

Topical Seminars
Friday, May 15
1:30 pm on Zoom
The Relevance of Non-Violence in 2020
Rick Grier-Reynolds
Registration Required

<https://delawarelibraries.libcal.com/calendar/virtuallibraryevents/?cid=9904&t=m&d=2020-05&cal=9904>

Rick Grier-Reynolds, Trinity College, B.A History, Harvard University, M.ED, has been **teaching various Peace Studies courses for the last 40 + years. While at Harvard, he was a** teaching assistant in Prof. Karl Deutsch's "Peace and Conflict Studies" Kennedy School course. A longtime teacher/administrator at the Wilmington Friends School, he created a year-long required course called "Peace, Justice and Social Change." Rick has participated in humanitarian projects in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Cuba, Cyprus and the former Yugoslavia. He is the co-coordinator of the "Alternatives to Violence Project", an anger management program in the Delaware prison system. Rick currently teaches at Osher/Lewes and the Sussex Consortium.

Current Non Violent Activity

Before we get to 2020, let's take a look at 2019. Robin Wright opens her 12/30/19 New Yorker article, "The Story of 2019: Protests in Every Corner of the Globe," with the following quote: (see Attachment A below)

When historians look back at 2019, the story of the year will not be the turmoil surrounding Donald Trump. It will instead be the tsunami of protests that swept across six continents and engulfed both liberal democracies and ruthless autocracies...

What is Non Violence?

When you explore non violent social change you could start with Tolstoy, Richard Gregg, Gandhi, Hannah Arendt, Dr. King and into the present with Gene Sharp. There's a good short video from John Green's You Tube Crash Course series called "Non Violence and Peace Movements: Crash Course World History 228." This 12 minute video will give you a quick overview of some historical examples of non violent actions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eP-mv5IjFzY>

Gene Sharp's "198 Methods"

Gene Sharp is credited by many as the "Father" of contemporary non violent social change through his lifetime of academic work detailing, categorizing and describing the many methods of non violent action. His "198 Methods of Non Violent Action" created a

framework that others have since added to. One of his many contributions has been his looking at non violence through the lens of *power dynamics*. Rulers, parents or any form of authority can only rule/control when those below obey. Disobey and the power disappears. Successful non violent strategies identify the pillars of support for the authority/ruler and then work to pull them away. His work has provided the basis for many of the strategic uses of non violence happening today. The 198 Methods: <http://www.aeinstein.org/nonviolentaaction/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action/>

To learn more, please Read the New York Times article about Gene Sharp <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/middleeast/17sharp.html>

How Successful is Non Violence?

In 2012, Erica Chenoweth, now a Harvard Professor of Public Policy, and Maria Stephan wrote a groundbreaking book “Why Civil Resistance Works.” Looking at over 300 violent and non violent attempts to change regimes in the 20th Century, their research discovered that 26% of the attempts using violence were successful while 53% of non violent campaigns succeeded. In addition, those using non violence had a much better success rate of sustaining the change due to the broad based involvement of civil society. Her book and work has received numerous recognitions in the world of international relations. Erica appears in many you tube videos and here’s one from 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zciw15fxTLk>

Non Violence and the Present Pandemic

David Korten, author of the Great Turning (2006) has written an article in the recent YES! Magazine called “From Emergency to Emergence.” In this article, Korten portrays the current pandemic crisis as an opportunity to rethink and rebuild a more just world. He reminds the reader of the “Overton Window,” which is the range of policy possibilities that are acceptable to the general population. Korten argues that the pandemic, with its brutal exposure of the many inequities in our current economic and health care systems, will create opportunities for dramatic systemic change. The impossible ideas may now become the possible. His article offers a variety of prescriptive ideas.

