



# The Nonviolent Peace Force and Conflict Resolution

By Jeanne Zimmer  
Adjunct faculty, Justice and Peace Studies  
[zimm1021@stthomas.edu](mailto:zimm1021@stthomas.edu)

## Abstract

"Nonviolent Peace force," one of PBS NewsHour's Under-Told Stories, highlights how civilian protection and ceasefire monitoring has been used to lower the number of skirmishes and preserve the ceasefire in Mindanao, Philippines, which has lived with conflict for centuries. The video raises questions about the role of civilians and the use of outsiders, as well as religious conflict, inequality, power, and culture.

## Story Link

<https://www.undertoldstories.org/2012/10/02/nonviolent-peaceforce/>

## Learning Goals

As part of the development of reflective practitioners, students will consider their beliefs attitudes, and behaviors related to conflict.

Students will understand conflict and learn how to and analyze conflict in order to shape more effective and productive responses.

This learning module can stimulate discussion about the goal of promoting peace, especially in the areas torn by violent conflict, and empowerment. The video raises questions about the role of civilians and the use of outsiders, as well as religious conflict, inequality, power, and culture.

## Learning themes/topics for consideration

- The role of civilians and outsiders in peacebuilding and issues of power and empowerment
- The intersection of religion, culture, and inequality as related to conflict and peacebuilding.
- How the concepts of neutrality and impartiality are factors in conflict management and peacebuilding

## Preparation

Students should view the video ahead of time and explore the Nonviolent Peaceforce website: <https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/> Students should also review the information listed under "Background."

## Background

- Brief history of the Philippines: <https://www.gov.ph/about-the-philippines>
- The Mindanao conflict:  
<http://documents.vsemirnyjbank.org/curated/ru/701961468776746799/The-Mindanao-conflict-in-the-Philippines-roots-costs-and-potential-peace-dividend>

## Discussion Questions

Note: The questions listed can be assigned to be completed in writing prior to class, to ensure a better-informed discussion.

1. What are your impressions of the concept of a Nonviolent Peaceforce? What do you see as the strengths, based upon the video? What concerns do you have?
2. In the video an army major said, "Since they are foreigners the perception could be they are neutral compared to local organizations that are involved in the peace process." and a MILF representative said, "Only unarmed civilian protection monitors would be effective, because our people have been

traumatized. If they only see government and MILF working for civilian protection, there is no impartiality.” How do you see neutrality and impartiality in this context?

3. To what degree might outsider involvement be disempowering? Is NVC mediation a culturally bound process that is appropriate only for white, middle class, North Americans and therefore inappropriate or even offensive to other cultural/racial/ethnic groups?
4. How might you see a Nonviolent Peaceforce working in your community? Founder Mel Duncan said, “We have to engage with local partners who can understand things in ways that internationals will never be able.... we have to remain humble and this is not a tool that fits every situation and that will rid the world of war.” What partners might you engage? How would humility fit?

Note: A variation of this question is to have students identify other communities that might benefit from Nonviolent Peaceforce. This would broaden the discussion for those who may not perceive their community as needing this kind of support.

## Deeper Dive

### Synthesis Activity

Students will provide a brief (2-4 page) written assessment, reflecting on the video, the readings, and the discussion, as well as what issues or questions were raised for them. In Justice and Peace Settings, students should relate their assessment to the Circle of Praxis/Social Change Wheel.

<https://www.stthomas.edu/justpeace/academics/>

The Circle of Praxis/Social Change Wheel Through, coupled with interdisciplinary and experiential study, introduces students to a new way of looking at and responding to the world. The goals are to **criticize responsibly** and **act effectively** for the common good: **to relieve suffering** and **to make positive changes** in social structures. The Synthesis Activity will provide students with the space to reflect on the Nonviolent Peace force module.

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This study guide was prepared by Jeanne Zimmer, [zimm1021@stthomas.edu](mailto:zimm1021@stthomas.edu), adjunct faculty in the Justice and Peace Studies department at the University of St. Thomas.

**To request the teaching note, email**  
**[undertold@stthomas.edu](mailto:undertold@stthomas.edu)**