

“Following her lead”: Women, faith, and nonviolent action to transform violence

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For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

In the contemporary world, violence affects women in particular ways, and in particularly acute ways. First, no longer is war a regulated exercise fought between soldiers on battlefields removed from population centers. Modern warfare manifests in irregular and effuse ways. Insurgencies may target civilians, the increasing use of automated weapons such as drones expand the battlefield, as does chemical and biological warfare. As a result, women, children, and the elderly – those often not targeted for conscription into military forces or armed groups – have become the overwhelming majority of modern war casualties. Women are particularly affected by the pervasive use of sexual violence – rape and forced sexual enslavement -- as both a tactic and consequence of war. In fact, evidence shows that even as wars end in defeat or negotiated settlement, domestic violence against women often increases as the violence of war is absorbed into the home. Finally, even in contexts of apparent sustained peace, a silent and often unseen war often plays out on women’s and girls’ bodies as multiple forms of violence and exploitation, including sex trafficking and femicide, are driven by a rape culture rooted in women’s perceived expendability, impurity, or unworthiness. Religious and cultural belief systems are often complicit in shaping and legitimating a culture of violence against women, and these systems may be marshalled to stigmatize female survivors of violence, shunning them from communities of faith at a time when they most need spiritual and emotional support. Finally, subtle and overt perceptions of women’s inferiority and gendered norms that proscribe the limits of their authority, often no further than the household, result in structural forms of injustice that harm women. Marginalized from political and social leadership, their priorities and needs are often not addressed, so perpetuating cultures of gendered violence.

Given these realities, nonviolent action in today’s world must be cognizant of and seek to transform explicit and more subtle forms of overt, cultural, and structural violence against girls and women as a central component of its agenda for peace so as to produce a culture affirming the dignity of all genders. Moreover, central leaders in nonviolent effort can and must be women of faith (and no faith). And indeed, many women of faith around the world already

actively mobilize as de facto leaders of local, national, and transnational nonviolent movements in ways that are impactful and transformative, if under-appreciated or acknowledged by outside observers. These women bring particular priorities to nonviolent movements based on their experiences, and they use tactics that are often unique and that leverage their authority as women – as faith leaders, scholars, journalists, activists, survivors, mothers, sisters, daughters, social and political leaders, and so much more – to advance their nonviolent cause. In so doing, they stand on the shoulders of women from their historic faith traditions who similarly and creatively leveraged their relationships, resources, and power to advocate nonviolently for the dignity of all and for a culture of peace.

Starting place: The Christian Scriptures

Let us turn first to sources within our Christian tradition, especially the scriptures, to determine what they have to say about the violence women face and their leadership. From the start, it is striking the degree to which both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures offer accounts of violence against women, especially forms of sexual violence like rape, but also forced marriage and sexual slavery. From the rape of Jacob's daughter Dinah (Genesis 34), to the nameless concubine woman who is gang-raped to death and then dismembered (Judges 19), to Tamar's rape by her half-brother (2 Samuel 13), and the exploited and abused prostitutes and accused adulteresses named in the gospels (Luke 7, John 8), the holy scriptures of our Christian tradition reflect the reality of violence and exploitation women face, often at the hands of men, in our fallen world. They also reflect how often these women are silenced, their perspectives and needs ignored. These forms of gender violence are sometimes sanctified through the Biblical narratives. While the Biblical accounts are sometimes critical of the rape of women, and in fact Deuteronomic law condemns to death perpetrators of rape (Deut 22:25-27), this is not exclusively the case across all the accounts; in fact, glorified men of Israel are often complicit in the rape or forced marriage of women (consider Bathsheba by David [2 Samuel 11], Hagar by Abraham [Gen 16], or Ziplah and Bilhah by Jacob [Genesis 30]). In legal codes, the abduction and rape of female prisoners of war is mandated (Deut. 21:10-14), victims of rape are forced to marry their rapist (22:28-29 and Judges 21:20-24). Moreover, the larger Biblical practice of linking Jewish and Christian belief and notions of nationhood (the people of Israel) with stories and discourses that perpetuate violence against women in turn inculcates cultures of rape in which gender violence is enshrined as a feature of patriarchal systems and so normalized. The issue of gender violence endemic in Biblical texts is one that must be critically examined and understood. To ignore these problematic passages that seem to sanctify gender violence is to ignore the voice and experience of the Bible's women victims. In so doing – in seeing how gender violence that targets women in particular ways exercised and sanctified through Biblical narratives – we can gain better insight into contemporary phenomena that do likewise. In this

