

Turning the Tide Programme of Quaker Peace & Social Witness

Nonviolence for social change

Issue 22

Summer 2010

Editorial

Turning the Tide's tools and techniques are quite eclectic. We use and adapt methods from others, invent our own methods and develop them according to particular group and workshop needs. Some are the same as when we first used them years ago - they work well and we've found no need to change them. Others we've dropped or revised. We are constantly inspired by a world of other approaches and insights, so the body of TTT materials and resources is always changing and growing. We encourage our workshop participants repeatedly to use their experiences to reflect and analyse so they can do better next time, and we try to do the same; a constant cycle of creative action and learning.

In this issue we feature some of the techniques and resources currently attracting our attention. The US training organisation, Training for Change, continues work that American Quaker activist, George Lakey, and others developed in the 1960s and 70s. George came to the UK in the 1970s but, apart from a very few practitioners in the peace and women's movements who took it on, his approach didn't take root here until Quakers adapted it some years later. Turning the Tide is an inheritor of this work, so the account of Training for Change's Super-T course provides a valuable reconnection. Daniel Hunter's article on ground rules also offers an indication of their approach.

We look at activist empowerment techniques of Soma, the use of Forum Theatre for exploring the dynamics of conflict, and the use of alternative narrative for strategic campaigning. I hope you'll get a sense of the energy, creativity, understanding and inspiration these methods can bring. Use the links to discover much more.

Steve Whiting, *Programme Manager, Turning the Tide*

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Turning the Tide local workshops

8 October	- Godalming
9 October	- Huddersfield
13 November	- Northampton
20 November	- Watford

Plus

*Living Authentically Inside and Out:
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Training for Change, Super-T

Steve Whiting

For many years I'd received invitations for a Super-T training course in North America, but could never justify the environmental and financial expense of cross-Atlantic travel. This time, since Turning the Tide (TTT) has established its year-long course, I felt I could bring back some valuable learning for TTT in general, our year course in particular, and for my own development as a trainer.

Training for Change (TfC) was founded in 1992 by American Quaker, George Lakey, who has been involved in nonviolent change work since the 1960s and published extensively both for activist and academic readers. He was part of the radical Movement for a New Society in Philadelphia that older activists might remember.

Super-T is a 3-week comprehensive training course for facilitators, trainers, activists and consultants wanting to use training more effectively; or teachers, community leaders and others who want more experiential tools. The goals are:

- To enhance workshop facilitation and design skills
- To increase the training tools you can use effectively
- To gain greater awareness of yourself as facilitator
- To meet and receive support from other trainers and learn about new developments in the field

It's divided into four modules with a rest day between each:

1. Training for Social Action Trainers, 3-days
2. Adventure Based Learning, 2-days
3. Creative Workshop Design, 3 days
4. Advanced Training of Trainers, 5 days

As with our TTT course, the group was a combination of people doing the whole thing (17 of us) and those coming for a particular workshop. Participants were drawn heavily from the university and local area (Edmonton, Alberta in Canada), although trainers from trade unions, particularly the Canadian postal workers' union, featured in individual workshops. Some participants came from other parts of Canada and the US. Four internationals comprised one from Uganda, one from Zimbabwe and two from UK - the other one was based in Colombia. I stayed in the house of a local activist-artist with two other men, Francis the Ugandan and Jamal the Zimbabwean. There was a valuable orientation for us international participants, which included a briefing about Canadian culture and social change issues. It was helpful for us to know in advance that gender politics and First Nation land rights were issues of concern to many Canadian participants.

The first three workshops were held in different spaces at University of Alberta, and the fourth at the house of a local supporter. It was important to TfC that the advanced training took place in a more intimate, home environment. Meals were part of the workshop provision, including breakfast. Music was a feature during non-session time. Handouts accompanied just about every session. Clear information was given well in advance about venue, travel and participant requirements, but details of the agenda for each workshop were not provided, only the workshop goals and an indication of the training approach.

Direct Education

Like TTT, Training for Change has an experiential learning approach, which it calls Direct Education, developed from the popular education methods introduced in the 1960s by Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. It challenges the traditional approach that Freire describes as the banking, or "empty cup", method, where learners are seen as empty vessels to be filled by deposited knowledge from teachers and books. Instead it uses elicitive methods to work with participants' own knowledge and experience.



Training for Change believes its particular method is unique because it is not curriculum-centred but group-centred, and the trainers' challenge is to design and lead a workshop that helps the group access its own wisdom and expertise.

TfC describes some elements of its Direct Education approach as follows:

Emergent design

Facilitators plan the beginning of the workshop and include diagnostic tools within it, and then create the rest of the workshop in light of the emerging needs and dynamics in the group, staying true to the learning goals.

Workshop as laboratory

Experiential education in which participants try new behaviours to internalise learning.

Difference/diversity as a theme running through the workshop

Constantly paying attention to the dynamics of the group's mainstream and margin, and staying ready to support the group to go deeper. Teachable moments on diversity often arise from unwitting expression of stereotypes of sexist, racist or other behaviours.

