

"WHEN PEOPLE DECIDE THEY WANT TO BE FREE...
THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN STOP THEM."

DESMOND TUTU



A FORCE MORE POWERFUL

A CENTURY OF NONVIOLENT CONFLICT

PROGRAM SUMMARY

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Familiar to us all are the images of wars and other violent events that were milestones of the last hundred years. Yet the world of today has been shaped equally by a different, less visible kind of conflict: the nonviolent resistance that has toppled dictators, foiled military invaders and overcome oppression everywhere. How nonviolent power has done this — how it has liberated people, established democracy and won human rights — has never been fully revealed on television, until now.

A Force More Powerful is a riveting three-hour documentary that probes six decisive chapters in the story of nonviolent conflict. Weaving together these distinct human dramas, the series shows how nonviolent campaigners on four continents learned from their predecessors and how their courage and their strategies changed the course of history.

Mohandas K. Gandhi, who led the movement for Indian independence against British colonial rule, defined nonviolent resistance as “a force more positive than electricity, and more powerful than even ether,” showing that he saw it as something rigorous and scientific rather than pious or mystical. *A Force More Powerful* illuminates the principles behind this power — and the valor of those who used it.

PROGRAM ONE: INDIA AND NASHVILLE

India: Defying the Crown

By March 1930 the people of India are growing more restless under the yoke of British rule. Indian nationalists turn to Gandhi to lead a campaign for full independence. Having successfully employed nonviolent sanctions while fighting for suppressed Indians in South Africa, and then again in India in the 1920s, Gandhi moves to confront the colonial rulers in ways that average Indians can understand and be part of.

His first target is the British monopoly on the manufacture and sale of salt, and he leads a 250-mile [400 kilometer] march to the sea, where he and thousands of protesters violate the law by making their own salt. The British crack down, and many, including Gandhi, go to jail.

But civil disobedience spreads, and the campaign encompasses a boycott of British cloth and the resignations of local Indian officials who work for the British. All this puts great pressure on the government, and the British viceroy opens talks with Gandhi, who opts for compromise. Although the campaign does not dislodge the British from India, it shatters the legitimacy of British control and rallies the Indian people to the cause of independence, which eventually comes in 1947.

Nashville: “We Were Warriors”

The genius and fearlessness of Reverend James Lawson and the young men and women who followed him are the touchstones of this pivotal chapter of the American civil rights struggle. Inspired by his studies in India of Gandhi’s work, as well as the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lawson begins in 1960 to train black and white college students in nonviolent methods to desegregate downtown Nashville, Tennessee.



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Sit-in at Walgreen’s lunch counter in Nashville, 1960

The students stage a sit-in at segregated city lunch counters in February 1960. First they are ignored, but when they return again and again, they are beaten and jailed. The resulting outrage in the African American community leads to a boycott of downtown stores; many whites stay away as well, disturbed by the brutality and disruption. Business leaders apply pressure for a political solution, and the bombing of a prominent black lawyer's house prompts the students to march on city hall and confront the mayor. After he is forced to admit that segregation is wrong, Nashville begins to desegregate.

PROGRAM TWO: POLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

Poland: "We've Caught God by the Arm"

In August 1980 workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk decide to strike, to protest food price increases. For years many workers have wanted the right to organize their own free trade unions, separate from the Communist Party that runs the country. Now they make that goal their number one demand.

Led by Lech Walesa and other veterans of earlier workers' protests, the strikers decide to occupy the shipyard instead of marching into the city and inviting a confrontation with troops. Spreading news of their action to other enterprises on the Baltic coast, they organize an interfactory committee to negotiate with party leaders and demand that the talks be broadcast on television. Eventually the regime grants most of their demands, and a new independent organization, Solidarity, is born.

After the regime imposes martial law, Solidarity goes underground — but eventually it is legalized and invited to negotiate the basis for free elections, which it wins.



© Erazm Colek

Polish workers strike, 1980

South Africa: "Freedom in Our Lifetime"

Suffering under the system of apartheid for almost 40 years, black South Africans — who have erupted in protest several times over the years — take to the streets of townships across South Africa in 1984. But the revolt is chaotic, unorganized and violent, and many blacks die as the regime responds with violence.

