



NONVIOLENT ACTION TRAINERS NETWORK

TRAINER RESEARCH SUMMARY

AUGUST 2025

A note from the organizing team

DEDICATION

We dedicate this report to the nonviolent action trainers and educators who shared their insights and experience in surveys and interviews for the 2025 Nonviolent Action Trainers Research project. This research follows up a 2018 national trainers gathering held in California, and was conducted as a service to all nonviolent action trainers and supporters of training. You commit your life experience, passion, skills, volunteer time, and modest pay to share the skills of nonviolent action.

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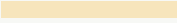
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project examined the state of nonviolent action training in the United States in 2024-early 2025, focusing on how, when, and why action trainings are conducted; the resources required; and the support mechanisms for trainer development. The study employed three methods: online searches for training opportunities in fall of 2024, an anonymous long-form survey in the winter of 2024, and interviews with 20 experienced trainers in the spring of 2025.

Internet Research

The initial phase of this research involved internet/desk-based inquiry to understand the landscape of nonviolent action training in the United States, focusing on the accessibility, distribution, and characteristics of available offerings. Using a wide range of search terms related to nonviolent action, the team aimed to catalog training opportunities by variables such as cost, format, and thematic focus. However, this effort revealed significant limitations: many websites lacked current information, and relevant content was often fragmented or buried under inconsistent terminology. A supplementary analysis of Google search trends indicated spikes in public interest around major protest events, particularly in mid-2020 and early 2025, but also highlighted the challenges the public faces in locating training opportunities.

These findings suggest a mismatch between public interest in nonviolent action and the accessibility of training information online. The fragmentation of terminology and absence of centralized, up-to-date resources limits visibility and access, especially as learning habits shift toward short-form video and digital content. This informed the next phase of the research: a survey designed to capture the lived realities and needs of trainers more directly.



Survey

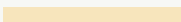
Over 70 trainers participated in the nonviolent action training survey, which sought to learn what training influenced those participants to become a trainer, what type of training they now do, and support mechanisms for their work. Participants varied in age and geographic region, but a majority of respondents were located in Massachusetts and California, and were between the ages of 25-54.

In-person training emerged as the most influential format in shaping survey participants' development as trainers, with live, instructor-led sessions proving significantly more impactful than asynchronous formats. The survey respondents often train within the same areas of interest that brought them to training. For instance, if someone received training while participating in an action geared towards social justice, they now train in that same topic. Trainings they offer are typically localized, with both trainers and participants operating within the same region, reinforcing a regional orientation in nonviolent action ecosystems.

Many respondents indicated a desire to provide longer format training, but often trainers are asked to provide trainings that are short or not linked to a particular campaign. This is a frustration for trainers who are looking to meet the current increased demand for training, and be strategic about their time and efforts. Trainer compensation remains inconsistent and often inadequate, with many respondents uncertain or hesitant to assert rates for their training or express "industry standards."

Interviews

Interviews revealed that sustained engagement in nonviolent action is rooted in strong community relationships based on shared values. Support strategies include wellness programming, intergenerational mentorship, and community-building initiatives.



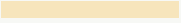
Trainers often emerge from personal experiences with injustice, engagement in social change education, or movement spaces, developing their skills through varied learning modalities and mentorship. Effective training ecosystems appear to be linked to long standing institutions like faith-based communities, schools, peace and justice organizations, and/or shared localized experiences.

Current challenges include political repression, burnout, and structural inequities. Interviewees recommended current training should strategically shift toward decentralized, inclusive organizing, pragmatic noncompliance tactics, and community safety. Trainers expressed the need to learn from past movement building and center women of color who lead these efforts, while also determining ways to better protect them.

Experiential, context-specific, trauma-informed, and embodied nonviolent action training methods delivered through longer in-person formats are most effective for building trust and resilience. Linking trainings to real-world campaigns enhances relevance and impact. Virtual formats can increase reach yet are limited in fostering deep relational learning, still are regarded as helpful when aiding accessibility.

For trainers, community is synonymous with nonviolent action training. Community is the currency of both training and organizing. While the creators of this study sought to understand how and where funding is needed, it became apparent that those who train will continue to train either because they are directly impacted or because they view it as essential to their life's work... navigating the tension between deep commitment and financial sustainability.

Interviewees asked for stronger social, emotional and legal support systems, and practical administrative and marketing support. Ultimately, nonviolent action trainers asked for improved coordination and support for a trainer community, shared strategic clarity, and administrative support to serve as a broad infrastructure that supports them and their work.



Implications for future exploration

Ideas for future work on the subject are: to develop or strengthen existing mentorship models, support the field through promotion efforts to create a broader public understanding of nonviolent action and nonviolent action training, support existing or new networks administratively, host trainer events, dive deeper into how young people are engaging with nonviolent action learning and development, and support organizations that serve as incubators and sustainers for nonviolent action trainers. Below is a more in depth look at each phase of the effort.

PART ONE:INTERNET/DESK RESEARCH

The initial phase of this inquiry involved desk research aimed at gaining insight into the landscape of nonviolent action training in the United States. This effort had two primary objectives: first, to establish a baseline understanding of the distribution and accessibility of such trainings; and second, to compile an inventory of available offerings. This hope was to create an inventory of captured variables such as cost, mode of delivery (in-person, virtual, hybrid), and thematic focus.

To identify relevant trainings, a set of search terms was employed, including: *nonviolent action, civil resistance, direct action, nonviolent resistance, people power, positive action, satyagraha, and resistance movement. Supplementary searches also included combinations such as noncooperation training, nonviolence training, civil resistance training, and Kingian nonviolence training.*

However, this approach yielded limited results. Many websites lacked detailed information or featured outdated contact data, constraining the ability to gather information. In response, the research pivoted to an examination of Google search trends for those terms. While several terms were too infrequently searched to yield meaningful data, the analysis of related search activity provided preliminary insight into broader public interest and terminology usage within the field.