Different learning styles

People learn in many different ways: visual, auditory, through the body (kinaesthetic), heart connection, and more. Therefore workshops need to be designed for a diversity of learning styles.

Learning as risk-taking

Deep learning is change, and change requires risk. The facilitator's job is to invite risk and make it safe to risk. This not only has design and facilitation implications (such as creating a safe environment for these risks), but also implies that the facilitators themselves need to take risks, including the risk of transparency to the participants.

All of this was powerfully delivered during the Super-T that I attended. From day one, a four-step learning model was used and reinforced over and over. Based on the experiential learning model of educational theorists, David Kolb and Ron Fry, it sequences these four steps:

1. Experience: provide an experience for participants. This could be an action, role play, game, video, or a reconnection with a previous experience in a way that is more than just remembering.
2. Reflect: allow participants to reflect on that experience, particularly on what it felt like.
3. Generalise invite the group to identify the learning from reflections of that specific experience and see what connections there are more generally. For example, how I reacted in a particular role play might give me an insight into how I or others react in comparable real situations.
4. Apply: assist the group to apply this learning, for example through repeat or follow-up exercises, personal and group commitments, or action/campaign planning.

My overriding experience was of the rigour and discipline with which TfC adheres to this model, and all TfC trainers are thoroughly grounded in it.

Adventure-based learning

The 2-day Adventure-Based Learning (ABL) workshop particularly exemplified this approach. ABL is used to build group cohesion, explore conflict, examine leadership roles, and look at strategic thinking. "Group challenges" provide problems for groups to solve. These hands-on activities are seen as a laboratory for people to experiment with different ways to lead or support a team. One familiar challenge was where two teams from opposite sides of a "river" had to cross to their

opposite bank on a single line of small stepping stones (too small for passing) without touching the river or being seen by a "patrol boat". Another was to define in small groups our "utopias", then defend them from avaricious outsiders. At the end of each exercise participants explore options for wider application and greater effectiveness.

Because a group is making decisions in the moment, ABL helps them see their own dynamics more clearly. It revealed that my Super-T group, for all its radical social change commitment, characteristically deferred to authority and tended to reflect in some ways the society that produced it. This is not unusual but, over a period of days, these tools powerfully reflected this back to the group.

A major thread all through was diversity and inclusivity. This was informed by the understanding, from the process oriented psychology work of Arnold Mindell, that change in any group or society, invariably comes from the margins. The group was continuously challenged to identify its own mainstream and margin and to work with these differences and diversities.



At first, as a white middle-aged English man, I felt strongly in the margins of the group, which identified its mainstream as well-educated Canadian young women. In the early team games, influence and leadership roles were being given to/taken by those in the mainstream. I felt I was being less listened to or included, and my confidence decreased. I connected with others that I felt closer to: two black African men (my housemates), one or two from my own age group, and an English woman who likes Marmite and knew someone I also know.

As the course progressed, we were encouraged more strongly to identify and share our individual-group relationships, which we found enabled us to connect more strongly across boundaries. This was helped by free time in which the group sometimes arranged its own activities. For example my two housemates and I joined with two from the "mainstream" to hire a car, and we had a wonderfully rollicking day in the Rockies. For me, things

changed after that, and I felt that my two house pals and I became more affirmed and accepted.

What I brought back

TfC promised that at the end of the Super-T, participants would have more training tools to use; increased skill in dealing with challenging situations, including tips and tools for working with strong emotions and difficult participants; greater awareness of yourself as a facilitator and new ways to use your strengths more effectively; more clarity in how to arrange activities in a powerful sequence; more confidence in facilitating with emergent design. For me, they delivered on all of these and I feel strengthened by the experience.

I also brought back some questions for Turning the Tide. We do similar work to TfC and much of their material and approach is familiar to us. But the rigour and discipline with which TFC delivers it is something we don't have. We tend to be more flexible and our Resource People are free to use whatever approach they prefer, albeit within a recognised TTT ethos and framework. This may include elements of the "empty cup" method, which to be honest I've used myself, defending it on the basis that we also have something to say from our experience.

One piece of feedback from a participant in the Training for Social Action Trainers workshop suggested there should have been space for broader political analysis of social change issues, since this was not emerging from the participants. I understood his point, and have felt similarly that some deeper contextual input such as macro-politics or nonviolence theory is sometimes necessary from the facilitator if it is not forthcoming from the group.

But this could still be incorporated. Some RPs are comfortable using emergent design, but should we encourage this further so that it becomes the norm for us? And how will we do this? For some (including me) it is less comfortable, but I believe a movement in this direction would both benefit the groups we work with and strengthen skills more broadly within Turning the Tide.

In short, should we develop a more cohesive "TTT approach", which might be similar in style, rigour and discipline as TfC, in which we set a clear methodology and standard for Turning the Tide work? Or not?

