

The Heart of Social Change

**How to Make a
Difference in *Your* World**

*A transcript of a Nonviolent
Communication™ workshop given by*

Marshall B. Rosenberg, PhD



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Introduction

This booklet contains excerpts from a workshop given by Marshall Rosenberg in San Diego in May, 2000, and serves as an introduction to his wisdom on effective social change. In narrative commentary and role-play, he returns our focus to basic questions: What is at the root of any social problem? What needs am I meeting in getting involved? What do we need to affect change?

From the manner in which we communicate, to the intention we bring to every interaction and the organization structures we support, social change “begins with me.” Marshall shows how Nonviolent Communication can help you create an internal culture of peace that will help you effect lasting social change. In the role-plays participants are identified as UF (unidentified female participant), UM (unidentified male participant), and MBR (Marshall B. Rosenberg). All other words are Marshall’s. We pick up the conversation with a question from one of the participants in the workshop.

Striving for Systems Change

UM: I’m just curious, what can we do to change the source of social problems instead of dealing with the symptoms of all the problems, to get to the root of where all this is coming from? What can we do to change what happened

eight thousand years ago, or maybe duplicate it in a compassionate way so that we can change it in the next eight thousand?

MBR: First, I can tell you a strategy that I'm trying to follow myself—the best that I've found at this point. It's this: change the paradigm within myself, to liberate myself from the way I was programmed and to be in harmony with how I choose to live, with how I reflect the story that resonates the most in my heart. In other words, I strive to create that chosen world within. Peace begins with me.

Next, I really like the paradigm that I've chosen. I've found out that it's nothing new. I was just told in British Columbia by some indigenous people that I was working with up there that they liked what I presented. They said, "You know, Marshall, this is just what our elders taught us," and I've been told by Palestinians I work with that what I've come up with as a new paradigm for myself is just Islam. What I've come up with works for me and also seems to be something that other people have chosen for their own paradigm. So let's do our best to share the new paradigm with others. That's one way to create social change. Share what works for us, what makes our life richer without blasting the old paradigm, without calling them a bunch of bigots . . . tell what we like about our story, and how it's enriched our life.

Then we can get clear what social structures would look like. What would gangs (see *The Concept of Gangs and Social Structures*, page 10) look like that function in harmony with the paradigm of our choosing? And how can we develop our skills to radically transform existing structures into ones that are in harmony with our paradigm?

Then I ask: What education is necessary for people to have our paradigm so that they can create other structures that resemble our paradigm? I'm trying to work in all four of these areas together.

That last one—education—is one I put a lot of energy into. I want to get the next generation of people around the world educated in a radically different paradigm, and

with skills for creating structures that support the new paradigm. So, for example, we not only teach the kids in the school, we also set up Nonviolent Communication training with their parents, teachers, and administrators. And equally important is that the school is a reflection of the kind of government that we would like to see. It shows leaders as servants. Teachers are servants of the students; the administrators are servants of the teachers. Rewards and punishment are not used. The relationships among the student body are created as interdependent relationships, not as competitive ones. Tests are not given to determine grades. Tests are given to determine whether the teacher has done his or her job. They're not tests of the students; they're tests of the learning process. This is what my book *Life-Enriching Education* is about.

Paradigm Change Within Ourselves

Being Motivated to Enrich Life

Life-Enriching is the key concept in my paradigm: every action comes out of an image of seeing how human needs would be met by the action. That's the vision that mobilizes everything. A life-enriching organization is one in which all work in the organization, everything that every worker does, comes out of seeing how it's going to support life in the form of meeting needs—needs of the physical planet, trees, lakes, or human beings or animals—and it's clear how life will be served through meeting of needs. And that's the vision that inspires the actions, purely. In a life-enriching structure, nobody works for money. Money plays the same role as food for a mother who is breastfeeding her infant. She doesn't receive food as payment. The food is nurturance so she has the energy to serve life. It all boils down to human needs, which is why Nonviolent Communication is so rooted in the consciousness of needs. Everything we do is in the service of needs and the pleasure that is felt when needs are fulfilled, especially spiritual needs. Those are the most fun needs to fulfill.

