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## CHAPTER 26

# PEACEBUILDING AND NONVIOLENCE: GANDHI'S

## PERSPECTIVE ON POWER

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Mahatma Gandhi's theory of nonviolent power represents a much-needed perspective from which to criticize contemporary dominant modes of representing power primarily in terms of violence. His understanding of power offers both a theoretical and a practical approach to the problem of peacebuilding in today's global society. This chapter makes its arguments in three parts. First, I point to some shortcomings of the dominant discourse of power rooted in Thomas Hobbes' early modern view of human nature. Second, I introduce Gandhi's contrasting perspective on power and nonviolence based on his idea of "searching for *satya*" (truth, being) through the practice of *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Third, I examine particularly difficult historical cases in which the employment of nonviolent means actually produced socially transformative ends.

I am sensitive to critical voices who have rightly urged theorists of nonviolence to provide more precise definitions of their key terms. I must admit that I use the term "nonviolence" only reluctantly because it signifies for many people the *total* absence of both "direct" (physical) and

“indirect” (structural) forms of violence. Yet, even for Gandhi, absolute nonviolence remained a moral ideal which might only be approximated in the world of politics. Indeed, Gandhi himself sometimes engaged in such extreme actions as fasting-unto-death and harsh physical discipline, which could be interpreted as weapons of psychological coercion (Borman, 1986). Moreover, in *Hind Swaraj*, his sole sustained treatise on political theory, published in 1909, Gandhi relied on the conceptual violence of constructing a “pure” Indian identity defined against a tainted British “Other.” Thus, throughout the essay, I will therefore limit the use of the term “nonviolence” to mean the opposite of open, physical forms of violence. After all, the earliest English usages of violence (from the Latin *violentia*) describe it as “the exercise of physical force” against someone who is thereby “interrupted or interfered with rudely or roughly” (Keane, 1996).

## **THOMAS HOBBS AND THE DOMINANT DISCOURSE OF POWER**

Our ideas about social phenomena are closely connected to the way we construct and use language. We make sense of social reality through *discourses* and *narratives* that reflect shared images, ideas, values, beliefs, and ideals. Discourses provide individuals and social groups with a coherent orientation in time and space.

Political discourses tend to focus on the meaning and legitimate exercise of power (Ricoeur, 1986). With the seventeenth-century rise of *liberalism* as a political doctrine challenging *feudalism* and the king’s *divine right* to rule in an autocratic fashion, Western political discourses acquired new meanings, most importantly the idea that power rested in individuals and their ability to apply violence and coercion. To this day, this central assumption is reflected in the standard definition of the *liberal agency model of power*: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957, pp. 203–204). This under-

standing of power derives from philosophical and psychological assumptions made by early modern thinkers, most notably by the English political theorist Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). His ideas about human nature and political institutions gave rise to an understanding of power which emphasized “natural” aggression, looming violent disruptions, and other “imaginings and threats of force, disorder, and pain” (Sarat & Kearns, 1995, pp. 1–2). Indeed, Hobbes’s influential writings greatly contributed to the invention of the modern “realist” political discourse which was later termed *Realpolitik*. This German term refers to the idea that the essence of politics consists of a ceaseless struggle for power, material goods, and the control of the means of violence.

In order to better understand the fundamental psychological and political assumptions inherent in *Realpolitik*’s equation of power and violence, it is useful to examine in some detail Thomas Hobbes’s view of human nature. In *Leviathan*, his major treatise on political theory published in 1651, Hobbes puts at the center of his analysis a particular understanding of the individual as an isolated, self-contained being who interacts with other individuals in mechanical fashion. As Donald Tannenbaum and David Schultz (1998) point out, Hobbes’ atomistic conception of the individual has a clear psychological basis, rooted in three motives. First, all individuals are amorally selfish and controlled by their hedonistic desires and physical appetites. They are absorbed in their personal interests as they compete for scarce or limited goods such as wealth. Second, they are impelled by the desire to seek power and domination of others to protect themselves and their goods. As Hobbes notes, “I put as a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceases only in death” (1985, p. 161). This is due to what Hobbes calls “diffidence,” or mistrust of others. Finally, individuals desire glory, the good opinion of others which makes them seem superior and more praiseworthy (Tannenbaum

& Schultz, 1998).