To learn more:

Training for Change - www.trainingforchange.org
Paulo Freire: www.freire.org
Amy & Arnold Mindell: www.aamindell.net
David Kolb - www.learningfromexperience.com

Ground Rules

Daniel Hunter

I am not always against ground rules. However, ground rules are often poorly understood and often a waste of time. At worst they are pious rituals of political correctness designed to enforce mainstream norms. Too many facilitators limit themselves to using them when other tools might work much better.

What are Ground Rules?

The last time I watched ground rules being led the facilitator started with this explanation: "Ground rules are a way to help support each other's behaviors, by setting ways of communicating and rules for how the group operates."

With a little encouragement the group made a list: no talking over each other, no interruptions, active listening etc. Sometimes the facilitator asked for a little more specificity. One person said "no judgements" and was asked, "Do you mean internally or externally?" The reply: "Both." So "no judgements – internally or externally" made it onto the list. At the end, the facilitator reviewed the list. She asked if people would agree to that list. About a third of the group nodded. She then announced these were our ground rules for the workshop. They were never mentioned again.

Making Ground Rules Work

First, before I say why I think ground rules are mostly a waste time, I'll explain how they can be effective. In the right context and done well, ground rules *can* be a powerful tool for assisting a group to interact better and practice new behaviors for more effective communication.

First, ground rules need to be understood as a real group process. After a list has been made, the facilitator should test for agreement in a genuinely open way. The question should be understood: is this a list of behaviors *you* agree to hold yourself accountable to as an individual? If there's not some open resistance to the list, you're not asking enough. Therefore, if you plan on ground rules taking 10 minutes, you are rushing the process. Rushing makes it a ritual and reduces its meaning. It needs time for people to air concerns, clarify what's on the list, and make an internal commitment to the items on it – or, throw items off the list.

One facilitator makes individuals stand if they are in agreement, emphasizing the process as a personal pledge. If they don't stand, then they keep facilitating until they have full agreement. Secondly, the list needs to name behaviors that can actually be regulated. "No internal or external judgments," for example, may be one group's idea of a good goal – but it can't be enforced. If the group can't enforce it, it's not a rule. Items that regularly get on lists are short-hand for behaviors. "Active listening" or "step

up/step back" (in other words "make your contribution and leave space for others to do the same"), for example, are not behaviors but principles of behavior. To be meaningful on this list they need to be pared down to reflect specific behaviors.

Take "active listening". It is so broad and means a whole range of behaviors that are understood very differently by different people. The facilitator should help the group break that down into specific behaviors. That might include: no talking while others are speaking, letting people finish saying a point, reflecting back during disagreements. That is important because, thirdly and finally, ground rules need enforcement. And who enforces? At least at the outset of a group, the facilitator does.

The whole enterprise of ground rules is wasted if a facilitator does not uphold ground rules. Not doing so is saying to a group, "We agree to these behaviors. But agreeing to them is meaningless." How disrespectful to our commitments!

Enforcement need not be harsh. Relaxed reminders can be fine. "Alberto, please try not to interrupt" or "We've agreed to not have our cell phones on, Nancy." But enforcement is best when explicit and direct – identifying behaviour in the moment or shortly after it. In other words, don't review the list of behaviors and *hope* that Nancy will notice her behavior and act to stop it. Use that moment, if appropriate, for a teachable moment. Not turning off your cell phone may be more about self-care than just an oversight. If so, your enforcement and thoughtful facilitation could be high-quality learning for Nancy and the group.

The role of enforcer can be tough for many facilitators, because we fear being nagging teachers. But nagging teachers don't ask students what behaviours they want to strive towards. Enforcement is an act of empowerment because, assuming the ground rules are not coerced, then the ground rules are the group's goals and your enforcement helps them get there.

And you will know you're being successful when the group will take up the mantle and become self-regulating. Do these things and you will take the process of setting ground rules from a tired repetition to a powerful empowerment exercise.

Mainstream Coercion

So why don't I do ground rules in all my workshops? Because of the stipulation I mentioned before, "If ground rules are not coerced, then they are empowering." The reality: ground rules tend to be created by the mainstream of the group, who are clueless in their coerciveness.

Take, for example, "no interruptions" as a ground rule. It explicitly privileges one communication style

over another. In this case the mainstream believes interruptions reduce effective communication because people cannot make their points when they are cut off – a belief more associated with white, middle-class, and professional cultures. African-American cultures and other cultures that may be marginalised have different styles of communication and may view interruptions differently -- they can be part of keeping the pace of conversation moving. It's still rude to cut off someone if they have not been able to make a single point, but even more rude to hog the floor making multiple and even unrelated points. But "interrupting" allows people to handle a conversation point-by-point, keeping a flow of a conversation. Every group will have its own set of mainstreams and margins, and when the full group is asked to make a decision, who tends to get their way? The mainstream or dominant culture of the group!

