



The Search for a Nonviolent Future: A Promise of Peace for Ourselves, Our Families, and Our World

Michael N. Nagler , Arun Gandhi (Foreword by)

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Is There No Other Way? is the mature work of one of the world's most widely respected peace scholars and activists. Beginning with the achievements of Mahatma Gandhi, and following the legacy of nonviolence through the struggles against Nazism in Europe, racism in America, oppression in China and Latin America, and ethnic conflicts in Africa and Bosnia, Nagler unveils a hidden history. Nonviolence, he proposes, has proven its power against arms and social injustice wherever it has been correctly understood and applied.

Nagler's approach is not only historical, but also spiritual. He argues, drawing upon the experience of Gandhi and other activists, that the shift to nonviolence begins within the individual, through the reshaping and re-visioning of how one understands the world. He then shows how from changes in the individual, changes in the larger community follow.

Is There No Other Way? is a provocative and emotionally powerful document that challenges readers' assumptions about the workings of power in their homes and communities, as well as the larger political arena.

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Michael says

I read the previous version of this book Is There No Other Way?: The Search for a Nonviolent Future and thought that the second edition would be different. It's not. Great book, don't get me wrong, but I already read it.

Kathleen Reilly says

Used a lot of anecdotal episodes that I felt weren't enough to prove his points. Some of his assumptions about human nature seemed more like wishful thinking, but he did make some interesting points and gave some insight in how in incorporate non-violence into our daily lives.

Terri says

A terrific book! If you're new to nonviolence or an expert, this book will open even new paths of thought on the subject and show practical ways to begin implementing it in our daily lives. This is complemented by Professor Nagler's webcast courses from UC Berkley, available at http://www.mettacenter.org/?page_id=229

Kathleen says

Amazing book about the power of nonviolence.

Catherine Griwkowsky says

Everyone on the Earth should read this book.

Michael Nagler gives an in-depth look at the history, principles, methods and future of nonviolence.

The book looks at several examples where nonviolence has worked in the past from Gandhi's satyagraha and

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to every day smaller-scale uses of soul force.

Nagler outlines why nonviolence is more effective. In fact, it's the only way forward!

There are high-level explanations on the theory of nonviolence as well as practical ways to put it into action.

This book offers a life-changing, world-changing beacon of hope.

Tom Emanuel says

Michael Nagler provides a thoughtful, conversational introduction to nonviolence, incorporating the better-known (although still often misunderstood) concept of nonviolent resistance into a holistic, ethical worldview grounded in the Hindu virtue of ahimsa. The book is filled with stirring examples of nonviolence in action, ranging from the public and well-known (Gandhi's Indian freedom struggle, the People Power Revolution in the Philippines) to the personal and all-but-unheard-of (largely culled from the author's personal correspondence with peacemakers the world over). Nagler's reflections are usually spot-on, even if he overstates his case from time to time. In particular he makes it clear that nonviolence, far from being the passive opposite of active violence, is itself profoundly active and constructive. Recommended.

Kevin says

Excellent book. Strongly recommended for everyone.

Chenoa Siegenthaler says

I would give this book ten stars if I could. It presents everything I could ask for from a book on this subject - theory, history, inspiring anecdotes, and, most rare, practical ways that you and I can apply these things in our own lives.

Robert Fischer says

This book gets into nonviolence as a principle of organizing life. The term "nonviolence" here is somewhat misleading, because the book describes a kind of overall orientation/habitation towards peace much more than any particular stance regarding inflicting violence on others. It's a superb book because it speaks to the science (of all stripes), the politics, and the lifestyle: it's really a broad vision of the future, but with very particular suggestions on how to begin to shape yourself towards this goal.

Mike Radice says

I want to meet this person. This is the clearest voice I've read/heard/encountered about how violence is developed, sustained, and how it can be turned into nonviolence using peaceful means. The book was brilliant.

[illegible][illegible]

Michael Nagler's "The Search for a Nonviolent Future" is at times more stuffed with rhetoric or preachiness than it is intellectually rigorous, and it focuses a bit too much on the lives of MLK and Gandhi (still noteworthy, but occasionally overworn and possibly overpolished examples). Nevertheless, Nagler's book is a comforting descent from the "ivory tower" of academia," illuminating the lost history and present of nonviolent action, emphasizing that nonviolence is far from naive passivity but, if anything, is something radical and bold -- in Gandhi's words, "something for the brave, the courageous." Although Nagler might not fully illustrate a solid and explicitly practical picture of how nonviolence can be "systematized" at the large scale -- of a society based exclusively on nonviolence -- he is able to point (with reference to Arendt) to the modern state's disregard for the sanctity of human life, for even nature itself. The solution is far more complex than anyone today can probably imagine, but ultimately the sheer power of Nagler's many anecdotes spanning histories, cultures, politics, and religions is what makes the book's moral drive for social justice and spirituality shine. There are varieties of power other than the threat of violence, Nagler argues, and we ought to unravel and explore their potential rather than fall trap to a jaded point of view which only perpetrates a downward spiral of "violence begets violence." 3.5 stars.

I have read this three times now, and learn something more every time, something about myself, some way to feel better about myself and this life, what we do and why, how we can change and help. And hope. It doesn't have all the answers, although he does attempt a few, but it holds a lot of questions and reasons to consider what we do and why, and where we might want to go from here.

This book is the author's attempt to prove that nonviolence is effective and necessary. Unfortunately, I found

it really hard to read; it was hard to stay engaged and keep plowing through it. I appreciated his concrete, specific suggestions at the end for how to actualize nonviolence: "Use alternative media (and commercial media only with extreme care); Take care of yourself spiritually; Relate kindly and personally to others; Learn nonviolence; Build peace." (p 294) Seems like good principles to live by. I also enjoyed the exploration of Gandhi's Constructive Programme (Chapter 6), the positive, constructive side of nonviolence (as opposed to noncooperation). But in general, I don't think reading this would turn a hawk into a dove, which seems to be what he's setting out to attempt. At any rate, here's some thoughts worth remembering:

--"anything we do to reduce violence anywhere will do something toward reducing violence everywhere." (p 11)

--"What is the use of calling violence an unnecessary evil, which it is, when no one can relate to the term 'evil' except as a technical term in some people's religious vocabulary?" (p 37)

--Quote from Gandhi: "Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by fear of punishment, and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment." (p 53)

--"one-pointed attention is the psychological key to nonviolence" (p 80); he goes on to refer to William James' unknowing description of the art of meditation: "The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character and will." (p 81)

--"if a people can steadfastly discriminate between a group of people and their agenda--between the sinners and the sin--resolutely resisting the latter while just as resolutely acknowledging the humanity of the former, they develop an almost irresistible force." (p 119)

--"In Gandhian economics, there is a qualitative difference between the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, and anything less essential. Everyone has a right to those three basic needs. If they are not met--for everyone--a society has failed." (p 169)

--"Gandhi had long ago learned the lesson of 'swadeshi,' a prominent guiding principle in both the constructive and obstructive modes of nonviolence. It states that by working in your own sphere of influence you create a resonance in widening circles, but if you overextend yourself, if you try to do everything too soon, you lose power there and here." (p 184-5)

--"when a system is based on threat power, it cannot but reduce the human beings who move within its circle to creatures of threat power." (p 246)
