A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict, a new two-part documentary, will premiere on PBS stations on Mondays, September 18 and 25 at 9:00 p.m. ET (check local listings). The riveting three-hour documentary—narrated by Academy Award-winning actor Ben Kingsley—explores how, during a century of extreme violence, millions around the world chose to battle the forces of oppression and brutality with nonviolent weapons—and won.

A co-production for PBS by York Zimmerman Inc. and WETA of Washington, D.C., A Force More Powerful is written and produced by award-winning filmmaker Steve York. Einstein Institution Board member Peter Ackerman is the series editor and its principal content advisor. Jack DuVall is the executive producer for the documentary, Miriam Zimmerman its managing producer, Dalton Delan its executive in charge of production.

Acclaimed filmmaker Steve York bypasses the clichés that commonly surround nonviolent movements and skillfully portrays the hard-edged planning, strategy, and discipline that often determine success or failure. The film also gives voice to several pioneering, though lesser known, leaders of these powerful nonviolent campaigns.

The idea for the film emerged from several of the themes and case studies that Einstein Institution Board member Peter Ackerman and former Einstein Institution President Christopher Kruegler developed in their book Strategic Nonviolent Conflict (1994).

The Einstein Institution is one of a number of underwriters for the television series. In addition, the Institution contributed extensive research materials and comments to the filmmakers during the film’s research phase. In 1997 the Institution received a grant from the U.S. Institute of Peace to coordinate preliminary archival film research by the filmmakers.

The new PBS series is the centerpiece of a global media and educational project intended to elevate understanding of how nonviolent action can succeed in overturning dictators and securing democracy and human rights. St. Martin’s Press has just published a companion book of the same name by Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall.
An Interview with the Creators of A Force More Powerful

When A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict premieres on PBS on Mondays September 18 and 25 at 9:00 p.m. (ET, check local listings), it will showcase six victorious campaigns that changed the course of history during the 20th century. It will also reflect the passionate interest and dedicated work of series editor, principal content advisor, and Einstein Institution Board member, Peter Ackerman, and award-winning filmmaker Steve York. In the following interview, they discuss the series origin, messages, and goals.

Q: How did A Force More Powerful get started?

Ackerman: In a sense, the project germinated a quarter century ago with my doctoral dissertation: “Strategic Aspects of Nonviolent Resistance Movements.” This served as the starting point for a book I co-authored with Christopher Kruegler in 1994, Strategic Nonviolent Conflict. Jack DuVall brought the book to Steve York’s attention; Steve believed these stories would offer gripping material for a documentary.

As a graduate student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the late sixties and early seventies, I was interested in “asymmetric conflicts,” where one side had the preponderance of military power but still lost. New factors were in play that were more psychological and political than material. Guerrilla warriors like Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara were, for many in the late sixties, shrewdly strategic, ever-escalating course of “noncooperation” with British rule.

In the 1980s, these nonviolent techniques came increasingly into play as country after country was transformed into a working democracy, culminating with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the victory over apartheid in South Africa. To my way of thinking there was not enough acknowledgment by foreign policy elites that these were not isolated events. These were successful “wars,” but the brilliant part was that the winning sides weren’t fighting with guns and bombs but with innovative nonviolent

A Force More Powerful uses stunning archival footage to present six stories of successful movements around the world. Each includes interviews with witnesses, survivors and unsung heroes who contributed to these century-changing events. The stories include:

♦ The 1960 Nashville, Tennessee campaign to desegregate the city’s downtown business district, which profiles the Rev. James Lawson Jr., who studied Gandhi’s techniques in India and later joined forces with Martin Luther King Jr. His intensive workshops on nonviolent resistance drove the sit-ins and boycotts and became what King called “the model of the movement.”

♦ Mohandas Gandhi’s famous Salt March of 1930, during which he enjoined Indians to protest the British salt monopoly—a turning point that paved the way for India’s independence from Britain. Gandhi steered a shrewdly strategic, ever-escalating course of “noncooperation” with British rule.