way, the Bible can serve its sacred purpose as a guide to help us identify death-dealing practices in our world that require transformation so as to defend life and dignity.

Critically, an important aspect of Jesus' ministry was to acknowledge the women around him, including those who were survivors of violence, and to affirm their inherent dignity, worth, and wisdom. As acknowledged by John Paul II in *Mulieres Dignatum*:

“In the eyes of his contemporaries Christ became a promoter of women's true dignity and of the vocation corresponding to this dignity. At times this caused wonder, surprise, often to the point of scandal: ‘They marveled that he was talking with a woman’ (Jn 4:27), because this behavior differed from that of his contemporaries.”[1]

Throughout the gospel accounts, Jesus' ministry to, with, and led by women is noted in several ways. First, he notices women in a distinct way and brings them healing throughout his ministry (Matthew 8, Luke 18). He refuses to comply with ancient laws that cast some women as impure, crossing social bounds of acceptability to be with, and bring a healing touch to, women who faced social ostracism (Mark 5, Luke 13, John 4). Despite the important activities of Jesus to witness and bring healing to women survivors of violence, the Christian ethical tradition has not historically offered adequate attention to the problem of pervasive forms of violence against women and girls, and sexual violence experienced by those of all genders.[2]

Jesus often pointed to women around him who were models of faith (Luke 18, Luke 21). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that his female disciples were often among the few who recognized Jesus for who he was during his ministry, remained vigil with him during his crucifixion, were the first to whom he appeared after his resurrection (Mark 16), and were subsequently the first to preach the good news – the central call of Christian faith. Women were not only central in Jesus' ministry during his life on earth, with women accompanying Jesus and his male disciples in public through their travels and providing hospitality to them throughout (such as by Mary and Martha), but were critical ministers of his teachings following his death, resurrection, and ascension. In the Acts of Apostles and epistles, several women are named as key leaders of early Christian communities such as Phoebe in Rome and Junia, who Paul describes as “distinguished among the apostles” (Romans 16:9), as prophetesses (Acts 21:9), missionaries and founders of churches such as Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19).[3] Other historical sources further illuminate the critical role women played as leaders in the early Christian movement.

Moreover, we have several examples from the texts of women serving as leaders of nonviolent resistance. The first comes from Exodus. When Pharaoh orders midwives Shiphrah and Puah to

kill Hebrew sons when they are born, they refuse to obey, even lying to the Pharaoh when asked in a courageous act of deception for the cause of life (Exodus 1).

Violence against women and girls

Norwegian peace researcher Johann Galtung's scholarship presents three forms of violence, arguing that each need to be addressed in the process of building a positive (or just) peace: direct, cultural, and structural. Direct forms of violence include killing, bodily injury, rape and abuse, and other overt and easily perceived forms of harm caused to individuals or communities that are particularly pervasive during times of war, but are not limited to such. Structural and cultural forms of violence are less directly perceived, but are both a symptom and driver of direct violence and irrevocably linked to them. Structural violence is embedded into social, political, and economic systems and institutions in ways that foster injustice, ensuring that power and its benefits (including resources) are given to some at the expense of others. Structural violence is predicated on systems of domination. Cultural violence are the ideas, beliefs, symbols, and practices that justify and legitimate structural violence (and so also make indirect violence tenable), by leading people to believe that some groups of people are inferior to others, often determined on the basis of gender, race, age, class, or nationality. These ideas are taught and reinforced in subtle and overt ways through education and social norms. Structural and cultural forms of violence make direct violence against groups possible, and those forms of direct violence against groups in turn perpetuate and reinforce structural and cultural forms of violence in a cyclical fashion. Efforts to build just peace must find ways to non-violently identify, confront, and transform these forms of violence that affect many communities, including women and girls. Hence let us identify these three dimensions of violence directed against them.

