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Editorial

Welcome to a new *Making waves*! Turning the Tide (TTT) has been through a process of renewal this past year and we have a new website to go with it: check out www.turningtide.org.uk.

As we leave behind troubled 2016 and look to the possibilities of 2017, this edition of *Making waves* goes back to basics by refocusing Turning the Tide's core value: nonviolence for social change. Nonviolence is the thread that weaves through all of TTT's work and so it is with this edition of *Making waves*.

We begin with a round-up of news from Turning the Tide by TTT Programme Coordinator Hannah Smith, before a reflective piece by TTT trainer, long-time peace activist and *Peace news* editor Milan Rai on page three. Entitled 'Navigating our way through Brexit-Trumpland', Mil's article talks about his experience of engaging with the Brexit-Trump landscape as a trainer and activist, and offers one person's interpretation of the implications for those seeking to effect nonviolent social change.

Meanwhile, 'Common dilemmas on nonviolence' (page five), a shortened version of a blog post on the TTT website, explores

some of the very different understandings of nonviolence that exist among those who are guided by its principles. Then, on page six, TTT trainer Clare Bonetree speaks to the importance of valuing all forms of activism as she shares openly and honestly her experience of renegotiating activism.

Continuing our nonviolence theme and in the spirit of sharing the resources TTT has built up over more than two decades of supporting the grassroots, our featured workshop tool is the hugely insightful, tried and true classic, 'Nonviolence spectrum' (page seven). And because TTT has its roots firmly in its Quaker faith, we end with a book review of *Spiritual activism* by TTT trainer Bob Banks. It seemed fitting. Especially in these tumultuous times.

After all, as the book itself chimes: "Whilst our opponents may have the resources to buy political influence and newspaper column inches, we ... may have psycho-spiritual riches".



News from Turning the Tide

2016 was a momentous year for many people. At Turning the Tide we've been on our own journey, and settling into a new phase after big changes – from recruiting new trainers to re-vamping our website, and from building our skills to sharing updated resources online for nonviolent social change.

I began the year as a new member of the team, alongside 15 brilliant trainers, mostly new to the programme. In this time we've been getting to know each other, developing support systems and resources, learning about the work – and doing it.

Together, we've been supporting action groups from York to Bristol, to Cardiff and East London, delivering workshops on: nonviolent direct action for Trident Ploughshares and a faith-based climate group; spirituality and activism for The Spark London festival; exploring nonviolence for the Earth First Summer Gathering; nonviolent communication skills with Year 13 school students in Derbyshire; consensus decision-making with a military-related peace group; strategy workshops with a union branch, a climate group and an economic justice group; and group decision-making with European youth workers... just to name a few!

This year, we're doing our first ever three-part mini-course – a way of working that we hope to do more of. This one is for Quakers in Bristol, and will explore how change happens and how to plan collective action on issues they care about.

We're also developing work to support those concerned about increasing division and aggression in their communities since the referendum on EU membership and the US presidential election.

If these sound like areas you and your group would like support in, please get in touch for a chat, or request a workshop.

We know there are huge challenges ahead but we're excited about the opportunities these bring. Building and strengthening movements of nonviolent resistance and positive change is vital, now as much as ever.

Hannah Smith, TTT Programme Coordinator

Invitation to host a free Active Witness course in your area

As we draw a line under 2016 and refocus our social change efforts for this new year, Turning the Tide invites you to collaborate with us in 2017:

- Are you concerned about current peace, social and environmental justice issues?
- Are you keen to take collective action with like-minded folk in your area?
- Would you welcome an opportunity to develop your understanding of power, social change and collective action?
- Would you like to learn practical tools for taking effective nonviolent action for change?

If the answer to these questions is yes, please get in touch. We are currently seeking interested parties (particularly, but not limited to, Quakers) to join us in hosting mini-courses around the country.

Bristol Redland Quaker Meeting has already taken up the opportunity and, together with Turning the Tide, is hosting a series of three, one-day workshops in early 2017. For details see: www.turningtide.org.uk/active-witness-bristol.

The Bristol course is a pilot and we envisage each mini-course being tailored to the needs and interests of local hosts. So if you, your group or your meeting is interested in reinvigorating action for social change in your area, contact: turningtide@quaker.org.uk or 020 7663 1064/1.

We'd love to hear from you!