For Hobbes, “reason” merely functions as a calculating device in the service of passion which leads the individual toward pleasure and the avoidance of pain. However, the raging competition among appetitive individuals for the same goals results in a state of violent anarchy—a “natural state of war” bereft of civility, friendship, and compassion. In Hobbes’ state of nature, “the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 1985, p. 186). On one hand, their irrational desires prompt individuals to behave like solitary beasts who feel no natural obligation to others and are guided solely by the urge for power and self-satisfaction. On the other, however, they seek to use reason to escape the “continual fear and danger of violent death” lurking in the chaotic state of nature. It is this fear of death, born of their own primordial violent tendencies that ultimately serves as the incentive for calculating individuals to create an artificial “civil society” which ends the state of nature and allows for the maximizing of pleasures while minimizing the possibility of violent death. Through a *social contract*, individuals transfer their “natural right” to exercise power through violence to a common sovereign authority (the state) which claims a monopoly on the use of violence.

Relying on a model of human nature based on an individualized psychology of primordial violence and fear, Hobbes was the first modern thinker to argue for the creation of a more “rational” and therefore more “economical” order of violence backed by popular consent rather than divine right. While Hobbes’ contract theory opened the door for the later development of more democratic models of self-government based on popular sovereignty, it also provided the rationale for modern *Realpolitik* and its claim that the exercise of political power inevitably involved the capacity to unleash violence. The creation of a civil society through the social contract

merely centralized violence in the hands of a powerful state: “Covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all” (Hobbes, 1985, p. 223). Evident in Hobbes’ connection between “strength” and the “sword,” the sovereign’s power was ultimately grounded in force and violence, not persuasion and communication.

As I will show below, Gandhi’s model of power fundamentally challenged such dominant “realist” discourses of power. Unfortunately, modern thinkers in the West have failed to respond to Gandhi’s challenge of Hobbes’ one-dimensional conception of power as bringing violence to bear on someone else’s person or possessions. Seen as hopelessly utopian and politically impotent, alternative models of power such as Gandhi’s hardly ever impact the contemporary debates on democracy and social justice. As a result, liberal democratic discourses of power perpetuate the belief in the naturalness of violence, and a new generation of citizens resigns itself to the “fact” that the maintenance of our individual liberties as well as our political institutions of representative democracy inevitably involve some forms of violence. In the end, political thinkers in the Hobbesian tradition remain suspended in discursive and cultural practices that simultaneously encourage, limit, and redistribute the violence of its origins. Thus, it is not hard to concur with John Keane’s (1996) observation that the reasons for political theory’s frozen political imagination about violence and power and its consequent glum silence about nonviolence derive from the “confused and confusing *mélange* of unspoken prejudices and significant assumptions” of the Hobbesian paradigm.

### **MAHATMA GANDHI’S NONVIOLENT SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

The most valuable contribution of Gandhi’s theory of nonviolent power lies in its critique of dominant discourses of power based on a psychology of fear which equates power with violence.

Gandhi emphasized the crucial role of moral reason in a politically anchored, nonviolent search for truth. Gandhi's defense of radical political action directed against oppression corresponded to his preference for a conception of theory as a "critical program" designed to charge political systems and their institutions with violating universal human rights. From a Gandhian perspective, *nonviolent direct action*—the withdrawal of popular obedience—is the most effective way of frustrating unaccountable power networks. Gandhi and his followers thus considered both a philosophical and a pragmatic "search for truth" as an indispensable means for challenging the violence of colonialism and other forms of oppression.

Before discussing the basic elements of Gandhi's political thought—*satya* (truth, being), *agraha* (firmness, force, power), and *ahimsa* (nonviolence)—we must remember that he considered himself primarily a spokesman for the marginalized and downtrodden, such as the Indian caste of *dalits* ("Untouchables"). Gandhi's writings and speeches can hardly be detached from their cultural context, reflecting the concreteness of his political location within an intricate web of existing power relations which routinely undermined a sense of human dignity and cultural self-expression. Thus, it was only through concrete political struggles that he developed his new model of political power as the nonviolent search for truth (*satyagraha*). Yet, nonviolent resisters (*satyagrahis*) could not unilaterally impart privileged philosophical knowledge to the masses; rather, they developed their own theoretical understanding of nonviolent political power out of their daily interactions with those social groups most exposed to the effects of colonial power. Indeed, Gandhi's political theory represents less a cognitive affair than a problem-driven, theoretical extension of concrete experiences of domination and resistance at the level of everyday existence. The violence of racism, for example, was embodied by the colonial policeman who

threw the young Indian barrister out of the first-class cabin of a train bound for Maritzburg or the English barber in Pretoria who refused to cut the hair of a “bloody coolie” (Gandhi, 1948).<sup>1</sup> Such moments of intense suffering served as the crucial catalysts for Gandhi’s formidable challenge to the dominant Hobbesian discourse of power.

