

# Exercises For Nonviolence Training

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## OVERVIEW

Participatory exercises constitute an important part of any nonviolence training. Exercises serve many purposes. They give participants an opportunity to try out new tactics and techniques in a safe environment. They allow participants to experience feelings and behavior when confronted with threats or anger. Finally, exercises break up a potentially monotonous sequence of presentations and discussion during a training with activities designed to get the adrenalin flowing.

In order for training exercises to be fully effective, nonviolence trainers must give careful attention to the scenarios they choose, and the way they set up any given exercise.

All exercises follow the same basic format:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Scenario
- 3) Action
- 4) Analysis and Discussion.

### 1) Introduction:

To begin, the trainer names the exercise, gives a brief statement of its purpose, and, if appropriate, connects it to the preceding relevant parts of the training (i.e. "We will now do an exercise called 'Hassle Lines,' which is a confrontation exercise designed to expand on the discussion of nonviolence we just finished, and to introduce some specific nonviolent techniques.")

Then the trainer explains the structure of the exercise, but does not give any specific scenario. This is to ensure that all participants understand what will be asked of them, without becoming distracted by the specific roles they are to play. This is a good time to physically arrange the participants into the groupings required by the exercise (into two rows for hassle lines, for example, or into small groups for quick decisions.)

The trainer should make clear how she/he will start the exercise, and how she/he will signal that the exercise should come to an end.

Then the trainer should stop and ask for clarifying questions. Only after all participants are clear on the dynamics of the exercise should the trainer continue.

## 2) Scenario:

Scenarios for the various exercises depend on the specific exercise, the purpose of the training, and the composition of the group. Though the trainer should have planned scenarios in advance and be prepared to present them, flexibility is valuable. Some of the best scenarios are drawn from discussion during the training itself. In addition, scenarios are often modified, and sometimes changed beyond recognition, by the participants. This should be encouraged (within limits), as it tends to make the exercises more relevant to the participants' needs and expectations.

Part of explaining the scenario is assigning roles to individual participants or to groups of participants. If a participant has a strong objection to playing a particular role, she/he should be assigned something else. In general, however, people should be encouraged to attempt a wide variety of roles. One of the valuable outcomes of many exercises is the beginning of identification with an otherwise unfamiliar role ("the other").

Some general guidelines for scenarios include:

Make the scenarios as concrete and unambiguous as possible. Describe the physical setting carefully (e.g. "The peacekeepers are at the edge of a park, with the demonstration taking place behind them. Here is the edge of the park, the demo is right at that wall. A group of counter-demonstrators has just crossed the street, which is over there...")

Tailor the scenario to the group of people being trained, and the type of action for which they are being trained. Use examples of a picket line if a picket line is being planned, etc.

Use scenarios that are as realistic as possible. It is always good to use events that the trainer has actually experienced.

Use scenarios that, in addition to providing the context for the specific objectives of the exercise, also illuminate other aspects of the training agenda. Quick decisions, for example, can be used to explore forms of oppression; hassle lines can stimulate discussion on the unintentional targets of a particular tactic.

After describing the scenario, the trainer should again stop and ask for clarifying questions or comments.

At this point the trainer should be open to making modifications. One of the most useful skills a trainer can develop is the ability to think on her/his feet, and spontaneously change (or even totally reinvent) scenarios. Even the best planned scenario may turn out not to be appropriate for a given group. Input from the group is especially valuable here; participants have a much larger personal investment in a role play they have helped create.

Once agreement is reached, the trainer should be sure to restate clearly the final scenario.

When all questions have been answered, the trainer may want to give participants a little bit of time to think through the scene, and prepare themselves for the roles they are to play. Then the trainer should give the signal to begin.

## **HASSLE LINES**

### **Purpose:**

Hassle Lines are a confrontation exercise designed to raise questions and stimulate discussion among participants concerning specific techniques and attitudes that can be used to defuse potentially disruptive or dangerous situations. Participants learn how confrontation affects them, and how to deal with their fright or anger.

### **Suitable For:**

Nonviolence, Civil Disobedience, and Peacekeeper trainings. Best scheduled towards the beginning of a training, frequently after a discussion of nonviolence or nonviolent techniques.

**Time Required:** 30 - 40 minutes for three hassle lines.

### **Brief Description:**

The exercise begins with all participants lined up in two rows facing each other, so that each person is directly opposite one other person. The trainer then explains the exercise in general terms, outlines a specific scenario involving two people, and assigns one role to one of the lines, and the other role to the other line. After a brief pause during which the participants think through the roles they are to play, the trainer gives a signal for the action to begin. When most of the participants have finished playing their scene the trainer signals that the exercise is over, and begins discussion of the events that have occurred in the individual scenes.

