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January 19, 1993  
Professor George Gerbner  
234 Golf View Road  
Ardmore, PA 19003

Dear George:

Here I am at it again. Some years ago, I applied to the Guggenheim people, was seriously considered and then was turned down. In retrospect, however, the proposal was not good enough.

So here is a much better one--very brief and with a contents table of the proposed book.

It seems as though this is an unending process, one that started about twenty years ago when the Annenberg dean helped me prepare a plausible dissertation. How the world has changed since then! Since I have to submit this application by October 1, I am hoping that you might find time to mark up this draft and fax it or mail it back to me with any comments or suggestions.

I still regret that I could not get to Slovenia, but am looking forward to being with you at the cultural environment kick-off next year. Hoping to hear from you soon.

As ever,

  
Kusum Singh

September 14, 1995

**Kusum Singh -- 1996 proposal to Guggenheim Foundation**

Building on many years of research and interviews in various countries, I plan to complete a manuscript entitled *SACRED NONVIOLENCE: Civilization, Not Barbarism?*

The importance of nonviolence in the post cold war disorder is, unfortunately, not widely understood. Many people see it as utopian or irrelevant. Some view it as a subject discussed by marginal people who do not understand the realities of politics and power. Yet throughout the world, so-called "marginal people" have often changed the world. In India, almost fifty years ago, nonviolent activists achieved what had long been deemed impossible: liberation from the British Empire. In Asia and Africa, other colonies followed suit--in most cases without bloodshed. In the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe (with the exception of Rumania) and the Philippines, the impossible happened again. In Greece, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Nicaragua authoritarian regimes were often displaced without war or by ending a civil war. In the USA the civil rights movement helped change race relations and set a powerful example for movements against war, environmental degradation, sexism, and homophobia.

These achievements are widely forgotten. Many people ~~are emotionally attracted~~ <sup>accept</sup> violence, particularly when it is clothed in the rhetoric of retribution, nationalism, religious extremism or ethnic superiority. Many justify violence as a "last resort" without exploring nonviolent alternatives as possible "earlier resorts." Moreover, nonviolent practitioners have often oversimplified the nature of their own work; like Gandhi, they do not enjoy the leisure for systematic writing. Many scholars, in turn, have tended to oversimplify nonviolence. Some have viewed it as unadulterated pacifism or mere passive resistance. Others have viewed it as confrontational protest only. Still others exclude from the realm of nonviolence traditional methods of peaceful conflict management that, although basically nonviolent, have historically not carried the nonviolent label; these include not only fact-finding, publicity and negotiating but also litigating, legislating, voting (when available or relevant) and the slow and difficult process of generating the formal machinery of constitutional democracy. Some self-styled "Gandhians" see nonviolent principles as moral absolutes that rule out the role of whatever armed services--local, national or transnational--may be needed to prevent or control violence and protect the practitioners of nonviolence. Most of this is what historian George Frederickson calls "Gandhism."<sup>1</sup>

My research indicates that nonviolence has usually been most effective when nonviolent protest, whether passive or confrontational, is combined with the use of constitutional methods and infused with universal moral ideals. During a year free from heavy teaching and advising duties, I shall more formally consolidate my years of work in this field. This means articulating a general paradigm of "integrative nonviolence." In this paradigm I extract essential ideas from the lives of persons who have made major contributions to the practice of nonviolence in this century. These include Benigno Aquino, Corazon Aquino, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Ralph Bunche, Mohandas Gandhi, Vaclav Havel, Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi, Rigoberta Menchu, Taslima Nasreen, Medha Patkar, Andrei Sakharov, Desmond Tutu, and Lech Walesa. For reasons to be fully explained, I include both Malcolm X

## Kusum Singh -- 1996 proposal to Guggenheim Foundation 2

and Nelson Mandela in listing people who have become symbols of human dignity and courage in the face of violent oppression. I draw on the work of Indian authors rarely read outside of their own country and of little known women whose activities have been rarely recognized any where.

In my paradigm I use two slightly unusual concepts: "truth power" and "the golden age within us." They help me bring together--and update-- many practical techniques and high ideals usually thought as separate. This is a complex task that, to my knowledge, nobody else has yet attempted.