To me, the bees and the flowers are part of a life-enriching organization. Look at how they both meet each other's needs. They don't do it through any guilt, duty, or obligation, but naturally, in a natural system. The bee gets its nectar from the flower and it pollinates the flower.

On Needs

It is hard to separate meeting human needs from the needs of the environment: They are one and the same. Meeting the needs of all the phenomena on the planet. Seeing the oneness of it all. Seeing the beauty in that whole scheme, that whole interdependent scheme of life. Life-enriching structures—the kind of structures that I would like to see us creating and participating in—are structures whose vision is to serve life. And how do we know if an organization—whether it's a family, or work team, or government—is a life-serving organization? We find out by asking: Is its mission to meet the needs and enrich the lives of people within—and affected by—the organization?

And what do people need? Money is not a need. It's a strategy that sometimes might meet a need. Fame is not a need. Status is not a need. These are things that domination structures use to mislead people—take a real need and misrepresent it, and get people to think that these false things are the needs. So, a life-enriching organization, in fact, serves life, serves needs. Next, all work done within a life-enriching structure is motivated by the mission. Not by money, not by salary, not by position, not by status. Every bit of work that a person does is coming from this joy of meeting that mission. And life-enriching organizations give the workers within them the nurturing they need to live that mission. Now, here's where money comes into play. They might get a salary for some food for their family and themselves, but that's not why they're doing the work. They're motivated to do the work purely by the life-serving mission. But the most important part of an organization in this respect isn't the money. A life-enriching organization must be set up to be very good at getting genuine gratitude

to every worker. That's the fuel necessary to keep people working in a life-enriching organization. Sincere gratitude. When you do so people can see how their efforts are instrumental in the life-serving mission.

My need is not to teach Nonviolent Communication. That's not a need. My need is for safety, fun, and to have distribution of resources, a sustainable life on the planet. Nonviolent Communication is a strategy that serves me to meet those needs. I look for ways to get both that other person's need met and my need met. I'm not trying to sell, I'm trying to get both needs met. So, my first job is to create the quality of connection where I see clearly what the other person's need is, and where they see what my need is. When the person trusts that I'm equally interested in their need as mine, 90 percent of the problem is over. Making a request of someone without getting to the need sounds like a sales job.

The Spiritual Basis of Social Change

MBR: Unless we as social change agents come from a certain spirituality, we're likely to create more harm than good. What I mean by spirituality is that, moment-by-moment, we're staying connected our own life and to the lives of others. And we can discover our spirituality by asking: What is the good life? What are we about? This quality of consciousness will help lead us to a life-enriching spirituality that helps us connect with ourselves and others at the heart level. We are all politically sophisticated, we know all the dangerous structures out there, we're very astute in seeing what's wrong with the world, and we're going to change it. If we do not first make a radical spiritual change within ourselves we're not going to be effective; in fact, we may even contribute to what's already going on.

So, yes, we're going to start with ourselves, but be careful because spirituality can be reactionary if we get people to just be so calm and accepting and loving that they tolerate the dangerous structures. The spirituality that we need to develop for social change is one that mobilizes

us for social change. It doesn't just enable us to sit there and enjoy the world no matter what. It creates a quality of energy that mobilizes us into action. Unless our spiritual development has this quality, I don't think we can create the kind of social change I would like to see.

The spirituality that I try to live by is a very simple-minded spirituality. I used to get bored in all of my exposures to churches and synagogues, so I need a spirituality that is alive for me, that doesn't take many words. I like the way Joseph Campbell summarized it. Joseph Campbell is a gentleman who has written a lot about myths and comparative religions. He tried to get at what was beautiful in all religions, and he found that to his ears all of them were saying the same thing—and he liked what he heard them saying. And so what is his summary of spirituality? What all of the basic religions are saying is this: Don't do anything that isn't play.

