

Challenge Corporate Power



RAN.org

An Introduction to Nonviolent Direct Action

"We who engage in non-violent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with... Injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience, before it can be cured." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Civil disobedience is the assertion of a right which law should give but which it denies... Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good... All through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants... and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall, always." - Mahatma Gandhi

The Rainforest Action Network is committed to creating an environmentally and socially just world. This introduction will help you understand one of the most powerful tools we use in our campaigns – nonviolent direct action.

What is Nonviolent Direct Action?

Nonviolent direct action (NVDA) is, at its simplest, taking action directly on an issue, without hurting anyone.

NVDA can conjure up images of barricades, arrests and confrontation, but actually it encompasses much more. For example, if your issue is hunger then giving someone a meal is a direct action. Riding a bicycle to work instead of driving a car is another example.

Civil disobedience (CD) is the deliberate and open violation of an unjust or immoral law without resorting to physical violence. Civil disobedience is a type of NVDA. An example of CD is African-American activists in the 1960s refusing to leave restaurants designated "white only."

Other examples of NVDA include: A protest outside a Ford dealer, hanging a banner off the side of a building, disrupting a corporate awards ceremony, holding a vigil, greening your campus or school, or physically blockading a logging road.

The Impact of Nonviolent direct action

Nonviolent direct action is one of the most effective tools for positive social change. Two of the best-known examples are Gandhi's campaign for Indian independence and the Civil Rights Movement in the US. NVDA has a long and

Challenge Corporate Power



RAN.org

proud history in the U.S. One of the most famous direct actions ever, the Boston Tea Party is patriotically taught in school.

Since the beginning of the modern environmental movement, campaigns against nuclear power, toxic waste dumping and for old-growth forest protection have all incorporated significant direct action components.

Most of the world's democracies have been created by acts of conscience against the state. Tyrannical regimes in Serbia, the Philippines, South Africa, Chile and many other countries were overthrown through campaigns that used nonviolent direct action. More recently, the resistance group, Otpor, overthrew Slobodan Milosevic by undermining the power of the Yugoslav police force using NVDA.

From the women's suffrage campaign and the struggle for civil rights, to the ongoing work of labor activists and the development of the modern environmental movement, Creative nonviolent protest continues to galvanize activists, educate the public and shape the debate over many social change issues.

Nonviolent Direct Action and You

Not everyone will be comfortable participating in nonviolent direct action. This is ok. It must also be recognized that it is a privilege of those in white, dominant society to risk their personal freedom without having to worry as much about the consequences of their actions as people of color may. There are many roles to play in any campaign and in any direct action. People should never feel pressured to engage in direct action, nor should they be judged for choosing not to.

NVDA requires respect for the humanity of the oppressor. In situations where there is the risk of a violent reaction from others, it also involves accepting that risk and remaining nonviolent in the face of violence directed against you. This requires considerable preparation and commitment.

If you are interested in making NVDA/CD a part of your campaign, **you must receive proper in-person training through the Rainforest Action Network or partner groups**. We are happy to provide these trainings to activists and activist groups or connect activists with other NVDA trainers. Please discuss the use of any nonviolent direct action or civil disobedience tactic on a RAN campaign with RAN staff before proceeding. activism@ran.org.

More Resources on NVDA and CD

Challenge Corporate Power



RAN.org

The Ruckus Society's Action Planning Manual:

<http://www.ruckus.org/downloads/RuckusActionPlanningManual.pdf>

The RANT Trainers' Collective:

<http://www.rantcollective.net/article.php?list=type&type=17>

The Midnight Special Law Collective:

<http://www.midnightspecial.net>

The Force More Powerful – The Game of Nonviolent Strategy:

<http://www.afmpgame.com>