♦ The consumer boycott campaigns against apartheid in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in the mid 1980s, led by the young Mkhulezi Jack—radicalized at the age of 18 by laws that kept him from enrolling in school. These and other campaigns proved instrumental in defeating apartheid and freeing Nelson Mandela.

♦ The courage and endurance of Denmark’s citizens during the Nazi occupation of World War II. Their noncooperation undermined Nazi attempts to exploit Denmark for food and war matériel. In addition to committing sabotage and staging general strikes, the Danes’ underground resistance rescued all but a few hundred of Denmark’s seven thousand Jews from the Holocaust.

♦ The 1980 Gdansk Shipyard strike that won Poles the right to organize free trade unions launched the Solidarity movement and catapulted Lech Walesa, a shipyard electrician, on a path of leadership—and led to the fall of communism in Poland and the election of Walesa to the presidency of the country.

♦ The national protest days led by Chilean copper miners in 1983 showed that public opposition to the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet was possible. Brutally suppressed, opposition forces persisted and eventually removed Pinochet’s military government in a 1988 referendum.

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methods. Sure there was violence happening all over the world in the 20th century, but nonviolent power was prevailing too.

Q: How do you put all that scholarship and strategy on screen and do people want to see that?

York: What you put on screen are stories and people. You show ideas personified. The drama is in the history. When I was in India, I walked along the dusty road leading to the beach where Gandhi broke the salt law. It looks about the same as it did in 1930 and it’s nothing special, but what Gandhi did there is remarkable, and it gives the place a quiet sense of power. I’m not talking about the kind of power we associate with presidents or prime ministers; I mean the power of moral courage, and personal action.

I’m still amazed at what James Lawson, at the age of 30, was able to accomplish in Nashville in 1960, and what Mkhuleko Jack accomplished in South Africa in the early 1980s at the age of 27. They’re not considered “powerful” people, even today, but they understood the power of ideas. Being in the presence of people like that is an incredible reminder that ideas matter, and that human intelligence and ingenuity can prevail.

Q: Why does nonviolent conflict work?

Ackerman: Part of the underlying force of nonviolent resistance is that people who undertake it believe wholeheartedly in what they’re doing, because they deeply feel the justice of their cause. In contrast, conventional warfare is often waged for greedy, aggressive purposes and fought by persons who have been conscripted into the fight by their government.

Nonviolent action always has the potential to prevail against ruthless opponents because it can be conducted on a huge scale and involves every citizen who wants to play a part. Its techniques flow from the disruption of the everyday normalities that the tyrant counts on to maintain power. You see it time and again, in India, in Poland, in Chile, in South Africa—millions of people became part of these movements as much as by what they refused to do as by what they did.

That is not to say that nonviolent conflict is easy to wage. It involves willingness to suffer and to be hurt but not to retaliate and cause others to hurt. Gandhi often said there were many things he was willing to die for, but nothing he was willing to kill for. In nonviolent conflict, people are willing to be beaten, or jailed, or even killed, and they will only defend themselves with their convictions, their willingness to persevere and the force of their strategy. The result of this discipline, over time, is to make the aggressor see that what he wins militarily or through terror he cannot keep for very long without massively increasing the resources required to suppress all aspects of civil society.

York: Nonviolent movements often form in response to out-and-out tyranny, but rather than subduing people, repression often energizes them. It rouses public sentiment from the center, the core, that moderate middle that won’t act until the extremes are cast into dramatic relief. The tide turned in Nashville, for example, when the home of a prominent black lawyer was bombed. Such acts of violence fueled the nonviolent ranks of the civil rights movement, rallied the African-American community, engaged the white community, and caught the attention of media and government, because the contrast was devastating.

Q: So why, as you claim, is nonviolent action so misunderstood and underappreciated?