And the dynamic is toughest when the group is early in its formation - exactly when ground rules tend to be done - and there is little container (by which is meant a feeling/atmosphere of "mutual support for learning") to hold the group's disagreements. Rather than speaking up against a mainstream norm, people holding a margin position will tend to be quiet, deferential and outwardly polite.

Legislating behavior

Even assuming one navigates the terrain of mainstreams and margins, there are still other downsides of ground rules. George Lakey, in a draft of a forthcoming book from Jossey-Bass Publishers writes, *Some groups use ground rules to legislate against "misbehavior" when the group would learn far more if the behavior actually showed up. For example, in a workshop on communication it might be far better for a man to interrupt a woman and use his louder voice to get the floor. At that point the group could intervene and practice handling the problem, with the support of the facilitator. Far more might be learned about dynamics of gender and power, for application out there in the real world, than if the group agreements result in polite correctness and head-nodding proprieties.*

I want people to be authentic. Ground rules can create some sense of safety; or they may shatter it, by creating a culture of political correctness that makes people worried they might be breaking a "rule." I would prefer that someone break a rule and learn about how their behavior hurts others than to internalize a rule without understanding. It makes it more likely that they will understand and choose to change their behavior outside the training room.

Rather than teaching the skills to prevent hurtful behaviors, ground rules appear to me to increase guilt while giving people no meaningful practice in handling hurts when they happen. At the macro-level, I think this has a real danger to how activists interact. Rather than learning to work with people as

they are, many activists try to apply rules and impose values, without relationship, without a sense of where other people are coming from. Ground rules, to me, reflect a mistaken activist belief that we can and should legislate out oppressive behaviors.

Safety requires more than rules

Safety is a complex issue, taking a deeper look into this singular tool highlights that. Clearly, ground rules can be a part of safety, or they can diminish it. I highlight several ways ground rules, as led, reduce the quality of the group. Legislating oppressive behavior rather than dealing with it when it arises can reduce safety. Rules without enforcement support a culture of non-accountability, which reduces safety. And unconsciously mainstream rules marginalise others – which reduces safety.

At Training for Change we regularly teach many options besides ground rules for creating safety in a group: from setting up workshops as learning laboratories to creating safety through “noticings” to emphasizing self-responsibility in conflict.

But whatever tools we use, we should be conscious of how we are doing it and its impact on marginal cultures. When doing ground rules, we can see that ritualistically leading a tool will not create safety. In fact, poorly done, it will isolate and reduce safety. We should lead tools, always paying attention to the impact on margins and overall safety in a group. Now that’s a rule worth enforcing.

Daniel Hunter is a staff trainer at Training for Change. See TtC’s website for more engaging articles and tools: www.trainingforchange.org

Soma games for activists

Denise Drake

Photo: Nick Cooper



So -- what?

“I’m doing a course in soma.” “A course in so - what?” I first heard about soma from TTT Resource People Rachel Anderson and Carl Reynolds. At the Autumn 2007 RP gathering they led us in playing and discussing soma games. The games are a bit like trust games with odd twists. Some are light and fun, and others a bit strange. But I found soma fun and interesting, so when I heard that the soma teacher was running another course I signed up.

A bit of background

Soma was originally developed in the 1970s by Roberto Freire as a therapy for supporting activists resisting the Brazilian military dictatorship. Freire drew from the work of psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich, Gestalt therapy, Antipsychiatry studies, Capoeira Angola and Anarchy to create the soma framework. Soma was brought to the UK by Brazilian-born and Freire-trained Jorge Goia who is taking soma back to its activist roots and using it with groups more as a springboard for learning than a therapy. Goia leads soma workshops for activists to help us develop an awareness of how economic, political and cultural systems permeate and influence our way of being in the world. The soma course flier explains: *Capitalist values of corruption, profit, individualism and hierarchy contaminate our belief in the possibilities of freedom. We have all found ourselves giving up on a personal, artistic or work-related dream under pressure to be realistic given the political and psychological climate. Soma is an opportunity to study the micro-political and the everyday through our bodies’ response to certain physical exercises.*

Workshop snapshot

The soma course I took met one weekend a month for four months. We played a round of soma games from 11 to 12.30, followed by a group discussion about the games and lunch. From about 2 to 4 we had a second round of games and an hour debriefing to finish the day.

The basic materials of soma games are the five senses, the body and participants’ interaction. There is no right or wrong way to play a game, and the only rule is to pay attention to how you feel and how your body reacts. Soma views the body as a unified entity, not elevating the mind over the body.

Reflection on this unity is critical to developing our social awareness to undo the conditioning which

limits or prevents us from reaching our full potential. Goia is well-practised as a game-leader, he gives clear instructions and demonstrates when necessary. A game begins simple, each round adding another layer.

