

# Nonviolent Social Movements in Creating Change

## Combination Session (50-60 minutes)

**Background:** Most people know far more about the activities of presidents and entertainment or sports figures, than they do about peace and justice movements and leaders. It is no wonder that our media mostly emphasize legislatures and political decisions as the place where important change occurs. Or that when political leaders say military action is required to respond to another country, most people are willing to go along.

This session allows participants to expand this picture for themselves through the story of one specific social movement (the civil rights sit-ins in Nashville in 1960), and an activity that surveys the breadth and variety of social movement activity throughout history. (Preview the full video and read "Wall" materials in preparation.)

**Materials needed:** 1. DVD or Video deck; 2. Projection Equipment & Screen (or Monitor); 3. "A Force More Powerful" DVD (or Video); 4. "Wall of Hope" brochure (or list). *Have video cued up*

**Overview of Combination Session, PART I:** brief introduction, first 10 minutes of the Nashville segment of "A Force More Powerful"; 10 min. discussion. **PART II:** 3 min. to set up "Wall of Hope" activity; 6 min. in pairs, 5 min. sharing, 10 min. discussion. A key time and pacing issue is to ensure that the final 10 min. discussion is not cut short because other things ran over.

### **PART 1 – NASHVILLE VIDEO and DISCUSSION** (18-20 min.):

**Introduction:** It seems to work best to move as quickly as possible to the Nashville story. You want to allow participants to learn for themselves from the video segment and brochure stories, so we don't recommend talking about your goals for the session. If there is time, you can begin with the question: "What was it like in the U.S. South in the 1950s before the civil rights movement?" (This can make it easier to enter into the story for those who aren't very familiar with the setting. It also helps late arrivers not miss any of the video.)

**Showing of video segment** (10 min.): For a 50- 60 min. period, show just the first 10 minutes of the Nashville segment of "A Force More Powerful" -- Up to the point where the mayor says "we have to have order." (In a longer period, you can show the full 24-minute video.)

**Discussion** (8-10 min.): Mention that stories can help us identify the necessary elements of successful nonviolent social change. (Even though each context will differ, the principles and characteristics do not.) Begin the discussion with a few moments of silence so that participants can gather their thoughts, and be ready to listen to others. Start with a general question, "What are your reactions?" Then you may ask questions to touch on areas not yet addressed:

1. What did you observe about the situation of blacks in the South in the late 1950s?
2. What was the plan of the Nashville students? Their goal? Their preparation? Their conduct? Why might others want to join their activities?
3. What was the result? You might add here that the sit-ins alone didn't bring about change. The video goes on to show how students needed to evaluate their situation, propose, and organize a boycott of local businesses the following spring, to broaden the involvement of the community, and to build support among whites for change.
4. What role did organizing as a social movement play in making the desired changes?

## **PART 2 – WALL OF HOPE** (22-26 minutes):

**Set up Wall of Hope activity** (3 min.): Pass out Wall of Hope brochures (or list). Divide people into pairs by counting off or by simply pointing to pairs. Tell each pair which of the 6 (or 4) columns of examples they will discuss (identify their column by the top date of the column). Invite the pairs to read the events on their column and then to discuss the ones that are familiar, the ones that are new, and those they find especially intriguing. Finally, invite each participant to choose an event to share with everyone when they return to the large group.

**Reading and Sharing in Pairs** (5-7 min.): Move around the room to be available to quietly clarify an instruction and to gauge when folks have had a chance to read, discuss, and choose an event to share. (e.g. after around 5 minutes, it can help to say "How about 1 more minute?")

**Sharing with the Whole Group** (5-8 min.): Invite group members to share the movements they chose in roughly chronological order (invite participants who had the first column to begin; make sure there is time for discussion, ask for just 1 sentence or no descriptions here if necessary).

**Discussion** (6-8 min.): Questions that may help: 1. What makes these events interesting? What difference might it make if such stories were more visible in our schools and media?

2. What is the role of stories like these in our efforts for peace and justice? How might we make use of such stories in our peacemaking efforts? What social change stories are part of your life today? What more could you bring into your life from stories like those on the Wall of Hope?

(For example, participants in the past have concluded that because of the huge gap in most US media and education, that it is important to listen regularly to alternative media, and to regularly watch videos like "A Force More Powerful," and read accounts of social change movements and biographies of their leaders. Some participants have made commitments to put serious energy into devising plans to make stories of social movements a larger part of school curricula, Sunday School programs, church and community library collections and programs, and the agendas and activities of community groups.)

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**Leadership Options, Both Activities:** If possible, plan the Nashville segment and Wall of Hope activity as two separate sessions. Each of the two sessions benefit from more time and can be enriched with other activities and materials, such as the half page handout "Jesus Third Way" or the outlines of social change insight: "Four Roles" and "Eight Stages of Social Movement Success."

See "A Wall of Hope Activity" for more leader tips, follow-up activities, and resources. A dozen activity and discussion ideas are summarized on "Activities Using the Wall of Hope." Both are available at [www.lutheranpeace.org](http://www.lutheranpeace.org) and <http://pjrcbooks.tripod.com>.

Similarly, there are both community and classroom discussion guides with background material and tips for leading each of the six stories in "A Force More Powerful." Much of these and other resources are available at [www.aforcemorepowerful.org](http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org)

See also the book *Doing Democracy* by Bill Moyer, et al, *The Children* by David Halberstam on the sit in movement, and the book, *A Force More Powerful* by William Ackerman and Jack Duvall. The PJRC resource guide, "Sources for the Wall of Hope" offers brief annotated listings of 200 books covering 2/3 of the events on the Wall. See also "Transforming Our World" and the "Shalom" essay.