In-Class Exercise for Teaching Peace Literacy
Developed by Sharyn Clough
Professor of Philosophy, Oregon State University

For more biographical info about Clough visit http://peaceliteracy.org/about

Break/prep room for exercises
- Clear desks to sides of the room
- Tape up signs on each of the four walls designating two axes:
  - violent/not violent
  - justified/not justified

Exercise 1: Reflecting on violence
(Adapted from Leah Wells, Teaching Peace, A Guide for the Classroom and Everyday Life, Santa Barbara: Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, 2003.)

Divide the room into four quadrants. Along one axis, violent/not violent; along the other justified/not justified. Listen to three scenarios (as below). After each one, stand in a quadrant that best represents your views on whether the scenario illustrates an action that is violent or not; an action that is justified, or not. For now, this is not about defending our positions; the point is to reflect on them. Begin with a deep slow breath, in and out through the nose. Plant feet. Listen.

1. The police in your neighborhood have once again shot and killed an unarmed black teenage boy. You join in a protest outside the police station and you get in a heated argument with a very angry counter-protestor. He steps toward you as if to hit you, you push him away from you.
   - Move to the quadrant that best fits your position.
   - If you thought any of the scenarios involved violence, and that the violence was justified, now ask yourself the further question:
     - Does the justified violence involve simply reacting or responding? Does the justified violence lead to further justice or injustice?
     - Does it solve the problem in the long-term or merely offer a short–term solution?
     - Does it make things better or worse?
     - Given these considerations, is the violent act, even if justified, prudent?
     - Why or why not?

2. The protest lasts into the night and a message is sent to the police chief demanding that they address your group. The police chief refuses. After five hours of waiting, chanting, and comforting your distraught colleagues, you pick up a garbage can and throw it into the window of the police station, breaking the window.
   - Move to the quadrant that best fits your position.
   - If you thought any of the scenarios involved violence, and that the violence was justified, now ask yourself the further question:
Does the justified violence involve simply reacting or responding? Does the justified violence lead to further justice or injustice?

Does it solve the problem in the long-term or merely offer a short–term solution?

Does it make things better or worse?

Given these considerations, is the violent act, even if justified, prudent?

Why or why not?

3. On the way home from the long night of protesting you stop at McDonalds to purchase and eat an Egg McMuffin that contains bacon from a pig raised in what you suspect is a factory farm, and packed at what you suspect is a processing plant that exploits cheap immigrant labor.

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  - Does the justified violence involve simply reacting or responding? Does the justified violence lead to further justice or injustice?
  - Does it solve the problem in the long-term or merely offer a short–term solution?
  - Does it make things better or worse?
  - Given these considerations, is the violent act, even if justified, prudent?
  - Why or why not?

**Exercise 2: Practicing non-violence**

Focusing on whichever of the issues above generated the most polarization

- Form a line along the violence/ non-violence continuum only
- Join hands, and double back until everyone is facing someone from the other end of the continuum.
- We’re now going to practice a non-controversially non-violent act, specifically, listening respectfully.
- This sounds easy and straightforward but in fact we all need practice at it.
- Choose which partner will speak first about their view/rationale
- The first partner speaks for ONE MINUTE, the other partner DOES NOT SPEAK, BUT LISTENS CAREFULLY, then for ONE MINUTE the partner repeats what they heard, then for ONE MINUTE they both clarify any points that were missed.

- Now switch.

**Debrief**