### **Details:**

Make sure there is enough room for participants to form lines, and for the lines to shift back and forth during the exercise. Make sure that participants form even lines, and that everyone knows who her/his partner is (one way to ensure this is to have participants touch or shake hands with their partner). If there are an odd number of participants, one of the trainers should join the exercise. If there is only one trainer, one of the participants will have to sit out the first hassle line, then join the second while somebody else sits it out. Instead of asking this participant to passively, the trainer should encourage her/him to become an active observer.

It is very important to carefully explain the dynamics of hassle lines to the participants, and to make sure that everybody understands exactly what they will be expected to do. Going over a general overview first (e.g. "I will present a scenario involving two people, and assign this line one of the roles and that line the other role...") and then stopping for questions is better than jumping into a specific scenario too soon.

### 3) Action:

During an exercise, the trainer's main responsibility is to be aware of what is taking place, unobtrusively observing the action. If some of the participants seem to be stuck, the trainer may make suggestions to move things along.

Identifying when to end an exercise is usually a judgement call. If most of the participants are running out of steam, or laughing, or repeating themselves, it is a good time to call a halt.

If any participant is getting carried away (overwrought or disruptive) the trainer should intervene. Should this occur, it is sometimes helpful for the co-trainer to deal with the overwrought individual while the trainer continues with the exercise.

### 4) Analysis and Discussion:

The discussion that follows any given exercise is when the experience is processed, and any lessons learned are verbalized and explored in more depth. Participants should report back on what they experienced from their particular perspective, and should be encouraged to ask questions or make comments to the group as a whole on issues raised in their minds.

The exact form of discussion will vary depending on the composition of the training group, the exercise being analyzed, and the specific scenario chosen. Some questions the trainer may wish to ask include:

"What happened from your perspective?"

"What were you trying to achieve in this situation?"

"How did you feel when placed in this situation?"

"Have you ever been in a similar situation? What did you do then?"

"What could you have done differently?"

The trainer should encourage everyone to talk about possible responses to the situations presented, and weigh their relative merits and disadvantages. People should especially be encouraged to discuss similar situations that actually happened to them, how they actually responded, and what the result was.

The trainer should feel free to participate in the discussion when necessary. The trainer has a unique perspective in that she/he was not participating but rather observing from outside. This position is especially suited for giving a critique of body language and general atmosphere. Negative observations can be made impersonal (e.g. "I noticed a number of peacekeepers looking at the ground"). Good examples can be made specific (e.g. "Mary did an excellent job of smiling and looking her antagonist in the eye").

Time constraints often make it necessary for the trainer to cut off discussion before it would naturally end. In these cases the trainer should try to make it possible for every participant to say what is most on her/his mind, and then move on. Watch for the least verbal people in the group, and encourage them to speak, even at the expense of cutting verbose participants short.

To wrap up the exercise, it is helpful for the trainer to restate its purpose, and summarize the most important points made during discussion.

The discussion that follows the actual hassle lines is the most instructive part of the exercise. Participants should be quizzed as to what exactly happened during their scene. Some questions for the line playing demonstrators/peacekeepers are:

"What were you trying to achieve in this situation?"

"What did you say or do that seemed to lower/raise the level of confrontation?"

"How did you feel when placed in this situation?"

For the other line some interesting questions are:

"What did your partner say or do that calmed you down/excited you further?"

"What made it hard/easy for you to continue being belligerent?"

"What do you think your partner should have done when faced with a person like you?"

"What were you thinking and feeling during the scene?"

The trainer should always allow time for at least two hassle lines (and sometimes three or four). The second hassle line should have participants switch roles, so that the people who played demonstrators/peacekeepers the first time are now playing antagonists. This way every participant has the opportunity to experience both sides of the situation.

#### Some Possible Scenarios:

A small demonstration is taking place in Lafayette Park. A Young Republican walking by notices the crowd, and walks up to heckle.

A picket line is taking place in front of the White House. A family of tourists walks up. They are on their annual vacation, and this is their last day in DC. It has been a long day for them; the White House is their last stop. Since they have missed the White House tour (which is what they really wanted to do), they now want to take a few photographs, and are irate that the picket line is in the way of a good shot. They could care less about the politics; they just want their photos.

A picket line is taking place at the Contra office on Connecticut Ave. It has been going on for about an hour, when suddenly the top Contra leadership walks out of the office and begins walking toward their limousines. The demonstrators, who have been fairly orderly up to this point, gather in a crowd and pursue the Contras, shouting insults. Peacekeepers line up between the Contras and the demonstrators, facing the demonstrators.

A Take Back the Night rally is in progress in a small park across from the DC Rape Crisis Center. It is evening, and a musician is playing guitar. A middle-aged man walks up to the edge of the crowd and starts yelling about lesbians.

A march is proceeding down 16th Street. Peacekeepers are walking along the side of the march, making sure the marchers follow the route designated in the permit. The marchers take about fifteen minutes to pass any given point along the route. A car pulls up from a side street and begins to honk: the driver wants to cross the street and continue on her/his way. The peacekeepers motion the marchers to continue, and the driver storms out of his car and accosts the peacekeepers.

