

ON OBEDIENCE

Dr. Gene Sharp (born January 21, 1928), the founder of The Albert Einstein Institution a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the study of nonviolent action, has spent his life studying nonviolent resistance and why it is the most effective way to overthrow corrupt, oppressive regimes. He is known for his extensive writings on nonviolent struggle, which have influenced numerous anti-government resistance movements around the world. Indeed, many credit him with being a major influence in the recent “Arab Spring”. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 and 2012, and received the Right Livelihood Award in 2012.

The American Catholic Council has engaged in a pilot program to study Sharp’s methods and to apply them to the hierarchical Catholic Church. Although Sharp himself writes about political situations, the concepts are applicable to any oppressive regime.

A hallmark of Sharp’s teaching is his insight into the relationship of **obedience** to power.

These are his **three basic concepts of nonviolent action**:

1. All hierarchical systems depend upon the obedience of the governed.
2. Obedience is voluntary.
3. If the people resist in large enough numbers and for a long enough period of time, the structure changes or collapses.