Ackerman: Several reasons, but I think the main one is that government wages war, or some organized authority uses violence, whereas nonviolent action is a diffused people’s action, and so it’s not easily seen and followed. And because, in small groups, people can be brought out to protest almost anything, there’s a “fringe

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Mkhuleko Jack, who lead a consumer boycott against apartheid South Africa, speaks at a memorial service in Port Elizabeth January 4, 1986. Photo credit: Eastern Cape Herald
Dalai Lama Writes Foreword to Gene Sharp’s New Book in Tibetan

Tibetan spiritual and political leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written the Foreword to our first publication in Tibetan—Gene Sharp’s The Power and Practice of Nonviolent Struggle. “I congratulate and commend the publication of this book about nonviolent struggle, written by Dr. Gene Sharp,” he stated. “I expect that the publication of this work on nonviolent action in the Tibetan language will become an instrument that will widely open the door of knowledge of the Tibetan people on the subject.”

Our first Tibetan publication, expertly translated by Pema Tsewang Shastri, was published earlier this year by the Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre (TPPRC) in New Delhi. The TPPRC coordinated the book’s publication and has distributed the work to Tibetan leaders, schools, organizations, and activists.

The Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche, Chairman of the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (Tibet’s parliament-in-exile) and Chairman of the TPPRC, wrote an Introduction to the book as well.

Interest in a Tibetan language book on nonviolent struggle arose from a series of intensive workshops the Einstein Institution has conducted for Tibetan leaders and activists over the past several years.

The Power and Practice of Nonviolent Struggle includes a condensed treatment of the core analysis contained in Dr. Sharp’s three-volume work The Politics of Nonviolent Action, and it is augmented by a series of brief accounts of nonviolent struggle around the world. The work also includes additional chapters on political applications and strategic planning for nonviolent struggle. Dr. Sharp is in the process of editing further accounts and developing additional chapters that will be included in future editions.

Sharp Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

In April 1999, Gene Sharp was awarded the Peace Studies Lifetime Achievement Award at the 11th Annual Peace Studies Association meeting held at Siena College in New York. The award recognizes Dr. Sharp’s decades-long inquiry into the nature and dynamics of nonviolent struggle.

In acceptance, Dr. Sharp presented an overview paper of his work entitled “Developing a Realistic Alternative to War and Other Violence.”

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element” that taints some of these ideas. For example, I heard recently that certain animal rights activists protested an episode of the Survivor TV show because someone on the program roasted a rat for dinner, and these protestors were defending the rights of rats. Now the animal rights people have actually waged a very successful campaign over the past 20 years to get people to stop wearing fur, to lessen cruelty to animals in mean and gratuitous ways, to make people more sensitive to the feelings and lives of other creatures besides humans, and that’s a good thing. But then you get a bunch of people marching in front of CBS screaming “Save the Rats,” the media jump on it and people think: “Aha! Crazy activists.” So there’s this impression that the only bona fide power struggles are those that are fought militarily and that nonviolent strategy can only be used by powerless fringe groups, which are barely tolerated in benign societies.

Another important aspect of why nonviolent conflict is misunderstood and under-appreciated is because it’s so diverse in its practice and methods and participants. The media (much less historians) don’t know how to recognize where it is operating. If country A sends troops into country B, the sides are clearly defined and, literally, the battle lines are drawn. If you’re not dealing with international conflict between huge armies, but rather with efforts to undermine the entrenched power of the autocrat or invader, and you combine that with cumulative action by many people on many fronts—a boycott here, a demonstration there, a petition, a work-slowdown—the location is no longer clear. Where do the media send the cameras, or how does a historian frame a simple narrative?

Q: The media often focus on leaders. Is that a good way to delve into nonviolent movements?

Ackerman: There are two important things about leadership in these conflicts. One is that the leaders themselves are often reluctant leaders and even more reluctant heroes. They’re not power mad, they’re not looking for glory—some of them don’t especially want to be leaders; they just want to stop the tyranny or the inequity, whatever. Which brings us to the second point, which is that when there is no clear leadership, movements lose their focus and momentum.