Some important things to explain are:

During a hassle line each pair of participants should pretend that they are alone, and ignore all the other people on both sides.

The trainer will be wandering up and down the lines. The trainer should also be ignored.

The one absolute rule in hassle lines is that physical contact is not allowed. Confrontation should remain on a verbal level.

Some participants may find it hard to imagine themselves in the roles that may be assigned. Nonetheless, participants should do their best to act out the part (one of the benefits of this exercise is that participants may begin to understand some of the motivations guiding an antagonist). The clarity of the trainer's descriptions is key to overcoming self-consciousness and helping participants play unaccustomed roles.

The trainer should make it clear how she/he will signal that the exercise is over. Since hassle lines often involve quite a bit of noise, one way to signal the end is to clap one's hands and shout "All Over!".

After the general overview has been explained, and all questions answered, the trainer should present a specific scenario, and assign roles to the two lines of participants.

In addition to the guidelines in the Overview, an additional consideration for scenarios is:

Vary the scenarios. Try to mix trouble coming from outside (counter-demonstrators) with trouble coming from inside (an overwrought demonstrator).

After explaining the scenario, and answering all questions, the trainer should allow participants time (30 seconds or a minute) to think through the scene, and prepare themselves for the roles they are to play. Then the trainer should give the signal to begin.

While the hassle lines are in progress, the trainer should walk up and down the lines, listening in on the individual scenes, and getting a sense of what is going on.

There is one aspect of hassle lines to which the trainer should pay especially careful attention: body language. Comments about participants' stance and demeanor are almost always appropriate. The trainer can discuss the differences between stepping backwards (retreating) and a confident, erect posture; between a worried expression and a smile; between defensively crossed arms and arms relaxed in an open position at one's side; and between looking at the floor and looking an antagonist in the eye.

One technique that is valuable in addressing body language is for the trainer, instead of bringing the action to a halt by clapping (or whatever signal was agreed upon), to instead shout "Freeze!" When all participants have frozen, the trainer can ask them to become aware of their physical position, and begin discussion.

Trainers must use their judgment in deciding when to end the scenes. Generally, if most of the participants are running out of steam, or laughing, or repeating themselves, it is a good time to call a halt. Hassle lines usually last two to four minutes.

## **SPECTRUM**

### **Purpose:**

The Spectrum exercise is designed to expose participants to a variety of (mainly nonviolent) possible tactical responses to a given situation, and make them choose among the alternatives. In addition, the Spectrum allows participants to get a sense of the other members of the group, and gauge how similar or different they may be.

### **Suitable For:**

Nonviolence and Civil Disobedience trainings (not really relevant to Peacekeeper trainings.) This is a good exercise to follow a discussion of nonviolence, or to introduce a section on planning a campaign.

**Time Required:** 20 - 30 minutes

### **Brief Description:**

The exercise begins with all participants seated, facing the trainer, who is standing in front of a wall. The trainer explains the exercise in general terms, then outlines a specific scenario calling for some kind of group response. The trainer then begins to verbally describe a range of possible alternatives that a group might take. After each response is described, the trainer tapes a sheet of paper labeled with the response on the wall, eventually resulting in a line of actions ranging from the "mild" to the "extreme".

After all clarifying questions have been answered, the trainer asks the participants to stand in front of the response that they individually would feel most comfortable with (on both a personal and political level). After all participants have placed themselves in front of their preferred response, the trainer asks everyone to remember where they are standing, and look around to see where everybody else is standing. The participants then sit down, and the trainer leads the evaluatory discussion.

### **Details:**

The trainer should prepare the labeled sheets of paper in advance, so as not to lose time during the exercise. Ideally the labels will all look the same (not six in blue and the two most "extreme" in red, for instance.)

The trainer should choose a wall that is long enough to give each label enough space for participants to line up in front of (two feet per label seems to work pretty well).

It is important to explain the dynamics of the Spectrum Exercise, and make sure everyone understands what is expected of them. Going over a general overview first and then stopping for questions is better than jumping into a specific scenario too soon.

A silent vigil is in progress near the South African embassy. A new person joins the crowd, but breaks the silence with loud chants. A demonstrator walks over to quiet her/him down.

A rally is taking place in a small park on Capitol Hill. A street person, who lives in the park, walks up to a demonstrator at the edge of the gathering and starts yelling disjointedly.

A rally is taking place, and peacekeepers are doing stage security around a fairly large raised platform. A demonstrator, basically sympathetic to the objectives of the rally, walks out of the crowd, and wants to get on the stage to make a point she/he feels is being overlooked.

A rally is taking place, and peacekeepers are doing stage security around a fairly large raised platform. A U.S. Marine, totally unsympathetic to the objectives of the rally, walks out of the crowd, and wants to get on the stage to make her/his point of view known.

A picket line is taking place in front of a fur store, protesting the killing of animals. A customer walks up, and is angry that she/he is being harassed. A demonstrator walks up to defuse the situation.

