

REVOLUTIONARY REMINDERS:

The Smallest Superpower

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As citizens of the world who believe that change is needed, we often forget that the most powerful change is the one we can make in our own lives. Who do we have the most influence over? Ourselves. Yet we often sit at home and see so much pain and suffering in the world that we want tell people how to do it right! I know I've been out in the streets shouting "we want democracy and we want it now," and I've come to realize that neither anyone in that crowd or even I myself were mindful enough to represent just what it was we thought democracy meant.

It is so silly to tell people what to do without embodying it. As Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world," or else how can people see why they should change? It doesn't make sense to tell people to recycle, reuse, or act from good intentions. It makes sense to do these things, which are a part of a nonviolent way of life, and see if they inspire change in others. Coercion has no place in nonviolence; we need to persuade people to crave a better planet. Once people understand why and happily embark on those actions, they will discover the smallest superpower - our daily actions. The truth is that the greatest power on this planet is not an army, it's not the atom bomb, it's not the legislative board of a country, it's not even Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. It is the power of our collective daily actions, for better or for worse. Our daily thoughts and deeds shape who we are as a society and what we stand for. Not even Gandhi managed to convince most Indians to truly

embrace nonviolence as a way of life instead of employing it as a strategy for liberation.

It would take a revolution of our cultural values to have a successful nonviolent movement, because if we want a permanent and sustainable change we will need a new lifestyle that integrates a continuing and deepening awareness of our daily actions. The result of such a nonviolent movement won't just be a new leader in the same

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old power structure, rather an entirely new mode of life that integrates and deepens awareness of our actions. Through our new mindfulness in our normal lives we would see that the current "democracy" has dropped off track on our journey towards global harmony.

A great example of people using the power of their daily deeds to change the world is that of the activists in

the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and the African American community of Montgomery understood that taking the bus, even if it was cheap and convenient, was at the same time supporting a system of segregation. So they boycotted the buses. By doing so, African Americans harnessed the true superpower and the white community's opposition quickly melted away. No other power could have overcome their nonviolent power. The Ku Klux Klan and traditional power structure threatened, attacked, threw bombs, terrorized, and even created new legislation to make it harder for these African American people. But nothing can overcome the realization of the power of mindful actions.

So how did this group of African Americans harness nonviolence? By evaluating their decision to ride on a bus that didn't represent their values and then changing their choice to support a healthier society. We too need to continue evaluating what we are supporting, who we are honoring, and where we are spending our energy to make sure that it is going to build better bonds. Just simple things like buying organic, locally-grown produce, patronizing small family-owned community businesses, or recycling, are great choices to begin researching. Growing some portion of the food you eat is a fantastic way to decrease plastic waste and save fossil fuels by preventing the same food from being shipped across the country. I work for a non-profit called Daily Acts, and we have a great list of little differences that you can make and explanations of how they make a difference. Check them out at: <http://www.daily-acts.org/actions.html>. Implementing the changes that we see fit is a beautiful power and the true use of our education.



Rosa Parks shows how far one small action can carry you.

Whatever else we do to better the world, we should focus on our part of the superpower by being mindful in our lives. Gandhi spoke of a concept he called *svadeshi*, which literally means "one's own region". However, Gandhi used *svadeshi* as a concept which meant to start a social revolution from the center of oneself, reflecting on each and every action that you partake in and making sure that it stems from good intentions. We are only able to create change in our own space, so that is where we should focus. In our choices, our homes, our work, and our local communities, that is where our primary responsibility as revolutionary activists continues to be.

Someone reading an early version of this article told me, "So, I've really been thinking about your article and I tried to figure out what to do to embody the smallest superpower, maybe you should add a little more about that." Yes ma'am! Here's the trick... start low and slow from humble I and ponder and cry about what it is that is making the world die, in your eye! Choose one thing you can do for a week or two, so that you can stay committed and continually grow in a way that will create a better relationship with someone or something. Because of you!

One of the first things I did on my journey was, for one week, whenever I spent money on myself - for clothes, food, or transportation - I'd spend an equal amount of money on another person. My friends loved me because every time we'd grab a cup of coffee, I'd pay for theirs. I even took a stranger out for a sandwich once that week. Just that focus on going out of your way and acting on good intentions, regardless of their notable effect (who really knows how this whole cause and effect thing works anyway), it starts to bring awareness to the smallest superpower. Then grow slow, stay true to what seems right in your heart and never think that your actions are in vain. The most powerful things that take place can't be explained or understood scientifically, so understand them as we did in the days of old, with some loving faith. And please do some of that research to convince our lovely Western civilization of the smallest superpower!

It sounds cliché, but a revolution of cultural values will have to grow as each one of us evaluates the space that we take on this planet and works to build healthier relationships with the world around us by discovering how to find bliss in each of our smallest and menial tasks. Inhale. As we develop an understanding of the effect of every action in each day and every second of our lives and make choices that build healthier relationships, the old power structure will fall away and new values will be the final indication that we've made a sustainable change.



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