An example: the walking game

In the “walking game”, participants first practice walking around the room normally, then on tip-toes,

next on heels, then the outside and last the inside of the feet. All the while noting how each of those techniques felt. We then rolled around on the floor, letting different parts of our body power our movement. These strands culminated in everyone taking off our shoes off and each lying down alternating head to toe. We became a human carpet, and then each of us took a turn walking across the 'carpet' using the inside-outside of the foot technique, across the bodies first on the buttocks, then bellies. During the discussion time, we all expressed surprise at our bodies' ability to endure everyone's weight, from the lightest to the heaviest. We also noted that a person's skill with the inside/outside technique, rather than the person's weight was what made a difference in comfort to the people being trod upon. None of us felt too uneasy about the walk across the backside, though some of us (me included) felt more vulnerable about the belly walk. As we talked through our experiences, Goia would occasionally intervene when we'd lose track of talking about the *how it made us feel* and insert grains of soma wisdom to round off sessions. The point of this game is to demonstrate that the body is not as fragile as we may think. And while having someone carefully walk across your back/belly is not the same as taking a police boot in your belly at a demo, it shows participants that our bodies are not as fragile as we've been led to believe and that you can go beyond your comfort zone (the belly walk) and still be OK.



Photo: Jorge Goia

Soma applications for the real world

Soma approaches a person holistically using a variety of physical games and group discussion to build a sense of solidarity, power, creativity and spontaneity. The mind is not elevated over body, or vice-versa. Instead participants are asked to pay attention and reflect upon how a game felt, what did your body do, what did you think? If your mind and heart/gut are having a disagreement, listen to them, talk it through. Acting on "I should-s" or "doing the

right thing" is often what keeps the world lurching along at its unhealthy canter.

Focusing on "how did the game make me feel" is important because it keeps participants centred upon exploring, knowing and deciding for themselves how they want to understand their response. Rather than viewing our experiences through the lens of social conventions or what "experts" tell us, soma insists that we interpret our experiences for ourselves. Our interpretations, yes, will be influenced by our culture, but it's our responsibility to weave that into our reflection as well. Soma games attempt to raise awareness about the links between what happens to individuals as individuals, as part of society and the world at large. We live in a hierarchical, authoritarian world and soma pushes participants to first acknowledge, understand and then deal with (either by accepting, modifying or challenging) that behaviour to get down to the heart of soma - helping people to identify and combat external agents that are blocking or preventing the fulfilment of dreams and goals.

Links:

www.somaterapia.com.br/eng

www.somadocumentary.com

Future course info -- jorge.goia@bol.com.br

Forum Theatre

Candia Crosfield

Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for itⁱ

Augusto Boal

Theatre of the Oppressed has been a passion of mine since I realised its connection with Paulo Freire's revolutionary "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"ⁱⁱ. I felt excited about harnessing the power of Freire's "problem-posing" education, the opposite of traditional "banking education" where students are merely receptacles waiting to be filled with knowledgeⁱ, and combining it with concrete action, which could in theory lead to real social transformation.

Forum Theatre (FT) is the main tool used in theatre director Augusto Boal's (1931-2009) Theatre of the Oppressed, a theatrical form originally used in radical popular education movements. Its central idea is that no one should be a spectator. Instead, people should become "spect-actors", ready to observe a problematic situation and then change what they see. FT breaks down the imaginary "fourth wall" of theatre, between the actors and the audience, and encourages them to be part of the performance. To explain how this magic happens, I will use my own experience of creating a piece of FT with a group of 13-year olds in North London.

Firstly the subject matter needs to be true to and resonate with the audience. With our group we spent a lot of time discussing what the issues in the school community were. The overwhelming response was that the escalation of violence was a massive problem and we therefore hypothesised that when shown a play on this topic with a tragic conclusion, the audience would recognise the situation and feel provoked into needing to change it. We used true stories based on the group's own life experiences, and those of people they knew to ensure it was believable, and drew them together into a short play, what Boal calls the "anti-model". A small playground squabble between pupils, through gossip and hearsay, spilt out of the school gates to their elders and ended with someone getting stabbed. The dramatic (yet, sadly familiar) ending we hoped would provoke a response from the audience.

Photo: Peace Child International



On presenting it to the audience, in this case the group's school peers, a key component of FT is a "Joker", a facilitator of the process who will let the audience know the "rules of the game" and encourage them to take part. The Joker introduces the performance and lays out the rules. The play is shown. The Joker then explains that it will be shown again, and when someone sees a moment where the main character (our protagonist) could do something to change the outcome, they should put their hand up. So the play is shown again and someone will stop the action at a crucial moment. They are then invited to come on stage, replace the character and try out their alternative action in the moment, with the actors around them responding to their idea. In our school it was a tense moment as we awaited our first spect-actor to volunteer. But they did, and this was because they cared about what they had seen on stage and felt the need to take some control over the situation and change the outcome. And once one came, others followed with their different ideas, changing the scenes in many

ways with the actors responding creatively and as realistically as possible. They tried changing the play at the start, by the protagonist simply apologising for the misunderstanding which triggered the conflict. They tried intervening later on to stop the spread of malicious gossip. One lad even acted out a violent response, which was really useful as it demonstrated that violence did not help to change the tragic ending at all.