The term "truth power" (Dennis Dalton's translation from Hindi of Gandhi's word *satyagraha*) replaces "truth force," the usual translation of the term Gandhi invented to describe his resistance activities in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> This "power of the powerless," as Vaclav Havel explains, involves much more than passive resistance.<sup>3</sup> In identifying 196 nonviolent techniques, Gene Sharp includes many that are confrontationally activist, even economically injurious.<sup>4</sup> Truth power also involves striving for forms of democracy that, beyond mere formalism, allow political party competition, nourish women's participation in power and escape the dangers of charismatic leadership. But it need not imply any total disavowal of physical force. Personal security --including that of nonviolent activists--is not possible without protection by the very police power of the state that, if undisciplined, may undermine personal security. The threat or use of armed forces may also be necessary to protect providers of humanitarian relief for starving people or, under special circumstances, to promote international peace keeping or peace making. It is also needed to help regulate the production and distribution of deadly weapons. On none of these matters is truth automatically revealed or fully attained. "Moral principles," as Catholic writer Peter Steinfel puts it, "arise from experience; they are tested and revised in the face of new experience, and they must be embodied in experience and the collective memories that result."<sup>5</sup> Gandhi called this process "experimenting with truth."

The idea of "the golden age within us" was first used in 1955 by Claude Levi-Strauss: "If men have always been concerned with one task--how to create a society fit to live in--the forces which inspired our distant ancestors are also present in us. . . . What was done, but turned out wrong can be done again. The Golden Age, which blind superstition had placed behind [or ahead] of us, is *in us*."<sup>6</sup> In 1966 the United Nations' General Assembly began to propose human rights treaties that set forth basic ideals of an entire world fit for all people, not merely the rich and powerful, to live in; these proposals also aimed at prohibiting the worst forms of barbarity and protecting specified groups of people who might otherwise suffer from oppression, deprivation or discrimination. Treaty ratification, however, has often been a "stealth process," with neither governments nor media doing enough to inform people about treaty-protected rights and the responsibilities of governments, groups and persons. Officials may then more readily ignore violations, evade responsibilities and deny remedies, while hiding behind the rhetoric of freedom from intervention. Yet nonviolent leaders have usually acted to fulfill both the oft-stated civil and political rights or the more muted economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. They have also gone much further. For them,

### Kusum Singh -- 1996 proposal to Guggenheim Foundation 3

freedom has meant independence not only from oppression but also from their own baser instincts, habits or traditions. Hating sin but not the sinners, they have tried to act on the Gandhian principle that "my adversary is my friend." In countries where dictatorships or apartheid have been displaced without war, they have followed the nonviolent process of "truth and reconciliation;" they are bringing the truth about previous crimes into the open without mandatory punishment of all those who had aided or abetted the criminals.

Yet violence itself often dominates the world's mass media. Real-life violence through war and armed gangs is overdramatized and reinforced by TV drama, films and news reports. Nonviolence is treated as less newsworthy and dramatic. As the number of available channels enlarges (even including worthwhile programs), TV watching displace much direct communication among people. In this cultural environment the "ur fascism" Umberto Eco predicts<sup>7</sup> and the "friendly fascism" Bertram Gross warns against<sup>8</sup> raise their ugly heads.

My completed manuscript will also show how, in contrast, women and men throughout the world are reinventing nonviolence. They see their practice of nonviolence as a sacred responsibility.<sup>9</sup> Through personal example, face-to-face organizing and efforts to "green" the media wastelands, they channel frustration and rage into constructive channels of love for humankind. They developed educational programs on nonviolence in defense of human rights for all people at work, rest and play at home, in their nations and the world as a whole. This transdisciplinary effort might illuminate the opportunities and obstacles on the road from current barbarisms to more civilized societies in the first decades of the 21st century.

#### Notes

1. George Frederickson. *Black Liberation: A Comparative Study of Black Ideology in the United States and South Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1995.
2. Most previous writers in English have translated the Hindi term (in some ways, really untranslatable) as "truth force." More recently, political theorist Dennis Dalton has replaced "truth force" with "truth power," thus bringing Gandhi's thought and action more fully into the language of political struggle and political science. Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*, Columbia University Press, 1993
3. Vaclav Havel. "The Power of the Powerless," Vaclav Havel et al. *The Power of the Powerless*, M. E. Sharpe, 1990, p. 41. Nonviolent practice helps bring into the open what Havel, calls the "hidden sphere of life in its real aims, of its hidden openness to truth."
4. Sharp, Gene. 1973. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (3 volumes). Boston: Horizons Books
5. Peter Steinfels. "Beliefs," *The New York Times National*, Saturday, July 29, 1995
6. Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*. 1955. Translated from the French by John and Doreen Weightman. Atheneum, 1973. p. 392-393
7. Umberto Eco. "Ur Fascism," *New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995
8. Bertram Gross. *Friendly Fascism*, South End Press paperback, 1982
9. "Without responsibility." writes Michael M. Nagler, "no liberties can have much meaning." *America Without Violence*, Island Press, 1982. He also offers an important discussion of love.