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/opinion/2020/04/23/coronavirus-rebuild-economy/>

Michelle Goldberg’s 5/2/20 New York Times OP-ED piece “The New Great Depression is Coming. Will there be a New Deal? Is included as a bit of a tease for an upcoming topical conversation, but also as another sign that serious people are talking dramatic change. (see Attachment B)

The pandemic has temporarily quieted some of the 2019 protest movements, but accelerated a number of others, as seen in recent worker boycotts/protests over safe working conditions and the “lift the quarantine” folks assembling at various state capitals. “People Power” happening everywhere. Non Violence offers many strategies to create institutions that support the common good.

Questions to ponder:

- What is non-violent social change?
- How effective has it been?
- Is non violent social change relevant today?
- How can non violent strategies be used to address the current realities facing peoples everywhere?

Attachment A

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-story-of-2019-protests-in-every-corner-of-the-globe/>

The Story of 2019: Protests in Every Corner of the Globe

By Robin Wright

December 30, 2019

When historians look back at 2019, the story of the year will not be the turmoil surrounding Donald Trump. It will instead be the tsunami of protests that swept across six continents and engulfed both liberal democracies and ruthless autocracies.

Throughout the year, movements have emerged overnight, out of nowhere, unleashing public fury on a global scale—from Paris and La Paz to Prague and Port-au-Prince, Beirut to Bogota and Berlin, Catalonia to Cairo, and in Hong Kong, Harare, Santiago, Sydney, Seoul, Quito, Jakarta, Tehran, Algiers, Baghdad, Budapest, London, New Delhi, Manila, and even Moscow. Taken together, the protests reflect unprecedented political mobilization. The global consequences dwarf the turmoil of the Trump year and his rippling impact beyond America's borders.

“People in more countries are using people power than any time in recorded history. Nonviolent mass movements are the primary challenges to governments today,” Erica Chenoweth, a political scientist at Harvard, told me. “This represents a pronounced shift in the global landscape of dissent.”

Popular protests have long been part of the human story in the modern era: the Protestant upheaval (so named for its protests), in the sixteenth century; the French Revolution and the Boston Tea Party, in the eighteenth century; and the uprisings that brought down the Berlin Wall and the Soviet empire, in the twentieth, to name just a few. They have always come in waves. One of the most famous waves was in 1968, a year of social activism that included antiwar demonstrations in the United States, workers' strikes in France, the Prague Spring's challenge to communism in Eastern Europe, and student protests in Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Britain, Germany, Italy, Pakistan and Poland. “At a time when nations and cultures were still separate and very different . . . there occurred a spontaneous combustion of rebellious spirits around the world,” Mark Kurlansky writes in “1968: The Year That Rocked the World.” “There has never been a year like 1968, and it is unlikely there will ever be one again,” he predicts.

Until now. Civil resistance in 2019 brought down leaders—some democratically elected, others dictators long in power—in Algeria, Bolivia, Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan.

Movements still threaten regimes in Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Haiti, Peru, Poland, Russia, and Zimbabwe. They forced governments—through peaceful means—to reverse course on controversial policies in China, Chile, and France, countries with starkly different political systems, economies, and cultures.

The difference today, Chenoweth said, is that in 1968 there was still a widespread belief that real power flowed from the barrel of a gun. “In our time, that belief is crumbling. There is a falling away from the consensus that you need armed struggle” to change political systems, and an increasing sense that violent protest leads to a disproportionate loss of life. “People are not picking up guns as they did in earlier eras. They're instead looking to civil resistance to assert their claims and seek transformation,” she said. “It's what binds the different movements of our time.”

Many of the catalysts in 2019's protests were originally small. In Lebanon, a tax on WhatsApp usage, in October, spawned weeks of anti-government protests in Beirut and across the country. Photograph by Sam Tarling / Corbis / Getty

The triggers have been as diverse as the movements they spawned. Many of the catalysts in 2019 were originally small, even unlikely, and the initial demands modest. In Sudan, the spark was the price of bread, in January; in India, the price of onions, in October; in Brazil, it was a cutback in funding for school textbooks, in August; in Lebanon, a tax on WhatsApp usage, in October; in Chile, a hike in subway fares, in October; and in Iran, a four-cent increase on a litre of gas, in November. But virtually all protests worldwide quickly escalated, and began issuing ultimatums for their governments to embrace sweeping changes—or to move aside.

