Power Essay, Research Paper

Power. A word from which many meanings derive. To each

individual, it means something distinct and it is how one uses their

power that makes up who they are. Power does not come from the barrel of

a gun. A gun can do nothing without someone there to pull the trigger.

The power to take a life rests within the person, the gun simply serving

as their tool. When groups protesting for a cause they believe in use

violent tactics, do they ever accomplish anything? When we kill , what

do we achieve? To say that power lies in the barrel of a gun is to say

that the most effective way to get what we want, or what we feel we

deserve is to murder. It is only those with no faith in their dreams, or

belief in themselves who could make such a statement.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "If a man hasn?t found

something he will die for, he isn?t fit to live." A leader in the Black

community and the recipient of the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, King?s

accomplishment of attaining civil rights for Blacks was a great one, but

the road to achievement was long and full of sacrifices. It was a time

when Blacks had no rights and most of them accepted this as the way it

was and no one could do anything about it. Most of them, but not King.

When the police arrested a black woman for sitting in the front of the

bus and refusing to give up her seat to a white woman, King led a

committee that organized a boycott of buses. The results were that on

April 23, 1956, the Supreme Court ruled that "segregation in public

transportation is unconstitutional" and that South Carolina as well as

12 other states must remove the "whites only" signs that hung in the

front of the buses. This was just the beginning, he vowed to continue

his fight using "passive resistance and the weapon of love". He helped

establish the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and became its

first president. Then in 1957, King met with Vice-president Nixon in

Washington to "discuss racial problems

. He went on to lead protests, demonstrations and marches, making the

non-violent resistance stronger than it had ever been before. He

succeeded in making people aware that every human being is born equal

and that no one should be denied his civil rights.

Martin Luther King had a dream and he knew that there was only

one way to make it come true, to wake up and to take action. He was a

true example of someone putting their power to good use. He started his

life with a disadvantage, he was hated because of the color of his skin,

but he did not let that stop him. He was arrested, thrown in jail,

stabbed, stoned, he even had his home bombed. Through it all, he refused

to give up, he had found a cause worth dying for and he did. He was

murdered on the night of April 4, 1968. People tried to use their power

to stop him and his fight. In the end, they may have succeeded in

killing its leader, but the battle against racism lived on. Looking

back, people say that Martin Luther King Jr. was a very powerful man. I

have never heard anyone say his attackers or his murderers had.

"I am indeed, a practical dreamer. My dreams are not airy nothings. I

want to convert my dreams into realities, as far as possible."

-Mohandas K. Gandhi

Mahatma is the name the people of India gave to Mohandas

Karamchand Gandhi. The meaning is Great Soul, and they considered him as

the father of their nation. He named his autobiography, "The story of My

Experiments With Truth." That was, after all, what his life was about:

the truth and his search to find it. He was against violence in any

form, he felt there existed better methods of accomplishing things, and

he proved to be successful. he made up his won technique for social

action that he called satyagraha, "non-violent resistance to injustice

and wrong." Gandhi?s actions were guided by his philosophy that the way

a person behaves is more important than what he achieves. It was these

tactics that he used in his fight for India?s independence.

Gandhi was a lawyer, on a business trip to South Africa and he

was greeted with prejudice and discrimination against the fellow Indians

living there. What was supposed to be a trip, ended up being a 21 year

stay as he began to work towards a cause he believed in, Indian rights.

He launched a newspaper entitles, "Indian Opinion" that was published

weekly. He returned to India and soon after became the leader of the

Indian Nationalistic Movement. He led a satyagraha campaign, but the

moment riots broke out, he canceled it. It was defeating its own purpose

if violence was involved. Gandhi brought about many economic and social

reforms; he led campaigns, strikes, demonstrations, and achieved many

great things. The people of India will always be grateful to him, for he

played the major role in acquiring freedom for their country, which

Great Britain finally granted in the year 1947. Although he may not have

been large in build, his strengths when it came to the issue he believed

in as well as his moral values, were immeasurable. He found something to

fight for and he did, never suing violence, even if it could have worked

to his advantage. He was a man much like Martin Luther King Jr., both

achieving civil rights for their people and attempting to abolish

discrimination. Unfortunately, Gandhi too, suffered from his opposition.

he too was arrested on several occasion and was the victim of murder.

The day he dies was one marked with grief, but not a weakness on his

part. No one thought on that day, Gandhi lost his power and his

murderers achieved it. Reflecting on his life, one could describe it as

a series of historical events.

Gandhi defined a satyagraha as one with the persistent hope,

"who followed a vision of truth and tried to deploy the strength of

truth and love in daily life. I believe that that is an accurate

description of is own character.

"In the name of our party?s movement, The Syrian Muslim Party of

Justice, we declare that the blood of all Jews living in Syria will be

spilled starting on Saturday the 13 of March 1994, according to Muslim

month (1/Shawal 1414). May the almighty witness our deed."

A special branch of the secret police in Syria –the Makhabrat–

was assigned to keep the Jewish community?s activities under constant

surveillance. Emigration of the Jews was forbidden. When Jews who still

tried to escape illegally were caught, they were thrown in jail without

a trial or charge. Jews were not permitted to be a candidate in an

election nor were they granted voting rights. Travel was allowed only

for medical treatment or to visit relatives In order to assure their

return, they were required to leave as family members behind as well as

large sums of money. There were restrictions on the numbers of Jews

allowed to attend University, and the only Jewish schools in Damascus

were ordered to accept a vast number of Palestinian students. The Jews

were forced to wear identity cards, marking their religion on it. All

mail from outside Syria was censored and telephone calls were monitored.

The Jews outside Syria found out what was going on and decided

to take the matter into their own hands. Everyone went about it in their

own individual way. Michael Schelew, national chairman of the Syrian

Jewry Committee of B?nai Brith Canada?s Institute for International

Affairs and Paul Marcus, National Director of B?nai Birth Canada?s

Institute for International Affairs, wrote an article for the

Leader-Post, a newspaper printed in Regina. The article was entitle,

"The abuse of Jews a fact of life in Syria" and it exposed the truth

about what was really going on there. NAHON, an organization that

focuses mainly on social action and is made up exclusively of students,

distributed this article as well as many others at one of their

conventions, to promote awareness among students in Montreal. When

Syrian President Hafez Assad made a commitment to allow the Jews to

leave freely in 1992, he did not honor his promise. 73 senators wrote a

letter expressing their concern over this issue to President Clinton,

urging him to "press Syria to honor its commitment to allow the Hews the

right to travel freely." B?nai Brith Youth Organization began an

international petition, requesting that "the Syrian government fulfill

its promise and allow free emigration of Jews from the country"

immediately. Everyone had their own way of helping, each individual and

group used their power in their way, and together, we succeeded. The

Jews in Syria are now to free to leave the country as they wish.

Regardless of whether or not an individual is the president of

the United States or simply a student, they have the power. It is up to

us to make the difference because the power remains with the people, not

the gun. it is easy to walk blindly past the truth, to close our eyes

and deny what is going on. It is easy to blame others and to say that

unless we kill, there is nothing we can do. The ones who make use of

their power are the heroes, the ones who are remembered. Do not follow

the path set out for you, do as the people mentioned in this paper have.

Pave you own, and leave a trail. Power does not lie within the barrel of

a gun, it lies within you.