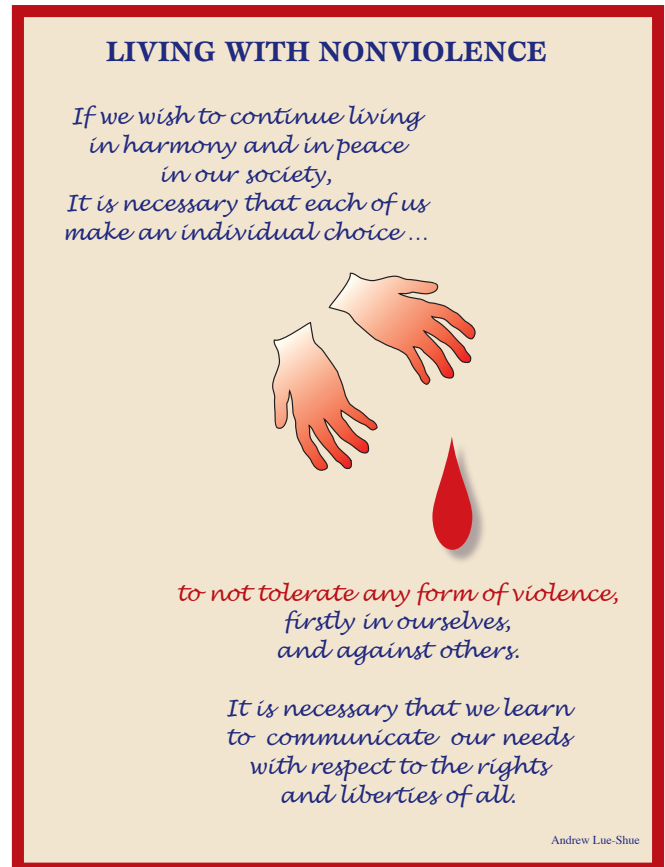


Nonviolence: A Path to Survival, Peace and Unity

Andrew Lue-Shue February 2017

We cannot truly walk the path of nonviolence and hope for durable peace until we come to terms with the violence that is both in us and around us. Violence has become so much part of our daily lives that many of us hardly even notice the insidious impact it has on our physical and mental health, as well as on our spiritual well-being. It is everywhere, in the media, on our streets, in our work places, in our schools, in our homes and sometimes in our intimate relationships. Many of us may or may not be aware of how, when and why we use violence as a means to satisfy our own needs. Some may not recognize that an unease they experience may be a result of violence. All violence is based on some inadequate strategy that is used to satisfy the need to control others. Perhaps it is in raising your voice to intimidate and impose your will; or sulking in order to manipulate compliance; or playing the victim to solicit sympathy or to make someone feel guilt; or in the attitude of the schoolyard bully that finds power through intimidating those he or she perceives as weak. Whatever its form, it demonstrates a deficit in the ability to know and to communicate one's emotional needs and the lack of respect for the integrity of other beings. It also reveals weak self esteem and limited self-awareness in spite of projected outer appearances. However you look at it, violence rides the moral low road to desolation and chaos; self-restraint, the moral high road to self-fulfillment and peace. The energy wasted in trying to control others would be better invested in controlling oneself wherein the dividends are vastly superior at all levels.

Many people have a limited perspective on what violence is and may see it only in its most dramatic manifestations. Violence has many different faces and may appear quite differently in a war zone than it would in a monastery. However, its roots are from the same soil: non-respect of one's higher nature and the nonrecognition of the other as being part of the same divine consciousness. Our culture's obsession with the physical world has created an uneasy separation of body, mind and spirit which conceals the unity inherent in universal order.



What is violence?

Violence is any willful means that is used to control others, to neutralize opposition or to force others to submit to a situation that is not desired by them.

Violence is an inadequate way to respond to one's needs, one's environment or to obtain personal gratification through means that are not respectful and egalitarian.

Violence is a personal choice and it is an inadequate and unacceptable way of expressing oneself that is detrimental to the dignity and integrity of someone.

The only person responsible for violence is he or she that imposes it.

Types of violence

1) **Verbal violence:** With the aim of intimidating, I am being verbally violent when:

- a) I use injurious language
- b) I humiliate through criticisms
- c) I insult someone
- d) I threaten someone

2) **Psychological violence:** I am being psychologically violent when:

- a) I insist on imposing my will on someone
- b) I make others uncomfortable by my sulking or bad mood.
- c) I show jealousy
- d) I manipulate to get what I want
- e) I try to control others through intimidation

3) **Physical Violence:** With the aim to control others, I am being physically violent when:

- a) I hit someone or an object, a wall, a door, etc.
- b) I willfully fluster, jostle or upset someone
- c) I shove or aggressively push someone or something
- d) I shake someone
- e) I physically injure someone

4) **Sexual violence:** I am being sexually violent when I impose suggestive comments, sexually explicit touching or a sexual act that is not expressly desired or welcomed by someone.

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When we understand that each one of us is a complex and organized system of cells, intelligent microorganisms and conscious energy; that we are an integral part of that magnificent system we call the universe; that our existence in this present moment occurs at the intersection of micro and macro universes, we will begin to see that all violence is malignant to our spiritual evolution and ultimately to our survival as the human race. I offer you a more holistic definition of violence that infers the element of spiritual unity.

Violence is any thought, word or action, conscious or subconscious, that does not recognize the just value of a person (including oneself), of an animal or of all living beings including insects, trees and plants.

I consider *'the just value of a person'* as each living being's existential right to dignity, integrity and the liberty to achieve his, her or its fullest potential.

Consider that the ant and the bee are also systemic beings that function, like us, in a communal system and that they also play a vital role in our survival and that of the planet. From this perspective, animals, intelligent and sentient beings that they are, also possess personhood and like us, have evolved relatively complex communities for their survival. *'Just value'* also applies to the environment, for which deep respect flourishes from the understanding of the vital role nature plays in maintaining our well-being and our survival, individually and collectively. The endearment inherent in the terms *Mother Nature* and *Mother Earth* celebrates a symbolic 'personhood' of Nature and thus accords her rights. We cannot follow the path of nonviolence without experiencing the awe, the appreciation and the gratitude that comes from the realization that we are part of a living planet and a conscious universe; that we are part of the divine.

Nonviolence is not just an idea that preaches no violence, but a conscious commitment to follow a spiritual path to peace and self-realization. Where the shadow of violence is moral weakness, the light of nonviolence is spiritual strength. It is here, in the light beyond the shadows that we connect, you and I, united as spiritual brothers and sisters.

Andrew Lue-Shue, February 2017