Direct violence

Violence against women and girls is pervasive across the world in both developed and developing countries, impacting communities of all faiths, races, and nationalities. In addition to sexual and domestic forms of violence that impact women disproportionately, even in societies designated as "at peace," modern warfare as exercised in other environments brings particular and serious harm to women and girls. While in World War I, five percent of deaths were civilians, in the 1990s it was estimated that up to 90 percent of casualties of war were civilians, meaning relatively more women and children are dying as a consequence of modern war. The decentralized and diffuse nature of modern warfare contributes to a breakdown in social welfare institutions and structures such as schools and hospitals, which are often

decimated in urban warfare. And in fact civilians are often targeted deliberately as a strategy of warfare by both terrorist organizations and governments, as witnessed in Syria during its current civil war. Sexual violence against women is a common element of violent conflict (this form of violence afflicts men and children in wartime as well). In many wars of the last century, including those in the Balkans and Northern Uganda, women were systematically raped in private and public, particularly in the presence of family members, as a tactic of warfare. Many were taken as sex slaves or forced wives by combatants, including notoriously by Daesh (also known as ISIS). These are acts not only perpetrated against individuals, but against whole communities, meant to tear them apart and undermine social stability. It is notable that some of the very United Nations' peacekeepers sent into post-conflict societies to help provide human security have themselves been perpetrators of sexual violence against women. Even in the aftermath of formal warfare, violence against women often goes up as the violence of the battlefield is absorbed into the home. In short, war is particularly dangerous in fomenting violence against women and girls.

But violence against women is not just found in the midst of war. According to the World Health Organization, approximately one third of women worldwide have reported experiencing sexual violence, and the majority of the perpetrators of this violence are their intimate partners, not strangers.[4] In fact, well over a third of women murdered worldwide are killed by their male partners. Hundreds of millions of girls have been married at young ages or faced forms of harmful genital mutilation. These forms of violence women and girls have serious consequences. In addition to the obvious physical wounds and consequences that must be treated (including unplanned pregnancies and increased risk for miscarriage or stillbirth),[5] untreated psychological harm caused can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and suicide. Behavioral patterns may emerge that include risky sexual behavior, substance abuse, and challenges in developing relationships of trust with others, that can exacerbate the survivor's healing process.[6]

Structural violence

Structural violence is embedded in political and social institutions which exert power over women, marginalizing them from decision making and ensuring that their priorities are not addressed adequately and resources are not equally distributed to them. Around the world, gender inequality continues to be a pervasive problem that is illustrated by, and drives, structural forms of violence. While there has been great strides in recent decades to ensure more women hold political office, the overall rate of approximately 24 percent representation in parliaments is still far below equal representation.[7] Moreover, women are often less likely to own land or property, to have equal inheritance rights, to receive equal (or even adequate) access to education and health care, or to hold leadership in powerful social institutions such as

corporations, religious institutions, or universities. Women's lack of access to proper health care and nutrition results in higher mortality rates around-the-world.[8]

Evidence shows that addressing structural violence against women is critical for building a just peace. The research of scholar Valerie Hudson illuminates that causative relationship between the existence of women's equal political and social status and the creation of security. In countries where women are empowered there is far less likelihood of political violence or forms of food insecurity, violent extremism, or international conflict.[9]

Cultural violence

The ideological and ritual infrastructure provided by culture drives structural and direct violence against women, and is a symptom of it, as these ideas are drawn on to defend or legitimate those forms of violence. When it comes to creating and sustaining cultures in which direct and structural violence against women and girls becomes entrenched, religion plays a key role. Through asserting particular beliefs and practices about women (and men) that imply a hierarchy (men as dominant, women as subordinate) or that present women as ritualistically impure, sexually suspect, or intellectually inferior, religious traditions around the world have constructed and reinforced cultural violence against women.