Search Term	Peak Period	Recent Trend (2025)	Notable Events Influencing Trend
Nonviolent Action	Mid-2020	Slight increase	George Floyd protests; 50501 movement
Civil Resistance	Mid-2020	Resurgence	2020 protests; early 2025 activism
Direct Action	Mid-2020	Spike	Civil disobedience campaigns; policy opposition
Nonviolent Resistance	Mid-2020	Minor increase	Continued advocacy efforts
People Power	Mid-2020	Slight increase	Grassroots mobilizations
Social Justice Training	Mid-2020	Renewed interest	DEI initiatives; response to political developments

Insights

- The murder of George Floyd in 2020 served as a catalyst for heightened interest in nonviolent protest-related terms.
- While interest in these terms declined after 2020, early 2025 has seen a resurgence, likely influenced by new protest movements and political shifts.
- Current political climate and nationwide protests in early 2025 have contributed to renewed attention to civil resistance and direct action

The list of trainings seemed small in relation to how many trainers responded to the survey and the presence of nonviolent action movements indicated in subsequent portions of our process.

It seems, from this initial inspection, that the public is interested in finding out more about training and/or organizing, but doesn't have the language to search for the "proper" terms or access to clear and directive information online, where a majority of people are accessing information. Similarly, when there are web pages, they often use differing vocabulary to reference similar ideas or resources, and offer resources like books, though we observe that more varieties of resources are becoming posted online in mid-2025. As more media is created as short form videos, it warrants a look at how accessible these resources will be to shifting ways of learning and information consumption. This initial search led to more questions than answers, which formed the basis for the survey.

PART 2: SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey was distributed via email to over 100 individuals and organizations, including those identified by the project's planning team as well as additional training organizations identified during the prior phase of the project. The survey was administered using the SurveyMonkey platform. A total of 71 responses were collected, with the majority of respondents

between the ages of 25 and 54. Notably, 15% of respondents identified as non-cisgender—a proportion significantly higher than the estimated 1.6% (Brown, 2022) reported in the general U.S. population, although this comparison does not account for age distribution. While most respondents resided in California or Massachusetts, international responses were also recorded, including participants from Belgium, Canada, Cameroon, Palestine, and the United Kingdom. Below are the high level findings of the survey questions and an overview of the responses.

Survey Section 1

What training did respondents receive?

We are hoping to understand more about all the types of training that you have taken part in. What methods of training have you experienced?

The highest level of training participation reported by respondents was in-person, with 95% attending such sessions. Additionally, 73% engaged in in-person “on the job” training. These in-person workshops or training sessions were characterized by clearly defined goals and objectives.

Training that I have received that I feel contributed to my ability to become a nonviolent action trainer consisted of the following lengths.

The duration of training received by respondents, which contributed to their capacity to become trainers, was predominantly within the 4–8 hour range (60%), closely followed by the 2–4 hour range (56.67%). Notably, there was a substantial increase in training time at durations exceeding 36 hours (55%). This pattern suggests that training programs lasting 8–12, 12–16, or 16–36 hours were either less commonly taken, unavailable to be taken, or considered less impactful compared to those within the 2–4, 4–8, and over 36-hour categories.

We understand that you have probably taken part in many different trainings and learned from many materials, some online, some in person, some good, and some probably leaving things to be desired. However, we are curious about the ones that you consider to be the best and most impactful, the ones that made you want to become a trainer. Think back to the top three trainings that stick out in your mind.

The majority of respondents reported that the most effective and impactful trainings, which inspired their pursuit of trainer roles, were those led by instructors who explicitly communicated session objectives, regardless of whether the format was virtual or in-person (71%). This outcome highlights the critical importance of trainer presence during instructional sessions. Nevertheless, desk research revealed a substantial number of asynchronous training formats, enabling participants to engage with the content autonomously, without the need for direct instructor facilitation.

In your experience of receiving training, how true is this statement? There was an opportunity to reflect on what worked/didn't work/get your questions answered, and internalize the concepts?

Seventy-seven percent of respondents affirmed this experience. In general, training participants were provided with opportunities to reflect, internalize the material, and have their questions addressed. This suggests that trainers are created by other trainers, a virtuous cycle.

If the training(s) you participated in were geared toward a specific cause, please indicate below.

The largest causes specified were Social justice (70%), Racial justice (63%) and Anti-war (62%) followed by peace, climate, community defense, environmental, immigration, anti imperialism, anti capitalism, violent conflict, labor, and land back. There were 16 additional causes identified within the "other" category.



If the training(s) you participated in were geared toward a specific skill, please indicate below.

A majority of participants reported engagement in civil disobedience preparation activities (93%) and role-playing exercises (86%). Additionally, between 67% and 68% of respondents indicated participation in training focused on action guidelines, decision-making processes, and power dynamics. Furthermore, respondents identified 38 additional topics beyond those specified, with some overlap observed among these categories.

Please describe what leads you to seek out, discover, or take a training?

A total of 53 respondents answered this question. The most frequently reported motivation was the pursuit of acquiring new skills or enhancing existing ones. The second most common reason cited was preparation for a specific or anticipated need for action. The subsequent reported motivation involved participating in and supporting the needs of one's community.

Survey Section 2

What types of training do our respondents provide?

If you do in person trainings/workshops where are you most likely to do them?

Participants were presented with three response options: (1) conducting trainings within their immediate community or state, (2) dividing their time equally between traveling to provide trainings and trainings within their community or state, and (3) predominantly traveling outside their immediate community or state to deliver trainings or workshops. The majority of respondents indicated that they primarily conduct trainings within their immediate community or state.

If you do live virtual trainings/workshops do your attendees tend to be from your state or community or outside of your state or community?

Participants were presented with three options regarding the location of their training activities: (1) conducting trainings within their immediate community or state, (2) splitting their time equally between traveling to deliver trainings and training within their community or state, and (3) predominantly traveling outside their immediate community or state to provide trainings or workshops. Consistent with previous findings, the majority of respondents reported conducting virtual trainings primarily within their immediate community or state.

How true is this statement, I incorporate and utilize the training I received as a participant taking workshops in my work as a trainer.

Seventy-nine percent of survey participants reported a likelihood of incorporating elements of the trainings they have attended into the trainings they subsequently deliver. This finding suggests a cross-pollination of training designs, delivery approaches, materials, and methodologies.

We understand you most likely offer several avenues for your training. Please indicate if you or the organizations you work with offer any of the services below.

In-person meetings are the most frequently conducted format, with 85% of respondents delivering training that include formal objectives for the session. Additionally, 50% of participants offer live virtual training with an instructor at a scheduled time, also incorporating defined goals. Hybrid training, which combine in-person and virtual formats, are provided by 30% of respondents. Notably, 20% of participants report utilizing all of these training modalities.