Navigating through Brexit-Trumpland

With 2016 behind us but the result of the EU referendum and the election of Donald Trump bound to have wide-ranging implications for some time, we asked Milan Rai, a Turning the Tide trainer, *Peace news* editor and long-time activist for his reflections on what it might mean for those of us working for nonviolent social change.

A few days after the EU referendum in June, two local radicals called an emergency gathering in the centre of Hastings. I went along, with about 60–70 other people. I would guess they were all Remain voters, in various states of shock, unhappiness and outrage. Almost immediately, the facilitators invited us to propose activities responding to the result.

This approach – diving straight into ways of responding, before sharing our feelings – was in notable contrast to that of Training for Change (TfC), the Quaker-founded US training group that Turning the Tide has been connected to since 2002. TfC bases much of its work on the insight that people need to process their experiences before they can work out what to do about them. It's a training approach that Turning the Tide has learned from.

Concentrating on a task without dealing with our emotions can inhibit our effectiveness.

After Donald Trump's election victory in November, TfC supported activists as they worked through their feelings about the result. The point was to enable people to process their emotions and then discover what they'd come together for, or make the decisions and plans they needed to make.

Making space for a range of emotions

Gabriel Carlyle (also a TTT trainer) and I ran a weekend workshop on facilitation this way, at the end of November. Trump's election victory was fresh in participants' minds. We decided to run an exercise that drew from TfC's approach. We began by inviting people to form a spectrum line (see page seven for more about this tool) based on how strongly they'd been feeling about the US election result. People spread out right across the spectrum. We invited them to talk to someone near them about how they felt when they heard the result, and how they had been dealing with the news.

After a while, the group formed a circle and everyone chose a pose or a movement that



Photo: Emiliano, Flickr (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/uk/legalcode>)

showed how they were feeling (maybe with some sounds). Each person demonstrated their action, and then everyone else mirrored them. A huge range of emotions were expressed, from fist-waving defiance to anguished head-beating.

Afterwards, a participant said gladly, "Trump: tick. Done that. Now what?" People had worked through their emotions about the US election just enough for them to pay full attention during the rest of the weekend.

Racial advantage

One of the things that came out of that Brexit gathering in Hastings was 'Hastings Conversations', a project to go out and listen to all sorts of different people discuss their thoughts and feelings about the difficult issues thrown up during the referendum campaign.

There were interesting differences in the group. Some people wanted to ask pointed, closed questions that pushed people in the direction of 'the right opinion' about, say, immigration. ("Do you know what proportion of local council housing goes to migrants and refugees?" and so on.) Others were more interested in asking open questions that gave people the chance to think things through for themselves, without trying to control what their final opinion might be.

After an afternoon session preparing people for public conversations, we went into the town centre and took it in turns to approach people. I am a middle-aged Asian man and was partnered with a middle-aged white woman called Gill, who I've known a long time. We went up to a middle-aged white man sitting on a bench, and I explained who we were and asked whether he would have a conversation about the referendum and the issues involved. He looked uncomfortable, and made eye contact mainly with Gill, even though I was the one who had approached him. Then, when Gill approached a middle-aged Asian woman, she talked more to me, even though Gill had started the conversation. That woman also said there was nothing much to the referendum debate.

It seemed to me that the white man didn't feel able to speak freely about referendum issues with an Asian man. Similarly, the Asian woman didn't seem to feel completely free to speak to a white person about Brexit, even one as friendly as Gill.

I have no idea what attitudes or opinions those people actually had about the issues, but we learned something important about racial advantage. There is an opportunity now for progressive white people to go beyond their usual networks and build bridges with people who have anti-migrant, Islamophobic and/or racist views. I think this is one of the most important tasks around – one of the biggest nonviolent challenges there is. It means, as the TfC co-founder and US Quaker George Lakey has written, drawing on our empathy with Trump voters – and Leave voters.

An opportunity and a challenge

There is also an opportunity here to stand with people who have, in the words of activist-filmmaker Michael Moore, “felt ignored, left-out, and cheated”. We need to be on their side in the struggle for economic justice, while at the same time separating ourselves from prejudice.

Women of colour in the US have pointed to the difference between ‘calling out’ – publicly criticising and shaming people about their expressions of prejudice – and ‘calling in’ – being in community with people whose attitudes

we disagree with, but whose humanity and decency and intelligence we recognise and acknowledge. The activist Betsy Leondar-Wright did a good interview with me on this for *Peace news*. We need a lot of courage and humility from progressive people, particularly white progressive people, to be willing to form relationships and community that may be awkward and uncomfortable, but that are needed to move us forward.