For example, Christian theologians and church leaders have sometimes counseled women to stay in violent marriages and/or to forgive their abusers. They have reinforced and even sanctified Biblical or other religious narratives and teachings that reinforce an idea that women's dignity is less important than men's. They have drawn on religious teaching to legitimate the exclusion of women from leadership – including political and religious leadership. The endemic existence of sexual violence against women, men, and children within the Catholic Church perpetrated by priests can be seen as both a symptom and driver of this culture, and of the particularly dangerous environment that can be created when religious belief and practice and forms of gender and sexual violence collude. In order to transform violence against women and girls, and sexual violence that affects those of all gender, the cultural and religious ideas, norms, and practices that drive and embed a perception that women have less dignity or capacity than men must be addressed as part of nonviolent movements to build a just peace, and religious leaders and organizations have a particularly critical role to play in this given their complicity in helping to build and sustain the ideological foundation for violence against women.

Women of faith mobilizing in nonviolent action: Processes, priorities, challenges

Despite the multiple forms of violence targeting women and girls, they have mobilized powerfully and creatively in nonviolent action for the cause of peace. This includes both women who are mobilizing as part of secular-oriented organizations and institutions, as well as women who ground their work in faith-inspired organizations and religious institutions. Women's efforts to organize and lead nonviolent movements have often not been fully acknowledged or appreciated by outside observers. Rather, the oft-heralded leaders of successful movements of nonviolent resistance have tended to be men: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr, or Abdul Ghaffar Khan. But the reality is that critical nonviolent movements throughout history and throughout the world in the contemporary moment are being galvanized and led by women. This is not surprising, upon consideration. Given women's marginalization from the spaces in which decisions about, and leadership of, armed political movements are made, it makes certain sense that women have tended to choose the avenue of unarmed resistance movements in order to address injustice and wage nonviolent conflict.

History provides many examples of women leading movements of creative nonviolent resistance to advance the cause of just peace, including that of Harriet Tubman in the United States who helped organize the escape of enslaved Africans. In the famous play *Lysistrata*, ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes tells of a sex strike imposed by Athenian women in order to pressure men to bring about an end to war. This method has been used successfully by women throughout history, including by Iroquois women in 1600 or Liberian women led by Leymeh Gbowee in 2003.[10] Women across the world have also used creative processes of nonviolent resistance in their efforts to advance gender equality and reduce violence targeting girls and women. This can be seen in the myriad movements worldwide for women's right to vote throughout the 20th century, which often took the form of boycotts, street marches, hunger strikes, and popular campaigns with transnational connections in places like China, Turkey, Egypt, and the United States.[11] In the First Intifada, Palestinian women played critical roles in organizing committees and nonviolent actions in response to Israeli repression.[12] During the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, women were central leaders of nonviolent movements against authoritarianism. Tawakkol Karman, known as the "Mother of the Yemeni Revolution," who won the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize alongside Leymeh Gbowee, led the efforts in Yemen on behalf of not only women's rights, but the rights of all Yemenis who had been oppressed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Noting the preponderance of women participating in resistance movements against his oppressive rule, President Saleh sought to mobilize opposition to them by religious and other leaders by arguing that their involvement in political activities in public went against cultural and religious norms.[13] In Egypt, women like Asmaa Mahfouz used the internet in order to organize and spark the nonviolent revolution centered in Tahrir Square.

