

The 2025 WWFOR Fall Conference

by David Lambert

As the summer of 2025 was drawing to a close, the Fall Conference planning group had not yet met and we were approaching a deadline. Thankfully, Bruce Pruitt-Hamm suggested **the idea of a conference** consisting of **training in nonviolent noncooperation**. It would be a shorter version of the two day one Bruce and others had recently attended. Ultimately Mary Lou Finley, a long time WWFOR member and one of the co-directors of the WWFOR Mike Yarrow Peace Fellowship and a long-time colleague of hers, Pam Smith of Portland, agreed to do **a two hour condensed version**.

The prelude to the conference was 15 minutes of various arrangements of the iconic civil rights song: “We Shall Not Be Moved.” These had been deftly and effectively put together by Jean Buskin. The interactive and skillfully led training by Mary Lou and Pam in **collective noncooperation strategies** featured a number of ways people working together can “fracture” a regime’s formal power. One way, the Movement Action Plan (MAP) was discussed and the trainers pointed out that our country now is in **the 4th MAP stage, i.e. Majority Stage**, where strong sections of the public are in opposition and are protesting the current formal power structure. While this is initially very favorable to the movement, there is **a strong risk of large numbers of people moving into discouragement**, developing a sense of failure if things don’t change right away. Movements need to **not** rely strictly on protests and **advance into a more creative phase** through a multiplicity of strategies and noncooperation methods to increase the chance of success. **Large protests are still needed but simply as one of a variety of numerous other noncooperation actions**. This can lead to an increasing majority of the people sustaining their support for movement goals.

The 6 principles of Kingian nonviolence were explored and the key concept of attacking the conditions and structures of injustice was emphasized i.e. the “Pillars of Support”. We should not negatively label the people who are opposing us, that is, those who continue to support the regime. **Really listening to people** who are less, or not supportive, and **asking questions** to try and understand their perspective, can increase movement effectiveness. One conference participant made a soulful comment that it felt much better to her to get to know the person she disagree with, rather than try and change them for the sake of change without really trying to understand them.

Rounding out the conference were three MYPF (Mike Yarrow Peace Fellowship) trainees who shared their social justice projects and their responses to the theme of the conference. Oona Foster-Bill shared her work toward abolishing nuclear weapons and with developing singing circles; Brady Johnson told of his work with college students pushing for U.S. divesting of the military resources used in the war between Israel and Palestinians; and Sneha Nandkeolyar shared her project of empowering and enhancing literacy of women.

The after-conference discussion was facilitated by Mary Hanson. Planners for the conference were: Jean Gant Delastrada, Jean Buskin, Tom Hathorn (the excellent technical person), Mary Hanson, John Repp, Regon Unsoeld, Mary Lou Finley, and David Lambert.

To see the pages on our website about the Fall Conference, see <https://wwfor.org/2025-wwfor-fall-conference/>

A further **Resource List** relating to our Nov, 22, 2025, Fall Conference “Nonviolence: Key Strategies for Times of Rising Authoritarianism,” compiled by trainer Mary Lou Finley. **Click here** to view or download.