I predict that when we have that—don't do anything that isn't play—in mind, we will see that the most fun game in the world is making life wonderful. How do you make life wonderful? Don't do anything that isn't play. Wait until it's play. And it'll be play at the moment our full consciousness is on a life-enriching vision. Then use your power in service of human and planetary needs. Use your power to enrich life by meeting needs.

Social change is liberating ourselves from any theology, from any spirituality that is not in harmony with what we believe will enable us to create the kind of world we would like. Get very clear about the kind of world we would like and then start living that way. As soon as we start living by a different spirituality we're already starting social change. You don't want to stop there, but the moment we live—and to whatever degree we live—a different spirituality, the social change begins.

The spiritual development of people largely determines the kind of world that people are going to create, the kind of social structures they're going to create. For example, the spiritual development that we need, as I understand

spirituality, focuses on a few of questions: What is our nature as human beings? What are we about? What's the good life?

The spirituality that I was exposed to—the culture I grew up in—viewed the good life as punishing bad people. Good forces punishing bad forces. I would say this spirituality is still our number one spirituality. Children in our culture are exposed to it, especially from seven to nine at night when they're watching television shows. In 75 percent of those programs, the hero, the good guys, either kills someone or beats someone up. We can't blame the television for this spirituality; many holy books have been used to teach the same message. But I wanted to define my spirituality in a different way.

Sharing the Paradigm With Others, and Structural Change

On Quality of Connection

In the context of social change efforts, it is critical to create a quality of connection with people of whom we're requesting something. Each of us will seek to know exactly what the other person is feeling and needing. Most important is that the other person doesn't think our objective is to get them to do what we want. In order to get them to trust that, we need to be sure that *isn't* our objective. Use as few words as necessary to get the other person into a dialogue. Be careful of monologues; be careful of trying to sell ideas. Get a dialogue going. Let the other person direct you to what they need to hear.

With each person that we connect with make sure it is our objective to create a certain quality of connection with that person. It's not to get what we want. We're really trying to live a different value system, even in our social change efforts, which means, yes, we would like to ask for some things, but what's most important to us is every connection along the line. Does it mirror the kind of world

we're trying to create? Each step in every bit of asking we do needs to reflect energetically what we're after. It's a holographic image of the structure we're trying to create. In short, the asking process needs to reflect the value system we're trying to support.

The Four Key Dimensions of SC

I think it will help me to show you the different ways in which we've been applying Nonviolent Communication to support our social change efforts and political activism by getting us all clear about four dimensions—four interacting issues—which for me are very important to have in my consciousness. They help me decide how I want to contribute to social change.

In the **first dimension**, there's what some people call the story. Other people call it the cultural myth or the basic paradigm. And essentially what is usually meant by this dimension is the answer to a couple very important questions: How were we meant to live, and what is our nature as human beings? All of that is this first dimension. And I think it's probably the most important dimension for social change. It's crucial that we understand the prevailing theme in any culture. How have people been educated to answer those questions? What is the good life? How shall we live? And what is our nature?

Drawing from Riane Eisler's work, author and theologian Walter Wink, in his book *The Powers That Be* and other writings, points out that about eight thousand years ago a new story came into being. A different kind of understanding than ever before of what the answer was to those two questions. About eight thousand years ago a myth started to develop that involved how the world began. How did our world begin? See? It began when a very heroic, virtuous male god crushed to smithereens a nasty female goddess, and out of that crushing of the evil force by the virtuous force, the energy created the earth. And however these things get started, it evolved then to become kind of general knowledge, a general understanding. It was passed

down from generation to generation and answered this question of how the world began. Now, this is pretty well documented. We don't know where it started because it evolved over hundreds of years, but it gradually evolved and became this kind of history in people's minds about how the world began. It's not too surprising how this first dimension got answered and has been answered over about eight thousand years. How were we meant to live? And the answer to that is we were meant to live by crushing out evil forces. The good life is the virtuous forces crushing out the evil forces.