York: The American civil rights movement has become identified with Martin Luther King Jr., who was a phenomenal leader—but the fact is, he wasn’t alone. In Nashville, Jim Lawson and Bernard Lafayette were central to the Nashville protests. Lawson was, in fact, one of the architects of the civil rights movement, because he trained students and other demonstrators in nonviolent tactics that he himself learned from Gandhi’s people in India. But in many nonviolent conflicts, a paramount leader may not be necessary, because ordinary people on their own initiative can take nonviolent action.

“These are powerful stories — a dissolving evil, and life eclipsing oppression, and the world of the 2 more humane if it heeds it.”

— Jimmy Carter, former President

INTERVIEW continued from p. 3
About truth overcoming lies, love death. Nonviolent valor can end 21st century will be safer, freer, and the lessons of this series.”

Q: Both of you speak exclusively of nonviolent conflict, nonviolent action, but you never use the terms “nonviolence” or “passive resistance.” Why?

Ackerman: This is something I feel strongly about. It’s not a semantic distinction; it’s the critical difference between action and inaction. What Gandhi did and what the people in Chile did and what Lech Walesa did was anything but passive. They didn’t just sit there. They went out and did proactive things. They held strikes and they organized boycotts and they put themselves in harm’s way precisely because their actions punished their military oppressors. You can attach the word “nonviolent” to all kinds of initiatives, including unorthodox techniques of seeking influence in a parliamentary setting. But the term, nonviolent conflict makes it clear that you’re talking about using nonviolent weapons, nonviolent activism, in the most serious battles for fundamental human rights.

Confusion can sometimes be created with the term nonviolence. For example, UNESCO has designated this as the Decade of Peace and Nonviolence, which is about people being good to each other, changing personal behavior to acknowledge the common good, defining one’s own ethical positions. Now that’s fine, good work. But we’re talking about strategic nonviolent conflict, the use of nonviolent strategies, whether people have access to violent weapons or not. There have been many cases of people who have chosen nonviolent approaches even when they had military options, and this is very important to understand. People in nonviolent struggles are not unarmed—they are simply not armed with violent weapons, but make no mistake, they have formidable resources that flow from the fabric of their society. They are not necessarily principled advocates of nonviolence or other forms of peacemaking. Nonviolence seeks to make the conflict go away by virtuous behavior, while nonviolent strategists seek to win by aggressive engagement with an opponent.

York: Absolutely. Most people think of Gandhi as a saint. Perhaps he was, but that was only one facet of the man. He was much more. Our film shows that he was a brilliant political strategist.

South Africa Program
Books Published

In January 1993, the Albert Einstein Institution officially launched the South Africa Program at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Two years of prior research and interviews, which included Nelson Mandela and other top South African leaders and scholars, revealed an important finding: while South African activists felt deeply proud of their heritage of and participation in the liberation struggle, they did not view nonviolent direct action as a field for systematic analysis or implementation. Activists had not used their detailed knowledge to assess objectively methods, failures, and successes—assessments the Albert Einstein Institution believed could provide valuable insight to the broader study of nonviolent struggle.

The Program embarked on three major research projects. Recently, the results of two of these projects—the Project on Civil Society and the Black Trade Unions Project—have been published by M. acmillan Press (U.K. and other countries) and St. Martin’s Press (U.S.A).

From Comrades to Citizens: The South African Civics Movement and the Transition to Democracy, edited by Glenn Adler and Jonny Steinberg, examines the role of black township organizations, or “civics,” as they are known in South Africa, in the struggle for rights and justice. Throughout several decades, members of these voluntary associations concerned themselves primarily with improving living conditions within black townships. Around 1979, however, civics emerged as distinctive and dynamic elements within the broader ebb and flow of mass-based struggles. By late 1980, civics had mushroomed throughout the country. Adopting a policy of “making the townships ungovernable,” members organized street committees to counter state security measures and mounted campaigns of rent, bus, and consumer boycotts. Relying predominantly on nonviolent direct action, civics were to form one of the strongest weapons against the apartheid state.

