
The Voluntaryist

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"If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."

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Whose Name Is It, Anyway? (Another Tiny Freedom We Ought to Preserve)

By Claire Wolfe

Readers often ask if Claire Wolfe is my real name. Apparently they know the flaky habits of writers. And perhaps they suspect I'm on the run from 47 government agencies.

The truest answer is this: Of course Claire Wolfe is my real name. And if I decide tomorrow that I want to be known as Ablamasnort Xlsnoff, that will be my real name, too.

I'm not being flippant. I'm pondering something few of us think about: that we are the owners of our names and can change our identities at will, without the permission or assistance of any government. It's possible even in this corporatized, registered, encoded, licensed, reported, taxed, conscripted, and bureaucratized world.

The ability to change names without government sanction is something we may never take advantage of. But it involves fundamental principles we shouldn't lightly dismiss—including the right of self ownership. Historically, ad hoc name changes have also helped many people transform their lives—a power that's still in our hands today.

You don't have to go to court to change your name. One traditional means of name changing is... just use a different one.

This form of name change comes to us from English common law, and is recognized as valid in all but a handful of U.S. states. It's available to any adult (except a prisoner) who makes the change with no intent to defraud or trample on someone's rights. Despite popular belief, you can even use two or three names simultaneously without the Name Police conducting a midnight raid. If you couldn't, half of Hollywood and plenty of writers would be in the Identity Lockup. (Legal problems with aliases and alternative ID come primarily when you attempt to commit fraud, hide a crime, or gain benefits illegally—although the possession of "fake ID" is itself becoming more dicey all the time.)

English common law considered a person innocent unless proven guilty. Both English and American traditions also held that our business was our own unless we trespassed on the rights of others. Thus name changing didn't fall under the authority

of the state. Gradually, the presumption of innocence is eroding. Streetside spy cameras, random checkpoints, new-hire databases, biometric ID, and similar accouterments of the surveillance state are law-enforcement investigative tools. They operate on the presumption that every individual is a criminal suspect. To prevent us suspects from evading our investigators, governments have a growing need to permanently fix our identities or tightly supervise any changes we wish to make.

Expect common law name changes eventually to become either illegal or so cumbersome that a court-ordered change will look good by comparison. In the meantime, however, we still have this freedom.

The sidebar article, "An Itty Bitty Guide to Name Changing," has information and resources on making a name switch. That's the easy part. The more vital issue is that, whether we change our names or keep them, names have a power that our culture seems to ignore. Our ancestors surrendered partial authority over their identities to bureaucrats, and we are in the process of surrendering much, much more. Their surrender was to our ancestors' detriment—as ours will be to us.

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An Itty Bitty Guide to Name Changing

The first step in making a common law name change is to start using your new name. Tell your friends, relatives, and business associates (and keep reminding them when they forget).

Step two – unless you're one of the rare beings who moves through the world without paperwork—is getting documents and accounts changed over to the new name. You may be surprised to discover that some businesses won't ask you for any documentation of the change. Most will, however.

So one of the earliest things you'll want to do is get a key ID document, like a drivers license, passport, or company ID, switched to the new name. To do this, you may need to submit a notarized affidavit of name change (draw it up yourself or use a form they give you; it'll cost only a couple of dollars to have it notarized). This affidavit might contain your certification alone, or might contain verification from someone else who knows you. Ask the agency or company what form of certification it requires.

I once knew someone who made up a new name

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Editor: Carl Watner

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Whose Name Is It, Anyway?

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The tradition and power of names

Has it never struck you as odd that in a culture so rich, our naming traditions are so sterile?

You get tagged at birth with a label like William Smith, and what does it say about you? You don't even know what William means until you look it up in a name-the-baby book. And is it of any deep interest to you that some ancestor once wielded a hammer? Probably not. Yet this essentially meaningless collection of syllables is expected to be your lifelong, most personal ID—which is downright bizarre when you think about it for more than a minute.

Only if we bear the name of a cherished relative or hero, or strongly identify with a family line (and don't mind that our other parent's family line is being erased), do our names have much significance beyond their mere sound. Our names are often strangely detached from our personalities, interests, and lives.