In Port Elizabeth a charismatic and shrewd young activist, Mkhuseleli Jack, skillfully redirects the people's energy into strategic nonviolent action. Mounting an economic boycott of downtown businesses, all of which are owned by whites, blacks gain more attention for their demands than ever before.

Coupled with rent boycotts, labor strikes and international sanctions, the new wave of nonviolent direct action separates the government from its means of support. It also helps push a new prime minister into negotiations for national elections in which blacks participate for the first time in South Africa's history and elect Nelson Mandela as president.



© Eastern Cape Herald

Mkhuseleli Jack rallies support for consumer boycotts in South Africa, 1986

PROGRAM THREE: DENMARK AND CHILE

Denmark: Living with the Enemy

By the summer of 1943, in the midst of World War II, Denmark has been occupied by German forces for more than three years. Resistance to the invaders has been sporadic, mainly limited to displays of Danish cultural identity or scattered acts of sabotage. But now, provoked by German brutality, the Danes act more boldly to resist the Nazi war machine.

Mass nonviolent protests begin first with labor strikes. Then when SS troops arrive to round up Danish Jews for deportation to the death camps, the Danes rescue their fellow citizens, ferrying most to safety in Sweden. The effort galvanizes many Danes, and soon general strikes challenge German control, and the Danish underground emphasizes nonviolent operations. Although Denmark is not liberated until the end of the war, nonviolent resistance has stymied German plans for extracting value from the occupation.

Chile: Defeat of a Dictator

A decade into the terror-ridden dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, Chileans have had enough. A union leader organizes a national protest day in 1983, in which citizens bang on pots and pans, demonstrate in the streets and bring the capital Santiago to a halt. Monthly days of protest follow, and an open, nonviolent opposition to Pinochet emerges. But as extremists turn to violence, the government is able to justify violent repression.

After surviving an assassination attempt, Pinochet believes himself invincible — and goes ahead with a plebiscite designed to legitimize his continuance in power. Defying threats of violence, the nonviolent opposition organizes massively behind a “No” vote against the dictator, skillfully uses the mass media to promote positive images of change, and Chileans repudiate the regime at the polls. Chile is back on the road to full democracy, without violence.



© Marcello Monticello

Augusto Pinochet

These history-making stories of nonviolent power are told through vivid interviews with their heroes and eyewitnesses — including James Lawson and Nobel Peace Prize winners Lech Walesa and Desmond Tutu — and are studded with rare archival photographs and video footage never before seen on television. This documentary proves, in the words of Archbishop Tutu, *“When people decide they want to be free...there is nothing that can stop them.”*

Program Sales and Broadcast

A Force More Powerful is available on VHS and DVD in the following languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Contact Miriam Zimmerman at mzimmerman@yorkzim.com or by telephone at + 1 202 337-3291.

For information about licensing for television broadcasts please contact CS Associates at programs@csassociates.com or call + 1 617 923-0077.

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict develops and encourages the use of civilian-based, nonmilitary strategies to establish and defend democracy and achieve human rights worldwide. To stimulate the choice of nonviolent conflict as a way to liberate people from oppression, it educates the global public and policymakers, facilitates media coverage of nonviolent movements, and helps provide field assistance in strategic nonviolent training. Visit www.nonviolent-conflict.org or call + 1 202 416-4720.

Companion Book

A Force More Powerful, the companion book to the television series, is currently only available in English and is sold as a paperback in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States. Translated excerpts of the book may be available; please contact the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) at info@nonviolent-conflict.org or call + 1 202 416-4720.

Websites

Comprehensive English-language websites for the film with program synopses, timelines, maps, interviews and descriptions of nonviolent strategies as well as curriculum materials for college and high school students can be found at www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful and at www.aforcemorepowerful.org.

Television Production Credits

A production of York Zimmerman Inc.
Written, Produced and Directed by: Steve York
Narrator: Ben Kingsley
Series Editor and Principal Content Advisor: Peter Ackerman
Managing Producer: Miriam Zimmerman
Editors: Joseph Wiedenmayer & David Ewing
Original Music by: John Keltonic
Executive Producer: Jack DuVall

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