Deeply influenced by the Jain philosophy of *anekantavada*—the *many-sidedness of all phenomena*—Gandhi defended throughout his life the importance of an ethical and spiritual pluralism rooted in the fragmentariness of our understanding of *satya* (Chatterjee, 1983). Noting the derivation of the term from the Sanskrit verb *sat* (“to be” or “to exist”), Gandhi opted for an “experimental” basis of truth which differed sharply from Cartesian rationalism and its various philosophical offshoots. In other words, while explaining truth as epistemological (truth as “factual correctness”), pragmatic (truth as “selfless political action”), psychological (truth as “honesty”), and religious (truth as “God”), Gandhi remained nonetheless firmly wedded to the skeptic’s position regarding the difficulty of ever grasping *satya* in its fullness (Iyer, 1973).

In spite of the complexity of moral choices, the political activist was called upon to continue the struggle for a political realization of *satya* through the employment of *nonviolent* means: *negotiations, demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience, and other nonviolent forms of non-cooperation*. Deeply concerned with the practical applicability of truth, Gandhi insisted on a tight connection between theory and practice; this allowed him to address head-on the practical difficulties associated with the notorious political ineffectiveness of rational discussion and the ensuing moral problem of the proper relationship between means and ends in instances where

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<sup>1</sup> For an interpretation of Gandhi’s spirituality as attention to the details of social and political life, see Brown (1989); Chatterjee (1983); and Green (1993).

reason had fallen silent. “I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long and based on supposed religious authority. Reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding” (Gandhi in Bose, 1948, p. 222).

But what exactly did Gandhi mean by “strengthening reason through suffering”? Wasn’t it much more “reasonable” to avoid suffering and pain at all cost, especially in times of crisis when the thin garments of civility were stripped away and naked imperatives for self-preservation prevailed? It was precisely in such situations that the Hobbesian model of violent retaliation seemed to offer commonsensical, practical guidance for eliminating human suffering caused by arbitrary acts of violence.

For Gandhi, a genuine process of peacebuilding had to involve the use of nonviolent *means* to secure a sustainable satisfaction of human needs of security, identity, self-determination, and quality of life. His most serious challenge to the dominant Hobbesian discourse of power becomes apparent in his conscious break with the assumption that the nature of political power was to be found in the capacity to unleash violence, and thus, that the exercise of political power inevitably involved employing violent means of physical coercion. Instead, he offered a compelling rationale for why the principle of *ahimsa* might constitute the core of an alternative model of power:

[It] is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey

the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of the self. (Gandhi, 1938, p. 71)

As Dennis Dalton (1993) noted, the term “power” appears to be a much better translation for *satyagraha* than “soul-force,” because “force” is usually associated with “violence.” After all, it was precisely this supposedly natural connection between power and violence that Gandhi wished to challenge in his assertion that *satyagraha* represented power “born of Truth and Love or nonviolence” (Gandhi, 1958, Vol. 29, p. 92). For Gandhi, the infliction of violence on another person presumed society’s ability to pass ultimate judgment in terms of right and wrong; but since there was never absolute certainty as to the truth of one’s own position, there could be no “natural right” or competence to punish: “In the application of *satyagraha*, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be Truth to one may appear false to the other” (Gandhi, 1958, Vol. 19, p. 46). Even forms of corrective violence undertaken by agents of the state or other “legitimate” claimants of authority amounted to the dogmatic posture of violently enforcing one’s partial understanding of truth. Thus, Gandhi insisted that the practice of arriving at uncoerced, consensual truth through the practice of *ahimsa* represented the only rationally defensible course of action. Employed as nonviolent direct action, such as in Gandhi’s famous 1930 Salt March when he and his followers defied the British monopoly on salt-making, *satyagraha* overcame the dilemma of political impotence without violating its theoretical emphasis on nonviolence. It allowed for a settling of conflicts which did not involve the elimination of enemies or the application of physical force. As Joan Bondurant (1988, p. 195) has put it, “The claim for *satyagraha* is that through the operation of

nonviolent action the truth as judged by the fulfillment of human needs will emerge in the form of a mutually satisfactory and agreed-upon solution.” This practical reconciliation of self-interest and other-interest could only be consistently applied through the practice of *satyagraha*: “Means and ends are convertible terms in my political philosophy” (Gandhi, 1958, Vol. 25, p. 480).