About Turning the Tide

Training for social action

Turning the Tide offers a range of workshops, courses and resources. All our work is focused on supporting groups at the grassroots to work for nonviolent social change.

Workshops

Turning the Tide offers free training on request; we only ask for a donation for travel expenses.

We can help with:

- planning effective nonviolent campaigns
- making your social change work more sustainable
- tools for better group working, including facilitation skills training.

Resources

Our online toolkit contains resources for running your own training for social action.

Browse the toolkit: turningtide.org.uk/toolkit.

Long term support

We know groups working for social change are doing this work for the long term, and so are we – we've supported some groups for years. Sometimes the need is not easy to pinpoint. We work with groups on every step of their change-making process. Even if you're unsure of the kind of support you need, do get in touch for a chat.

Stay in touch!

Receive updates from us about upcoming courses and public workshops as well as articles about nonviolent social change. Sign up at turningtide.org.uk/updates.

Common dilemmas of nonviolence

In this 'Breaking waves' column, Steve Whiting, TTT Programme Manager, and Kat Barton, TTT trainer, tackle some of the many challenges faced by those engaging in action for social change.

One of the things we've learned from the discussion that emerges when we use the nonviolence spectrum tool (see p7) in TTT workshops is that people have very different understandings



of nonviolence. So while it's possible to point to some core principles of active nonviolence, here we explore some common dilemmas we face in our understanding of it.

Property destruction

Nonviolent actions that have damaged property include: destroying the Berlin Wall (1989), pulling down the fence at Greenham Common nuclear weapons base (1983), disabling a Hawk fighter aircraft bound for the repressive Indonesian government (1985), emptying a nuclear weapons floating laboratory (1999), disabling bombers to prevent them bombing Iraq (2003), and pulling up genetically modified crops in test fields (1999).

Some say: violence to property in the name of protest is still violence, and is unacceptable. How can it be called nonviolence?

Others say: context and motive are all-important. We are talking here about carefully prepared and executed actions that focus on particular property. Shouldn't we ask, "Who was hurt?" What you would do if you heard the cries of a distressed child behind a locked door? Would you break down the door to rescue them?

Anger

Some say: anger is a destructive emotion and does not support nonviolence. Surely the first thing to deal with is the violence in ourselves? How can we be nonviolent people with anger in our hearts? Anger often fuels hatred, and both can lead to destructive action – they encourage defensive or retaliatory behaviour in our opponents, restrict dialogue and obstruct the

way to positive change. Nonviolence requires us to separate the person from their actions, but hatred clouds thinking and makes this difficult.

Others ask: can anger and hatred be separated? Can you be angry at the act without hating the person? Can anger be channelled? Can it be used as a positive form of energy that leads us into creative action? Many activists say that the anger they feel when they see suffering or the natural world dying is directly related to their love and compassion. Their anger is a measure of their love. It's the thing that led them to action in the first place. It powers their continued activism.

Persuasion vs coercion

Some say: nonviolence is about winning the hearts and minds of our opponent – persuading and converting them, not coercing them. How can coercive acts be described as nonviolent? Is there a difference between coercion and violence? Is there even such a concept as nonviolent coercion?

Others say: coercion is just a more assertive form of persuasion. Think of how we bring up children; do we use coercion to stop them doing harm? Do we help force decisions in other parts of our lives? Is pulling someone out of the way to save them from injury a coercive act? Isn't it actually being nonviolent?

When challenging entrenched vested interests, is persuasive argument sufficient even to gain their attention? We think of it as 'speaking truth to power'. What if power already knows the truth? What if power doesn't listen? Will persuasion alone change them? What if the issue is urgent? Are coercive actions such as blockades, disabling equipment and strikes acceptable forms of nonviolent activism?

As these common dilemmas illustrate, commitment to nonviolence is not straightforward. What other dilemmas can you think of?

This article is a shortened version of Steve Whiting's fuller 'Common dilemmas of nonviolence' blog post which forms part of TTT's blog series on nonviolence and social change. Explore other dilemmas at www.turningtide.org.uk.

My activist journey

Activism is a journey and we're all in different places. We invited Clare Bonetree, a TTT trainer and artist, to share her personal experience of it.