If the training(s) you provide are geared toward a specific cause, please indicate below by checking all that apply.

Survey respondents identified a range of focal issues addressed in their work or training. The most frequently cited topics included social justice (72%), racial justice (56%), and peace (54%). Climate-related concerns were reported by 50% of participants, followed closely by anti-war issues (48%) and community defense (42%). An equal proportion (42%) noted involvement in other unspecified topics. Environmental issues were identified by 36% of respondents, while immigration and violent conflict were each reported by 28%.

Do you currently provide trainer for trainers (T4T) education?

A comparable proportion of trainers reported providing Training for Trainers (T4T) workshops or educational sessions (47%), while 52% indicated that they do not offer such training.

Survey Section 3

Trainers relationship to compensation

I have supported training through...

The majority of respondents reported committing their time (96.23%) and labor, which includes both the development and delivery of training (96.23%). Nearly half of the participants (47.17%) indicated financial contributions as part of their commitment. Additionally, a smaller proportion (13.21%) specified other forms of commitment beyond those listed. Time and labor are the way most trainers support training efforts.

How true is this statement (1 being the least true and 4 being the most true), I or my organization is adequately compensated for my or my organizations delivery of nonviolent action training.

Respondents' replies varied greatly, without a general consensus with an average of the level of truth being 2.3 on the scale, almost a neutral overall response. Trainers do not feel they or their organization are compensated adequately for their delivery of nonviolent action training, but do not feel overwhelmingly undercompensated.

If you charge per training, what would you say would be the amount of money on average needed to sustain your training efforts per training? Please enter a dollar amount.

There appears to be no standardized approach or consensus regarding fee structures. Responses varied, with many participants indicating that fees depend on specific circumstances, while others reported not charging at all. Among those who provided fee information, amounts ranged widely from \$500 to \$10,000, with a notable concentration between \$1,500 and \$3,000.

It is important to note that over half of the participants chose to skip this question, marking the onset of lower response rates for items related to costs and compensation.



If you charge per hour, what would you say would be the amount of money on average needed to sustain your training efforts per hour? Please enter a dollar amount.

There appears to be no standardized or widely agreed-upon practice among respondents regarding compensation, with many indicating that they do not charge fees, while others report charging rates ranging from \$50 to \$300 per hour.

What would you say would be the amount of money on average needed to sustain your training efforts per year? Please enter a dollar amount.

Just 28 people responded to this question and there were a wide range of answers. The ones that responded stated between 25-50k annually for part time work.

Survey Section 4

Trainers and their resources

What resources do you need besides money to enable or support your training work?

More than half of respondents identified resources as the most significant need, encompassing time, materials, financial compensation, and venues for delivering training. The second most frequently cited need was community, reported by 44% of participants, which includes partnerships with co-trainers. The third most commonly identified category was logistical support, encompassing materials provision, marketing, and assistance with setup.



What curriculum/materials do you use in your training work? (IE Beautiful Trouble Handbook, PowerPoints, lists, articles, etc.)

Many responses were collected, most stated similar information as listed in the questions, while others listed specific resources and materials. You can find the full list of responses in Appendix A

What has been the largest factor(s) in your ability and/or motivation to continue providing nonviolent action training?

The short-answer response format elicited a range of open-ended answers, which predominantly aligned with four categories: (1) meeting a need (60%), (2) connection to a larger movement or calling (26%), (3) resources (22%), and (4) personal development (18%). The primary motivating factor for trainers was identified as addressing an existing or existential need, often one that links the individual to broader societal or personal values. A smaller subset of respondents emphasized logistical or resource-related challenges, such as time, financial constraints, and capacity, as significant influences on their ability or motivation to continue training. Others framed their ongoing involvement in training as part of their personal growth trajectory or legacy.

Please share any additional resources or situations that you feel positively contribute to your ability to conduct nonviolent action training.

A total of 33 participants responded to this question, representing a slightly lower response rate compared to other items. Among these respondents, 66% reported that having a supportive relationship positively influenced their capacity to conduct training. Such supportive relationships included co-trainers, spouses, communities of trainers, and spaces fostering connection. Additionally, 15% of participants identified supplementary skill sets or perspectives that enhanced their training ability, including experiences with adverse realities in their daily lives and training in related fields, skill sets, techniques, or strategies.

Please share any insights you may have on how to best work with other trainers.

Seventy-six percent of respondents identified the most critical aspect of collaborating with other trainers as the shared allocation of time for planning and processing. Various methods to fulfill this need were articulated, including creating spaces to build relationships and trust, collaboratively defining roles and strategies, and identifying complementary skill sets. Additionally, 15% of participants emphasized that diversity in experiences and skill sets contributes positively to co-trainer relationships. It is noteworthy that nonviolent action trainers express a preference for working in teams and conducting trainings in person.

Survey Section 5

Barriers and concerns for the field

The biggest barrier(s) I have to providing nonviolent action training is/are...

This question produced some unanticipated findings. While resource-related constraints were cited by 32% of respondents, as expected, a notable theme emerged regarding a misalignment between the types of training that trainers seek to offer and those that are institutionally supported—whether through organizations, movements, or funding sources. This discrepancy, identified by 41% of respondents, reflects an imbalance between the supply of available trainers and the specific needs of communities.

These imbalances take place in multiple directions depending on the context. Some general combinations include:

- Funding and demand might be in place for a one day nonviolent action training, but the trainer doesn't feel that those trainings are a valuable use of time as they often lack application and therefore efficacy.
- An organization is willing to support training and community building for under-represented and disproportionately impacted communities, only to abandon the group during pivotal or controversial moments.
- Not having enough engaged and interested participants to provide training.
- Having interest, but no way to apply and link it to a strategic movement.
- Not having enough time or funding to meet a growing need.

From your experience, what would you say is your primary concern for the field currently?