That wasn't always so. The Anglo-Saxons, whose names described courage, cunning, or strength, were in tune with their culture and expressed personal aspirations. The names of the Puritans—Flie-Fornication, Charity, Discipline, Praise-God, and the like—may have placed heavy burdens on their bearers, but at least they expressed values. Tribal names around the globe describe totemic connections, personality traits, experiences, aspirations, place of origin, sometimes even day of birth or birth order. Sappy as they were, our own Rainbow-Sunshine-Harmony names of 1960s were at least an attempt to bring meaning back to naming.

Names have power. We recognize that in a limited way. We understand that plain old Susan Weaver magnified herself when she became the exotic Sigourney. And could Margaret Hookham ever have danced as elegantly as Margot Fonteyn? Tiffany suggests a larger cup size than Sadie. Preston is more likely than Cheech to be admitted to prep school. A Rose by any other name does not smell as sweet—not if the name is Gertrude or Rodham or Spike.

Other cultures have recognized the power of names far more strongly than we, sometimes to the point of superstition. Ancient Chinese doctors burned

a piece of paper containing the patient's name as part of their cures, thus sending the airy, smoky name heavenward. Among the Delaware Indians (and many other tribes), tribal shamans gave children the "real" names by which they were known to the Creator and the Spirit Forces. Since knowledge of this spirit name gave terrible power to conjurers, individuals were universally known by "safe" nicknames, with only a few family members ever learning who they "really" were.

Many other peoples also accept name changes more readily than we do—adopting new names routinely. In some tribal cultures, individuals change names at various stages of maturity. (This makes great sense; are we really the same person at 30 or 50 as we are at 15?) The new name signals a new set of responsibilities or marks a notable accomplishment. The Tiwi people, who live on islands north of Australia, historically took seven new names in the 11 formative years from adolescence to young adulthood. It's so common throughout Africa for people to change their names that if you meet an old acquaintance on the street, you can never be sure if her name will be the same today as it was 10 years ago.

America's Two-Party System:



J.R.R. Tolkien understood the power of ever-changing names when he invented his Ents, ancient tree-like beings whose rumbling, rambling names grew longer as each Ent lived and learned. (Ents were astonished at the "hasty" European-style names borne by the Hobbits.)

In the Bible, name changes are part of divinely ordered life changes. Saul, converted by his vision on the road to Damascus, became Paul. Abram, chosen by God to be the founder of a great nation, became Abraham, and his wife Sarai, Sarah.

Throughout history, name change and life change have gone together. This transformative power is still ours. And it drives bureaucrats crazy.

Governments and names

We've all heard that, sometime in the Middle Ages, our English or European ancestors adopted fixed surnames to help avoid confusion as the population grew and became more urbanized.

This is a pleasant half-truth. The real tale is more complex.

In Britain before the Norman Conquest (and in other parts of Europe), people had one given name. They may also have had a casual, highly changeable byname to help distinguish all the many Marys, Annes, Johns, Elizabeths, Williams, and Henrys from each other. Most of these bynames fell into four categories: occupations (Matthew Baker, Alfred Innkeeper, William the Brewer), patronymics or matronymics (Richard Nelson, who may have been the son of Neil or Nell, John Megson, son of Margaret), place names (Matilda Atwater, Robert Oakes, James Bygate), and nicknames (John the Stout, Agnes Catsnose, Charles Fairhead).

Bynames weren't fixed from generation to generation. They were applied solely—and sometimes quite creatively—to the individual they described. William the Carter might father John Williamson, who in turn might father a brood whose members bore the bynames Hunter, Farmer, Carpenter, and Seamer. It was common for one individual to be known by different names in his lifetime. Matthew Allardson might also be Matthew Butcher and, after a heroic showing in wartime, Matthew Archer, Matthew Bowman, Matthew Braver, or Matthew Godthanks. Legal documents are full of people who were known by two, three, four, or even seven completely different sets of names.

Whether the name was pronounced Schmidt, Ferraro, Kowalski, Smid, Smed, Szmidman, Petulengro, Kovacs, Gough, Seppänen, Fèvre, Kálvaitis, or Kuznetsov (all of which mean Smith), the naming traditions from country to country were similar—and flexible.

Around the year 1000 A.D., Venetian merchants, wanting a better way to track the people who owed them money, rediscovered the hierarchal Roman naming system, which had died out when the empire fell. The Venetians created a simplified version using fixed surnames.

The French aristocracy adopted the new naming practice, which then began to be adopted across France.