September 15, 1995

From **SACRED NONVIOLENCE: Civilization Not  
Barbarism?**

by  
Kusum Singh and Bertram Gross\*

Preface: Nelson Mandela  
Foreword: George Gerbner

Introduction: **Reluctant Embraces**  
Part One: **TRUTH POWER**

**1. NONVIOLENT ACTIVISM: More than Passive Resistance**

The better known messages  
The lesser known messages  
Unconditional love

**2. TRUE DEMOCRACY: More than Formalism**

Female-male partnerships  
Non-charismatic leadership  
Political parties with a difference

**3. DISCIPLINED FORCE: Beyond Pacifism**

The police power of states  
Regulation of deadly weapons and armed forces  
International peace keeping, making and building

Part Two: **THE GOLDEN AGE WITHIN US**

**4. HUMAN RIGHTS: Universal Moral Ideals**

International proclamations  
Responsibilities and remedies  
Technology serving basic needs

**5. COMMUNICATION: Not by Media Alone**

Education for conflict resolution  
Fertilizing the "media wasteland"  
Oceanic circles

**6. CIVILIZATION**

Drifts toward "Ur Fascist" barbarism. The barbarians within the gates  
The possibility of civilization



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May 16, '95

Dear George,

Hope you have not  
given up on Gandhi and me!  
With Bert's help, we are  
moving along slowly but  
surely.

Any comments from you  
would come as a real  
encouragement.

With warm regards,  
Kusum

**George Gerbner**

**University City  
Science Center- One East**

3624 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
Telephone/fax 215-387-5202

September 19, 1995

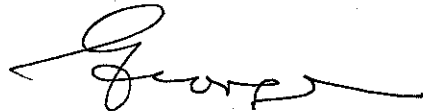
Dear Kusum:

I read your draft -- between trips, deadlines, teaching chores and lots of networking traffic, so I must be brief.

The only minor revision I suggest is to use "accept" instead of "emotionally attracted" on the first page.

But the main problem is that this proposal reads like a synthetic essay of second-hand sources. You should emphasize the original unpublished material (e.g. interviews) you have, and your other original observations and research. Foundations rarely give grants for authors to write books, unless there are unique circumstances and opportunities to make original contributions. So I would stress that and give detailed information on transcripts, documents, etc. that you will use and integrate with other authors' ideas to come up with an original theory.

Good luck, best to you and Bert, keep me posted.



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I am very pleased to write in support of Dr. Kusum Singh. I was her dissertation adviser and have followed her academic career ever since. We have published some of her work in *World Communication; a Handbook*, and in the *Journal of Communication* (both of which I edited). I am, therefore, familiar with Dr. Singh's scholarly work and abilities.

Dr. Singh has developed a powerful and provocative theory on the subject of her proposal for a Fellowship project. It is a subject on which she is a leading expert. Extensive preparation and her own background make her uniquely qualified for this ground-breaking project.

Dr. Singh has qualities of a renaissance scholar. She is theoretically versatile and profound. Her research is thorough and her writing lucid. Her project is well-organized and ready to be completed. I recommend her highly.

George Gerbner, Professor and Dean Emeritus  
The Annenberg School for Communication  
University of Pennsylvania  
Director, the Cultural Indicators Project  
University City Science Center  
Philadelphia

JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

90 Park Avenue · New York, N.Y. 10016

November 1995

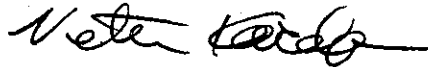
Dear Mr. Gerbner:

The attached papers concern a Fellowship applicant who has referred us to you. We shall be grateful for your candid and critical appraisal of the candidate. You may be sure that your comments (which we would appreciate receiving at your earliest convenience) will be held in the strictest confidence.

