



INTRODUCTION TO NONVIOLENT ACTION TRAINING AGENDA

Nonviolence Training: An Introduction to Nonviolent Action in 2 to 3 hours

This workshop is an opportunity to prepare for participating in demonstrations for people who are new to nonviolent action. It is not preparation for participating in civil disobedience, which is a longer training.

The Agenda includes:

- Preparation to participate in nonviolent demonstrations: build capacity to be street smart, effective, safe, sustainable.
- What to do, what not to do, what to be aware of, dealing with fear
- Understanding your rights
- How to work in small groups for solidarity
- Time to practice + experiment before getting out into the streets.

***This agenda is presently scheduled for 2½ hours.** It can be done in 2 hours, if you trim down or cut out some of the agenda items, or expanded to 3 by putting more time into what the group most needs. Obviously a group will get more out of a longer agenda, but that may not be possible if scheduled for an evening session. To create a 2 hour session have shorter introductions (-10); Hand out "Do's + Don'ts", only ask for clarifying questions and include issues in the hassle line scenario (-10); spend less time on working in small groups and encouraging organizers to help create affinity groups (-5); at the end do a quick go-around asking people to share a word or phrase, eliminating the triad part of the exercise (-5).*

***If you only have 2 hours,** and the participants are not familiar with nonviolent actions or campaigns, encourage them to see the video **Nashville: We Were Warriors** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs14dOW2IFw>), which is a good introduction to nonviolence training, action and campaign strategy including addressing concerns and fears, before doing this Nonviolent Action Training. See also the [Nashville Campaign workshop](#).*

[15 MINS] Introductions Welcome, introduce trainers and goals of workshop/why training, Agenda review asking people if this covers their concerns, be clear this is not a training that prepares people to risk arrest. Review or create group process guidelines (i.e. listen, respect others, step up/step back, be succinct, how the groups wants to deal with cell phones, etc.)

Who is here: step in the circle, or raise hands, if:

- You have attended a nonviolence training (ask if was for an hour, half day, day, weekend?)
- Taken a college course or a workshop on nonviolence?
- Who has been to a mass demonstration/rally/march? A small demonstration? Picket line?
- Who has risked arrest?

[15 MINS] Concentric Circles - To introduce ourselves to others and focus on why we are here. Organize people into two circles of equal number, one inside the other, facing each other. Have them identify who is across from them. Start by asking the people in one circle to answer the first question, have the outer circle move clockwise and people in the other circle answer the same question. Move again for the next question, and so on. Have as many questions as you have time for.

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A sample of possible questions:

- Why did you come to this training?
- Is there an issue or movement you feel connected to/passionate about?
- What are your concerns or fears?
- What gives you hope?

[30 MINS] Nonviolent Direct Action - Quotes – note each quote has a different process:

- **Deconstruct MLK quote on why nonviolent direct action:** <https://nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/node/40552?language=sk>
- **Discuss a quote from Barbara Deming in small groups:** *"The most effective action both resorts to power and engages conscience. Nonviolent action does not have to beg others to "be nice." It can in effect force them to consult their consciences-- or pretend to have them. Nor does it have to petition those in power to do something about a situation. It can face the authorities with a new fact and say: accept this new situation which we have created."*

[15 MINS] Know Your Rights: Share these resources, discuss what is most pertinent to the group. Contact your nearest **National Lawyer's Guild** chapter for **Legal Observers** and support: <https://www.nlg.org/chapters/>

- **Know Your Rights: A Guide for Protesters** - www.nlg.org/know-your-rights/
- **Know Your Rights for Protesters** (English & Spanish) www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights
- **Know Your Rights** (NY-focused in English, Spanish, Arabic) - nlgny.org/know-your-rights
- **If An Agent Knocks:** Toolkit for the Movement <https://ccrjustice.org/if-agent-knocks-resource>

[15 MINS] Being Prepared - Do's + Don'ts Handout

- https://www.warresisters.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/dos_and_donts-2026.pdf

[30 MINS] Practice (Hassle) Lines - Conflict and de-escalation <https://nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/resources/2017/parallel-lines-also-known-hassle-lines?language=sk>

The trainer should come up with scenarios based on information from organizers or what they have heard from the group so far. Start with a lower risk conflict and escalate from there. Use role plays for higher conflict situations. Debrief each scenario before moving to the next one. Ask for overall observations at the end.

- 1) A co-worker, neighbor, or family member is upset that you have decided to participate in this training and nonviolent actions.
- 2) You are in a vigil or march and the person next to you starts yelling back at cars going by yelling at you.
- 3) You are in a vigil or march and someone comes up to you and starts arguing with you or making racist or sexist comments to the group.

[15 MINS] Supporting one another in small groups: Why work in small groups at a demonstration or legal nonviolent action? For mutual support, to help people stay together in a large demonstration, if there is a problem and solidarity is needed, for support if people become emotionally distraught, for quick decision-making if a problem arises. "Affinity groups" or "support groups" are not necessarily needed in a legal demonstration, but they can be helpful. It is also a good opportunity to introduce the concept of "affinity groups" <https://nonviolence.wri-irg.org/en/node/40513>

[10 MINS] Take-Aways In triads, ask each person to share what they most want to be mindful of during the demonstrations, what will ground them if they feel overwhelmed by the emotions of the day.

Go around – on word or phrase – what I want to remember.

[5 MINS] Evaluation (what went well, what could have been better) + Next steps for the group.

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