- **Strategic Concerns:** Fifty-six percent of respondents expressed concerns related to strategic challenges within the field of nonviolent action. A central theme was the difficulty of achieving coordination and alignment on shared priorities and methodologies that would yield lasting impact. Respondents called for either enhanced national collaboration or a deliberate shift toward more decentralized organizing models. Additionally, several participants noted widespread public and practitioner misunderstandings regarding the strategic purposes of nonviolence, alongside concerns about recent media portrayals that have contributed to the discrediting of the field. Respondents also raised questions about how to effectively manage the growing backlash and incidents of physical violence encountered in response to nonviolent action.
- **Increasing Demand:** Twenty percent of respondents identified concerns related to meeting the increasing demand for training, particularly in the communities and geographic areas where it is most urgently needed. These concerns reflect challenges in scaling training efforts to align with the evolving needs of diverse populations engaged in nonviolent action.
- **Diversity:** Fifteen percent of respondents stated a lack of diversity as the largest barrier to nonviolent action training. They specifically emphasized the need to increase diversity among practitioners, calling for greater inclusion of younger individuals and those from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.
- **Lack of training:** An additional 15% identified a lack of sufficient training as a pressing issue, noting the importance of preparing individuals to engage in nonviolent action through holistic, strategic, and sustained approaches. Respondents stressed the limitations of brief, one-off sessions and advocated for more in-depth, in-person, and collaborative training formats to build lasting capacity.

Survey Section 6

Trainer Resilience

What has contributed to my ability or inability to stay consistently engaged and resilient?

A substantial majority of respondents (60%) attributed their sustained engagement and resilience to a sense of community, whether through involvement in social movements, faith-based groups, or networks of fellow trainers. Additionally, factors such as access to resources—particularly funding—and the ability to maintain balance between professional and personal responsibilities were also identified as influential in supporting continued participation.

I do my best work when providing nonviolent action training when...

Respondents identified several key conditions that support their most effective work as trainers. Over half (51%) indicated that they perform best when working as part of a diverse team. Additionally, 28% reported increased effectiveness when trainings are connected to a specific movement or intended outcome, while 23% emphasized the importance of participant receptivity and engagement. Furthermore, 20% of respondents noted that having sufficient time to prepare with co-facilitators and to research participant backgrounds and desired outcomes contributes significantly to the quality of their facilitation.

If I had a wish related to providing and sustaining nonviolent action training it would be...

Many respondents expressed a desire to convene not only for the purpose of collaborating on a shared vision but also to cultivate a sense of community. Participants also offered a range of suggestions for advancing the field, including increasing access to funding, fostering greater interest in training, and developing centralized databases and educational hubs to support knowledge sharing and coordination.

Survey Takeaways

- **Training Formats and Influences:** In-person training emerged as the most influential format in shaping participants' ability to become trainers. This influence stems from both formal instruction and informal, "on-the-job" learning experiences. Respondents overwhelmingly reported that trainings led by a live instructor, whether in-person or virtual, were significantly more impactful than asynchronous formats.
- **Motivations for Participation:** Respondents most often pursued training for one of three reasons: (1) to gain or deepen a specific skill, (2) to prepare for a specific issue or context, or (3) to be in community or uplift collective work.
- **Geographic and Delivery Patterns:** Training sessions are predominantly conducted in person, aligning with participant preferences and perceptions of in-person formats as more effective. Trainers and participants are generally from the same region or state, indicating a strong localized orientation in training ecosystems.
- **Continuity Between Training Received and Delivered:** There is a broad correlation between the topics of training practitioners have taken and the trainings they now provide. However, many trainers noted a mismatch between the most beneficial trainings they received and what they are currently equipped or resourced to offer. This could mean that fewer trainers are being ushered into the field or that they are not getting the same level of training as their predecessors. This warrants future exploration.

Survey Takeaways (cont.)

- **Trainer Compensation and Sustainability:** A consistent theme among trainers was inadequate compensation for their time and labor, which are the primary contributions they make to training efforts. Responses also revealed a lack of standardization in how training is priced and what resources are necessary for trainers to sustain their work. Many trainers provided incomplete information regarding compensation, suggesting discomfort or uncertainty around the economics of training provision.
- **Interest in Continued Engagement:** There is strong interest in ongoing engagement. Forty-six respondents requested to be added to a nonviolent action trainer contact list, and forty-five expressed interest in participating in the next phase of interviews. A key feature on ongoing community building could focus on strategic approaches and community building and maintenance.



PART 3 : INTERVIEW TAKEAWAYS

Following the establishment of the database and the analysis of survey responses, the subsequent phase involved a deeper exploration into the findings that necessitated greater nuance. This was achieved through semi-structured, 45-minute interviews with key practitioners in nonviolent action training. Although 45 respondents expressed willingness to participate, a total of 20 individuals were ultimately interviewed. Due to the limited number of interview opportunities and the research's specific focus, priority was given to trainers who identify as BIPOC. Notably, the interviews were conducted within the first 100 days of the second Trump administration, a context which was critically front of mind for trainers, their work, and their communities. While each trainer brought their unique experience, perspective, and approach several salient themes emerged.

Trainer Origins into the Field of Nonviolent Action

Nonviolent action trainers emerge from a wide array of formative experiences that intersect education, faith, social movements, and lived values. Many trainers cite firsthand experiences with systemic injustice as catalytic, including being brought into a direct action during pivotal historical moments. The formats in which they received their training varied widely from short workshops to long-term immersive residencies indicating a flexible infrastructure for capacity-building.

However, there was one throughline throughout their responses. Organizations served as incubators and foundations for ushering survey participants into the field. This layered entry into the field suggests that building a robust trainer pipeline requires holistic support of some type of organization, be it religious, educational, a particular movement, or lifestyle based.



Higher education settings served as critical hubs for exposure and engagement along with segments of major religious institutions serving as convenor. Trainers often began their journey through college peace teams, strategic campaigns, or popular education initiatives, encountering foundational texts and methodologies (e.g., Gene Sharp, Paulo Freire). Mentorship and collective learning were also key: many participants reported being shaped by trainers' collectives, communal living, or lifestyle-integrated learning models.

Diverse Spiritual and Secular Perspectives Informing Nonviolent Action Trainers and Training

Participants articulated a broad spectrum of relationships with religion and spirituality, reflecting the complexity and diversity that informs nonviolent action training today. For some, negative experiences with organized religion have prompted a turn toward humanist and secular frameworks that emphasize ethical commitment without religious affiliation. Others draw from Buddhist concepts of interconnectedness and compassion as foundational to their practice of nonviolence. Several participants described formative influences rooted in Jewish upbringing, noting how cultural and religious traditions contributed to their early sense of justice, ritual understanding, and community belonging.

