

Nonviolence Training: Nonviolent Action Preparation

4 – 5 + hour agenda

This training session is for people considering engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience action. The agenda includes exploring what is meant by nonviolent action, an overview of the scenarios and the action structure, preparing to maintain a commitment to nonviolence, understanding your rights and the potential consequences of nonviolent civil disobedience, including the arrest process.

This agenda does not have a separate section on oppression. Trainers should include an awareness of how oppressive behavior – on the part of the police and activists – can be dealt with throughout the training. Brainstorm what oppression looks like in groups (prompt people to think of what they witnessed or felt oppression). Discuss how to overcome oppression in the group process. Do hassle lines, brainstorm or discussion around issues of oppression related to the action being prepared for, discuss potential occurrences or activities to look out for and how to deal with them. To deal with this properly, you will need to make the time either in the sections or in a section of its own.

This agenda assumes the participants are familiar with the issues. The trainer needs to work with the organizers to determine if more time should be spent on developing the scenario, understanding the action structure and group process as well as the legal situation.

Even though people often request short trainings, it is extremely difficult to prepare for nonviolent civil disobedience in less than 4 hour, and that assumes they will get some of the information they need before or after the training. To practice nonviolence in an action it is wise to *practice nonviolence in a training*. If people are unfamiliar with the action structure and decision-making process or the legal system, it takes time to understand it and consider options. While this agenda can be done in as little as 4 hours, it is written in the hopes people will commit to the longer option of 5 hours or more. If possible, reading materials in advance will help with preparation, and give everyone an opportunity to go deeper during the training.

Most of the links to materials and exercises are from War Resisters' International's [Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns](http://wri-irg.org/pubs/NonviolenceHandbook) <http://wri-irg.org/pubs/NonviolenceHandbook> (2009). Most of the resources are also available as a PDF for easy handouts. There are also several sections that help nonviolence trainers/facilitators prepare. In particular note “Nonviolence Training” in the Introduction, the Tasks and Tools for Organizing and Facilitating section and the Exercises.

The Handbook is in Spanish at www.wri-irg.org/pubs/ManualNoviolencia.

You can also purchase both the Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns and the Handbook for Nonviolent Action from War Resisters League at:

<https://www.warresisters.org/category/catalog/handbooks-and-organizing-guides>

AGENDA for Facilitators

5 Introduction – Welcome, introduce trainers and goal of training. Ask if there are any police in attendance would they please identify themselves. Be clear to the group that we are nonviolent and have nothing to hide, but do not welcome informants or provocateurs.

10 Agenda review (write up the agenda items that are in bold) **and creation of group process agreements** which should be made by the group (i.e. step up/ step back; listen; be succinct when speaking). The facilitator may want to ask for a show of hands to get a sense of the group: who is attending a training for the first time, has participated in a large demonstration/nonviolent actions, etc. Make it clear in asking that there is no hierarchy, we are all in this together.

15 Group introductions – Facilitator asks people to: *pair with someone you don't know, answering "Why am I here/what I hope to learn at this training/what do I want to prepare for?" This is a listening exercise, take turns telling about yourself and listening, don't engage in a conversation.* Tell them to listen to each other for 2 minutes, then switch (facilitator should keep time).

If there are under 20 participants, go around so the facilitators can hear what they hope to learn (option, have people introduce what their partner said.) If it is a large group, have five pairs/10 people introduce their partner to the others in 30 seconds.

Or if this is a training for an affinity group who already know each other you might want to have them ask other questions such as "what are you most excited about/most fear in doing this action?"

20 Scenario overview – Facilitator asks the participants: "Do you think *the message and goal of the action is clear? Is there information you need to know for this preparation? Are there back-up plans?*"

OR Perhaps the groups needs to spend time deciding which action they wish to engage in, which will take additional time. (Cross-spectrum exercise below is a helpful process for developing a scenario.)

10 Nonviolence Guidelines – *Nonviolence guidelines or agreements are not a definition of nonviolence but an agreement made by those participating in this action for tactical and safety reasons.* Have everyone read the nonviolence guidelines together, followed by questions and comments. Ask if everyone can agree.

History and examples of nonviolence guidelines, including the SOAW guidelines, are at end of: <http://wri-irg.org/node/6185>

20 Hassle Lines - See <http://wri-irg.org/node/5217> for a description and examples of roles. Role play at least 2 situations, escalating the "hassle". In the debriefing ask how their behavior related to the nonviolence guidelines.

20 - 50 What is nonviolence action? Choose one or both of these exercises for the group to explore and deepen their understanding of nonviolent action.

(20) Brainstorm – <http://wri-irg.org/node/5220> Do two brainstorms side by side: *what is nonviolence, what is violence?* Make sure that key elements are listed and that some are on both lists (i.e. power, anger), prompt discussion on the differences.

(20 – 30) Cross spectrum– <http://wri-irg.org/node/5233> A short version of this exercise should give an opportunity for participants to determine what is effective nonviolent action. This can also be used to develop a nonviolent action scenario, which may need a full 30 minutes.)

15 Deconstruct Martin Luther King, Jr quote from “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” as it relates to this action. Write this quote on a wall chart: *“Nonviolent direct action seeks to create a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to so dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.”* Ask the group to identify the crisis, the creative tension, the community, and how they can dramatize the issue they are addressing.

15 Break

5 – 10 Game or song

30 – 40 Action Structure, Affinity groups and quick decision-making The content of this section depends on the action structure, if there are affinity groups and what the decision-making process is. You will need more time if this is new information for the participants. It is best to have handouts (available below or from the organizers). Practice is important. For example a quick-decision role play: In affinity groups discuss what you would do when the police told you you can't go any further, or if you do not disburse you will be arrested, or another possible scenario.

Affinity groups, group process, decision-making:

<http://nonviolencetraining.org/>

http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=644#6

<http://wri-irg.org/node/5139>

30 – 45 Legal Process The content and length of this section depends on several things: is there a separate legal briefing, what is the risk factor of the action, is there a call for bail solidarity? Make sure people understand the legal system, go through the Legal System Flowchart http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=644#8, making sure people understand their options. This is a good time for people to share short stories of options they have taken. If there is not a separate legal briefing for the action, a description of the possible charges and consequences is needed. Distribute Know Your Rights cards, (<http://www.aclu.org/print/drug-law-reform-immigrants-rights-racial-justice/know-your-rights-what-do-if-you> includes a downloadable card that is helpful and can be used to create role plays for possible situations. Let people know if there are Legal Observers in bright green caps. If there is time, role play the arrest process and processing.

30 Scenario Role Plays – <http://wri-irg.org/node/5234> Make sure there is time to give people an opportunity to practice several possible situations they may face such as dealing with a

police blockade, a provocateur encouraging people to rush a police line, dealing with counter-demonstrators or people in your affinity group who want to violate the nonviolence guidelines.

10 Carry it on In pairs, ask each person to share what they most want to be mindful of during the nonviolent action, what will ground them if they feel overwhelmed by the emotions of the day. If there is more time, people can do this in their affinity groups, if less time encourage them to do it later in affinity groups, although it may stick with them more if they make the commitment at the training.

10 Evaluation and next steps- What went well, What could have been better?
Are we clear about next steps (meeting schedule, affinity group development, signs and props we need to bring, travel plans, etc.)?