Personally I find Forum Theatre to be a brilliantly participatory tool, which I have seen transform people. These transformations can be literal; spect-actors get on stage seizing control and transforming what they see, but also deeply psychological, as in the case of the young actors I worked with. Through the process they began to draw connections between their own actions and their consequences, in this case realising the importance of taking responsibility for their own behaviour and role in escalating situations of violence, in order to prevent people they cared about getting hurt. One young actor said:

I now think about how what I do has other bigger effects and that if I do something, bad stuff can happen because of it.

Another:

Nobody listens when teachers talk to you about stuff. [In this project] we learnt skills to deal with escalation.

On an even deeper level, FT can transform perceptions of what we see as "the way things are", making us conscious of contradictions in our society. For example, in my group, the process of bringing to their attention the consequences of gossiping, an activity they saw as something "people just do", made them decide not to be a part of it because they had realised it could lead to serious consequences.

I felt really amazed by the power of Forum Theatre demonstrated in that one project. It achieved more than I could have possibly hoped. The head of year reported a significant drop in the number of incidents he had to deal with in the school following the play.

In terms of developing our own nonviolence skills, the benefits of Forum Theatre are very clear. It is a way of making oppressions and contradictions conscious in our minds in order that we can change them. It is also a practical and interactive tool for rehearsing ideas for what we might call the "third way"; actions which are neither "fight", nor "flight", but creative approaches to conflict instead.

References

ⁱ A Boal, *Games for Actors and Non Actors*, (1992) London: Routledge, p. xxxi

Link: www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/en

ⁱⁱ P Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (1970) London Penguin, p.18

Battling with strategy

Matthew Herbert and Kathryn Tulip

A few fortunate individuals have the gift of strategic thinking. For them planning effective campaign is like water off a duck's back. For the rest of us strategy can be hard work. Ask a campaign group whether they have a campaign plan and they'll probably mutter something about their next action or event without being able to say how that action is going to change the big picture - there are far too many pressing things to do to spend a day planning strategy. The result is that many of us repeat the same few tactics over and over - whether that's a Saturday street stall in the market place or a lock-on outside a military base.

The situation isn't helped by the fact that most strategic thinking and planning techniques are time consuming and like something out of a management consultancy handbook: SWOT analysis, GANTT charts, PEST analysis... if it doesn't have an acronym and finish with the word matrix, chart, diagram or analysis then forget it!

Who wants to spend time in an alphabet soup of dry planning tools when there's a world to save?

Recently we've been exploring a new approach - story based strategy. We've shamelessly raided the work of the smartMeme collective in the USA and have been customising the bits we find useful to a UK context. In January, Turning the Tide staff volunteered to work through the approach with us in order to refine it.

Are you sitting comfortably?

Stories are everywhere. We're brought up on stories - everything from the creation myths of our religions to the activities of Santa Claus and his helpful elves. We hear stories every time we turn on the news or read a newspaper. Just the phrase 'war on terror' evokes a whole cast of characters from the caves of Tora Bora, the streets of Kabul, Burnley and Wootton Bassett, the burning towers of New York, and the cells of Guantanamo Bay, along with all the cultures (and clashes of cultures) that come with them.

Somewhere in there is the fact that we never fully articulate all the stories ourselves, but we absorb them nevertheless. We're fed the happy ever after endings and don't always notice that the storytellers/powerholders turn over several pages at once. We don't question them because the endings chime with our self interest - consumer affluence, safety etc.

If we did question them we'd realise that they don't stand up to even the most basic scrutiny. Or we do question them, find the truth unpalatable and hastily create or buy into new stories that take away the bad taste.

So we readily accept sound bites as if they were whole stories. Is the war on terror story really any more than: there's these bad guys Al Qaeda. They're fanatics who want to destroy our way of life.

They will bring terror to streets near you (twin towers/London underground/ Madrid). We need to go to war to stop them and keep you safe. The end.

When questioned about WMD or war for oil, or bombed wedding parties, another line is quickly added, accompanied by "Don't question us - it's an insult to the troops fighting for you."

A story-based approach to campaign strategy homes in on the stories of those we are campaigning against. Specifically it works on the levels of those stories that people have heard so often that they've accepted and internalised them. These are *control myths* - stories we're so familiar with that we might even propagate them through our own actions, lifestyles and conversation. Which of us, in our culture, doesn't play a role in spreading the story of the need for consumerism, for example, even if it's ethical consumerism? The art of story-based strategy is to subvert these stories and create new endings that bring about the changes we want to see in the world. And because stories are engaging, story based strategy is also more engaging.