But don't worry, if you missed out on that story, if you didn't learn about it, then go back to your formal education. Most of us learned that story in American history. I was taught when I was a boy that the good forces—the United States—needed to crush the evil forces. America is the hero. Other countries have a similar history of being the good forces crushing the evil forces. If you don't want to go back to school, turn on the television or see a movie. In the majority of these the hero either kills somebody or beats them up. And when does this violence occur?

UF: At the climax.

MBR: At the climax. It's like a sexual joy we get, and that's another thing that Walter Wink says: Our culture requires making violence enjoyable. And if you really want to see how to make violence enjoyable go down to Texas whenever they're going to execute a criminal. Go outside the prison, and you'll see hundreds of college students gathering outside for tailgate parties. Hundreds of them, hundreds of them every time. They drink, and they're waiting for the magic moment. What is the magic moment? When over the loud speaker from the prison, "The prisoner has been executed," and there's wild, wild cheering.

See, that's the story, that's the good life. The good guys crushing the bad guys. Now, there's a little bit of a problem with that story. How do you decide who the good guys are? Well, after a while some people came up with a very

creative idea. The good guys were the people whose families were closer to God than other families. They had what they called the divine right of God. It was their divine right to be kings because they're closer to God. Well, how do you know that your family is closer to God than others? Because I'm a King, yes, but how can you be sure? Have you seen the size of my army? Oh, yeah, yeah, I can see you're divine; I can see your divinity. So that's one way that people have described this story. Usually the good forces, the male forces, crush the evil forces, so, there needs to be a man at the top, because someone needs to say who's good and who's evil. That's the story that's pumped into everybody.

UM: You've got to have faith, you know?

MBR: You have to have faith, that's why these kings got the church involved. They got the church to work with them to define the divine rights of kings. So, you see, that's one dimension that's every important for social change. To understand the story that cultures try to pass down to people, because as we'll see, this is going to affect the next three dimensions.

The Concept of Gangs and Domination Structures

Now the **second dimension**, which is closely related to this, is gangs. What gangs are necessary for the story to be realized? What do I mean by gangs? I mean groups of people. In order for the story to be worked out, you have to make important decisions, how certain things are going to be done. Like, how are we going to distribute food to everybody? How are we going to protect everybody? These are important decisions. It's pretty hard for one person to make these decisions, so over the years we have developed organizations for doing the work that needs to be done for people to live in harmony with this story. So, you create gangs that are in harmony with the story. Now, what do these gangs call themselves? Some gangs call themselves gangs. Some gangs call themselves family. Some gangs

call themselves school systems, governments, police, corporations. But they're groups of people, groups of people that get together to do things. But the story affects the gangs, because if you believe in that old story then you create top-down gangs, or domination structures. With the most virtuous male at the top of the ladder, of course.

MBR: What gangs have I belonged to? I've belonged to a family gang. I was a student in a school gang. I have been a member of the gang called the United States government—I played the role of citizen in that gang. I've been in many gangs. I started a gang called the Center for Nonviolent Communication. So, gangs, you see are largely affected by the story. You create gangs in harmony with what you understand is the nature of human beings. If you believe the story we've been told—that human beings are basically evil and selfish until they are crushed or controlled by the virtuous forces—then you have a person given the power to use punishment with people who are designated evil and to reward those who are good. They don't always use the words "good and evil," but then again—and we'll get into this a little bit later—they require a certain education to sustain themselves. Okay, so we have two dimensions so far, the story, the paradigm, the good life and the good guys crushing out the bad guys. Next are gangs, gangs created from that story. Basically, gangs are hierarchical structures.

If we're functioning in domination structures, as we develop a different spirituality—and to whatever degree we develop and live by a different spirituality—the whole thing shakes. But we need to go beyond that. We also need to transform the educational structures and make sure that education is as we would like it to be to support the kind of world we want. And then we need to change the gangs, we need to transform the gangs, to support the spirituality we want to support. But the spirituality has to be real clear because all social change evolves from that. That's what guides us: to know whether what's happening is in harmony with our spirituality or not.