But the firm adherence to such an ethic was not an easy option for the fainthearted. To put up a determined resistance to British troops and their deadly firepower without resorting to violence required tremendous courage of the sort that seemed to ignore the biological imperatives of self-preservation. Once again, Hobbes’ psychologically effective story of the omnipresent danger of society’s descent into war seems to make the more convincing argument for basing political order on the ineradicable persistence of fear and violence. For Hobbes, to be alive meant to experience the fear of violent death. Early modern political thinkers skillfully interwove their influential postulations of natural imperatives for self-preservation with the development of a psychology of fear in which the horrors of physical pain and violent death were the essential components constituting human identity. Political leaders who disregarded fear in favor of love were seen by realists as fools blind to the “commonsensical” claim that without violence, politics had to come to a halt, for politics was essentially a commerce with violence.

Gandhi never denied the existence of fear in the face of the unsettling possibility of having to endure physical pain, torture, and violent death in the course of nonviolent direct actions. But it was precisely *because of* his clear recognition of the pivotal role of fear that he refused to go along with Hobbes’ conclusion. For Gandhi, any attempt to exclusively link fear to a discourse of power as violence merely served as a means to disrupt dialogue.

Gandhi insisted on the possibility of overcoming fear with the result of realizing self-rule in

both a political and psychological sense. The traditional Hindu virtue of *abhaya* (fearlessness) in the face of violence, repression, and even impending death was a quality which the *satyagrahi* could gradually develop through rigorous spiritual, political, and social training in *ahimsa*: “Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training of nonviolence....The votary of nonviolence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear....He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice *ahimsa* to perfection” (Gandhi, 1958, Vol. 72, p. 416).<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly, Gandhi’s familiarity with Indian philosophies and religions facilitated his adroit utilization of self-suffering as a method for simultaneously transforming one’s own fear and morally persuading one’s oppressor.

### **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FEAR<sup>3</sup>**

In the previous chapter on Gandhi by Dan Mayton, some social psychological explanations for the effectiveness of nonviolent action were hypothesized. In this section, the control of fear through cognitive mediation and learning is discussed.

Gandhi argued that fear need not be linked to violent behavior. This insight is supported by psychological work on the emotion of fear. Stressful environmental stimuli trigger the *fight or flight mechanism*, whereby physiological responses in the nervous system arouse the body and prepare it for action. Any situation that is interpreted as dangerous can activate a range of chemical and hormonal changes throughout the brain and muscular system, changes which stimulate the muscles for action. Specifically, the hypothalamus controls the sympathetic system, releasing

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the traditional Indian cardinal moral virtues, see Datta, 1953, pp. 86–104.

<sup>3</sup> This section was contributed by Deborah Du Nann Winter, Laura Boston, Sara Houck, and Matthew Lee.

neurotransmitters to activate various organs and smooth muscles, such as heart rate and pupil dilation. Simultaneously, chemical transmitters are released into the bloodstream to elevate blood sugar levels that prepare muscles for quick action. The combined effect of these chemical and muscular changes is a heightened probability of fight or flight, and the accompanying emotional experience of anger and/or fear.

Therapists have developed a range of techniques to lower the stress response in their patients and reduce the likelihood of fight or flight, thereby supporting Gandhi's claim that fear need not lead to violence. For example, patients suffering from a *phobia*, or excessive fear, can be classically conditioned to emit alternative responses to anxiety-provoking stimuli. Just as a patient who is deathly afraid of snakes can be taught to breathe deeply and gradually learn to enjoy playing with one, so training for nonviolence teaches political activists to stay calm, resist the temptation to run or fight, and stay near a buddy who can monitor one's actions (see Montiel's chapter, also in this section). Rehearsals and drills for nonviolent actions are important features of the method's success, demonstrating the behavioral approach to changing stress responses.

Cognitive therapy also offers insights. Fight or flight behavior is most likely when thoughts about danger are unexamined, leading to self-protective strategies. However, Gandhi teaches that suffering is a crucial feature of truth, and that self-protection is less important than ultimate truth, which addresses the human needs of more people than the self. Thus attributing one's personal suffering to a necessary struggle against unjust social conditions helps activists endure discomfort and personal pain. Clear recognition of the justness of one's cause fortifies nonviolent activists to remain steadfast, rather than cave in to fight or flight. Again, training in nonviolence is necessary because thoughts and cognitions about risks and physical pain are important in mediat-

ing fight or flight.