An affinity group is staging a sit-in in front of the Department of Energy to protest nuclear weapons policy. A DOE employee, who is a strong supporter of "deterrence", is angry that she/he is being inconvenienced.

An affinity group is staging a sit-in in front of the Department of Energy to protest nuclear weapons policy. A DOE employee, who claims to be working on regulations concerning wood-burning stoves, is angry that she/he may be late to work because of the disturbance.

A march is winding its way down Columbia Road, when a demonstrator complains to one of the peacekeepers that someone is causing a disturbance further back in the line. The peacekeeper investigates, and finds an obviously drunk person who is shouting offensive and inappropriate slogans.

A medium sized rally is taking place on the east side of Lafayette Park. A much smaller counter-demonstration has sprung up on the west side of the park. Several demonstrators are engaged in a shouting match with the counter-demonstrators. A peacekeeper tries to keep the noise level down by talking to the demonstrators.

An affinity group is in a large holding cell, after having been arrested for civil disobedience outside the South African embassy. Another prisoner approaches a demonstrator, angry that she/he is not paying attention to local problems.

An affinity group, taking part in an effort to shut down the Pentagon, has blocked the escalator to the Metro station. An angry commuter, headed into town, wants to get through.

Several years ago, in Guadalajara, Mexico, the ruling party won an election through massive fraud. The opposition targeted one of the ruling party's main supporters, the owner of the largest chain of supermarkets in town. Women were organized to enter the supermarkets, fill shopping carts full of food, push them to the check-out counters, and then say "Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot my money." At which point they left, leaving the full shopping carts behind. The hassle line takes place between one of these women and the store clerk, who has to return all the food to the appropriate shelves.



Depending on the scenario, and the group's response, it can be valuable to change the scenario slightly ("It is now one year later. The tactics we just finished discussing have been tried. The situation has not changed. What would you do now?") and do the exercise again.

### **An Sample Scenario:**

The group should imagine that they are a small peace and justice collective that has been meeting semi-regularly in Northern Virginia. At the beginning of the current meeting, one of the members pulls out a copy of the *Washington Peace Letter*, and reads an article aloud. Investigations by *Peace Letter* staff have uncovered the fact that a small company in Arlington is making self-described "security equipment", and selling it to the government of South Africa. In reality, claims the *Peace Letter* article, the equipment is being sold to BOSS (Bureau of State Security), and can only be used for torture.

The collective member, after finishing the article, goes on to explain that she/he has made a follow-up call to TransAfrica, and that TransAfrica confirms the accuracy of the *Peace Letter* article. The collective member then proposes that the whole group take some kind of action.

The suggested responses (all geared towards applying sufficient pressure to persuade or compel the company to stop):

A letter writing campaign.

A relatively "sedate" demonstration (mostly silent, some singing) in front of the company office .

A loud, angry picket line, with lots of potentially hostile chanting, in front of the company office.

Blocking the driveway leading to the manufacturing plant by sitting down.

Entering the company office, and sitting in.

Climbing over the chain-link fence surrounding the manufacturing plant, and occupying the plant.

Cutting through the chain-link fence surrounding the manufacturing plant, and occupying the plant.

Breaking into the office, and burning files.

Breaking into the manufacturing plant, and smashing the machinery used to fabricate the torture gear.

Some important things to explain are:

Participants should place themselves where they would feel most comfortable, not where they would like to feel comfortable.

Participants should try to be realistic in their choices. One objective of the exercise is to explore the potential conflicts between political principles and personal limitations: family and job responsibilities, or immigration status, for example.

Though participants are being asked to respond based on their individual beliefs and restrictions, the scenario calls for a group response. In other words, participants are really being asked to position themselves in front of the tactic they would like the group to choose.

Once the trainer has explained the overall structure, she/he should present a scenario. This scenario should be open-ended enough so that a variety of responses would be appropriate.

Part of explaining the scenario is presenting the suggested responses, and taping the labels on the wall. This can be coordinated with a co-trainer, so that one trainer does the talking while the other trainer affixes the labels.

The trainer should try to order the possible responses in a rough sequence, ranging from "mild" (legal, low-key) to "extreme" (illegal, disruptive). Not all options fit smoothly in such a sequence. One of the interesting discussion topics following the exercise is comments on the trainer's ordering.

Some participants may object that their preferred response has not been mentioned. Two reactions from the trainer are possible: either create a new label and insert it into the list where appropriate (this requires having materials available), or explain that there are many possible tactics that have not been listed, that the following discussion will allow opportunity to discuss some of them, and request that the participants choose one of the available options. Participants might also signal their dissatisfaction with the available choices by not standing in front of any suggested response, but trainers should be aware that this might lead to all participants standing aside.

After the scenario has been explained, and all the labels affixed to the wall, the trainer should again poll the group for clarifying questions. Once these have been answered to the participants' satisfaction, the trainer should request all participants to stand in front of their preferred tactic. When everyone is standing (or has indicated that they do not want to stand anywhere), the trainer should ask all participants to remember where they are standing, and to look around and get a sense of where the other participants have positioned themselves. The group can then return to their seats.