For the purpose of our study, let us turn our focus in particular to religious women's leadership in nonviolent movements for just peace. One example from Colombia is the Ecumenical Women's Peacebuilding Network, comprising entirely women who are leaders in their churches and communities, and who do extraordinary work for peace on the front lines of violence: supporting victims, confronting armed actors to create zones of peace, facilitating hard reconciliation conversations in local communities as combatants return home to communities they previously terrorized, advocating for the national peace processes (and advocating for more women to be included at the peace processes), and insisting that the needs of victims and women be taken into account in the negotiations, and so much more. In Honduras, Catholic sisters and lay joined forces with indigenous leaders, women of other faiths and none, and Afro-descendants in order to protest the 2009 coup and the violence associated with it. In so doing, they sometimes defied their own (male) religious leadership.[14] The aforementioned Leymeh Gbowee of Liberia mobilized women through Christian organizations, partnering with Muslim women's organizations, and drawing on powerful religious and cultural practices including song and prayer, in order to build a nonviolent movement that helped bring an end to a brutal civil war marked by extensive forms of violence that targeted civilian women and girls.

In a 2010-2013 study led by the U.S. Institute of Peace, Georgetown University, and the World Faiths' Development Dialogue that examined women religious leaders' peacebuilding activities worldwide, several trends marking religious women's nonviolent work for peace were identified:

1. *Cross-boundary work*: Time and again we see women, and particularly women-of-faith, seeking to reach across religious, political, ethnic, and other divides in conflict zones to build bridges and wider movements. To some degree, their marginalization from the top of institutional religious and political leadership may play a role in facilitating this, rendering them less constrained and freer to make moves considered politically or socially risky. For some, such as Israeli and Palestinian mothers or Christian and Muslim women in Liberia, this desire to reach out across divides comes as a result of their shared experience as victims of the conflict, "fed up with" the suffering imposed on their families and communities by continued violence. Oftentimes their goal in bridging these divides is as much strategic as it is about relationship-building for relationship-building's sake: as a group that has less political influence, particularly in an environment in which those carrying guns are those with voice, larger coalitions are necessary to exert influence and to be heard. But their work to organize horizontally across society also creates movements that are less hierarchical in nature, which often renders them more resilient (including their ability to persist even when some leaders are killed, arrested, or leave the movement). This kind of inclusive, horizontal

movement-making is particularly critical for the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance movements reliant on “people-power” to force political transformation.

2. *Advocacy:* Women-of-faith seek to influence political decision-making, and because they are usually excluded from direct participation in it, advocacy becomes their means to do so. They often advocate on behalf of the community, youth, and women – those suffering the brunt of war. Sometimes this advocacy keeps women’s rights or the eradication of violence against women and girls central, but not always. Again, consider Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman, who led resistance movements – marches, sit-ins, other forms of civil disobedience -- to end war or dictatorship. In Colombia, Catholic religious sisters advocate against corporate powers that profit from operating in the chaos of war, demanding greater accountability for these corporations to ensure they do not harm local communities and the environment. Women, and women-of-faith in particular, often seek to draw various groups – particularly disempowered or minority groups -- together in order to front an effective resistance to powers propelling violence.
3. *Psycho-social and spiritual support to survivors:* Women-of-faith seem particularly drawn to providing psycho-social care to victims in conflict zones, particularly male and female victims of sexual violence in war, who may not feel comfortable going to men for support, and to child soldiers seeking to reintegrate into communities. One example of how this issue of primary concern to women religious peacebuilders can influence institutional agendas when they are in positions of decision-making is Sister Marie-Bernard Alima, who as the first woman General Secretary of the Catholic Church in DRC’s Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace helped push Church programs to provide psycho-social support for the many victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (as well as programs seeking to prevent it and to transform the culture of impunity). An accusation often often waged against formal religious institutions is that they have not done enough to combat violence against women, including rape and sex slavery in warfare, human trafficking, and domestic violence that often spikes when soldiers come home. Certainly, however, women-of-faith have sought to push this issue more to the center of religious peace and justice-building priorities.
4. *Third-party actors:* Women-of-faith frequently serve as direct intermediaries between parties in conflict or between local communities and armed actors to advance peace. This is particularly true with respect to local mediation to create zones of security/protection, such as in Colombia or Northern Uganda. In places like Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan religious women have been able successfully to approach members of terrorist organizations in order to negotiate for the release of hostages or to reduce

harassment of local communities. Their moral authority and an assumption that they are apolitical or politically neutral can help grant them the access and influence to be able to serve as an intermediary in this way.