Similarly, trainers identifying as Christian or Mennonite emphasized faith not only as a personal commitment but as a necessary component of a hopeful, shared vision for justice and peace. When asked how their practices inform their training these individuals reflected that faith traditions provide ritual frameworks, spaces for collective discernment where folks can grapple with the big questions, and a moral grounding that links deep reflection, humility, and collective, strategic action.

Trainer Resilience

Participants' narratives reveal a complex relationship between financial compensation, sustainability, and personal commitment within the field of nonviolent action organizing. While some have been fortunate to secure funded positions, consistent economic stability remains elusive for many practitioners, underscoring the precarious nature of this vocation. The work is often pursued alongside other jobs or unpaid, driven by deep personal and community commitments rather than financial incentives. This dynamic illustrates the tension between sustaining a livelihood and honoring the vocation's ethos, which frequently challenges conventional capitalist frameworks. Additionally, several trainers note the benefit of holding parallel roles (e.g., as a therapist or corporate trainer or other jobs with overlapping skill sets) that help sustain their financial livelihood while reinforcing their organizing capacity.

Financial sustainability emerges as a critical gap in training and organizational support. Participants consistently emphasized the absence of practical guidance on managing personal finances, securing funding, and sustaining long-term engagement in movement work. This gap highlights a potential need to integrate fiscal resource development and economic empowerment into capacity-building programs.

The personal sacrifices inherent in this work are profound, including impacts on family life and life-stage-dependent risk management. Participants describe a "way of life" orientation, valuing non-material wealth and community impact over financial gain, yet affirming the fundamental need for fair compensation to honor their labor and sustain longevity in the field.

Community Sustains Training

Nonviolent action trainers and organizers sustain their work through deeply rooted and multidimensional forms of community. These communities function as the social and emotional infrastructure necessary for long-term engagement, accountability, and collective growth.

Across responses, shared values emerged as the foundation of community. Trust, care, accountability, and the ability to acknowledge and repair harm were cited as essential features. Deep, reciprocal connections with people and networks, particularly through cohort-based models and regionally grounded organizing are cited as essential sources of commitment, accountability, and longevity. This relational infrastructure acts as both an organizing asset and a form of mutual care in spaces that are emotionally sustaining, designed to carry the weight of long-term commitment to self, one another, and larger purpose.

While some trainer communities are hyperlocal, many others operate across great distances via Signal threads, email lists, newsletters, Zoom calls, and international partnerships. These spaces offer access to shared resources, peer learning, and collective accountability. Informal but consistent touchpoints (e.g., phone calls, listservs, newsletters) support coordination while reinforcing trust. What matters more than the venue for engagement is consistency and intentionality: community is sustained through regular contact, whether through monthly meetings, project-based collaboration, or ongoing mentoring relationships. It was clear from the interviews that each trainer is an expert networker.



Practically speaking, trainers emphasize the importance of boundaries, rest, and energy-awareness, monitoring how interactions feel and stepping back when necessary. They stay grounded by connecting to the earth, staying physically active, sharing meals, and cultivating joy alongside discipline.

These insights can inform the development of training programs that nurture trainers as whole people, support ongoing cohort engagement, and build the relational foundations critical to enduring and adaptive nonviolent training.

Funding Models and Financial Sustainability

A diverse array of funding models are utilized to support nonviolent action training and organizing initiatives, reflecting both traditional and alternative approaches. Common strategies include grant funding from institutional sources such as faith-based foundations and philanthropic organizations like foundations, as well as scholarship programs and sliding scale funding to ensure accessibility for participants of varying economic means.

Several programs also embrace gift economy principles, encouraging direct donations from participants based on financial capacity and perceived value of the training. Others cultivate wealthy donors' active participation in movement work, helping them deepen their understanding and commitment. However, effective implementation of donation-based giving requires a strong marketing and outreach component to sustain donor engagement and resource flow.

Organizational structures for funding management vary, with some initiatives operating as 501(c)(3) entities supported by advisory committees or secretarial administering groups, which can enhance governance and fiscal oversight. Alternative financial resources include endowments, honorariums, and nonviolent training specific funds. Despite this diversity, funding remains a significant challenge, exacerbated by concerns about economic downturns such as recessions, government service cuts, and people's ability to donate/give/or fund.

Scaling Training Capacity: Building Strategic Infrastructure Amid Crisis

Many nonviolent action trainers expressed a deep sense of urgency noting overlapping challenges: increased repression, ideological polarization, and the need to scale resistance efforts rapidly while maintaining the integrity, inclusivity, and sustainability of nonviolent approaches.

Scaling Responsively, Not Reactively: A central tension emerged around growth: Should organizations scale nationally or stay rooted in local communities? Respondents voiced concern that rapid expansion needs to be grounded in strategic clarity or risk the dilution of the impact of scaling. What's needed is scalable infrastructure, including affinity groups, regional hubs, and coalition conveners, with paid coordination roles. Investments should focus on strengthening civic engagement touchpoints and creating flexible structures which will likely include structures outside traditional 501(c)(3) models.



“My hope for the western world is that people will take the time to decolonize their mind, that is the first step.”
-Interview Participant

Diversifying Tactics and Engagement Pathways: Trainers are creating differentiated participation levels, ranging from low-risk creative actions (e.g., walks, music, storytelling) to high-risk direct interventions. Many are working within an affinity group model where trainees are organized by skill and risk, with calls for role-specific training (e.g., elders, white allies, immigrant defenders) and sector-based organizing (e.g., unions, faith communities, rural communities). Programs targeting youth, arts-based methods, and culturally relevant approaches (e.g., hip hop, storytelling) aim to broaden engagement and maintain ready networks.

Concerns were raised that nonviolence’s association with religious frameworks may alienate some participants. A cultural shift is needed to reframe nonviolence as strategic, accessible, and inclusive. Messaging through op-eds, cultural events, and digital campaigns can reposition nonviolence to resonate across diverse belief systems and readiness levels.

Deepening Interdependence and Leadership Alignment: Affinity groups and coalitions must operate with shared values and trust, but also with clarity about leadership. Respondents emphasized the need to ensure BIPOC leadership is at the helm and also for white allies to absorb greater public risk. There is a timely call to work this into training design to equip people to leveraging privilege strategically while centering safety for those who are most targeted. Organizational partnerships, especially across race, geography, and ideology, are essential for this moment.