As always, the ensuing discussion contains the heart of the exercise. Some interesting questions to ask are:

Where did you stand? Why?

How comfortable do you feel with some of the other participants' choices?

Do you agree with the sequence of options that the trainer has set up?

Are there options missing? Which ones?

If the group is small enough, it is valuable to go around and ask each participant for her/his response to the exercise. If the group is too large, only a few participants from each option should be polled.

The basic things to explain are:

During quick decisions each group should ignore all the other groups in the room, and imagine that they are alone in the particular situation.

The trainer may walk around the room, listening in to various small groups. The trainer should also be ignored.

The trainer will outline a specific scenario, answer any questions necessary to clarify the situation, and ask the small groups to spread themselves out around the room. The trainer will then give the signal to begin. The participants will have a very short amount of time in which to come to a decision. The trainer may want to give a 30-second warning before calling for discussion to end.

Participants should be warned that they may not be able to reach a mutually acceptable decision in the amount of time given. This may be frustrating, but reflects reality, where time may be in very short supply.

The trainer should make it clear how she/he will signal that the exercise is over. Clapping one's hands is an effective way of breaking through a heated discussion.

After the general overview has been explained, and all questions have been answered, the trainer should present a specific scenario to the participants.

In addition to the guidelines in the Overview, some additional things to keep in mind concerning scenarios are:

Vary the scenarios. Try to mix potentially dangerous scenes (threatening police or counter-demonstrators) with scenes involving disruption (a group of demonstrators chanting inappropriate slogans), and scenes involving personal difficulties (a demonstrator collapses).

Make the scenarios complex enough to be realistic and challenging, but remember that participants will have a very limited amount of time to come to decisions.

Choose scenarios that illuminate any particular situation the group may encounter. This is a good place to bring up issues touched on elsewhere in the training, such as forms of oppression.

After explaining the specific scenario, and answering all pertinent questions, the trainer should give the signal to begin.

While small group discussions are taking place, the trainer may want to wander from group to group, listening in briefly, to get a sense of how decisions are being reached. This makes it possible for the trainer to comment (during the following report back and large group discussion) on the dynamics of group decision making. Since discussion time is limited, the trainer may not have time to visit all the groups. The trainer may also decide that it would be too disruptive to walk around the room.

Trainers must judge when to halt small group discussion. The trainer should allow enough time for most of the groups to come to some sort of resolution, but not allow discussion to become too involved. Depending on the scenario, two to four minutes usually seems right. It can be instructive to throw in one quick decision with a very short amount of time allowed -- one minute -- to demonstrate that is in fact possible to reach agreement in such a brief period.

## **QUICK DECISIONS**

### **Purpose:**

Quick Decisions are an exercise designed to give participants practice in coming to group decisions rapidly in potentially tense situations, and at the same time introduce participants to some of the problems they may face as peacekeepers.

### **Suitable For:**

Nonviolence, Civil Disobedience, and Peacekeeper trainings. Typically follows the section on consensus.

**Time Required:** 30 - 40 minutes.

### **Brief Description:**

The exercise begins with all participants divided into small groups scattered around the training room. The trainer explains the exercise in general terms, then presents a particular scenario calling for a rapid decision. The participants are given a limited amount of time to work out their best response. After the trainer signals the end to the discussion period, the individual small groups report their decisions(s) to the full group. Both the decisions themselves, and the process leading up to the decisions, are discussed.

### **Details:**

The number of participants in the training session, together with the size of the training room, will determine the number and size of the small groups. In general, a group size of four to six participants is best. During the exercise the groups should be spread out enough so that they do not interfere with each other.

The small groups should be formed, but not dispersed too far from each other, before outlining any specific scenario. Participants may be encouraged to choose the group they want to be in. It is easiest, however, to suggest that groups be formed from people already sitting close to each other.

It is important to explain the purpose and dynamics of quick decisions to the full group before presenting any specific scenario. Only after giving a general overview, and pausing for questions, should detailed instruction begin.

A small group of peacekeepers is walking through a medium-sized rally and comes across a woman/man collecting money from the crowd, ostensibly to help pay for the organizing. The peacekeepers have not been notified that such money collection will take place, they do not recognize this person, and she/he is not showing any identification that would indicate she/he actually belongs to the organizing effort.

A small group of peacekeepers, walking along the side of a march, come across a lost child.

A small group of peacekeepers, standing at the side of a picket line in front of the State Department, are approached by a police officer who informs them that there are more people in the picket than the permit allows, and that the demonstration must disperse. Otherwise arrests may begin.

A small group of demonstrators is guarding a shanty erected on campus. A rally is taking place all around the shanty. All of a sudden, one of the demonstrators notices smoke coming out of the shanty.

During a rally in Lafayette Square, but outside the rally itself, two street people who live in the park start fighting. One of them falls down. A small group of demonstrators, walking around the perimeter of the demonstration, notice the scuffle and apparent injury.

