

Pacifism

When I was little I grew up around violent people. I didn't understand why they thought their behavior was helpful, and I decided I didn't like violence. I was very little at the time and, as I grew, I learned that a man named Martin Luther King, Jr agreed with me. I suppose I could say that I agreed with him, but I say it that way because I thought violence was no good before I ever heard of Martin Luther King, Jr. I also noticed that, through enforced study of the bible and the Lutheran church, Jesus didn't hit anyone either. In light of what recently happened in Charleston, SC, I have seen many posts about the need for protesters to take a non-violent stance. However, I do not believe self-defense (or defense of a child, for that matter) *is* violence. A pacifist stand can be very effective in most cases, but not all.

I have not been perfect in my life. I have struck about four people in my life. I remember each incident quite clearly. I also grew up and learned that in a "normal" home, people discipline animals by smacking the animal. It took some time to unlearn that, because striking animals does no more good than striking children. However, my default setting is on a nonviolent response. I have mostly stood by that and I do believe that turning the other cheek can be very effective. However, I also believe that you only have to do that once. If they hit you on the other cheek than they deserve whatever you might do to defend yourself - without excessive force, of course.

One place I have found a non-violent response totally ineffective is in the case of sexual harassment, assault or rape. Misogynists who practice sexual assault of any kind are looking to get away with it. Sometimes putting up a fight in such situations is effective. Other times putting up a fight is totally counterproductive - because sometimes the perpetrator takes fighting back as an invitation to use fists, weapons, or worse.

Because I have a pacifist nature, I have often just "laid back and taken it." I didn't enjoy the experience at all. Because I have been trained to advocate for other survivors, I have learned that nobody's way of dealing with assault is the one "right way" to deal with it. If, like me, someone just lays there and takes the

abuse, they must endure the whole ordeal. Personally I never wanted to have to get reconstructive surgery on my face, so I have never hit someone who assaulted me that way. That doesn't mean that I haven't wished I would have hit the assholes.... I have dealt with the guilt and shame of feeling like I didn't say "no" strongly enough or put up enough of a fight for it to qualify as abuse or assault, and know now it was them, not me that was at fault.

I ended up in a lot of situations like that because I spent a great deal of time trying to educate racists about racism. One of a favorite tactics of a racist is sexual assault of civil rights advocates. I don't believe anymore, that hate can be educated away. Mere prejudice can be educated away since that is usually the result of ignorance, but hate is different. Hate is usually on purpose and not the result of ignorance. I learned that from these people the hard way.

Non-violence does not work on perpetrators of sexual abuse and assault. If someone were to find a perpetrator assaulting a child, it would be totally ok in my book if he or she were to hit that perpetrator. Perhaps repeatedly. Sometimes stopping violence is more important than never committing "violence."

"No rule is so general which admits not exception" -- Robert Burton

One of the reasons that non-violence as a rule works so well, is because it is harder to control pacifists. Violent people can effectively be set off on purpose and to accomplish a certain end. I believe it is an effective way to protest and make a point.

It is also an effective way to discipline children. Violence aimed at children merely teaches them to hide what they are doing. I honestly believe it is so much more likely to teach children to be "sneaky." I honestly believe we want to set a good example for our children and not be a dictator. There is much evidence to support that hitting kids teaches them nothing of value, and is likely to teach them to be violent themselves.

Rape culture is real. There is much apathy surrounding the subject. Not much is being done about the problem. I am not big enough to deter a man and I find it sexist of many of these men who advocate non-violence, **no matter what**, to

ignore the problem. I find few of these "gurus" addressing the problem of rape culture. It is not my place to tell other women how to deal with assault, and it is certainly not a man's place.

The solution, like preaching about non-hatred, is not to stop preaching the value of non-violence. The solution comes in addressing the exception to the rule. Non-violence is the right thing in almost every situation, but not when it comes to sexual assault. I find that a lot of the new-age culture is wrapped in a cotton candy like insulation. And I have found, being an enlightened woman, that I feel like I am being looked down upon for not believing these blanket rules fit every single situation.... Exceptions must be acknowledged. The elephant in the living room must be accepted, if it is ever to be escorted away.

August 16,2017

Theresa M Lennon