Prioritizing Community Safety and Protection: Related to above, community defense and alternative safety networks are seen as essential to counter state repression. Interviewees call for de-escalation training, trauma-informed organizing, restorative justice circles, rapid response teams, and legal infrastructure like the national Lawyers Guild.

Strengthening Internal Resilience and Movement Culture as Strategy: Many respondents spoke to the emotional and spiritual weight of this work. There is a continually growing need for joy, mentorship, and values-based community to be intentionally built into all levels of movement infrastructure. Monthly coaching, affinity-based coaching groups, and wellness-based convenings can prevent burnout. Likewise, integrating trauma-informed practices and spaces for reflection into training and campaigns reinforces long-term sustainability for trainers.



Nonviolent Action Training Best Practices

According to interviewees, effective training is characterized by a combination of experiential, embodied, and contextually relevant approaches that foster deep engagement and long-term impact. These elements enhance emotional intelligence and facilitate the application of nonviolent strategies within participants' specific cultural and community contexts. Trainings are most impactful when they bring together the right mix of motivated participants to foster collective learning that naturally extends into collective organizing and ongoing community support. Ideally, training is provided with this lifecycle integrated or at least in mind. Some ideas on how to do this from the trainers are:

1. Invest in longer-form, in-person experiential trainings that incorporate multiple facilitators and allow ample time for skill-building, reflection, and community trust development.
2. Prioritize culturally responsive and context-specific curriculum design, co-created or informed by community members and local trainers.
3. Integrate interactive methods such as roleplays, collective debriefs, and feedback to deepen learning and practice. Engage and support young people as key stakeholders, ensuring trainings equip participants with civic skills and advocacy tools for sustained movement building.
4. Approach a cohort model for trainings related to specific actions. This provides a level of coordination, trust, and support for continued engagement.
5. Incorporate elements of humor, creativity, nature, and physical activity to sustain engagement and emotional resilience.

6. In-person training is essential when harnessing group energy, conducting interactive components such as roleplays, and facilitating community-building. The ability to read the room, maintain eye contact, and conduct small group observations significantly contributes to trust-building and emotional connection.

7. Virtual training offers flexibility, broader accessibility, and cost-efficiency, making it a valuable option when in-person gatherings are not feasible. However, virtual formats tend to be less effective for embodied activities like roleplays and nuanced group dynamics. The web is highly effective for sharing information and coordinating work across organizations, supporting ongoing communication and collaboration beyond training sessions.

Key Concerns and Reflections Among Nonviolent Action Trainers

A core concern is the safety and sustainability of organizers, particularly those from marginalized communities. There is strong interest in building coordinated, multi-racial coalitions and creating shared language to improve clarity and collaboration across the field. Trainers also stress the importance of challenging early social conditioning and cultivating democratic values through education.

Strategically, trainers are shifting away from high-risk tactics (like mass arrests) toward more sustainable forms of resistance such as noncompliance, while developing accessible toolkits and protective infrastructure for digital and physical security. One way of doing this is building more constructive community programs as opposed to focusing on dismantling harmful existing structures. A mindset of flexibility and inclusion is key. When a core few commit fully to intensive nonviolence frameworks, they can positively influence broader engagement in this moment when there is a large opportunity to pull folks into nonviolent action. To advance training and therefore capacity, trainers call for stronger networks and more effective knowledge-sharing systems.

Trainers' Ideas for Meeting the Moment

- Facilitators should be supported to create learning spaces that allow participants to explore meaning, ritual, and ethical frameworks in ways that are inclusive and non-dogmatic. Nonviolent action curricula can benefit from integrating elements of contemplative practice, collective reflection, and values-based discernment drawn from a variety of traditions.
 - Funding priorities might include resources for interfaith and secular coalition-building, ensuring spiritual diversity enriches rather than divides. Messaging should balance the universal human values shared across faith and non-faith identities like hope, humility, and interconnectedness.
 - Investing in network-building and peer support infrastructure. Funding wellness, reflection, and restorative practices as legitimate components of nonviolent action training.
 - Recognize community-building as core to training effectiveness and trainer retention. Fund nontraditional, flexible infrastructure such as regional hubs, paid coalition conveners, and grassroots affinity groups.
 - Develop risk-tiered training pathways that include joyful, low-barrier entry points as well as specialized high-risk action preparation.
 - Scale community defense and safety strategies through legal support, de-escalation programs, and trauma-informed response teams.
 - Coordinate national efforts through summits, shared tools, and policy-focused coalitions that retain local nuance while aligning with national urgency.
-

PART 4 :

IDEAS FOR FUTURE EXPLORATION

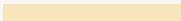
Mentorship Model: Each trainer mentioned a mentor relationship. Consider mentoring as a method of sustaining a “trainer of trainers.” Several key figures were mentioned again and again, James Lawson being the most prominent, a look at his methods could be a great jumping off point.

Promote the field of nonviolent action training: Explore how to advance cohesion and to increase awareness of terminology, methods, and access points. This would require the use of technological tools to determine how to reach certain audiences and an alignment on key terminology.

Administrative and Network Support: How to provide ongoing administrative support to a consistent network of trainers. Several models were mentioned, but held privately for safety concerns, that could be expanded or receive support for additional staff members.

Trainer Events/Networks: Coordinate national efforts through summits, shared tools, and policy-focused coalitions that retain local nuance while aligning with national urgency.

Determine how to incorporate younger trainers. Both the interviewees and survey participants were well above college age, a life stage when many of them reported having been ushered into nonviolent action training. There is an expressed need to understand how younger activists and trainers are accessing information, maintaining networks, and what factors support those communities.



Identify and support organizations that serve as incubators and sustainers for nonviolent action trainers. How to persuade more organizations to serve as home base and community for nonviolent action trainers.

Compile or grow a trainer and resources hub: How to utilize the initial list generated by the survey to start a living compilation of trainers by region as well resources for trainers to utilize.

Further explore resilience: How does resilience on a personal level interact and support the field at large? Could this be a strategic use of energy given this particular moment in the field?