A small group of peacekeepers is standing on the edge of a rally. The rally permit clearly defines the allowed area. The peacekeepers see a large group of demonstrators move beyond this allowed area.

As a march is proceeding down the planned route, a small group of peacekeepers at one side notice a counter-march approaching down a side street, on a collision course.

A silent vigil is taking place. A small group of peacekeepers notices a threatening looking police line forming to one side.

A rally is taking place in a small park. Across the street a counter-demonstration is taking place. A small group of peacekeepers notices a group of counter-demonstrators break away from the counter-demonstration, and begin to cross the street, approaching the rally.

An angry picket line is chanting in front of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission building. Peacekeepers are spread out along the edges. A small group of peacekeepers notices a group of demonstrators, armed with cans of spray paint, bunch together and start gesturing and pointing towards the NRC front doors.

A group of peacekeepers, walking through a large rally, comes across a pair of demonstrators fighting.

A group of peacekeepers is standing with a medium sized rally supporting another group of demonstrators engaged in a civil disobedience action. Though the rally is not participating in the CD, the police begin to arrest people at the fringes.

A small group of peacekeepers is walking alongside a legal march. Though no civil disobedience has been planned, a group of marchers spontaneously sits down in front of the doors of Riggs Bank.

An affinity group is sitting in the middle of Pennsylvania Ave, halting traffic. All support people have been cleared away by the police, and arrests are about to begin. Suddenly one of the affinity group members feels extremely ill.

After discussion has ended, each small group should choose a spokesperson to give a report to the full group. The reporting back process should have two components: each group should discuss the decisions they made (concentrating on what concrete action each member would perform), and also discuss the process that led up to the decision.

Some of the questions the trainer might ask are:

What did your group decide to do? Are you satisfied with your decision?

Does everyone in the group agree that what the spokesperson just said accurately reflects the group's discussion?

Who in your group would take responsibility for implementing which part of the decision?

Did you have enough time to come to a mutually satisfactory decision? Having discussed it once, would it be easier to come to a quick decision in the future?

Do you think the decision you came up with is realistic? How confident do you feel that you could successfully implement it?

How did your group make the decision? Did everybody who wanted to speak have a chance to speak? Did any one person dominate the discussion?

How do you think the discussion (and the decision) might have been different if your group was composed of only women / only men / only people of color / only older people?

In a reasonably sized training session, the trainer should have every small group report back to the full group. If there are a very large number of small groups, the trainer may ask only some of the small groups to report back, and then ask if other groups have new or different insights they want to discuss.

Depending on the size of the group and the amount of time allotted to quick decisions, the trainer may want to follow small group reports with general discussion about the scenario and possible responses to it. Time constraints, however, often force the trainer to halt discussion before it would naturally end. In these cases the trainer should try to make it possible for most of the participants to (briefly) say what is most on their minds, and then move on.

In general, it is best to allow time for two or three quick decisions, sometimes more. People should not, however, switch small groups; such activity is generally disruptive, and wastes time.

### Some Possible Scenarios:

A march is proceeding along the planned route, when a police officer approached the peacekeepers leading the march and announces that there has been a change in plans, and the march should deviate from the route assigned in the permit. This deviation would prevent the march from passing the White House.

During a large rally on the Mall, on a very hot summer day, a demonstrator in the middle of the crowd collapses. An affinity group notices.

During a march, a small group of peacekeepers walking along the side is approached by a marcher who announces that she/he feels faint.

## **MINI ROLE PLAYS**

### **Purpose:**

To illustrate a particular point that has been raised during discussion. To make an abstract discussion more concrete. To allow participants to try out various techniques.

### **Suitable For:**

Nonviolence, Civil Disobedience, and Peacekeeper trainings. Used at any point during a training session (often as part of Quick Decisions or a discussion of nonviolent techniques.) For a small training group (fewer than twelve participants), a series of mini role plays can be substituted for a larger, full group role play.

**Time Required:** 5 - 10 minutes.

### **Brief Description:**

Mini role plays typically involve a relatively small number of participants. The trainer should ask for volunteers, outline the particular scenario to be played, and start the action fairly quickly. Afterwards the action is discussed. Often it is valuable to try the same scenario several times, until the group is satisfied with the outcome.

### **Details:**

Mini role plays, unlike the other types of exercises, are spontaneous. Though the trainer may have some ideas for mini role plays before the training starts, these are not scheduled on the regular agenda, and may or may not actually take place. The best mini role plays seem to develop naturally out of discussion.

The trainer can suggest a mini role play whenever she/he realizes that participants are talking about a particular technique that requires physical action; when the discussion is becoming too abstract; when a particular point might be best illustrated through an example; or simply to liven up and energize a sluggish training.

Usually the trainer does not give participants much time to prepare themselves. Much of the value of such role plays comes from acting on the spur of the moment, and then evaluating what worked and what might have been done differently.