Trade Unions and Democratization in South Africa, 1985–1997, edited by Glenn Adler and Eddie Webster, analyzes the relationship between South Africa’s labor unions and the shift to democracy. In the 1970s and 1980s, the powerful black trade union movement established itself as a strategic actor in South Africa with the capacity to mobilize both inside and outside the workplace. Through widespread strikes, slow downs, stay aways, and other forms of nonviolent action, the black trade union movement played a central role in challenging the apartheid system. After the ban on the African National Congress (ANC) was lifted and the government became majority-elected, black trade unions
Karen and M pamphlets distributed in Burma

Over the past decade, the Albert Einstein Institution has been asked to provide critical resources to Burmese pro-democracy groups. Recently, we have fulfilled a long-standing request—to provide indigenous language materials on nonviolent struggle to some of the large ethnic groups in Burma. Karen and M language editions of Gene Sharp’s booklet From Dictatorship to Democracy are now circulating among activists inside the troubled country.

Burma has one of the most complex ethnic mixes in the world. The Karen and M are two of the numerous ethnic groups that have long lived in the rugged hilly tracts that surround the main delta region of the country. Karen and M leaders and activists have consistently sought—often through guerrilla warfare—greater political and civil rights. The current military regime, which seized power in a 1988 coup and by that later changed the country’s name to Myanmar, lost nationwide elections in 1990, yet still clings to power. The regime has more than doubled the size of the military and has launched scorched earth campaigns against civilians and ethnic military forces, and has consistently been charged with massive human rights violations, corruption, and involvement in the drug trade. Citizens of the numerous ethnic groups have often borne the worst of the regime’s crimes.

From Dictatorship to Democracy was originally developed in 1993–1994 for the Burmese pro-democracy effort. At the request of the late U Tin M Aung Win, former editor of the opposition weekly Khit Pyi (New Era), Gene Sharp wrote a series of articles that provided a conceptual framework for developing and engaging in nonviolent struggle against a dictatorial regime. Printed in both Burmese and English in the weekly paper, the articles were subsequently reproduced in booklet form—later editions in quite small formats to facilitate distribution and concealment. Altogether, more than 23,000 copies of the Burmese edition have been disseminated.

In 1998 and 1999, we supervised the translation of the booklet into four major ethnic languages—Karen, Mon, Jinghpaw, and Chin. The Karen edition was printed in late 1999 by Drum Publication Group in Thailand. The Mon edition was coordinated by the Political Defence Committee of the National Council of the Union of Burma in late 1999. The other editions will appear in 2000. The results have just been published in Civil Resistance in Kosovo.

Mr. Clark examines how a determined nonviolent struggle by Kosovar Albanians frustrated Serbia’s plans for Kosovo. He describes the growth and potential of the movement, its subsequent stagnation, and attempts to reinvigorate it. In assessing the achievements and limitations of nonviolent action in Kosovo, Clark suggests how the policy could have been more effective and draws lessons for consideration in future peace-building. Clark also addresses the failure of foreign governments. International diplomacy, he argues, took Kosovar Albanian nonviolence for granted. It did not respond adequately to the danger of war and failed to adopt preventative
He understood power, the source of power, and how to exercise power. If we do nothing more than add this dimension to how Gandhi is perceived—that will have been worth our effort.

Q: What about Tiananmen Square in China? Street protests in America? Are these examples of strategic nonviolent conflict?

