

**REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AS MEANS TO AN END: MANDELA AND  
FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

*“Revolutionary violence is the affirmation of the self-realising human being against the negation, the denial of the humanbeing.” Améry (2005:16)*

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**ABSTRACT**

*Violence is an evil that must always be avoided. Any justification for violence is dismissed because it is seen as a threat to social cohesion. However, the age-old question that has befuddled political philosophers and theorists over the years is whether there are instances where violence is permissible. In this paper, I argue that in order to overcome certain injustices, violence can be used as means to an end. I draw upon the case of South Africa and how Mandela, the most revered statesman of our time, advocated the use of violence in order to overcome the injustices of apartheid. I argue against such doctrines as Gandhi’s Satyagraha and pacifism. The argument proffered here is that if not properly examined, these concepts can be apparatus of domination and injustice.*

**Key Words:** *Violence, Injustice, Pacifism, Satyagraha, Freedom.*

**Introduction**

In an ‘ideal’ democracy, all forms of violence<sup>1</sup> are frowned upon. Order and respect for the rule of law are deemed to be the noble virtues that all should seek to aspire to such that the attainment of ‘real’ freedom can be achieved. In an ideal world, this is how things ought to be but history and the practicalities of everyday life tell us a different story. What happens when the respect and the application of the rule of law is only reserved for a few individuals?

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<sup>1</sup>“Although I am aware that violence is usually divided into two categories: random violence and coordinated violence, in this paper; I use the term violence to refer to actions of coordinated or controlled violence. In his speech, Mandela refers to the violence I have in mind as “properly controlled violence.” (Mandela 2003:121). For more on the distinctions of violence, see Mosesson’s nine types of violence contained in Dean, L. (2005). *An Analysis of the Justification for the Use of Violence for Political Purposes*. Mountbatten Journal of Legal Studies, December 2005, 9 (1 & 2), p.79. Also, see Morreall, J. 1976. The Justifiability of Violent Civil Disobedience, in, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, No. 1 p.38 who argues that acts of violence are always concerned about “getting at” persons.”

Nelson Mandela is regarded and praised by many as one of the greatest statesman the world has ever seen. Yet, the same statesman justified the use of violence so as to achieve the freedom that is enjoyed in South Africa today. From this instance and many others that history has to offer, the question that some theorists have battled with is whether or not there are circumstances under which violence is permissible and if so, what are those situations or circumstances. In other words, can or should violence be used as means to an end? This paper seeks to revisit this debate and argue that there are instances where violence is permissible and justified. Where other peaceful alternatives have been tried and tested to no avail, revolutionary violence can be used as the last option. This paper is divided into three parts. The first part gives a short summary of the justifications of violence as articulated by Mandela with special reference to the nature of the apartheid regime. The second part looks at the criticisms that have been levelled against the use of violence to achieve political goals. The third part will conclude by offering some justifications towards violence and civil disobedience thereby answering some of the criticism raised in the second part.

### **Mandela's Justification of Violence in South Africa**

Peaceful and reconciliatory ways are usually, if not always, preferred methods of dealing with conflicting interests in society. One of the obvious reasons lies in the belief that where conflict is resolved through peaceful means, there are hardly any casualties involved. It is for this reason that the mantra of peace is always echoed with a loud voice<sup>2</sup>. However, the challenge arises when these peaceful and reconciliatory approaches are not anywhere near to resolving the conflict at hand. From this brief analysis, one might point out that this is the predicament that was faced by Mandela together with his fellow members of the African National Congress. Mandela's speech, "I Am Prepared to Die", excerpted from Courtroom statement, Rivonia Trial, April 20, 1964 can be seen as both a defence statement of Mandela himself but most importantly, a justification of why the African National Congress had to resort to violence in order to achieve political freedom<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup>As Sorel famously puts it: "...our upbringing is directed towards so weakening our tendencies towards violence...Peace has always been considered the greatest of blessings and the essential condition of all material progress..." See, Sorel, G. 1915. *Reflections on Violence*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd p.205