When setting up a mini role play, the trainer should make sure that the action takes place in a part of the room visible to all onlookers. Sometimes making a large circle around the action is the best way to ensure this.

An affinity group is sitting in the middle of Pennsylvania Ave, halting traffic. One member of the group, who is wearing a large button clearly identifying her/him as a lesbian/gay man, has been singled out for verbal harassment by one police officer all day. Arrests are about to begin, and the affinity group notices the abusive police officer pointing at the one group member and laughing.

A roving squad of peacekeepers is wandering around the Pentagon parking lot during a large nonviolent CD action. Suddenly they notice a small group of people dousing trash barrels with gasoline, and setting them on fire.

An affinity group is blocking the doorways to NIH, protesting the experimental torture of animals. An NIH employee walks up, and states that her/his research animals will starve unless she/he is allowed inside to feed them.

An affinity group has been blocking the doorways to the Heritage Foundation. They have been there for over two hours: clearly the police have been instructed to wait them out. Heritage Foundation employees seem to have found another entrance. The media has come and gone. Most supporters have also left.

A group of peacekeepers is wandering through a crowd gathered at the staging area of a Gay and Lesbian Pride march. They come across two fundamentalist Christians, one passing out flyers, the other exhorting the crowd to "give up your perverted and sinful ways, and find Jesus." A group of demonstrators is beginning to form around the two. The demonstrators are not feeling friendly.



## **FULL GROUP ROLE PLAYS**

### **Purpose:**

Full Group Role Plays are designed to prepare participants for situations they are likely to encounter. The role play should help participants examine real problems, and give them a chance to try out and analyze different strategies.

### **Suitable For:**

Nonviolence, Civil Disobedience, and Peacekeeper trainings. Best scheduled towards the end of the training session, after discussion of affinity groups and logistics / scenario.

**Time Required:** 40 - 50 minutes

### **Brief Description:**

The exercise generally begins with all participants seated. The trainer explains the exercise in general terms, and then outlines a scenario involving multiple roles. A brief description of each role is given. After all general questions have been answered, the trainer divides the participants into smaller groups, and assigns each group a specific role. Typically the trainer goes to each group, and discusses their role in more depth. The groups are given a short period of time for discussion among themselves, then the trainer gives the signal to begin. After the action has wound down, the trainer gives the signal to end, and leads evaluatory discussion.

### **Details:**

Full group role plays require a critical mass of participants: twelve or fifteen people seems to be the practical minimum for a good role play. If the space is large enough, quite large groups can be involved in a single full group role play; role plays with up to eighty or one hundred participants have worked well in the past (though they take a long time to set up, and even longer to process at their conclusion.)

It is, however, very important that the room be large enough for the role play to take place without participants being cramped. Should the space be too small, only a subset of the participants should be used in to role play. The remainder should act as observers.

If participants are being trained for a specific action, the role play should illustrate that particular action.

The general scenario should be explained once, to the whole group, and the physical layout determined. It is important that the physical setting be explained carefully (e.g. "This is the entrance gate to the Department of Energy. The street starts here. Over by that wall is the legal assembly

In addition to the guidelines in the Overview, one additional thing to keep in mind is that scenarios should be quite simple: centered around one particular activity, with only one or two roles.

Evaluatory discussion frequently leads to suggestions for other mini role plays. This should be encouraged.

### **Some Possible Scenarios:**

A group of peacekeepers is called upon to quickly form a line and hold hands, so as to separate angry demonstrators from counter demonstrators.

A group of peacekeepers is called upon to quickly form a circle around a disruptive demonstrator, and move her/him to the edge of the crowd.

A group of peacekeepers is called upon to "smother" a fight by forming a tight huddle around two antagonists and moving them out of a crowd.

An affinity group is called upon to protect one of its members by forming a circle around her/him (or by linking arms with her/him.)

An affinity group member is lying on the ground, being beaten by several police officers. The affinity group rescues her/him by having several people pile on top, and the rest pulling the entire pile out of danger.

A lone peacekeeper, with no information, is faced by a crowd of angry and anxious parents who have been separated from their children.

During a training session, a discussion of cooperation and non-cooperation is taking place. The trainer sets up a mini role play so participants can experience what it feels like to be dragged away.

A training is preparing a group to protect an abortion clinic from "Operation Rescue". The trainer sets up a mini role play to allow participants to explore countering the "Atlanta crawl."

At least one of the roles should be that of an observer, removed from the action. The person playing this role often has some of the most interesting comments during the evaluation stage. Such a role might be filled by a curious passer-by, or by a journalist.

Eventually the trainer gives the signal to begin, the action takes place, the trainer signals that it is time to end, and evaluatory discussion takes place.

Evaluatory discussion is closely tied to the specifics of the full group role play, and the particular points that the trainer is trying to illuminate. Some questions to start discussion might be:

What did you experience from the vantage point your role gave you (this should be asked of at least one representative of each role.)