The **third dimension**: What education do you need to provide for human beings in order to be gang members? To be members of those gangs that work out the story you have to educate people in a certain way. So, how does this education take place? Historically, of course, there weren't public schools. The necessary education was just passed down by elders to others. Now, the basic educational unit we have is television, or media. That's how most people are getting the story these days—and from advertisements. I'd say that is the most powerful way the story is being taught now. It's also passed down through what we call this oxymoron, compulsory education. Did you ever hear of a more contradictory term than that in your life? Compulsory education. You can't have compulsory education, so we have compulsory indoctrination, which we call an education and we have the television in place of the elders.

So that's the form of our education—now what's being taught? First you need to teach people a language of domination. You have to teach them a language that fits hierarchical structures that fits the story. So, you have to teach people moralistic judgment—to think in terms of who is what. Who is royalty? Who are peons? Who is right? Who is wrong? Who is normal? Who is abnormal? Language is a critical way of molding people's minds. You can control people's minds to a large extent by the language you put in their heads. So, it's very important that some of the first words you want to get people to hear are the words good, bad, right, wrong, normal, abnormal, should, shouldn't, have to, and can't. If you want people to be controllable by authority, the key unit of education is language. What language do you pump into people's heads?

Education and Human Development

For example, if you really want to maintain domination structures, you have to give people a language of moralistic judgments. So, you've got to have psychologists and psychiatrists to say there is such a thing as mentally ill and healthy people. You have to have authorities—or church

people—to say what’s good and evil: We have to educate people in a language of moralistic judgments. Why? Because, Walter Wink says, one of the key characteristics of domination structures is to make violence enjoyable. And this is a very good language for doing that. It reduces people to objects. When you think of *what* somebody is, you really don’t see the life in that person. You’re reducing them to an abstraction, to a static phenomenon. And then along with moralistic judgments, you need a language that obscures choice. Words that imply we have no choice except to do what authority says is right. Words like *have to*, *should*, *ought to*, *must*, *can’t*, *supposed to*. And then you need this very important concept if you want to maintain a domination structure such as our judicial system and economic systems, the concept of *deserve*, or *worth*. It’s very important in maintaining domination structures to get people to believe that certain actions *deserve* reward, certain actions *deserve* punishment.

I recently did a workshop in Hungary and the people gave me as much money for one day as the college professors there would get for two months’ work. But see, I’m *worth* more. We have a culture that’s designed to make people think that some people’s efforts are worth more. Pretty scary. And we have learned that people should sit together arguing about whether, for second degree rape, first offense, or second offense, this person deserves twelve months in prison or sixteen? Sounds funny when you look at it that way, doesn’t it? It’s rather tragic to think that our judicial system is based on such thinking, even though our own statistics show that punishment doesn’t work. Even though it costs us twenty-five thousand dollars a year to give these people free room and board. Pretty scary. But we’ve been educated, strongly educated with a language that supports this. So, language is very important to our understanding of our story, our gangs, our education, and to how we develop as human beings.

So how do human beings develop? If you raise people in domination structures, for example, and educate them in a

certain language to believe that people deserve to be punished and so forth, then you're going to get human beings who do strange things, like punish their children. Once I was working with a person from another culture, one where the concept of punishment is strange. He asked me at one point in our conversation, "If a plant isn't growing as you would like, do you punish it?" If a child isn't behaving as you would like, do you punish him? When we hear this, it just doesn't make sense.

The Use of Power

Next you need to teach people how to use power, because everyone has to have power to survive. So, what power do you use to influence life? Well, in the story we have been educated in, you teach people to use *power-over* tactics.

Power-over tactics include punishment, reward, guilt, shame, duty, and obligation. This is how you prepare people to be good citizens in a domination structure. Teach them to use punishment. Teach them that punishment is justified. People who get labeled "bad" by the authorities deserve it. Reward is what you deserve if you are judged right by the authorities. So, if you want to educate people to be nice, dead people within hierarchical structures, it's critically important that you teach them that punishment and reward are justified.