I've been listening to a podcast on anarcho-feminism¹. It feels good to go back to basics as I reflect on how the way I intervene in the world has changed. The podcast mentions how



anarcho-feminism has, among its many contributions, critiqued the old macho tendency to give a greater value to high profile, insurrectionary forms of resistance. In this it has forced a reappraisal of other kinds of system change.

This reminded me of the hierarchies within activism. Even now there's an implicit acceptance that the frontline of protest is the most important place to be. The public sphere is often seen as the only space in which change can meaningfully happen – if you're not outdoors, making a show of yourself, you're not part of the solution (and we all know how that slogan finishes). I've been guilty of this myself. I've internalised that hierarchy and expressed scorn towards people – often in the form of sympathy for those who can't get out – without valuing the things they *are* doing. I've distinguished between 'activists' and 'campaigners', and fetishised the former, seeing the latter as a step on the path to 'real activism'. I don't think I ever said any of this out loud but I'm sure it communicated itself. I'm sure I hurt people with this attitude.

The person I hurt most was myself.

I write this on a cold day in late autumn. Another day indoors. I don't go out much between October and March, except to travel between warm, comfortable indoor spaces. Sometimes I don't even manage to do that. Over the last few years my physical limitations have restricted

my choices when it comes to action. For a long time I tried to carry on as 'normally' as possible. That meant taking action (outdoors, public, usually direct) only during certain months of the year. Or taking it only when I felt OK. At first this seemed a reasonable compromise for someone moving into her 40s with two decades of chronic illness behind her (and several more ahead). But as my body became more frail and less reliable, this meant taking less and less action, less and less often. I began to suffer the effects of being trapped in a narrow activist identity, common to anyone who has experienced burnout. I felt like a failure. I felt increasingly separate from other activists, and entered a spiral of increasing isolation. I was in danger of forgetting my sense of joy – the source of my determination to create a new world.

Over the same period I was engaging more seriously with my spiritual practice. At first it was only as a way to manage the pain and find some meaning in it, but I found myself changing more profoundly. Gradually, my grip on self-judgement loosened, and I began to let go of that 'activist' identity. I've become kinder and can let go of those pesky rules about what constitutes 'real' activism. I've learned that I can only be a peacemaker in the world if I am a peacemaker within and for myself.

These days I'm coming to terms with a very new 'normal'. I'm finding quieter, gentler forms of activism that my body will fit into, and for which I have the skills and aptitude. As well as my role as a TTT trainer these include mediation work, setting up a new CND group, and my live art practice, which addresses our connection to the earth and the skills needed for peaceful interaction with others.

As a result, I'm learning to value personal and interpersonal change more deeply. I've begun to integrate the how and the who of being an agent of change in the world. And it's making me a better, more effective activist.

¹ www.crimethinc.com/podcast/26/

Picture credit: Dai Owen, www.dai-owen.co.uk (also p5).

Tool: the nonviolence spectrum

Turning the Tide workshop participants can expect to engage in a range of activities aimed at supporting effective action for nonviolent social change. Here we showcase one of our favourite tools from the TTT trainers' toolkit, which can be found on our website.

Purpose

To explore what we mean by nonviolence and the range of different understandings.

Time

Minimum 30 minutes

Preparation

Review the scenarios below. Make sure you choose the ones that will be most meaningful for the group. You may need to write your own. Prepare two signs, 'Yes' and 'No', and at the beginning of the session put them up on opposite walls.

Scenarios

- A group of campaigners break into the empty office of an arms company at night and trash the computers and office equipment. Is this nonviolent?
- A parent lightly hits a child as a disciplinary method. Is this nonviolent?
- After years of trying to get a response from their MP, a group of local campaigners finally wins an appointment and blockades the room until the MP gives them a commitment to take action on their issue. Is this nonviolent?
- Indian women in Andhra Pradesh campaign to get the sale of alcohol banned. They attack the shops, pour the alcohol into the streets and shave the heads of men found drunk there. In some villages where shops refuse to close, they seize drunken patrons, wrap skirts round them, place them backwards on donkeys and parade them. Is this nonviolent?

You can follow up with the scenario that the state government prohibited the sale of any alcohol on paydays. Does that change anyone's position?

Description

Explain the purpose of the activity and describe how it will work. Indicate that opposite ends of the space represent the strongest views and ask participants to imagine a line between the two. They can place themselves anywhere along the line they feels represents their response to each scenario. Explain that there is no 'right' or 'wrong', just different opinions. You can move your position if you are persuaded by someone's view.

Read out a scenario and ask: "Is this nonviolent?"