What determined your responses? Advance planning? Confusion? Good communication? Orders? Fear?

Did you feel that you had a good overall sense of what was going on? If so, what factors helped you get the big picture? If not, what might have helped reduce the uncertainty and confusion?

Did you actually accomplish the task appropriate for your role?

If your role (or another role) had been played slightly differently, what might the significant changes have been?

How aware were you that a "plant" had been placed in your group? Did you react appropriately?

If there is sufficient time, it is often instructive to run through the scenario multiple times, giving participants the opportunity to try different approaches and tactics based on their previous experiences and the group's discussion. The scenario can be reused unchanged, or modifications made. Participants can be assigned the same roles, or groups switched.

### **A Sample Scenario:**

A coalition of peace and community action groups, in response to ever-escalating US military adventurism in the Third World, has called for civil disobedience to shut down army recruiting stations. The station targeted by the training group is a storefront office on a fairly busy street. It is surrounded by small stores, and is fronted by a wide sidewalk. To the best of participants knowledge, there are only two entrances to the recruiting station, a set of double doors in front, and a side door leading to a narrow alley that runs along the side of the building. The alley has only one exit, leading back to the sidewalk. Across the street there is a small park.

The police have been notified that CD will take place, and have granted a permit for a legal support rally in the park across the street.

The action will take place at 9:00 am, when the office is scheduled to open for the day.

area...") Props such as chairs and tables can be used to good effect (creating an entrance way with chairs, for example, or marking the boundaries of a holding cell.)

In addition to the usual explanation of how the trainer will signal the end of the role play, it is useful to agree on a "code word" that the trainer or any participant can use at any time during the role play to halt the action. The rationale for this is that large group role plays occasionally deteriorate into a pile of people stacked in the middle of the room. Should the person at the bottom of the pile start feeling suffocated, or otherwise severely uncomfortable, she/he needs a way to bring everything to a rapid halt. As soon as any participant hears the code word, she/he should immediately repeat it and move away from the activity taking place. It is helpful if the code word is not something that might be used naturally during the course of the role play; a silly word like "peanut butter" seems to be the best choice.

Then the whole group should be told what the various roles will be (e.g. "There will be two affinity groups trying to block a driveway (divided into those doing civil disobedience and those doing support), a squad of police, some employees trying to enter their place of work, a television camera crew, and a small counter-demonstration.") All general questions and comments should be resolved before going any farther.

Following the overall discussion, the trainer divides participants into smaller groups according to the roles they are to play. If participants have strong objections to a particular role, their wishes should be respected. Everyone should be encouraged, however, to try a role even if it seems foreign to her/his experience.

The trainer visits each group to go over their roles, and to give any special instructions (police, for example, typically have assignments that the demonstrators know nothing about.) If there are many roles, this individual briefing period can take a fair amount of time. It is helpful, if the more than one trainer is present, to divide up such discussion.

Sometimes there are individual roles within a group that the trainer wants to address (a CDer who becomes extremely agitated, or a provocateur). One way to address this without alerting the group to a possible "plant", is to pull one or more participants aside at the previous break (before the role play has begun), and request that they play an additional surreptitious role.

Alternatively, the trainers can prepare slips of paper with special instructions written on them, and hand these out during the small group briefings.

Frequently one of the assigned roles will have a great deal of influence over how the action unfolds (the police typically control what happens after an affinity group has taken whatever actions were planned.) If the participants are relatively inexperienced, or if the trainers have some specific points they want to address, it can be useful for one of the trainers to take a leadership role in one of the smaller groups (play the role of police captain, for instance).

Some groups may have additional decisions to make (affinity groups typically need to divide up into CDers and support, and decide exactly what kind of tactics they will use). Enough time should be allotted for this, but not so much as to bore the other groups.

In addition to the guidelines in the Overview, some additional things to keep in mind are:

The scenario can quite complex; the larger the group, the more roles should be created. Part of the value of large group role plays is experiencing the confusion inherent in a situation where many people are doing different things, all at the same time.

**Roles:**

Two affinity groups, whose goal is to prevent the recruiting station from opening, and to give a clear statement as to why they are taking this action.

Police, who are responsible for maintaining public order. Their special instructions are to target the "ring leaders" of the civil disobedience and make sure these are arrested. The others should be hauled away and released.

Army recruiters, who are rather hostile towards the CDers, and want to make sure that any potential recruits are not turned away.

A few young people interested in the army, who wish to visit the office. Special instructions may further break them down into some who are sure that they want to enlist, and others who are merely investigating their options.

Neighboring merchants, who may or may not be sympathetic to the recruiters, but who definitely do not want to lose business due to a disturbance.

Some curious passers by.

Journalists.

**Possible "Plants":**

A CDer who, at the last minute, loses her/his nerve and becomes extremely anxious.

A provocateur who, regardless of what the affinity groups decide they will do, at a critical moments jumps up and attempts to incite or lead a violent act (like smashing a window, or assaulting a police officer).