Shortly after the Norman Conquest of 1066, William the Conqueror sent agents throughout England to survey the population and its possessions for his Domesday Book (a record that still exists). The Domesday Book was given its name by the people in recognition of its dire purpose: to mercilessly discover, record, assess, and tax everything taxable in the newly cowed country. Among other things, William ordered his subjects to identify themselves by surname.

Those surnames were still not fixed and inheritable, but were soon to become so. By the 12th Century, the landed gentry of England had adopted fixed family names to link the aristocracy with its holdings from generation to generation. By the end of

the 14th Century, most English people bore inheritable surnames, although some parts of what we now know as the U.K. didn't have them until the 18th Century.

Other European countries took longer to make the change. Poland didn't begin until the 17th Century. Poles and Danes often lacked "modern" surnames until the mid-19th Century.

(Interestingly, the very last Europeans to make the change were the monarchs of England. Despite being of the house of Plantagenet or Saxe-Coburg or Hanover, British monarchs and their progeny didn't acquire inheritable last names until the present Queen Elizabeth made Windsor (and for lesser descendants, Mountbatten-Windsor) an official surname by royal decree.)

"In a free market system, people succeed not by oppressing their neighbors but by serving them."

—Robert A. Sirico, "Toward A Free and Virtuous Society," Occasional Paper 9 of the Acton Institute (1997), p. 7.

Fixed surnames weren't an enhancement for the bearers. They weren't voluntarily adopted to help neighbors tell each other apart, as our cultural myth implies. They were a convenience for the growing class of bureaucrats, tax gatherers, professional military men, and statistics-keepers. They made people easier to tax, track, assess, and conscript in an increasingly populous, anonymous environment.

Where surnames weren't imposed by law or royal decree, they were imposed in the same way many paperwork requirements are imposed today—by making it difficult to survive if you didn't comply. If you didn't have a fixed surname, you risked being taxed twice. If you bore two or three names, you might be conscripted multiple times. If your son didn't inherit your name, he might face questions when he inherited your property.

The countries where people were slow to adopt the "modern" naming systems usually resorted to national laws to achieve standardization.

The Scandinavian countries, which had a tradition of using the father's name as the basis of the child's surname, were latecomers. Denmark finally passed "modern" naming laws in 1828 and 1856.

Turkey forced inheritable surnames upon its population in 1933, and Persia (Iran) did so in the 1920s. (And an ancient naming tradition reasserted itself as people selected place names and occupation names, now including Scientist and Photographer).

Where countries adopted surnames over time, individuals had a better chance of controlling their own name. Countries that imposed surnames by decree weren't always so kind. What happened to the Jews of Eastern Europe, Germany, and Austria is a sad example.

Germany issued a decree in the early 19th Century, requiring German and Austrian Jews to adopt German surnames. In 1804, Tsar Alexander I of Russia imposed a similar requirement on the Jews within his realm.

Jewish tradition dictated a single name, followed by the name of the father (Moshe ben (son of) Shmuel or Simon bar-Jonah). Some Jews were able to meet the new legal requirements by taking occupation surnames (Goldschmidt), cultural names (Levy, from the tribe of Levites), patronymics (Isaacson), place names, or simply ornamental names chosen for their attractiveness (Lilienthal, from the flower).

Being forced to give up Jewish religious traditions in favor of Gentile ones was so offensive that a few Jews managed to register legal names bearing hidden protests. Rabbi R. Mermelstein, rabbinical advisor to Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership and author of the "Ask the Rabbi" column, relates, "One of the greatest Talmudic commentators from that period refused 'tzu vehren fargoyisht' (Yiddish—'to become like a Gentile'), so he listed his surname as Schick—an acronym for 'Shem Yisroel Kodesh' (Hebrew—'the name of a Jew is holy')." And yes, its fair to assume his descendents became famous for manufacturing razors.

A Jew of means could purchase (bribe) his way into a "desirable" name. But not all had a choice. Those without money and those who refused to submit to the imposed naming scheme were "punished" with names like Schmaltz, Lumpe, and even the vulgarity, Schmuck.

"We often see and hear the label - 'free market.' That's redundant. If a market isn't free and voluntary, it's not a market."

—John Simpson

As long as they remained in their countries of origin many were stuck with those names. But American immigration records reveal that among other freedoms beleaguered Jews sought here was the freedom to rid themselves forever of names like Eselhaupt (ass's head), Kohlkopf (cabbage head or blockhead), and Kanalgeruch (canal stench).