So those are first three dimensions. The story, which very much affects the gangs we set up, and the gangs we set up determine how we educate people. What language do we give them? How do we teach, what power tactics do we teach them to meet their needs? These first three dimensions very much affect the **fourth dimension**, how do we turn out? What is our development as human beings? This closes the circle, because if you go through these structures and education you become a violent person and this in turn proves the story. Look how violent people are. Look at the newspaper on any given day to see all the ways people are violent and greedy. Look at the business page, at what business people are doing to us—this just proves how evil

people are. So we have to keep finding virtuous people to control these evil people. More effective ways of punishing the evil-doers and rewarding the good-doers.

On Authority

UM: I want to ask about obedience to authority. I see some truth in what you've said. The problem is: Who's the authority? For example, in the twelve steps (healing process) the third step is to turn my life and my will up to the care of God, as I understand God. Turn my will over to my higher power. So, obedience to an authority is real, but the problem is they think they're the authority and they know the answers, and that's the controversy. With so many people I've had the feeling that there is obedience to authority, there's obedience to your higher power, there's obedience to waiting on the Lord . . .

MBR: I would say the word obedience describes how we sometimes choose to do what the authorities request because we see how it serves life. And I wouldn't then call that *obedience* to authority. I would say I'm choosing to do what the authority says because it's in harmony with my needs. Whenever we work with teachers and parents we try very hard to make sure that they make clear to children around them the difference between respect for authority and obedience to authority.

UM: I see.

MBR: I can't think of anything that's more important than to see a difference between those two concepts. The last thing I would want to teach anybody is obedience to authority.

UM: Okay, so obedience is blindly doing whatever the authority says.

MBR: Yes. And obedience to authority as I think you're meaning it is: I choose to do what this person says because I respect their authority. I really see them as having something to offer in serving life, so I choose to do it. One of the first

things we teach kids in our schools is never to give authority the power to tell you what to do. It's the *first* thing we want to teach them. It's easy to teach this to six-year-olds, it's pretty hard to teach it to their teachers. But respect authority, hear what authority has to offer, learn from them.

UM: Then make your own decision.

MBR: Then make your own *choice*. And also don't, because of how authority has been imposed on you in the past, now react with rebellion. Submission and rebellion both give power to the other person. Never give people power over you to make you submit or rebel. Submission and rebellion both give the other person power over you. When you're really free you're aware that you can do whatever you choose to do every moment of your life. Nobody can make you do anything.

Some of you have heard me tell about when my oldest son came back from the public school for the first time after going for six years to a school that I helped create. On his first day at the public school he came home I said, "What was it like, Rick, that new school?" He said, "It's okay, Dad, but boy some of those teachers." I said, "What happened?" He said, "Dad, I was half way through the door and some man teacher comes running over to me and says, 'My, look at the little girl.'" The teacher was reacting to his long hair. So, I thought to myself, welcome to public schools where the teachers know what's right, authority knows what's right. There's a right way for boys to wear their hair and a wrong way. And if you don't do it the right way you should be shamed for not doing what's right. So I was getting annoyed and I said, "How did you handle it?" "I remembered what you said, Dad. In that kind of structure never give them the power to make me submit or rebel." "Holy smokes," I said, "You remembered that? Man, you made my day." And I said, "Then what did you do?" "I tried to hear his feelings and needs, Dad, and respect him as a person." "Really, what did you hear?" "I heard he was irritated and wanted me to cut my hair." I said, "How did that leave you feeling?" "Dad, I

felt sad for the man. He was bald and seemed to have a thing about hair.”

So, we work on that with the kids. See, we know they’re not always going to be in life-enriching structures until we can create them world wide, but in the meantime, we’ve got to learn how when we’re in these other structures never to give others the power to make you submit or rebel.

UF: So it starts in controlled structures.

