

The 3.5% Rule

Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan studied nonviolent movements and found something powerful: when just 3.5% of a population **consistently** and **strategically** participates in organized resistance, authoritarian regimes often fall. This isn't a theory—it's a pattern proven by history. But success depends on more than numbers. That 3.5% must be **united, well-organized, and supported by the rest of the community** to make lasting change.

Support can look like donating, sharing information, offering child care, cooking meals, or helping with transportation. These behind-the-scenes actions help front-line protesters stay safe and focused.

Protest and Persuasion
These raise awareness and show public opposition.

marches, rallies, street theater, prayer vigils, or creative events like pajama protests or die-ins.

Noncooperation
This means refusing to support an unjust system.

boycotts, strikes, and saying "no" to unfair rules.

Non-violent intervention
These actions directly block harm or build alternatives.

forming blockades, setting up encampments, or organizing mutual aid to support vulnerable groups*

*These actions take planning, teamwork, and strong safety measures—like training, medicals, and de-escalation skills.

Principle 3: Discipline under pressure creates safety. We keep each other safe by planning ahead, training, and using de-escalation skills. Safety isn't extra—it's part of the strategy. We say, "Who keeps us safe? We keep us safe."

Principle 4: Solidarity builds strength. When we act together, we're powerful. Caring for each other, preparing, and communicating helps regular people stand up to injustice. These four principles work together: **strategy builds safety, safety builds solidarity, and solidarity helps us shift power.**

Gene Sharp's 3 Types of Non-violent Resistance

- protest & persuasion
- noncooperation
- non-violent intervention

4 Principles of Non-violent Resistance

Principle 1: Power depends on consent. Governments only work if people cooperate. When enough of us refuse, we shift the power. Nonviolent action—like protests or defying unfair rules—shows that real power comes from us. Courage spreads, and together, we're stronger.

Principle 2: Nonviolence is ethical and strategic. We choose nonviolence because it works—it protects people, challenges injustice, and keeps us focused. Staying calm under pressure is essential. Losing control can harm our cause, so self-discipline and emotional regulation are key.

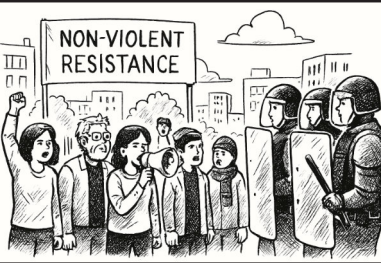
Right now, we're facing serious threats to our rights and freedoms. *But we have a chance to organize, resist, and win.* Small victories build momentum for bigger change.

We live in a wealthy country, yet **most people struggle while a few at the top profit.** That's not fair, and it's not how things have to be. If we work together—especially the working class—we can push back and build a better future.

We deserve a high quality of life.
We deserve democracy. And we have the power to fight for it, with non-violence—if we organize, support each other, and act.

INDIVISIBLE
- Wabash Valley -

Guide to Non-violent Resistance & the 3.5% Rule



 adapted from Parkrose Permaculture's YouTube videos

Why non-violent resistance?

We use nonviolent resistance not just because it feels peaceful, but **because it works.** It helps us create real change and protect people. It's a smart strategy, not just a moral choice.

Violence is what the system expects—it's built on the idea that power comes from force. But nonviolence flips that idea. It helps us *take control, shift the story, and gain the upper hand.*

IMPORTANT NOTE: nonviolent resistance is different from self-defense. Choosing nonviolence is a strategy. But we should **never tell people how to protect themselves when they're being attacked.** Nonviolence was created by marginalized communities to protect each other—but it's not the same as self-defense.

Definitions:

Nonviolence means choosing not to use violence or fight back with violence. It's not the same as being peaceful or passive. Nonviolent actions can be bold and disruptive.

Nonviolent direct action is when people protest or resist *without using physical force.* This can include refusing to follow unfair laws or doing things that challenge the system.

Civil disobedience is a type of nonviolent action where people *break laws* they believe are unjust, often to make a bigger point about government policies.

Preparation is key. That includes training, planning, and keeping each other safe. Safety isn't extra—it's part of what makes nonviolence strong.