Regulation-ridden Germany long forbade name changes, other than state-sanctioned ones made upon marriage or adoption. Today it authorizes a few others (for instance, to people undergoing sex-change operations). These can cost more than \$1,500 and always require intense bureaucratic scrutiny. Germany further requires parents of newborns to select from a list of government-approved names or demonstrate that the name they want to give their child is in customary use as a given name somewhere in the world. Even at that, the state holds veto rights.

The German government did make one exception to its name-changing ban. The Nazi regime required every male Jew without an identifiably Jewish sur-

name to adopt the middle name "Israel" and every such female Jew to adopt the middle name "Sarah." These names were placed on their national identity cards to make it harder for them to evade all the many restrictions imposed on Jews, and in the end, harder to avoid being murdered.

The gift of name changing

Although few of us take advantage of the common law right to change names at will, the ability to do so has been a great gift. It has enabled millions to shake off old personae and old burdens without the added (and occasionally costly) necessity of begging, hat-in-hand, before a judge.

We've already seen how it enabled immigrants to shed unwanted identities. Sometimes it also enabled them simply to blend in better by changing a "foreign sounding" name to one that would help them adapt in a not-always-tolerant new land. It even enabled a few creative Americans to sound more foreign. (It was once a plus for any opera singer to seem Italian, and for American violinists to bear Russian-Jewish names.)

Today: An abused child, grown to adulthood, can throw off a hated parent's name without having to bow before another frightening authority figure.

A victim fleeing a stalker can, with an ad hoc name change and some privacy cautions, assume a new identity without leaving an obvious paper trail for an obsessive criminal to trace.

A person who has struggled from childhood under an odious name can emerge from a chrysalis by independently shucking it.

A political dissident can take a new name for image or safety without having to petition his enemies to do so.

A person turning around a troubled life can gain confidence and a new self-image by creating a new name for himself, with or without the blessing of watchful officialdom.

A poor person, without the means to pay court costs or lawyer's fees, can change his name as effectively as can a millionaire movie star.

Fixed names, on the other hand, are a tremendous convenience to bureaucrats, and have other advantages for maintaining orderliness. (I can just hear genealogists, who love to trace family lines, cursing the nuisance of impermanent names.) Like it or not, we live in a world that increasingly values order over individuality and freedom.

As the U.S. and world governments tighten I.D. requirements, the state gains cradle-to-grave control over an individual's identity. Even where casual name changes aren't expressly outlawed, the complexities of modern life make them more cumbersome to implement. (Agnes Catsnose didn't have to notify five credit card companies and the DMV if she wanted to become Agnes Oakwood, and didn't have to have her entry in the FBI's fingerprint and DNA databases annotated and re-sorted.) This problem will increase

as national ID systems and global birth registration take over.

The result is that, for the sake of bureaucratic consistency—for the sake of taxation, conscription, statistics-keeping, social management, corporate convenience, and human-resource allocation—your identity slips further out of your own control. The ability to change a name easily may seem a small thing to lose, especially if you're perfectly content living your entire life as Winston Smith or Jane Doe. But along with the ability to change our name goes the presumption of innocence and the belief that our private business is exactly that—private and our own. We should think carefully before surrendering such a personal aspect of our lives to anyone.

[Information on the history of names is from *THE STORY OF SURNAMES* by William Dodgson Bowman, (George Routledge & Sons. Ltd., 1932), *THE STORY OF SURNAMES* by L.G. Pine (Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1966), *A BOOK ABOUT NAMES* by Milton Meltzer (Thomas Y. Crowell, 1984), "The Relevance of Surnames in Genealogy" (Society of Genealogists Information Leaflet No. 7), "What is in a Name Greatly Interests German Officialdom" by Daniel Benjamin (*WALL STREET JOURNAL*, July 15, 1993), various Internet genealogy sources, and from Rabbi R. Mermelstein (who points out that his ancestors must have been workers in decorative or memorial "marble-stone.") This article was inspired by passages in *SEEING LIKE A STATE* by James C. Scott (Yale University Press, 1998). Carl Watner gets thanks for research and reality checking. This article first appeared in the web edition of *BACKWOODS HOME MAGAZINE*, March 2002.] ☐

An Itty Bitty Guide to Name Changing

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while standing in line at the DMV and got that name put on her license without any documentation. She didn't even get a raised eyebrow from the clerk. But that was in the olden days, a couple of years ago. You probably couldn't do that now.