**Gloucestershire
Weapons Inspectors
action at Fairford
US Airbase during
the Iraq war 2003**



Challenged the assumption that it was OK to wage war and search for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, even though we have WMD in the UK

Point of Intervention: production

Challenging assumptions

In order to buy into the prevailing control myths we have to make assumptions such as: "Coca Cola is a trustworthy brand", "the government wouldn't lie to me", "shopping improves the quality of my life". The story-based approach says we're much more effective as campaigners when we challenge these assumptions. Often we assume that if we could just shout loud enough about an issue and give people the facts they are lacking, they would join our cause. But people are conditioned to ignore information that doesn't fit into their existing understanding of the world. The "facts" alone are not enough to persuade them;

their assumptions and pre-existing attitudes stop the facts making sense.

We need to focus instead on challenging the assumptions they are making, and changing the ending of the story. That takes us to the Battle of the Story...

The Battle of the Story and the Story of the Battle

The thinking process for working out the assumptions of the public, government, corporations and so on is called the *Battle of the Story*. This is where we put ourselves into the heads of those we are working to change and try to understand the world from their perspective, especially the underlying assumptions that make their version of the story appear to be “true”, e.g. that nuclear weapons will keep us safe. We look at the story they are telling, and the myths that underlie it. We try to subvert their story by debunking the assumptions that make their ending possible and offering our own ending to the story.

Battle of Seattle protests against the 1999 WTO meeting



Point of Intervention: decision making

Points of intervention can also be less tangible – so a campaign to change the voting system might have a point of consumption as the polling booth, a point of destruction relates to the erosion of democracy, a point of production could be Parliament and so on.

Story-based strategy overlays a fifth point of intervention – the *point of assumption*. Actions at the point of assumption are actions with the explicit goal of changing the powerholder's story. These types of actions when combined with an action at a physical point of intervention, make our actions more effective. For example, the Gloucestershire weapons inspectors took action at Fairford US airbase against the war on Iraq and challenged the assumption that the weapons of mass destruction

were in Iraq, they tried to change the story by saying that weapons of mass destruction were also here in the UK.

So what?

We're still in the early days with this approach, but it seems to have some potential:

- the potential for a more creative and engaging analysis of the context in which we're campaigning and which we want to change
- the potential to get into our 'opponents' head in a more useful and constructive way
- the potential to challenge us to use tactics that effectively challenge the assumptions of the powerholders and help make change happen.
- Of course there are still problems we're ironing out – making the thinking process as interactive as possible, the danger of replacing one set of jargon with another and so on. If you find the idea interesting and want to give it a try, get in touch. We'd welcome the opportunity to try the approach out with a wide range of campaigners.

Link: smartmeme.org

Matthew Herbert is a *Turning the Tide* Resource Person and a member of the Rhizome network, rhizomenetwork.wordpress.com. Kathryn Tulip is a member of the Seeds for Change collective www.seedsforchange.org.uk.

Pictures by Stig www.shtig.net

Radical booksellers take on Amazon

Fifty years ago, in the aftermath of World War Two, a group of pacifists opened Housmans radical bookshop at its current address at 5 Caledonian Road, in London's Kings' Cross. Ever since, Housmans has worked hard to continue its mission of promoting ideas of peace, human rights and a more equitable economy by which future wars, and all their inherent suffering, might be avoided. You may be familiar with Housmans' mission through the production of the Housmans Peace Diary (now in its 57th year), including the invaluable directory of 2000 peace, environmental and human rights groups (including *Turning the Tide*) from around the world.

At a time when independent bookshops are closing down left, right and centre, Housmans is fighting to hold its corner. The biggest threat to independent bookshops has been the rise, and subsequent domination, of the online bookseller Amazon.com. Amazon has achieved an unrivalled supremacy over the marketplace, but this wasn't achieved without the usual unethical practices that are so common to the world's biggest corporations.

What is wrong with using Amazon?

In 2001 the Guardian first reported on the poor working conditions in Amazon's warehouses, and nothing much has changed since. In December 2008, a Sunday Times reporter went undercover to their Marston Gate warehouse near Milton Keynes and discovered that staff were required to work seven days a week and were punished for taking sick leave, even if they had a note from their doctor. According to the Unite union, Amazon continues to see trade union representation as illegitimate.



But it's not just Amazon workers who suffer. Publishers are also squeezed for every penny, as Amazon forces them to supply them at rates so low that it leaves authors and publishers out of pocket – particularly damaging smaller publishing houses. Amazon's dominance of the market means that publishers have little choice but to comply with their demands. Aside from the ethical considerations, this affects readers in reduced output from small presses, and diminished availability of radical titles.

Providing an ethical alternative

And so into this arena steps Housmans Bookshop. Housmans, in conjunction with Gardners Books, has just launched its own online bookshop. Although still prioritising their stock of radical interest and progressive politics, the site is also able to provide around half a million general titles.

"Many of our most politically conscious colleagues use Amazon, and when asked why, it's because they know of no alternative. But now, wherever they live, people will be able to support independent and progressive bookselling from the comfort of their own home. I think it's essential that we are able to provide an alternative to help dent Amazon's monopoly," explains co-manager Nik Gorecki. "It's up to sympathetic book buyers to do the right thing, and buy their books elsewhere."