The psychology of fear might be seen as indirect evidence for Hobbes. After all, we are physiologically wired for fight or flight, and must be taught to resist these actions when chemically aroused. Without the cortical areas of the brain, Hobbes' view might prevail. However, the fact that we can be taught to resist violence, as well as the fact that we have to be taught to emit it (as in the strenuous training procedures of boot camp for military institutions), demonstrates that the human propensity for violence greatly depends on learning, thinking, and even spiritual dimensions. The ability to endure personal suffering for the greater good is a spiritual capacity which Gandhi and other great religious leaders, including Christ, have demonstrated.

In summary, then, Gandhi's conceptualization of power as seeking truth through the practice of *ahimsa* challenges the dominant discourse of power as the ability to inflict violence. He opted for a model favoring the idea of common people exercising power nonviolently through voluntary self-suffering and sacrifice for a cause they consider to be just and true according the standard of fulfillment of human needs. As such, Gandhi's ideas are clearly reflective of a position espoused by the authors in this volume—a peace psychology that seeks to elucidate psychological processes involved in the prevention and mitigation of destructive conflict, violence, dominance, oppression, and exploitation.

## **DOES NONVIOLENCE “WORK”? TWO CASE STUDIES**

Gandhi's perspective has served as an inspiration to other twentieth-century proponents of non-violence, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, and Aung San Suu Kyi. Still, many critics have questioned the practicality of nonviolent power to redress social in-

justices, arguing that Gandhi's nonviolent campaigns or the Civil Rights Movement under Martin Luther King, Jr. merely represent exceptional cases which show that nonviolence will only "work" with principled oppressors such as Great Britain or the United States. Inevitably, such skeptics point to more difficult cases of oppressive authoritarian governments that are not bound by a democratic logic. George Orwell (1950) most clearly captures this common objection: "It is difficult to see how Gandhi's methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the regime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again" (p. 101).

Drawing on two extreme cases, I will argue that Orwell's assertion is open to serious challenges. The nonviolent resistance of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo against the murderous Argentine military dictatorship of the 1970s, and the little-known 1943 Berlin Rosenstrasse Protest of ordinary Germans against the genocidal policies of the Nazi state show that the power of *satyagraha* can be successfully employed even against the most repressive political regimes in modern history.

### **Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo**

During the Argentine junta's 1976 to 1983 "Dirty War" against political "subversives," whose crimes consisted of demanding Argentina's return to democracy and the government's adherence to human rights, tens of thousands of ordinary citizens were abducted and tortured, often disappearing forever in the secret prisons of the military dictatorship (Guzman Bouvard, 1994). The power of the junta rested on its total control of the coercive state apparatus and the mass media. Moreover, its virulent anti-Communist rhetoric secured the tacit support of the United States and heightened a sense of general helplessness and all-pervading fear on the part of the population.

Beginning in 1977, a small group of middle-aged women—most of whom were homemakers who had never before actively participated in politics—formed the core of a growing dissident movement in Argentina which resolved to “speak truth” to the military government. Known as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, these women gathered regularly at the central square of Buenos Aires and publicly demanded from the regime that it disclose the whereabouts of their abducted sons and husbands. Circling the Plaza de Mayo arm-in-arm and wearing white shawls which symbolized the innocence of their children, the Mothers broke through the wall of fear and passivity in spite of mounting repressive measures employed by the police. Employing Gandhian methods of nonviolent struggle—demonstrations, strikes, and noncooperation—the Mothers defied police barricades, tear gas, attack dogs, arrests, and even assassinations. Undeterred, they continued their weekly display of solidarity, motherly care, and nonviolent power. By the late 1970s, the Mothers had built an impressive network of support that included church leaders, human rights activists, labor unionists, and other ordinary citizens who felt inspired by the women’s ongoing political dialogue on truth. Having acquired an international reputation and a distinct identity as nonviolent protectors of human life against brute force, the Mothers’ activities ultimately proved to be instrumental in bringing down the military dictatorship in the wake of Argentina’s 1982 war with England over the Falkland Islands.