If a bureaucrat insists on a court order, he's probably misinformed and you should speak with someone who has better information (unless it's a state official in one of the few states that doesn't recognize an ad hoc change).

Once you have a key ID document, it's smooth sailing to change all your credit cards, bank accounts, wills, trusts, etc. It just takes time. And remember, as long as you're not committing fraud, there's nothing that says you must stop going by two different names, or that you can't possess accounts or documentation in both names.

I'm supposed to add here that I'm not a lawyer and none of this is legal advice. Verify everything for

yourself before proceeding.

To learn whether your state will recognize a common law name change: Call the clerk of the local court. If she says no, doublecheck with a lawyer.

If you decide you want to make an "official" change in court: The legal name-changing procedures of all 50 states are online at www.namechangelaw.com. (Bear in mind that these statutes usually won't address common law changes, only describe court procedures.)

If you ask a judge to okay your new name, you'll have to meet the two standards described in "Whose Name Is It, Anyway?" (no fraud, no abuse of others' rights) and several other criteria, as well. To wit: Your new name cannot be "confusing" ("827xts6" probably won't go over too well, though "Three-Six" might). It can't be a racial epithet. And it can't be "fighting words." So if you want to have a name that's going to make people poke you in the nose or tell them that you'd like to poke them, don't ask a judge to help.

Otherwise, it's all pretty simple. You'll probably have a harder time getting your mother to accept your new name than getting the government to recognize it. ☐

Only We Can Make Ourselves Safe:

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us? The answer is: in the same way that the early pioneers, settlers, and wagon train participants did. They protected themselves; they defended themselves from predators, both human and natural. There was no one else to do it, if it was to be done. Stagecoach and train operators hired guards to protect their travelers. They knew they were responsible for the safety of their passengers. No, 100% protection was never achieved. However, robbers' unwillingness to confront people with guns (who knew how to use them) kept most travelers safe most of the time.

The airline industry has become such an entanglement of government bureaucracy and private industry that everyone involved (the airlines, the airports, and government agencies, such as the FAA) can place the blame elsewhere, absolving themselves of responsibility for protecting the American people from terrorism. Meanwhile, the Federal Aviation Administration will not let airline pilots carry weapons to defend themselves or their passengers. But if there were a skyjacking, and a plane was headed for Washington, don't you believe those same bureaucrats would order the plane shot down, with all onboard sacrificed? The government can protect itself with its Army, Navy, and Air Force, but its citizens are left defenseless. What a two-faced standard!

No, National I.D. will not make us safe. It never has, it never will, because only we can make ourselves safe by accepting that responsibility for ourselves and our families. ☐

How To Fight Against the State

By Oskari Juurikkala

Let us imagine an ideal society. No taxation, no bureaucratic management, a free economy based on gold currency, free gun ownership, independent families, and healthy communities.

There is only one obstacle to this ideal: the modern state and its centralized power. The essence of the state is institutionalized aggression, and the effects of centralized government logically follow. The state destroys private property, wastes scarce resources, undermines local and traditional values, and destroys families by taking children away from their parents and by putting them under the degenerative influence and socialist indoctrination of public school teachers. If our principles mean anything to us, we must fight back.

“But blood besoils any idea on whose behalf it is shed, and violence debases the thought it claims to defend.”

—Stefan Zweig, *THE RIGHT TO HERESY*, 1951, p. 314.

A bottom-up reform

No state is invincible. Ultimately all government rests on popular opinion. Yet we must avoid the usual mistake: the top-down reforms, such as voting, being active in a political party, and attempting to influence politicians and government bureaucrats. Such a strategy only adds to the legitimacy of the state and is likely to hasten further centralization of power. What we need is something different. We need a localist, bottom-up reform. We cannot destroy the state in an all-out attack, but we can starve it with piecemeal withdrawal of support and resources.

There are several ways in which we, and our friends, and neighbors, can work against state power - and do it on a personal level and everyday basis. Carry your own gun to protect yourself and family. Organize neighborhood watches. Protect your privacy - your mail, your personal information, and your address. If possible, use gold instead of paper. Avoid public courts, and use arbitration instead. Homeschool your children. Defend the traditions of your hometown and the values of your family. Resist the degenerating influence of the egalitarian mass-society, and defend the natural and civilizing hierarchies based on family and property.