The numbers have been blinding and the energy and endurance of the protesters staggering. An estimated three million Algerians—almost ten per cent of the population—turned out in the country, in February, to demand an end to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's twenty-year rule. He resigned in April. The demands of the protesters then grew to include the ouster of "the system," which in Algeria includes high-level military officers, politicians, and well-connected or corrupt businesspeople. Algeria elected a new president this month, but protesters are still on the streets, because the man elected, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, was a crony of Bouteflika's. In June, millions of protesters in tiny Hong Kong (population 7.4 million) demanded that the government—and its backers in Beijing—withdraw a controversial plan that would allow residents to be extradited for trial in China. It was the biggest challenge to Asia's behemoth (population 1.4 billion) in three decades. In September, the Hong Kong protesters prevailed—and then daringly went on to demand universal suffrage and an investigation of police violence. In November, the pro-democracy camp of the protesters swept local elections in a record turnout. And the protests are now headed into their seventh month.

"It's simplistic to think of these movements simply as protests," Carne Ross, the author of "The Leaderless Revolution: How Ordinary People Will Take Power and Change Politics in the 21st Century," told me. When that kind of energy is mustered, he said, it's difficult for governments to resist unless they use repression.

Paolo Gerbaudo, a political sociologist at King's College London and the author of "The Mask and the Flag: Populism, Citizenism and Global Protest," said the demonstrations may signal an even greater crisis in the future. "These protests are popular insurgencies. They reflect the failure of nation-states in the global era. They're not a passing crisis that can be remedied through the regular levers of the state," he said. "These movements may be the early symptoms of a new global crisis. They are like seismographs. They are like dials that announce things that are coming on the horizon."

Vastly different protests have borne common slogans and symbols. Hong Kong protesters adopted a phrase from the late martial artist Bruce Lee's admonition to "Be formless, shapeless, like water," in order to be impossible to suppress. The "Be Water" slogan was adopted in Catalonia and by student protesters in Chile, whose initial tactic was to jump subway turnstiles to protest fare prices. Since the unrest erupted in France, the term "yellow vest"—apparel used in emergencies or associated with working-class industries—has become synonymous with public demonstrations. Diverse protests have

also adopted common tactics—organizing with social-media technology and wearing masks to hide identities—that have complicated the ability of governments to contain them. Together, the protests of 2019 have produced an emerging global political culture.

Why Hong Kong's Protests Exploded

Protest movements will almost certainly be a feature of 2020 as well. “Protests are becoming part of ordinary political engagement,” Richard Youngs, a democracy expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the author of “Civic Activism Unleashed: New Hope or False Dawn for Democracy?,” told me. “The range of protests is quite staggering if you think about what’s happening across Latin America, in several African countries, in Eastern Europe, in both poor and wealthy Asian nations and even in the most difficult of circumstances in Russia. It’s remarkable. There’s not a political model that seems to be doing well or that is inoculated from the kind of uprisings the world is witnessing.”

The growing array of protests has coincided with a notable decline in voter turnout around the world, despite an increase in the number of voters and the number of countries with elections, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. For five decades, between the nineteen-forties and nineteen-eighties, the average global turnout was stable: at least seventy-six per cent. By 2015, it had dropped to sixty-six per cent. The data suggests less confidence that elections make much difference, and that citizens are instead voting with their feet, on the streets.

Many of the protests of 2019 have been loose-knit and leaderless, such as the demonstrations against Chinese overreach in Hong Kong, which are now heading into their seventh month. Photograph by Anthony Kwan / Getty

“What ties Hong Kong and Lebanon and Iraq with what we’re seeing in Chile, Bolivia, and Ecuador is the notion that political establishments have seized too much power,” David Gordon, a former vice-chair of the National Intelligence Council, who now works at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, told me. “There’s a common discontent and a common disillusionment and a common sense among protesters that they deserve more—and that the political establishment is to blame.”