Ackerman: Not really. First, successful nonviolent resistance reflects strategy, which implies a cumulative series of nonviolent actions or tactics intended to effect change. One kind of sanction, such as the demonstrations in Beijing, no matter how forceful or dramatic, cannot produce permanent change. But a strategic, well-managed campaign of nonviolent events can. Nonviolent strategy may include protests, but it will also include boycotts, strikes, noncooperation, and other tactics knitted together over time. Secondly, when we talk about strategic nonviolent conflict, we're using the same context, as we are when we talk about strategic violent conflict—that is, action directed against oppressors or invaders. So far the latest street demonstrations in America, such as in Seattle, haven't shown that a real movement with a real strategy has formed.

Q: What do you want viewers to take away from this series?

York: A sense of hope and a sense of appreciation for what's been accomplished, and what they themselves can do. We know from activists around the world, whom we've spoken to in the course of making this series, that many leaders, many participants, saw Attenborough's film about Gandhi and it inspired them to embark on nonviolent campaigns of their own. I hope that people will see Gandhi's techniques in India, speaks in Nashville, where he trained protestors for the famous 1960 lunch counter sit-ins. Photo Credit: The Tennessean

Einstein Institution
Monograph Series

Our Monograph Series is the only collection devoted solely to research on the history and dynamics of nonviolent struggle. Monographs can be ordered from our website at www.aeinstein.org or by writing to us (see address on p. 8).

Insurrectionary Civic Strikes in Latin America 1931-1961
by Patricia Parkman

"From 1931 to 1961, eleven Latin American presidents left office in the wake of civic strikes," writes Parkman. She compiles fifteen cases and includes a chronological summary of each case. 55 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-00-9) Price: $4.00

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In the wake of the 1989 revolutions of Eastern Europe, the late Johan H old—former Norwegian foreign and defense minister—outlined a future European security order and explored the potential of nonviolent civilian-based defense as a complement to military defense. 22 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-01-7) Price: $3.00

The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle
by Gene Sharp

“No nonviolent action...is capable of wielding great power,” writes Sharp, “because it attacks the most vulnerable characteristics of all hierarchical institutions and governments dependence on the governed.” 19 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-02-5) Price: $3.00

Civil Resistance in the East European and Soviet Revolutions
by Adam Roberts

Roberts examines the role played by “people power” in the undermining of regimes in Eastern Europe, the achievement of Baltic independence, and the defeat of the 1991 coup attempt in the Soviet Union. 43 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-03-1) Price: $4.00

Nonviolent Action in the Liberation of Latvia
by Olgerts Eglitis

Eglitis recounts how Latvians used nonviolent action to throw off Soviet control and regain independence. He includes official documents that outline popular resistance plans against Soviet attack in 1991. 72 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-04-1) Price: $5.00

Nonviolent Struggle and the Revolution in East Germany
by Roland Bleiker

Bleiker examines the role that “exit” and “voice” forms of protest played in the collapse of the East German regime. He includes a chronology of the 1989-90 East German Revolution and extensive notes. 53 pp (ISBN 1-880813-06-8) Price: $4.00

Toward Research and Theory Building in the Study of Nonviolent Action
by Ronald McCarthy and Christopher Kruegler

The authors discuss theory development and research in the field of nonviolent action. 35 pp. (ISBN 1-880813-08-4) Price: $4.00
transitional period. The Congress of South African Trade Unions had formalized an alliance with the ruling ANC and contributed to setting economic policy. Demands on unions were often conflicting, as they were striving toward economic growth, frequently in alliance with the government, while remaining committed to the problems of a poorly paid and unproductive labor force.

Both books (hardback, From Comrades, $69.95; Trade Unions, $69.95) can be purchased at a 20% discount arranged by the Albert Einstein Institution. Please contact us for a discount order form.

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KOSOVO

New Report on Activities

We have completed a comprehensive report on our outreach and research activities from 1993–1999. The report features our pathbreaking outreach to Burmese, Baltic, and Tibetan pro-democracy leaders (among others) and documents the breadth of research sponsored and/or conducted by the Institution.

The report is available for downloading (PDF file format) from our website at www.aeinstein.org or by writing to us.

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