MBR: Exactly. Then even when you’re in the domination structure you still live within this other story. And then when you want to transform the domination structure, we want to get to those teachers. We want to show them there are other ways of being, of dealing with children.

Still, a lot of children don’t have the training that we give to kids in how never to hear what authority thinks about you. Hear what they feel and what their needs are. Learn from them, but never give them the power to define you. So, with six-year-olds, we can get to it real quickly. We say “You did a good job.” They’ll say back, “You like what I did?” We say, “That was stupid.” They say, “You disagree with what I did?” We can get a six-year-old just like that (MBR snaps his fingers). The older they get the harder it is. The more they get addicted to these cultural values that teach everything is about getting a good grade, good judgments from the authorities. So, we want to teach kids to hear what this human being has to offer. Hear what their needs are, hear what they’re feeling, but never, never, never give a person in a position of authority the power to tell you what’s right, what’s wrong, or what you have to do.

UF: But we’re all products of that now, you know.

MBR: Even after our training?

UF: Even after . . .

MBR: How did we fail? How did we fail? (MBR says jokingly.)

UF: You know, sometimes I feel so frustrated and I know that I know better, and yet I’m still a product of that culture. I still

react in power-over ways and people hear it that way. I see people doing that with me all the time—even people in this room—and it’s so discouraging.

MBR: It’s probably even more discouraging because you probably have a non-NVC voice inside you that says you *should* be farther along than you are right now. Now, just being sad that you’re not farther along, that’s a sweet pain. But if you think you *should* be somewhere other than you’re at by now, that makes pain on top of the pain.

UM: You “should” be?

MBR: You “should” be.

UF: Well, I feel concerned, you know, because I think the only way to really make these big changes is to make them individually, inside ourselves. And after years of dealing with this, I know my own sincerity and my own work and I’m still here and I keep coming, but it’s difficult and challenging for me and I start feeling overwhelmed, like it’s futile, you know, when I see what still goes on.

MBR: Yeah, yeah. It’s overwhelming for you to see what is involved to try to make this shift in your own consciousness. You feel kind of hopeless and discouraged and frustrated with all that it takes to shift from the old paradigm to one of your own choosing.

UF: Yeah.

MBR: Yeah, eight thousand years is a long time to have this stuff poured into us. Generation after generation, it’s been in our books, in our cultural and religious training—or should I say in 90 percent of our religious training. Because Milton Rokeach, in his book *Open and Closed Mind*, showed that if you compare people who attend churches in any of the seven basic religions, people who sincerely follow the practices, and compare them on measures of compassion with people who have no church affiliation, they are less compassionate. The more people go to church the less compassionate they become. But he warns people about how they interpret his

data, because within each of the seven religions that he studied there were two radically different populations. There was a minority of about 8 percent that are more compassionate than the total population. It's the same religion but an entirely different way of interpreting it. A radically different way. Whether it's Jewish, Christian, Moslem, Hindu, or Buddhism—two different groups within each. One is much less compassionate than the total population—unfortunately the majority—and then the minority is much more compassionate.

Educating Self and Others for Change

Investing in Radical Objectives

One of the things we have to be careful about is making this important choice about being good investors of our energies in social change, and that means we have to be clear about the difference between radical objectives and peripheral objectives.

One effort I made to get a whole life-enriching school going was in Rockford, Illinois. The school, the Welch Teacher Development Center, was an elementary school. Our objective was to set up a school in harmony with what we'll call Nonviolent Communication principles. And it took about three years for this school to be established and functioning as we envisioned it. Those were rough years. I don't know if you know much about Rockford, but it is a city that is by various measurements of conservatism the most conservative city in the United States. So this was a great learning experience for me to try to get a radically different school created in the middle of conservative city. And it was rough. I've never seen a city more divided on issues related to education. On every yard there would be a sign either for or against this school. It was *the* political issue in the city for about three years.

So we got the school going and academic achievement was way up. It was also racially integrated. It hadn't been before, but now it was racially integrated, with a radically