Whatever the original flash points or agendas of the individual protests, taken together, they speak to a broader need for a new social contract between citizens and state power that goes beyond traditional political reforms, economic adjustments, or shifts in who sits at the top, Youngs said. In 1989, another year notable for unrest in China, Eastern Europe, and southern Africa, protests were regionally centered. “Today there is something structural and global that transcends the geo-political factors that triggered unrest in Europe in 1989,” he said. Protesters are challenging the political order not only of the twenty-first century but of the modern era.

The protests of 2019 have also altered the tactics, tools, and structure of civil resistance. Many have been loose-knit and leaderless and have drawn in people who consider themselves to be neither political nor civil-society activists. “They all represent a crisis of agency—of people who feel unrepresented,” Ross said. “For that reason, philosophically, they tend to not be top-down movements. If people want their own voice, they’re not happy if someone stands up and says they represent you. ‘We represent ourselves’ is a common feature of these protests.”

Technology has accelerated the organization and efficiency of protesting in 2019. In 1968, when sit-ins swept my campus at the University of Michigan, plans for protests were spread on landline telephones, through leaflets, or by word of mouth. In 1989, protesters had the fax. In 2011, as uprisings swept the Middle East, protesters had cell phones and social media, notably Twitter and Facebook. By 2019, encrypted apps, such as Telegram, WhatsApp, and AirDrop, offered a more secure means of communicating, a degree of anonymity, and less need for a single leader to mobilize. “There may be a global contagion due to social media. Seeing protests in other places motivates people to be willing to go to the streets in their own countries,” Gordon said.

To be enduring, movements today need to succeed in four factors, Chenoweth said. They need large and diverse participation. They need to create cracks in their opponents’ pillars of support, whether in business, politics, or the military. They need to employ a diverse set of tactics, including strikes, boycotts, or other forms of noncoöperation with the state. And they need to maintain discipline when government pressure tries to control or repress them. Because many of the movements today are leaderless, they find it harder to maintain control or unity.

Statistically, protests in the twentieth century that had at least a thousand people participating had a fifty per cent success rate—twice as high as violent campaigns, Chenoweth said. Between 2000 and 2010, between sixty and seventy per cent of nonviolent campaigns were successful. From 2010 to 2019, the success rate declined to thirty per cent—but they were still far more successful than campaigns using guns, which were successful only ten per cent of the time. “One of the ironies is that, even as their absolute success has declined, the relative success of nonviolent resistance has increased,” Chenoweth told me. “The rate of success used to be two to one over armed conflict. Now it’s three to one.”

Protest movements have serious limits, however. “Movements are called movements because they are not static and therefore can’t last,” Gerbaudo said. “They tend to come in waves. They give voice to concerns that are not in the public sphere. Once they have fulfilled the function, they tend to disperse.” Leaderless movements are not designed to govern, but they often generate momentum among politicians who take up or exploit their causes. “The rise of Bernie Sanders as a candidate would have been unthinkable without Occupy Wall Street,” Gerbaudo said.

Yet popular movements may have staying power well into the next decade and even beyond, Ross said, because of three accelerating stresses on every society: starker signs of environmental degradation that will increasingly impact daily life, worsening economic conditions and inequality generated by greedy globalization, and more mass migrations. And they can overlap. “If Europe has faced such a powerful rise of the extreme right since 2015, over a few thousand Syrian refugees reaching its shore, how are societies going to handle millions of climate refugees who will knock on the door of the West?” Gerbaudo said.

Many Americans, distracted by the antics of their President, have paid little attention to the turmoil beyond their borders. Ignoring them comes at a perilous cost. The protests of 2019 have been epochal, the fury real, and the underlying message profound for the future.

Robin Wright has been a contributing writer to *The New Yorker* since 1988. She is the author of “Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion Across the Islamic World.”

