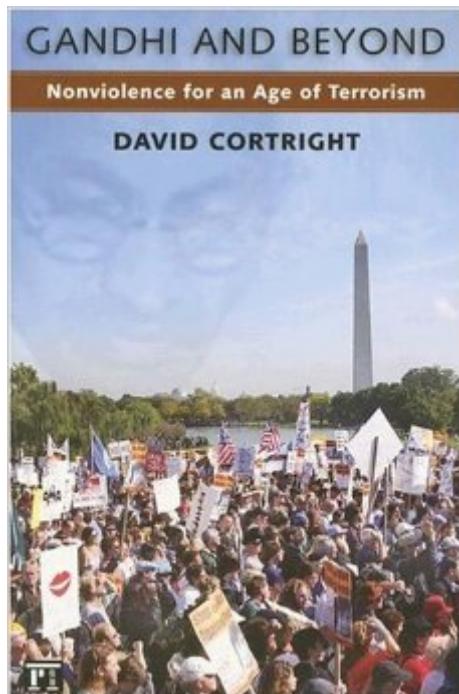


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Gandhi And Beyond: Nonviolence For An Age Of Terrorism



Synopsis

"David Cortright is a life-long activist and respected scholar. In Gandhi and Beyond, he convincingly shows the power of nonviolence as a philosophy of life, not just a method of social action. His practical analysis of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez, and others brings new insights and inspiration to those of us attempting to live that philosophy, and to those, especially a new generation, who are seeking a better way to respond to their world. I commend this book to all who are seeking an alternative to violence." Jim Wallis, author of God's Politics and editor of Sojourners Is there room for nonviolence in an age of terrorism? Drawing on the legend and lessons of Gandhi, Cortright traces the history of nonviolent social activism through the early twentieth century to the civil rights movement, the Vietnam era, and up to the present war in Iraq. Gandhi and Beyond offers a critical evaluation and refinement of Gandhi's message, laying the foundation for a renewed and deepened dedication to nonviolence as the universal path to social progress and antidote to terrorism.

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Customer Reviews

I had two misgivings about this book before I began to read it. Both of my misgivings turned out to be unfounded. The first one was that since I have read my fair share of nonviolence books I feared that it would all be repetition. Cortright starts the book with Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but not with the ordinary biographical stories of their lives. Rather he uses them as vehicles to explain the secret of nonviolence together with today's scholars and his own opinions. It works very

well and even though Gandhi and King are familiar to me I learned a lot, especially in a later chapter were he writes about Gandhi's and King's views on gender and sexuality. The second misgiving was the subtitle which made me hesitate if I would buy it or not: "Nonviolence for an Age of Terrorism". I was afraid that this was another American too hung up on terrorism; like terrorism was the biggest problem humans face today. As a Swede, living in a country who has not been struck by terrorism or taken part in the "war on terrorism" it might be more difficult for me to understand why terrorism is seen as the biggest problem in the world, when tens of thousands of people are dying every day of poverty. Actually the book doesn't talk very much about terrorism, but poses an important challenge to nonviolent activists. If we want to stop the "war on terror" we ought to be able to provide a better solution to the problem of terrorism than the military does. I have been racking my brain on how we can be more effective in our nonviolent campaigns. This book gave me a lot of food for thought on the subject. But unlike strategists like Gene Sharp, Cortright doesn't limit nonviolence to its effectiveness. He sees nonviolence not just as a method but as a way of life. He tells about his struggles and his times of doubts about the ideas of nonviolence. My respect and admiration for the author rose after I understood how much involved he has been for many decades and still is in the peace movement. Here is a man who not only teaches and writes about Gandhi and King, but actually tries to use their methods in his life. He manages to combines the learnings of the history of nonviolence with the nonviolent movement of today - a potent combination that we need more of. I am sure military analysts sit day in and day out trying to analyze yesterday's battles to learn how to fight more effectively tomorrow. We nonviolent activists have something to learn from the military in that sense. Cortright's book really highlights the importance of making this analysis and to learn from our mistakes. The book gives a refreshing criticism of our nonviolent icons. I had heard negative rumours about Gandhi and King but was unsure if they were true. According to this book some of them were and some were not. But Cortright makes a more important point - you can admire one part of a human's life - like Gandhi's nonviolent struggle against the British occupation while at the same time be deeply critical to another part of the same person's life - like Gandhi's warped views on gender and sexuality. Cortright rightly points out that we should not expect flawless leaders. Talking about leaders, I have been embarrassed to keep coming with nothing but male nonviolent role models in my nonviolent workshops. So I was happy to find two great female role models in this book; Dorothy Day and Barbara Deming. Two women who really deserve more appreciation for their contributions in the nonviolence struggle. In the end of the book Cortright gives us some practical tools to use in the nonviolent struggle were he emphasizes the importance of setting up concrete and achievable goals and warning us from disregarding the

importance of fund-raising and working effectively with the media. He also encourages us to try new, creative and some times more risky nonviolence methods; not always the petitions, demonstrations but also boycotts, strikes, blockades and sit-ins. These types of methods have proved to be the most effective in the nonviolence movement according to the author. We who work for peace and justice face incredible challenges. It is easy to get discouraged when you see what you are up against. Cortright gives us hope in spite of this. He shows many examples of how nonviolence has made fantastic gains the last decades. There have been victories even in the cases where it seemed we failed. And it takes time, some times a very long time, to change for the better. What we need in the struggle is persistence and hope according to Cortright. Both these traits have grown stronger in me while reading this book. Martin Smedjeback [...]

What I appreciated about this book most is that it told the "rest of the story" about those who have used civil disobedience as a tool to change their governments and the world. These activists were not portrayed as perfect, but rather subject to the human frailties that we all have. Not only did the book offer reminders of how others have used civil disobedience, but reminded us that they were human. This alone made civil disobedience a tool within everyone's grasp. It reminded me that the good fight is one that we can all participate. Before this book, I had put these activists up on a shelf and only loved them for being better than human. After reading this book, I loved them even more for being imperfect like me, which empowered me to more courageously participate in the struggle for justice...even though I too am not a saint.

I read this book for a peace and justice class at Michigan State University. The book is great in helping understand the field of peace and justice. David Cortright does a great job in keeping the book interesting and understandable.

A great review of the impact of Gandhi's active non-violence and its implications for today's age of terrorism and proactive war. A reminder of the benefits that could happen if we really tried active non-violence, as people, as communities, as a nation. What a world it would be. Thanks to the author for reminding us of the possibilities. Mary Nelson

This is a thoughtful, well-written and accessible overview of the history and issues of non-violence; I found it superior to the more ambitious "Nonviolence," which I recently read and which was long on history but short on issues and insights. Cortright has been long in the trenches and knows the

issues. I appreciated his efforts to give the kinds of credit to women that men writing on this subject so often ignore--especially his discussions of Dorothy Day and Barbara Deming--too often written out or trivialized. However, I was deeply disheartened by the fact that in giving examples of effective non-violence that has brought about major changes in societies, he totally ignores the women's liberation movement (later mainstreamed as the "women's movement") of the 1960s and 1970s. There are so many specific actions and approaches that would have hugely enriched his discussion, and however much we are currently seeing backlash and retreat, the effect of that movement was surely transformative. So much for non-violence folk to learn from there. It has been painful enough to me to see that powerful movement distorted, trivialized and erased in mainstream writing, but it's a real stab when someone like Cortright does the same. That's why I rated the book a 3 instead of a 4. But otherwise, I do recommend it.

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