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The Permissibility of Nonviolent Resistance and the Concept of Just War

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The Permissibility of Nonviolence and the Concept of Just War
Srilatha Dasari, Heather Salge, W140

Abstract
It does not take much more than a mere glance at one’s local news channel to come to the conclusion that we live in a violent world. Most civilians are aware of major nonviolent movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Indian Independence Movement, but there are major misconceptions about the process behind them. Nonviolent resistance as an option for solving issues, from personal to global, has become strictly theoretical. Now may just be the time to make the effort to learn about what nonviolent resistance truly means, due to the fact that the choices we make today may help determine what occurs tomorrow.

Misconceptions
History classes are generally well known for their extensive coverage of the world wars, battles, and conflicts that have shaped our society into its current form. However, the few fleeting moments in history during which nonviolent resistance succeeded on a large scale are often mentioned and subsequently dismissed. These pivotal world events are acknowledged, and as a populace we often feel accomplished knowing that the human race avoided bloodshed on some occasions, but not much thought is usually given to the strength and sacrifice it took to bring about such beneficial change. Many people assume that violence is sometimes the answer to our problems, when in fact nonviolence succeeds on a large scale more often than not. It does not take much more than a mere glance at one’s local news channel to assess the opponent, acceptance that there are drawbacks, and the act of being less prone to hate our enemies. “There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are poised to change history.” A Future Without War, 2008. When we discover this, we are poised to change history. A Future Without War, 2008. Just War

The Permissibility of Nonviolence
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The premise of nonviolence is that the opponent of a nonviolent resister holds value in the resister. In cases of genocide, such as the Holocaust, nonviolence would be utterly useless. This is when violence may be a necessary means to an end. Violence must only be initiated when it is morally justifiable and it is possible to succeed. It is crucial to keep in mind that just war, no matter how successful it seems, is only as good as the peace that follows it. Once war begins, it is nearly impossible to end. It is important to choose strategies, from location to weapons used, very carefully to avoid casualties.

“We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.” -Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Concluding Thoughts
The decision of whether or not to utilize violence to represent a cause is not easy in the slightest. Case by case analysis has shown to be effective in minimizing harm done, because nonviolence is not a “one-size-fits-all” process. Careful consideration and thought must occur in order to even hope for the success of a nonviolent movement. However, the unfortunate reality is that no matter how much preparation or strategy is used during an attempt at nonviolent resistance, the scenario may not allow for its success. This is the point at which violence could potentially be justified. Regardless of the method of resistance chosen, it is imperative that we, as a human race, allow for the preservation of justice for the future of our society.

REFERENCES