Women's ability to mobilize powerful nonviolent movements can be attributed in part to their perception as less threatening, apolitical, or because they are less visible, and so able to operate-under-the-radar to access critical spaces and organize powerful resistance movements undetected and so unchallenged until too late by those who might seek to disrupt their efforts. Security forces and other armed actors may be less inclined to respond violently to women activists at the front-lines of resistance movements, given the kind of backlash it might spark and because they are seen as less dangerous than a group of men might appear, for social-psychological reasons.[15] Women will often use their invisibility and non-threatening status in subversive ways to their advantage in waging nonviolent conflict, documenting abuses, and engaging in provocative acts of defiance against authoritarian leaders.[16] Women's propensity to lead nonviolent movements should not necessarily be ascribed to some aspect of her essential nature. In fact, history and contemporary times provides us with examples of women's involvement in armed campaigns or in cajoling men into armed battle. However, women's social and political position and experiences are likely more determinative of their selection of these forms of action than is their biological nature.

The priorities women-of-faith bring to nonviolent movements are often reflective of a holistic, just peace. While women's rights or an end to violence against women may feature in their goals, often their efforts are broader – seeking justice for other marginalized communities as well, or working to ensure the basic needs – including education and health – of all members of their community are being adequately addressed even when political decision makers or acts of war eliminate these social goods. They use the spaces in which they *do* have some authority and influence to advance their goals in creative ways. For example, Dominican sisters in northern Iraq have ensured schools remain open and available to young girls even during the waves of violence that have wracked the region as an act of resistance—seeking to ensure not only the ongoing educational formation of these girls, but the provision of safe spaces where they are protected from violence, including sexual violence and forced marriage endemic in the area as a result of ongoing wars. In Northern Ireland, Catholic sisters and Protestant women sought to create integrated, ecumenical educational settings even during a time of strict segregation as a defiant act of transformation. It was their advocacy, in large part, that put this issue on the agenda of the Good Friday Agreement and that has advanced its implementation subsequently.[17]

Women face many challenges in their work for peace, however. First, they are far less likely to receive funding and support from national and international funders of peacebuilding or human

rights work. This is particularly true for women-of-faith who are leading nonviolent resistance movements through their religious organizations or institutions. These women face double blinders – obscured from view in the same way many women are due to patriarchal assumptions about who is leading “political” movements as well as the realities of male-dominance in religious institutions that leads many to fail to see the religious women who are often quietly leading powerful efforts locally and nationally through these institutions. For these same reasons, they may be isolated, unconnected to networks of similar practitioners and communities of practice worldwide that could provide them solidarity and strategy. Finally, they often bump against patriarchal roadblocks within their own communities. This often takes the form of fellow community members and leaders – male and female – who draw on religious or cultural ideas or codes to seek to disempower their effort as inappropriate. In the face of these challenges, women of faith often draw from their own religious traditions those ideas, laws, and examples that affirm both the dignity of women and the precedent of their leadership for peace. In so doing, they transform cultural forms of violence against women, even as they seek to transform other, broader forms of violence affecting all within a community.

Why is it important to recognize and support women, including women of faith, who are leading nonviolent movements for peace and justice? First, their efforts are often effective and sustainable for some of the reasons cited above. Women bring particular skills, experiences, and relationships that can create inclusive and powerful movements. When their movements are inclusive and collaboratively led, as they tend to be, the very process of their efforts reflects the goal they seek – a more just society in which all can flourish. Which underscores the critical second argument for ensuring women are supported as leaders of these movements: by so doing, we can simultaneously ensure that structural and cultural forms of violence against women are transformed, as well as the direct forms of violence that women often ensure are acknowledged and addressed. Women have for too long been systematically marginalized from formal peacemaking efforts, which has meant that the peace being made in these efforts have been unlikely to take into account the needs of women and girls, half the population. From 1992-2009, women constituted only 2.4 percent of signatories to peace agreements. Those who get to the negotiating table are typically those who wield guns, leaders of government, armed groups, the security sector, arenas that are primarily (though not exclusively) the purview of men. Almost 15 years ago, the United Nations passed Security Resolution 1325 in recognition of this marginalization of women from traditional peacemaking and peacebuilding. Resolution 1325 has sought to correct the gender imbalance in peacemaking by calling for increased efforts to ensure and strengthen women’s participation. It also affirmed that women suffer particular injustices and violence in war – in ways that are different from men -- and that these injustices have not historically been addressed. When women are invited into formal peace processes, the agenda changes and expands. The same goes for all nonviolent movements for just peace. When women and girls are meaningfully included in the leadership