Localism: a natural way out

Protecting our own lives and property is a fundamental step toward reform. However, it should only be the beginning. We can do more. We cannot shoot the state down, but we can make ourselves, our neighbors, and even our hometown communities independent from it. In order to starve the state, we need to divorce ourselves from it as much as we can. Our goal is simple: the creation of strong and indepen-

dent localities - cities, towns, neighborhoods - that want nothing to do with the central government.

This localist/secessionist strategy is simply and fundamentally compatible with human nature. It is only natural to mind one's own business and to nurture one's family and neighborhood. Localism can easily win the support of a large number of people irrespective of their specific ideals. Localists need not be libertarians. They only have to be decent, responsible, and hard-working men and women. Taking care of one's self, one's family, and one's neighborhood is what any decent person would do.

Our ultimate goal - secession - is the natural outcome of localism consistently carried out. There is no need for political activism: just take care of your own business, create a network of secessionist communities, and you will lay the foundation for a peaceful separation.

Such a decentralization of power would destroy the legitimacy of the state once and for all. Local decision-making would completely undress the emperor. Every sane person would now see the absurdity and immorality of taxing production and rewarding incompetence, indolence, and destruction. Most importantly, localities that would continue violating private property rights would see that their productive members vote with their feet and leave. The socialists would still stick to their policies in their own communities, but they would have to face the social and economic superiority of those communities which embrace free trade and private property.

Secession: is it possible?

The state is mighty, but vulnerable. Just as Communist Russia collapsed under economic failure, the social-democratic states of the West are struggling with economic mismanagement and huge public debts. The inevitable economic bankruptcy can only be hidden and postponed by massive inflation and further centralization; but it cannot be made to disappear.

Once the hard-working taxpayers begin to realize the true situation, a secessionist revolution will be underway. That is when the seeds of localism will bear fruit: neighborhood watches, gun-ownership, traditional values and secessionist ideals will become shared by every decent family and healthy community. The central state will undoubtedly try to demonize the secessionists, and undermine their position by economic blockades and covert operations. However, the state would find it hard to justify its actions against the separationists, once strong community support for secession was established in many locations. Just imagine a large number of independent free cities - a multitude of Hong Kongs, Singapores, Monacos, and Lichtensteins - strewn out over an entire continent! If we are strong and consistent in embracing our principles, then one day this scenario could become reality.

A war against the state - against political power, political exploitation, and political corruption - is a

never-ending struggle between good and evil. However, as long as we respect the dignity of each individual; as long as we value private property; as long as we care about the freedom of our children, their children, and all the generations to come, we can never give up. We must fight back - and indeed we can.

[Editor's Note: Oskari was born in 1981 in Finland. This article was the winning selection in the 2002 Liberty Round Table Essay Contest, ages 19 - 21. Reprinted with permission of the author in an email of May 25, 2002.]

Correcting Common Misconceptions About Nonviolent Action

What nonviolent action is

Nonviolent action is a technique of socio-political action for applying power in a conflict without the use of physical violence. Nonviolent action may involve *acts of omission*—that is, people may refuse to perform acts that they usually perform, are expected by custom to perform, or are required by law or regulation to perform; *acts of commission*—that is, people may perform acts that they do not usually perform, are not expected by custom to perform, or are forbidden to perform; or *a combination* of the two. As a technique, therefore, nonviolent action is not passive. It is not inaction. It is action that is nonviolent.

These acts comprise a multitude of specific methods of action or “nonviolent weapons.” Nearly two hundred have been identified to date, and without doubt, scores more already exist or will emerge in future conflicts. Three broad classes of nonviolent methods exist: *nonviolent protest* and *persuasion*, *noncooperation*, and *nonviolent intervention*.

Love thine enemies—it befuddles them!
—Jim Russell

Nonviolent action provides a way to wield power in order to achieve objectives and to sanction opponents without the use of physical violence. Overwhelmingly, nonviolent action is group or mass action. While certain forms of this technique, especially the symbolic methods, may be regarded as efforts to persuade by action, the other forms, especially those of noncooperation, may, if practiced by large numbers, coerce opponents.

Whatever the issue and scale of the conflict, nonviolent action is a technique by which people, who reject passivity and submission, and who see struggle as essential, can wage their conflict without violence. Nonviolent action is not an attempt to avoid conflict. It is one response to the problem of how to wield power effectively.

What nonviolent action isn't

1] Nonviolent action has nothing to do with pas-

sivity, submissiveness, and cowardice: just as in violent action, these must first be rejected and overcome.