How to be involved

- Contact nvatrainersreport@gmail.com with feedback, questions, interests to connect with the field of nonviolent action training or respond to any part of this report.
- Contact nvatrainersreport@gmail.com if you are a nonviolent action trainer wishing to be listed in a public trainers contact list that will be shared with other trainers and nonviolent action organizations.
- Contact joanne@warresisters.org with questions about referral to active trainers in your area.

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APPENDIX A | TRAINING RESOURCES, WEBSITES, & HANDBOOKS 2025

Following is a list of resources that were gathered from the survey portion of this research.

Training Resources	
Source	Web Address
Note: This list was compiled from trainers' responses to the National Nonviolent Action Trainers Survey conducted in early 2025.	
Websites with extensive training materials	
Albert Einstein Institution	aeinstein.org
Beautiful Trouble Toolbox	https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/
Black OUT Collective	https://blackoutcollective.org/
Center for Third World Organizing	https://ctwo.org/trainings/
Commons Library	Commonslibrary.org
Nonviolence International	https://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/
Pace e Bene, Campaign Nonviolence	paceebene.org
Peace Brigades International	https://paceebene.org/campaign-nonviolence
Training for Change	trainingforchange.org
World Beyond War	worldbeyondwar.org
350.org	350.org
More Websites	
Ayni Institute	https://ayni.institute/
Community Peacemaker Teams	cpt.org
DC Action Lab	dcactionlab.com
Global Nonviolent Action Database	https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/
Global Platforms	globalplatforms.org
HOPE-PV Guide	https://www.endpoliticalviolence.org/
Horizons Project	horizonsproject.us
The King Center	thekingcenter.org
Leading Change Network (subscription required)	leadingchangenetwork.org
Metta Center for Nonviolence	mettacenter.org
Mob Lab	moblab.org
New Tactics in Human Rights	newtactics.org
Nonviolence News	https://nonviolencenews.org/
Organizing for Power	organizingforpower.org
Over Zero	https://www.projectoverzero.org/
People powered global hub for participatory democracy	peoplepowered.org
Ruckus Society	ruckus.org
Vision Change Win	https://visionchangewin.org/
Waging Nonviolence	wagingnonviolence.org
War Resisters League	warresisters.org/nonviolence

Handbooks	
Handbook for Nonviolent Campaigns	warresisters.org/nonviolence
Beautiful Trouble	https://beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/
Metta Center Education in Nonviolence	https://www.mettacenter.org/explore
Pace e Bene	https://paceebene.org/store/engaging-nonviolence
Commons Library	https://commonslibrary.org/topic/nonviolent-direct-action/
Bill Moyer Movement Action Plan	https://tinyurl.com/Bill-Moyer-MAP
Lisa Fithian	<i>Organizing for Power</i>
Bernard Lafayette, et al.	<i>Kingian Nonviolence Manuals</i>
Books	
Author	Title
Beer, Michael	<i>Nonviolent Tactics in the 21st Century</i>
Bondurant, Joan	<i>Conquest of Violence</i>
Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan	<i>Why Civil Resistance Works</i>
Engler, Mark and Paul	<i>This is an Uprising</i>
Gandhi, Mohandas K.	<i>My Experiments With Truth</i>
Freire, Paulo	<i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i>
Lahey, George	<i>How We Win</i>
	<i>Facilitating Group Learning</i>
Lahey et al	<i>Resource Manual for a Living Revolution</i>
Lawson, James, and Kent Wong	<i>Revolutionary Nonviolence</i>
Ivan Marovich	<i>The Path of Most Resistance</i>
Moyer, Bill, et al.	<i>Doing Democracy: The MAP Model</i>
Overy, Bob	<i>Gandhi the Organiser</i>
Sharp, Gene	<i>The Politics of Nonviolent Action (3 volumes)</i>
	<i>198 Methods of Nonviolent Action</i>
SNCC Women	<i>Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC</i>
Videos	
ICNC	<i>A Force More Powerful</i>
ICNC	<i>Bringing Down a Dictator</i>
	<i>Selma</i>
	<i>Gandhi</i>
	<i>From Montgomery to Memphis</i>
Extinction Rebellion UK Youtube	<i>The Birmingham Children's March, 41 min. version</i>
Contact with questions, comments: nvatrainersreport@gmail.com	

APPENDIX B | NVA TRAINERS & EDUCATORS PARTIAL U.S. LIST AUGUST 2025

Following is a list of trainers who came into contact with this research and also indicated their interest in being listed. Please refer to the previous “How to be involved” section if you have interest in being added.

Nonviolent Action Trainers and Educators

Contact Person	Organization, Location	Contact Email Address or Website
NOTE: Some trainers' personal email addresses are withheld. Email Joanne Sheehan for referrals: joanne@warresisters.org		
Trainers	Organizations	
LIST IN PROGRESS		
Sherrilyn Bevel	Addie Wyatt Center for Nonviolence, Chicago	sherribevel@gmail.com
Pam Smith	Addie Wyatt Center for Nonviolence	addiewyattcenter.nv@gmail.com
Mary Lou Finley	Addie Wyatt Center for Nonviolence	maryloufinley@gmail.com
Jordan Garcia	AFSC Denver	jgarcia@afsc.org
Jamila Raquib	Albert Einstein Institution	jamila@aeinstein.org
Joe Worthy	Albert Einstein Institution	joe@aeinstein.org
Carlos Saavedra	Ayni Institute	ayni+2Einstitute=gmail.com@hubspotstarter.hs-send.com
Amy Morrison	Backbone Campaign	amy@backbonecampaign.org
Nadine Bloch	Beautiful Trouble	nadine@beautifultrouble.org
Brianna Gibson	Black Out Collective, Center for Third World Organizing	https://ctwo.org/trainings/
Jonathan Brenneman	Christians for Free Palestine	jonathanbrenneman15@gmail.com
	Code Pink	https://www.codepink.org/localorganizingresources
Rick Greier-Reynolds	Continuing Education in Delaware	
Noor Mir	DC Action Lab	https://dcactionlab.com/
Eli McCarthy	DC Peace Team	emccarthy@dcpeaceteam.org
Richie Schulz	Earth Quaker Action Team	richie@eqat.org
	East Point Peace Academy	https://www.eastpointpeace.org/ourtrainings
	Extinction Rebellion	https://rebellion.global/
	Eyewitness Palestine	https://eyewitnesspalestine.org/racial-justice
	Fellowship of Reconciliation	forusa.org
	Fight Back Table	https://democracyfundvoice.org/fight-back-table-action/
	Freedom Trainers	https://freedomtrainers.net
Katherine Hughes-Fraitek	Global Crassroots Activist Network	https://blueprintsfc.org/ggsn/
Tabatha Pilgrim Thompson	Horizons Project and Growers Guild	tabatha@horizonsproject.us
	If Not Now	https://www.ifnotnowmovement.org/
Bekky Baker	Ignite Peace (Cincinnati)	bekky@ignitepeace.org
	IP3 / Indigenous People Power Project	https://www.ip3action.org/training/
Ivan Marovic	International Center of Nonviolent Conflict	https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/services/#section-6