Invite everyone to place themselves at a point on the line that is true for them, with "100 per cent yes" at one end and "100 per cent no" at the other.

Ask the person nearest to one end why they've placed themselves there, then someone at the other end, then someone in the middle. If someone moves during the discussion, ask them why. An important part of the activity is listening to one another and trying to understand other perspectives. Try to identify the issues that are dividing the group.

Repeat with other scenarios.

Debrief

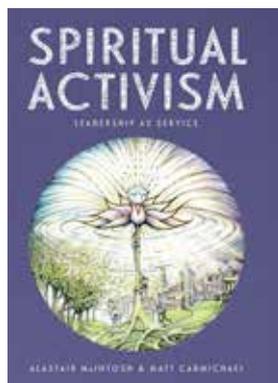
Ask the whole group: How was that? What did you notice?

You could share what you as facilitator noticed about areas of agreement and divergence, for example around context, motive, property damage, humiliation, and effectiveness.

Ask how the group can use what they have for their social change work.

Book review: *Spiritual activism: leadership as service* Alastair McIntosh and Matt Carmichael

This edition's book review is by Bob Banks, TTT trainer



Although only 200 pages long, this is a *big* book. It explores the meaning and place of spirituality in our modern world, and how this can inspire our activism, our politics, and other ways we act in the world.

The strongest aspect is the rich picture it gives of spirituality as the basis of a well-lived life. This is so necessary today, when the dominant ideology holds up material growth, competitive success and individual prosperity as the benchmarks of a good life. This is often not even seen as an ideology but the natural order of things. But, as Robb Jonson sings: “Something still dances, just out of your sight. It’s a voice from the well, it’s a trick of the light. It’s something like water you hold in your hand.”

The book articulates this “voice from the well” by being sparkling, inspiring and nourishing. In fact it articulates many voices. It also makes a vigorous case that spirituality is not only defensible, but essential.

The authors suggest that the “modern utilitarian worldview crushes alternative representations of reality... If nothing is sacred, nothing is safe from the mechanisers of life and the calculators of profit; and until we find ways to re-sacralize our world appropriately, there can be no end to the carnage.” To counter this, they explore riches from the world’s spiritual traditions. For example, the concept of eternity as a vital part of our right understanding of our condition – “no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end” (*Bhagavad Gita*) – sitting beyond, and providing a grounding for, our mundane experience.

The book also discusses the mystical experience, breathing life into our being and our actions. It cites George Fox, “everything was new. And the

whole creation gave off another smell to what I knew before, beyond what I could ever express in words. I knew nothing but purity and innocence and rightness.”

On building our future, the authors quote Martin Luther King: “The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community... It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age.” This “redemption” can be pre-figured in our activism, as Colin McLeod emphatically said of the Pollock Free State, protesting against the building of the M77, “This place is a fuckin’ redemption centre”.

All this leads to connection and deeper power. Desmond Tutu is quoted on the African principle of ubuntu: “This means a person is generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. It means my humanity is inextricably bound up in theirs. It is not ‘I think therefore I am.’ It says rather: ‘I am human because I belong.’ I participate, I share. I ... belong to a greater whole, and am diminished when others are tortured or oppressed.” The authors also explore several aspects of spiritual power – the mystic, the prophet, the shaman, and the bard. They give us courage to be out-and-proud about the validity of our spiritual power.

Along the journey, the book brings in neuroscience, psychoanalysis, social psychology, theology, nonviolence, the wisdom of myths, and much more. It explores spirituality’s dark side and the roots of ‘cults’, sustaining activism and avoiding burnout, eldership, alchemy, the Quaker practice of discernment, erotic activism, redemption, and so on. Inevitably, with such a whistle-stop tour, it can feel superficial at times but actually the book keeps spinning along, with fresh ideas flying out all the time. In any case, it provides a fertile mass of ideas to stimulate discussion, to inspire, and to nourish.

Turning the Tide is a programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness. It aims to promote the understanding and use of nonviolence to bring about positive social change. To find out more, and request a workshop, visit the website (turningtide.org.uk or www.quaker.org.uk/our-work), call 020 7663 1064/1061 or email turningtide@quaker.org.uk. Views expressed in *Making waves* or any leaflets enclosed are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by Turning the Tide, Quaker Peace & Social Witness or Britain Yearly Meeting. This issue was edited by Kat Barton.

Turning the Tide, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Large print version available on request.