- 2] Nonviolent action is not to be equated with verbal or purely psychological persuasion, although it may use action to induce psychological pressures for attitude change; nonviolent action, instead of words, is a sanction and a technique of struggle involving the use of social, economic, and political power, and the matching of forces in conflict.
- 3] Nonviolent action does not depend on the assumption that people are inherently “good”; the potentialities of people for both “good” and “evil” are recognized, including the extremes of cruelty and inhumanity.
- 4] People using nonviolent action do not have to be pacifists or saints; nonviolent action has been predominantly and successfully practiced by “ordinary” people.
- 5] Success with nonviolent action does not require [though it may be helped by] shared standards and principles, a high degree of community of interest, or a high degree of psychological closeness between the contending groups; this is because when efforts to produce voluntary change fail, coercive nonviolent measures may be employed.
- 6] Nonviolent action is at least as much of a Western phenomenon as an Eastern one; indeed, it is probably more Western, if one takes into account the widespread use of strikes and boycotts in the labor movement and the noncooperation struggles of subordinated nationalities.
- 7] In nonviolent action there is no assumption that the opponent will refrain from using violence against nonviolent actionists; the technique is designed to operate against violence when necessary.
- 8] There is nothing in nonviolent action to prevent it from being used for both “good” and “bad” causes, although the social consequences of its use for a “bad” cause may differ considerably from the consequences of violence used for the same cause.
- 9] Nonviolent action is not limited to domestic conflicts within a democratic system; it has been widely used against dictatorial regimes, foreign occupations, and even against totalitarian systems.
- 10] Nonviolent action does not always take longer to produce victory than violent struggle would. In a variety of cases nonviolent struggle has won objectives in a very short time—in as little as a few days. The time taken to achieve victory depends on diverse factors—primarily on the strength of the nonviolent actionists.

Source: Gene Sharp, *THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION* [3 Vols.], Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973. Copied from a flyer published by The Albert Einstein Institution, 427 Newbury St., Boston, MA 02115. ☐

Only We Can Make Ourselves Safe: Personal Protection, Not Government Protection

By Kitty Oviedo

How do we prevent another September 11th? How do we prevent terrorists from blowing up people and buildings? Hey - I have a great idea! Require everyone to carry an I.D. card. The good guys' cards will say, "I'm a good guy." And the bad guys' cards will say, "I'm a bad guy." Some cards will even say "I'm a terrorist." Problem solved. Simple minds, simple solutions; but will it work?

National I.D. is a no-brainer for the run-of-the mill terrorist. He or she will just have to devote a little extra time to obtaining one (legally or illegally). Terrorists have had plenty of practice in the many countries that already require National I.D.s. Columbia, one of the most dangerous countries in the world, has required National I.D. for over 50 years. So much for making a country safe! Every system of National I.D. must depend on people to issue the cards. Fake birth certificates, fake drivers licenses, fake passports abound in many countries. How difficult would it really be for a would-be terrorist to bribe, blackmail, seduce, or threaten a low-level government clerk?

And wouldn't there have to be hundreds, if not thousands, of clerks responsible for the issuance of National I.D. cards?

Our politicians love sound bite solutions. They know their sitcom-numbered constituents will not look behind the facade and see that government is just providing an illusion of safety, while at the same time using terrorist attacks and rumors of terrorist attacks to foment more fear so that citizens will cede more power to the government. But the government cannot protect us. It cannot put a cop on every street corner. It cannot put a sky marshall on every flight.

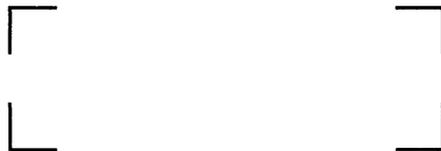
Our government has a problem now, because the illusion of safety is becoming increasingly hard to maintain. In a world made dangerous by government domestic and foreign policies, Americans are left defenseless, like declawed cats, in a world where they require protection. Many Americans have already been disarmed by federal bureaucrats and New York-style politicians. All our government can do, in conjunction with the major media, is distract us with descriptions of the perpetrators, with handouts for the victims and their families, with feel-good ceremonies, and with grandstanding congressional investigations. After a major catastrophe, the government certainly doesn't want us to conclude that it did nothing to prevent an attack, nor that it won't be able to prevent another one.

If the government can't protect us from terrorism, who will? How can we be safe if the government fails

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