The impressive example of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo shows the efficacy of nonviolent power even in struggles against brutal oppressors who refuse to identify with the logic of liberal democracy. In particular, three important lessons can be drawn from this Argentine case. First, the Mothers proved that the values and language of militarism can be successfully challenged by a nonviolent, maternal discourse of life, family, love, and trust. Emphasizing the con-

tinuity between the private sphere and public responsibility, the Mothers ingeniously employed traditional concepts of maternity for their own revolutionary purpose without resorting to violent or immoral tactics. Second, like Charter 77—Vaclav Havel’s dissident organization in communist Czechoslovakia—the Mothers represented the ever-present possibility of a moral regeneration of society through the nonviolent creation of a resistance movement within an oppressive society. Founded on principles of self-management, shared responsibility, and direct democracy, the Argentine dissident organization demonstrated the awesome power of solidaristic, nonviolent action. Third, the Mothers provided another impressive example of a new political consciousness of women challenging male conceptions of power and strength. Seemingly one of the most powerless groups in society, these middle-aged women took control of their lives and moved beyond their culture’s restraints and expectations, in the process enlarging the political sphere of all Argentine women. Organized around the Gandhian principle of *ahimsa*, the Mothers of the Plaza the Mayo united feeling, thinking, and acting in their powerful display of maternal love and individual responsibility.

### **Rosenstrasse Protest**

Let us now turn to the most difficult case: Nazi Germany at the height of its power. Nathan Stoltzfus’ study, *Resistance of the Heart* (1996) charts the lives of ordinary Germans who married Jews in the context of Nazi persecution and social harassment. Using interviews with surviving resisters and thousands of Nazi records never before examined in detail, Stoltzfus brings into sharp focus the frequently neglected issue of German-Jewish intermarriages in Nazi Germany. In December 1942, with the “Final Solution” at its height, there were still close to 30,000 intermarried couples in the German Reich and its Czech protectorate area. Given that the large majority

of intermarried Germans were women, the story of opposition by intermarried Germans is largely (but not only) the story of German women married to Jewish men (Stoltzfus, 1996, p. xxvii).

The existence of these intermarried couples was disturbing to Nazi ideology for a variety of reasons. First, under the Nazi logic of “racial purification,” intermarried Jews should have been the first Jews to be isolated and deported. Yet, it proved to be impossible for the regime to forcibly break up these marriages without undermining social traditions such as the “sanctity of marriage,” fervently supported by Nazi ideology. Second, intermarried couples gave birth to a “polluted mixture of Master Race and Jew” called *Mischlinge*. Third, their noncompliance with racial laws and their unwillingness to divorce their spouses directly challenged Nazi power and its propaganda of flawless German unity and the people’s unquestioned loyalty to concepts of racial purity and superiority.

The sole known mass demonstration against Nazi racial policies, the 1943 Berlin “Rosenstrasse Protest,” involved hundreds to thousands of Germans protesting the mass arrest of intermarried Jews. Stoltzfus explains not only why the demonstrations ended successfully in the release of the detained Jews, but he also offers a compelling narrative framework that shows the power of nonviolent resistance. For six days, hundreds of German women engaged in public demonstrations. Demanding their husbands, sons, and brothers back, they defied menacing guards and refused to comply with Hitler’s Total War decree ordering them to register for work. Joseph Goebbels was ultimately forced to order the release of the Jewish prisoners, because he realized that Nazi power rested, first and foremost, on popular accommodation ranging from enthusiastic support to passive acceptance. A withdrawal of accommodation touched off by the Ro-

senstrasse Protest could cause serious problems for the regime. The Nazi dictatorship feared social unrest more than it feared compromising its racial ideology or even rescinding its racist initiatives. The successful Rosenstrasse protest is extremely significant, for it proves that nonviolent opposition to the Nazi state was possible and that limits could have been placed even on the most notorious aspect of the regime—genocide. On Rosenstrasse, the protesters expressed the nonviolent power of “living in truth”—the willingness to live according to one’s own conscience and reason, in the process defying the most murderous regime in the twentieth century (Stoltzfus, 1996).

## CONCLUSION

Rejecting the dominant discourse of power based on Hobbes’ psychology of fear which equates power and violence, Gandhi instead provided a model of political power based on fearlessness and *ahimsa*. Emphasizing the crucial connection between political theory and social practice, Gandhi’s perspective on nonviolent power appeals to the kind of “practical wisdom” that can actually be used and applied by peace activists. The reassertion of such a problem-driven approach reinvigorates the critical impulse to understand and address concrete political problems in the world. By raising the crucial question of how political power can be conceptualized *and* practiced in *nonviolent* ways, Gandhi focused on the importance of linking social theory to the concrete task of diffusing violence in society. Thus, his perspective on power and nonviolence contains a strong injunction to link morality and politics without abandoning the great Enlightenment ideal of individual self-realization. At the end of a long century of violence, Gandhi’s perspective on power and nonviolence indeed offers an appealing vista for the twenty-first century.