Attachment B

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/02/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-new-deal-ubi.html>

Opinion

The New Great Depression Is Coming. Will There Be a New New Deal?

After the coronavirus, political transformation may be inevitable.\

By Michelle Goldberg

Opinion Columnist

May 2, 2020

Until very recently, Andrew Yang thought that the need for a universal basic income would be a big issue in the 2024 election, as “many of the trends that I campaigned on were going to become completely clear to more and more Americans” over the next four years. He was arguing, for example, that between now and then, “30 percent of our stores and malls were going to close because of Amazon.”

After more than a month of coronavirus lockdowns, Yang’s prediction looks quaintly optimistic. “That obviously happened not in four years, it happened in four weeks,” he told me. “And it wasn’t 30 percent, it was virtually 100 percent.”

Many of those stores will come back — some have already — but analysts predict that thousands won’t. Jobs lost to automation during this time — in warehouses and supermarkets, among other places — are especially unlikely to return. Americans, increasingly desperate in lockdown, are going to emerge from this period into a transformed and blighted world.

Yang used to believe that we were five or 10 years away from seeing some version of his signature policy enacted. “Now I believe this is very immediate and could happen this year,” he said. Representative Justin Amash, who’s exploring running for president as a libertarian, is calling for a U.B.I. for the next three months. The House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, recently said a guaranteed minimum income is “perhaps” worthy of attention. Last month Pope Francis spoke warmly of the idea.

Several candidates campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination on what Senator Elizabeth Warren called “big structural change,” and lost. Yet in a hideous historical irony, the end of the primaries has coincided with a calamity that necessitates an enormous federal response.

Covid-19 has killed more Americans than died in the Vietnam War and led to unemployment numbers that are likely worse than those during the Great Depression. Implicit in Joe Biden’s campaign was a promise of a return to normalcy. That may have always been illusory, but now it’s been revealed as an impossibility.

As we approach this year’s election, we’re looking at an abyss. The question is what will fill it. Societal disaster can have horrific political consequences: Around the world, despots are using the pandemic as an excuse to grab ever more power. But the need to rebuild the country comes with opportunities.\

At this point, even many Republicans acknowledge that the era of small government is over. (“Big-Government Conservatives Mount Takeover of G.O.P.,” said a recent Politico headline.) In such an environment, ambitious progressive ideas that once seemed implausible, at least in the short term, start to become more imaginable.

“I do think there’s an F.D.R. moment,” said Senator Edward Markey, Democrat of Massachusetts and co-author of the Green New Deal resolution, which calls for a huge new public works program to build environmentally sustainable infrastructure. “Like 1933 — which would be 2021 — we can see that it is now time to discuss universal child care, universal sick leave and a guaranteed income for everyone in our society.”

Unsurprisingly, mass unemployment — a particular catastrophe in a system in which most people’s health insurance is tied to their jobs — seems to have made Americans more supportive of New Deal-like policies. Figures from the left-leaning polling firm Data for Progress show that support for a Green New Deal has risen from 48 percent last May to 59 percent this spring. Backing for “Medicare for all” went from 47 percent in November to 53 percent in March, when coronavirus layoffs were just starting.

“I’ve had people in my district, Silicon Valley, tech professionals who’ve lost their jobs,” Representative Ro Khanna, Democrat of California, told me. “People who were doing well at small businesses who have either lost their jobs or faced extraordinary hardship, and suddenly they are now having to confront the difficulties of being uninsured. They’re having to confront the challenges of the private health system.” Khanna sees a much broader awareness “of how uncertain economic life can be,” he said, which creates a bigger coalition for progressive ideas to improve the social safety net.

After the Sept. 11 attacks, American culture lionized soldiers, firefighters and police officers. The political corollaries of this worship could be negative; it was part of an atmosphere of militarization at home and abroad, where dissent was repeatedly shut down in the name of “supporting the troops.” But looking back, you can see how quickly national priorities changed, and how the stories America told itself about its heroes shaped policy.