If you find it necessary to use your own stationery, please return our form as well.

With our best thanks for your help.

Cordially yours,



Peter Kardon  
Director of Planning

NB: Please destroy the attached plans.

Mr. George Gerbner  
University City  
Science Center-One East  
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Philadelphia, PA 19104

September 28, 1995

**Kusum Singh -- Proposal to Guggenheim Foundation for 1996**

Since the end of the late Cold War, the specter of barbarous violence has been stalking the world. Bloody wars rage in many parts of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. Civil war and terrorism grip Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Even in "civilized" countries rich in wealth and technology, people suffer the insecurity created by violent crime, domestic violence, murder, and terrorism. A cultural environment of accepted (and occasionally glorified) violence dominates vast areas of the world—even in homes, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces. Many people see extreme violence as necessary when justified by the rhetoric of retribution, nationalism, religious extremism or ethnic superiority. They justify violence as a "last" resort without exploring "earlier" alternatives. They see nonviolence as a utopian idea held by marginal people who do not understand the realities of politics and power.

Yet so-called "marginal people" have often won the power to make changes that had earlier been deemed impossible. In the earlier years of this century, after years of being jeered at or jailed, nonviolent female activists, with the support of some men, won the right to vote. In the United States, one of the first countries with female suffrage, the civil rights movement helped improve race relations, thereby setting a powerful example for movements against war, environmental degradation, sexism, and homophobia. In India, almost fifty years ago, the Gandhi-led liberation movement achieved freedom from the British. In Asia and Africa, other colonies followed suit—in most cases without bloodshed.

Later, the nonviolent Solidarity Movement under the leadership of Lech Walesa peacefully displaced the Communist dictatorship in Poland. This was followed by the so-called "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Bloc and the disappearance of the Soviet Union itself. Nonviolent activists displaced the Marcos regime in the Philippines. In Greece, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil authoritarian regimes were displaced without war and, as in Nicaragua and El Salvador, by ending civil war.

More recently, without the civil war that was earlier regarded as inevitable, the African National Congress displaced the apartheid regime headed by President F. W. de Clerk's National Party. Today de Clerk is a vice president in a democratically-elected government headed by Nelson Mandela, his former adversary. With the help of United States Armed Forces, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (previously overthrown by the Haitian military) is now president of a Haiti in which long traditions of violence are being slowly overcome.

**Unfortunately, no one has yet attempted to bring together the many factors underlying these great and diverse events.** This is not for the lack of documentation. On each of these events there is a rich literature of detailed histories, journalistic reportage, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and recorded speeches. There is even a treasure house of video tapes, well-organized documentaries and insightful films and novels. **What has been lacking, rather, has been a deep enough understanding of nonviolence and the circumstances favorable to its use.** This is not to be simply extracted from statements by nonviolent leaders. They have often oversimplified the nature of their own work; like Gandhi, they have not enjoyed the leisure for systematic writing, let alone cross-cultural comparisons. Many scholars, in turn, seriously misunderstand the practice of nonviolence. Some have viewed it as total pacifism or mere passive resistance. Others have viewed it as confrontational

## **Kusum Singh -- 1996 proposal to Guggenheim Foundation 2**

protest only. Still others exclude from the realm of nonviolence traditional methods of peaceful conflict management that, although basically nonviolent, have historically not carried the nonviolent label. Some self-styled "Gandhians" see nonviolent principles as moral absolutes that rule out the role of any armed forces.

My research plan, as indicated in my "career narrative," centers around the question **"What have been the many factors, including cultural traditions and historical circumstances, underlying successful or partly successful nonviolent movements?"**

In bringing these factors together in an integrative model, I shall consolidate and update my data from over 200 tapes, extensive notes, fumbling articles and historical documents on the activities of persons who have become symbols of dedicated courage in the face of violent oppression. These include Corazon Aquino (the Philippines), Jean-Bertrand Aristide (Haiti), Mohandas Gandhi (India), Vaclav Havel (the former Czechoslovakia), Martin Luther King Jr. (the United States), Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar), Andrei Sakharov (the former Soviet Union), and Lech Walesa (Poland). For reasons to be fully explained, I include Nelson Mandela despite his temporary use of controlled sabotage. I shall also draw on the life work of little known women and men who have been rarely recognized anywhere and Indian activists and scholars rarely known outside India.