of these movements, the agenda expands and the peace achieved is more likely to succeed.[18] Moreover, research has shown that political movements that incorporate gender-inclusive ideologies are more likely to be and remain nonviolent.[19] In short, if nonviolent movements are going to be successful, they need to meaningfully include women.

Conclusion: Following her lead

Nonviolent movements seeking to create and sustain a just peace must be gender aware and inclusive. They must take into account forms of violence that affect women and girls, seeing these as just as critical to address as the political forms of violence more often acknowledged, especially in wartime. And they must acknowledge and support the critical leadership of women to ensure these movements' success, and the incorporation of their priorities and needs into their movement's objectives. Without so doing, they are unlikely to be successful. Moreover, without careful attention and conscious steps taken to this end, these nonviolent movements may unintentionally reinforce forms of violence – especially those structural and cultural -- that affect women and girls in particular.

But the need is more than a pragmatic one. It's a moral one, rooted in the call of the Christian tradition and the example of Jesus to affirm the dignity of women. More attention is needed from Christian theologians and ethicists to the ongoing and extraordinary problem of violence against women and girls, and of sexual violence (that affects women and girls in particularly pervasive ways, but also men and boys). As noted above, this problem has not been tackled adequately by the Christian tradition, despite the foundation provided as demonstrated in the model of Jesus during his ministry, who confronted this issue head on. Attention will need to be brought to violence against girls and women as it manifests in three respects: direct, structural, and cultural. These forms of violence must be named and addressed as sins that are personal, relational, and social – causing harm to individuals, to relationships built on trust and mutual care, and by infecting societies with structures of dominance that destroy community. Only in so doing can a holistic transformation of these death-dealing forms of violence result. Nonviolent resistance remains the most effective and ethical means by which to transform these varieties of violence, and as demonstrated, women-of-faith have a great deal to offer in providing creating and effective processes of nonviolent resistance.

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http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_1988_0815_mulieris-dignitatem.html [Accessed online August 5, 2018]

[2] Fortune, Sexual Violence, 47-48. As Fortune notes, this may be due to the fact that authoritative Christian ethicists have been predominantly male and this issue has not been a priority for them, as it is one that primarily affects women and girls.

[3] For more see, Hans Kung, Women in Christianity.

[4] <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>. There is good reason to believe this is a conservative estimate, given the degree of perceived and real ostracization women face in reporting sexual violence.

[5] Ibid

[6] White et al, 185.

[7] <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

[8] <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Goal-5.pdf>

[9] Hudson et al, Sex and World Peace

[10] Codur and King, "Women in Civil Resistance" in Kurtz and Kurtz, Women, War and Violence, 405.

[11] Ibid, 414.

[12] Principe, Women in Nonviolent Movements, 6.

[13] Hayward and Marshall, Illuminating the Unseen, 73.

[14] Ibid, chapter 11

[15] Codur and King, 434.

[16] Principe, Women in Nonviolent Movements, 5.

[17] For more, see this interview with Mari Fitzduff:

<https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-mari-fitzduff-director-international-master-of-arts-program-in-coexistence-and-conflict-brandeis-university>.

[18]

<http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Beyond-the-Normative-Can-Womens-Inclusion-Really-Make-for-Better-Peace-....pdf>

[19] Asal, et al, Gender Ideologies.