Now the people celebrated as heroes are “essential workers” — doctors and nurses, but also grocery store clerks, bus drivers, meatpackers and mail carriers. There’s no guarantee that America will reward their sacrifice; even Sept. 11 emergency workers had to struggle to get the health care funding they needed.

But cultural shifts pave the way for political reform. “When little children are making signs that say, ‘Thank You,’ and taping them up in the window for the mail carriers and UPS delivery folks, the world has changed,” Elizabeth Warren told me. (Disclosure: my husband consulted on Warren’s presidential campaign.)

Warren and Khanna recently released a proposal for what they’re calling an “Essential Workers Bill of Rights,” which folds many longtime progressive labor priorities into a plan to address our current emergency. The proposal includes a mandate for free adequate personal protective equipment, hazard pay, universal paid sick leave and paid family leave, a crackdown on employers that misclassify full-time employees as independent contractors, and protections for union organizing.

That last part is important, because Warren believes we’re on the cusp of a new wave of labor mobilization. There have already been strikes, walkouts and other demonstrations across the country by workers forced to expose themselves to potential infection, including bus drivers, Amazon warehouse workers and employees at fast-food restaurants. Nurses have taken to the streets. “Whether it is slog-it-out bargaining over safety measures or bold legislative moves, unions see their coronavirus activism as the beginning of a new era for the labor movement,” said a Los Angeles Times article.

If so, it will echo what happened during the Great Depression. “This is what shocked everyone,” Warren said. “All of the economists thought the Great Depression in the 1930s would be the end of unions because so many people were unemployed and there was such a large labor supply, and unionization was going down during the 1920s. But that’s not what happened. In a time of great stress, more workers decided their only chance of survival was to come together and exercise their power through a union.” Mass unemployment also makes some version of a Green New Deal seem like more of a near-term possibility, at least if Biden wins the presidency. During the primaries, Biden’s environmental proposals were generally more modest than his rivals’, but with the pandemic ravaging the economy he’s called for a trillion-dollar infrastructure program focused on green jobs. That’s a lot less than what Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, who co-sponsored the Green New Deal in the House, has demanded — but it’s more than the entire cost of the stimulus bill President Barack Obama signed at the height of the Great Recession.

“In lots of ways I do think we’re closer to a Green New Deal than we were before, because the necessity of one has become more apparent,” said Rhiana Gunn-Wright, director of climate policy at the Roosevelt Institute and one of the thinkers who first conceptualized the Green New Deal. “It’s very difficult to talk about needing an economic transformation when the official metrics are saying this is a good economy.” The economy was always more fragile than the top-line numbers suggested; in some surveys a majority of Americans said they were living paycheck to paycheck before the coronavirus hit. But now the economy’s weakness is no longer a matter of debate. Obviously, that doesn’t make progressive reform of any kind inevitable. “It’s a question of what lessons are we learning from this, and I don’t think that that’s clear,” said Gunn-Wright. She added, “We don’t make policy decisions based on just, ‘What is the best choice?’ It’s a political process. It’s not a science fair.”

Gunn-Wright is interested in systems thinking; she talks about how paradigm shifts occur. At certain moments of crisis, dominant beliefs about how the world works can no longer explain what is happening. You can see this, she said, in the 1970s with stagflation, which was viewed as discrediting Keynesian economics. “That moment opened up the space for the neoliberalism that we have now,” she said.

Conservative economists in the United States had been developing the sort of ultra-free-market ideas championed by Ronald Reagan for decades. The era’s economic crisis allowed them to break through. As Wright-Gunn said, “There’s no answer for what’s happening, and here come these folks with an answer.”

Now, with so many of our assumptions about the way our country works collapsing around us, it’s progressives stepping forward with a set of answers they’ve been refining for years.

“We are going to be faced with a national rebuilding project at a scale that has never existed in our lifetimes,” said Yang. The biggest battle in politics now is over who will control that project, and whom it will prioritize.