Hardy Merriman	International Center of Nonviolent Conflict	
Kent Wong	James Lawson and Dolores Huerta Nonviolence Education Project UCLA Labor Center	kentwong@ucla.edu
Sekou Franklin	James Lawson Institute	sekou.Franklin@mtsu.edu
Mary King	James Lawson Institute.	
Bernard Lafayette	Kingian Nonviolence creator	info@selmacntr.org
Juman Abujbara	Leading Change Network	juman@leadingchangenetwork.org
Chris Gray	Love and Rage Affinity Group, Santa Cruz CA	chris.hablesgray@stanfordalumni.org
Kelly Hayes	Lifted Voices and Chicago Light Brigade	
Michael Nagler	Metta Center for Nonviolence	michaeln.nagler72@gmail.com
Stephanie Van Hook	Metta Center for Nonviolence	stephanie.n.vanhook@gmail.com
Adiel Pollydore	Momentum	https://www.momentumcommunity.org/
Michael Beer	Nonviolence International	michael@nonviolenceinternational.net
Mubarak Awad	Nonviolence International	mubarak@nonviolenceinternational.net
Sami Awad	Nonviolence International	sami@nonviolenceinternational.net
Matt Guynn	On Earth Peace	mguynn@onearthpeace.org
Peter Bergel	Oregon Peaceworkers	pbergel@igc.org
Ken Butigan	Pace e Bene	kenbutigan@gmail.com
Rivera Sun	Pace e Bene, Nonviolence News	rivera@riversun.com
	Peace and Justice Studies Association	http://peacejusticestudies.org/
	Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane	http://pjals.org
	Rainforest Action Network	
Stellan Vinthagen	Resistance Studies Initiative, U Mass Amherst	https://www.umass.edu/resistancestudies/about-initiative/endowed-chair
	Ruckus Society	https://ruckus.org/
Carl Klein	Satyagraha Institute, South Dakota	https://satyagrahainstitute.org/contact
	Sierra Club Georgia Activist Training	https://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/activist-training-series
	Sunrise Movement	sunrisemovement.org
	The Commons Social Change Library	https://commonslibrary.org/topic/nonviolent-direct-action/
	Thrive Network	https://www.thrivenetwork.org/
Daniel Hunter	Choose Democracy, formerly with Training for Change,	https://choosedemocracy.us/
Zein Nakhoda	Training for Change co-executive director	https://www.trainingforchange.org/about/#person-popups

Joanne Sheehan	War Resisters League, War Resisters International, CNVA	joanne@warresisters.org
Phill Gittins	World BEYOND War	phill@worldbeyondwar.org
	350.org	https://trainings.350.org/online-skill-ups/
Individual Trainers		
Rae Abileah	Beautiful Trouble, CA	rae@beautifultrouble.org
Ahmad Abuznaid	US Campaign for Palestinian Rights	ahmad@uscpr.org
Arnie Alpert/NH	NH (formerly AFSC)	
Clare Bayard	Ruckus, Catalyst project	info@collectiveliberation.org
Eric Bachman	Vermont	ebachman@riseup.net
Sean Duffy	CT Albert Schweitzer Institute/Quinnipiac University	sean.duffy@quinnipiac.edu
Kazu Haga	CA	kazuhaga.com
Eileen Flanagan	PA	eileenflanagan.com
Lisa Fithian		fithianl@igc.org
Penn Garvin	Pennsylvania Action on Climate	Penngarvin@gmail.com
Elizabeth Grisanti	Western MA	elizabethcarettigrisanti@gmail.com
Cathy Hoffman	MA	Catherinebhoffman@gmail.com
Tracy Howe	AZ Restoration Village Arts, action training?	tracy@restorationvillagearts.org
Dean Johnson		imaginepeace@riseup.net
George Lakey	Founder Training for Change / Earth Quaker Action Group	glakey03@gmail.com
Carol Lewis	Western MA	curiouscarol@gmail.com
Peter Klotz-Chamberlin	CA	2peterkc@gmail.com
Mary Link	Western MA	maryclink@gmail.com
Sarah Nahar	Michigan	sarah@efert.org
Jerry Monroe Maynard	Texas	cnvhouston1@gmail.com
Merwyn De Mello	DC	
Carolina Munis		
Bruce Pruitt-Hamm	WA	bpruitthamm@gmail.com
Janis Pruitt-Hamm	WA	
Maxina (Max) Ventura	San Francisco CA	beneficialbug@gmail.com
Paki Wieland	Western MA	pakiwieland@gmail.com
Dorie Wilsnack	Vermont	doriew@igc.org

Cate Woolner	Western MA	catewool@gmail.com
Universities		
Mark Stemen	Chico State University	MStemen@csuchico.edu
Erica Chenoweth	Harvard University	https://www.ericachenoweth.com/
Sara Koopman	Kent State University Peace and Conflict Studies	spcs@kent.edu
Patrick Hiller	Peace & Justice Studies Association	pthiller@gmail.com ; info@peacejusticestudies.org
Tom Hastings	Portland State University	pcwtom@gmail.com
Sean Duffy	Quinnipiac University	Sean.Duffy@quinnipiac.edu
Leslie Donovan	University of New Mexico	
Jonathan Greenberg	University of San Francisco	jgreenberg5@usfca.edu
Stephen Zunes	University of San Francisco Peace Studies	zunes@usfca.edu
Stellan Vinthagan	Resistance Studies, Univ of Massachusetts Amherst	stellan.vinthagan@gmail.com