All these people have something in common. Like the North American gentlemen who supported a war of independence in 1776, they have risked life and "sacred honor" on behalf of progress then deemed improbable. Any successes, according to my hypotheses and data, have resulted from such major factors as these: special historical circumstances, non-charismatic leadership styles, some high moral ideals, a variety of nonviolent operations, multiple modes of communication, and their paradoxical relations with violence. In all cases there have been post-miracle failures.

Let me spell out these hypotheses more specifically:

1. Historical circumstances. For each of the nine countries studied, I shall identify specific factors that provided opportunities for nonviolent activism. These include legacies or traditions of resistance to repression, the after-effects of war, the internal weaknesses of oppressive regimes and the opportunities provided by cold war competition between communist countries and the "free world."

2. Many leaders with a "common touch." Most successful leaders have built organizations and coalitions with many others in active leadership roles. Discouraging over-dependency on themselves, they have usually welcomed spontaneous activities initiated by others. They set personal examples of unusual courage. "My life," said Gandhi, "is my message." While well educated (with the exception of Walesa), they remained in touch with the less educated or illiterate. Efforts to deify them as superhuman persons with a Weberian type of charisma have tended to undermine the power of their movements.

3. Commitment to a few high moral ideals. Human freedom has been the major rallying ideal. It has been interpreted as freedom from legalized discrimination and unjust imprisonment, freedom of speech, and freedom to take part in competitive politics through voting. A basic undercurrent has been freedom from patriarchal traditions that impeded active participation by women. Still more fundamental has been the idea of freedom from human impulses to demonize, vilify or personally hate

### **Kusum Singh -- 1996 proposal to Guggenheim Foundation 3**

oppressors. Trying to act on the Gandhian principle that "my adversary is my friend," they have sought common grounds for working with former opponents.

4. Nonviolent activism: more than passive resistance. The best known methods of "creative nonviolence" have been public demonstrations, memorial services, strikes, civil disobedience and sanctions. These have been most effective when associated with the use of fact-finding, negotiating and publicity as well as litigating, legislating, voting (when available or relevant) and the slow and difficult process of generating or improving the formal machinery of constitutional democracy.

5. Communication: not by media alone. Many of these leaders have become temporary "media stars." When denied access to major domestic media, they have often won attention from the foreign press and influential organizations abroad, including the United Nations or even a number of foreign governments. Any success with the media, however, has been achieved through other modes of communication: face-to-face relations and religious or political organizations. Top-top and middle level discussions seem to have been most successful when more circular communication (including "bottom-sideways" and "bottom-up") communication takes place.

6. The violence paradox. Violence by oppressors has usually created moral abhorrence by those who learn about it, even in the suppressed conscience of many oppressors. Also, counter-oppression threats or use of violence have lent more legitimacy to nonviolent movements. Finally, even those leaders inclined toward total pacifism have usually recognized various needs for physical force. Personal security -- including that of nonviolent activists--is not possible without protection by the very police power of the state that, if undisciplined, may undermine personal security. The threat or use of armed force may also be necessary to regulate the production and distribution of deadly weapons, protect providers of humanitarian relief for starving people or, under special circumstances, to promote international peace keeping or peace making.

In all of these countries, victory has been accompanied by failure. The high spirit of former nonviolent movements seems to have faded in the face of powerful assaults on economic, social and environmental protections. The doors of opportunity for a better educated minority have not been open enough for the majority of the population. Most people are plagued by the barbarous insecurities of poverty, joblessness, bad jobs, and ever present threats of physical violence. With a decline in civility and civil discourse, new fascist movements have raised their ugly heads. Yet hundreds of little known people in these countries are trying to resist evil by linking high ideals, without which power is barbarous, and pragmatic power, without which ideals are futile.

By August 1997 a first draft of a manuscript will provide details on an improved set of hypotheses, with illustrations from each country. To provide a sweeping cross cultural perspective, I shall sacrifice depth of detail and raise questions that deserve more intensive study. Many scholars and activists here and abroad have encouraged me in this effort. With their help, I hope to get feedback from biographers, major collaborators or family members of each leader and from those leaders who are the still alive. My colleagues suggest that this effort might encourage more cross-cultural awareness among scholars and activists and illuminate the opportunities and obstacles on the roads toward more civilized societies. The title of this manuscript might be become "Sacred Nonviolence: Civilization or Barbarism?"