"This year Housmans celebrates fifty years of trading from our Caledonian Road address, but in order for us to be here another fifty years we have to

stand up for ourselves, and trust in ethically-minded book-buyers to support independents. The staff at Housmans has fought many battles over the years for causes we believe in, and this is one battle we can't afford to lose. Please support the shop that supports your campaigns!"

*Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road,
King's Cross, London N1 9DX*

www.housmans.com

Contact: Nik Gorecki on 07950 269 286 or
nik@housmans.com

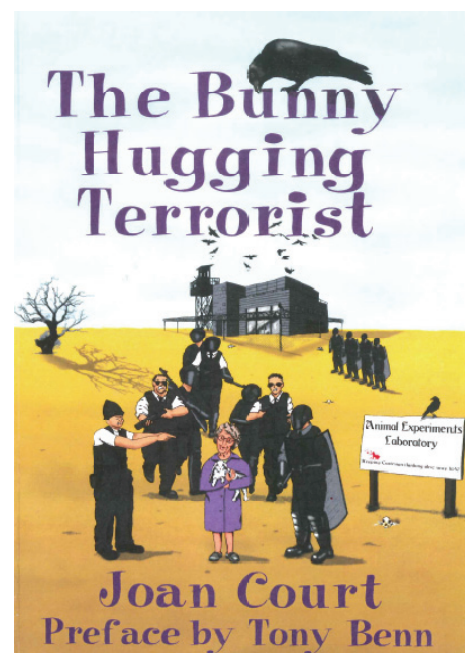
Book review

The Bunny Hugging Terrorist

by Joan Court

Selene Press, ISBN 0-9543452-0-5, price £9.99

Reviewed by Jill Greenway



This is the second instalment of Joan's autobiography, with a moving preface by Tony Benn. Much of her earlier life, as described in the first part of her autobiography *In the Shadow of Mahatma Gandhi*, was devoted to caring for other, less fortunate members of her own species. It's a real adventure story and I enjoyed it so much that I lent it around to friends and family, and someone else must have really liked it too because so far it hasn't found its way back to me.

This volume tells of life since “retirement”, which has focused on the struggle for the rights of sentient non-human animals, and what a struggle it has been. Interspersed among the fascinating stories from her life, Joan gives insights into her own ethical and moral code. Like a number of us in this struggle, she attributes her empathy with voiceless, tortured, innocent non-human animals to having been mistreated and neglected herself as a child. Originally inspired by Quakerism, but then disillusioned by the lack of interest shown by the majority of Friends (“with several notable exceptions”) in this particular form of ‘warfare’ against sentient beings, she sees her work for animals as a ‘spiritual calling’ unconnected with the Established Church, though she is now a member of a Buddhist order.

She has worked tirelessly in campaigns against fur farming, circuses, battery hen cages, live export and the Hillgrove Farm centre that bred cats for research. One of her greatest successes must be the part she played in preventing the building in Cambridge, her home town, of what would have been the largest primate research centre in Europe.

Experience leads Joan to recommend an empty bladder, a full stomach and a good book if likely to be arrested, which she has been on several occasions – showing the courage of the suffragettes or early Quakers. She has also handcuffed herself to railings and been on more than one hunger strike. Joan points out that hunger strikes are one of the few forms of protest that the government has not yet outlawed. Whether or not people are interested in animal welfare, we would all do well to recognise, and object to, how our liberties have been eroded over the last decade or so, before it is too late. At the ripe young age of 85, Joan joined the crew of the Sea Shepherd’s flagship *Farley Mowat* for its journey to the South Atlantic, and at 90 she is still upholding the cause. We should give thanks for the lives of those courageous souls who find the strength, from wherever, to carry on the struggle against all odds for our innocent, mistreated brothers and sisters. Quakers are exhorted to ‘live adventurously’ and to ‘show a loving concern for all God’s creatures’. Joan has lived the true Quaker ethic.

I can highly recommend Joan’s autobiography, and it deserves to be a huge success.

This review was first published in the newsletter of Quaker Concern for Animals, Autumn 2009

www.quaker-animals.org.uk



turningthetide

NONVIOLENT POWER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

About Turning the Tide

Turning the Tide aims to advance the understanding and practice of nonviolence and its use for positive social change, using the experience of contemporary and previous nonviolence movements.

Turning the Tide provides

- Public introductory interactive workshops exploring active nonviolence
- Consultancies, or tailor-made workshops, for groups. These can cover campaign strategy, empowerment, building strong groups, group process and preparing for nonviolent action
- Resource materials. TTT has an award winning video, *Nonviolence for a Change*, a journal *Making Waves*, a website www.turning-the-tide.org and a nonviolence resource library

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Views expressed in *Making Waves* and any leaflets enclosed are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by Turning the Tide, Quaker Peace & Social Witness or Britain Yearly Meeting.

Text available in large print

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