<sup>3</sup>For more on the formation of Umkhonto weSizwe, see Stephen Ellis (2011) The Genesis of the ANC's Armed Struggle in South Africa 1948–1961, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37:4, 657-676,

Apartheid can be seen as an evil genius plan whose main idea was to subjugate people of colour for eternity in the most atrocious manner one can ever think of<sup>4</sup>. It is for this reason that Apartheid is described as a crime against humanity<sup>5</sup>. Given such a hostile environment, violence seemed to be the only answer to the problems that were faced by the people of colour in South Africa. Mandela then gives two reasons why they had to embark on the route of violence in order to emancipate themselves. To that end, Mandela writes:

Firstly, we believed that as a result of government policy, violence by the African people had become inevitable and that unless responsible leadership was given to canalise and control the feelings of our people, there would be outbreaks of terrorism .... Secondly, we felt that without violence there would be no way open to the African people to succeed in their struggle against the principle of white supremacy (2003:117).

Mandela argues that although they broke the law, they avoided any recourse to violence. All other ‘peaceful’ opposition alternatives were legislated against and it is, “only then did ...[they] decide to answer violence with violence” (2003:117). Mandela goes further to quote the manifesto of Umkhonto in which it states:

The time comes in the life of any nation when there remains only two choices—submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom (2003:120)

It might be justifiable to infer that the kind of violence that Mandela and his organisation adopted was a ‘calculated form of violence.’ In other words, it was not just violence for the sake of violence but one that was to avoid loss of life and achieve the results it sought: dismantling white supremacy and the attainment of real economic and political freedom.

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<sup>4</sup> In his voluminous book, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, David Welsh gives a historical analysis of the rise and decline of the apartheid regime and to that end, he writes: “Many of these manifestations of separation were colloquially termed ‘petty’ apartheid, although there was nothing petty about the monstrous indignities that it inflicted on its targets” (Welsh 2009:56). Also, Hamilton (2014:2) describes this system as “the odious and tyrannical regime” see, Hamilton, L 2014. *Freedom is Power: Liberty Through Political Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.2”

<sup>5</sup>“See, TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMM’N OF S. AFR., REPORT 94–102 (1998), available at <http://www.justice.gov.za/Trc/report/finalreport/Volume%201.pdf>”

Whether real economic and political freedom was truly achieved is beyond the scope of this paper<sup>6</sup>.

As will be argued below, those who argue against the use of violence are not in touch with the ever-pressing needs of the oppressed. The untold suffering inflicted by the repressive apartheid regime in South Africa was not peculiar to South Africa only but was experienced by other decolonising nations as well<sup>7</sup>. In fighting against Portuguese imperialism, Cabral (1969:87) argues that “there is not, and cannot be national liberation without the use of liberating violence by the nationalist forces, to answer the criminal violence of the agents of imperialism.” Cabral goes further to point out that the “so-called peaceful way, show us not only that compromises with imperialism do not work, but also that the normal way of national liberation, imposed on peoples by imperialist repression, is *armed struggle*” (1969:87; emphasis in the original). Thus while other measures were put in place by the ANC, it did not yield much result until they had to resort to violence. To some extent, it then shows that the only language that imperialists were able to understand was that of violence.

### **On Violence and Its Critiques**

The subject of violence is an age-old problem, one that has been assessed right from the ancients. Nevertheless, the analysis has progressed generally in two divergent views. On the one hand, there are those who think that one ought to obey even the most unjust laws and overwhelming repressive governments while others are of the view that you cannot obey unjust laws<sup>8</sup>. Thus, violence might be one way of defying those laws. Following Rousseau’s thinking that to be free is to live by the laws that we have prescribed for ourselves, Mandela can be seen as echoing the same thought when he points out that: “The African people were not part of the government and did not make the laws by which they were governed” (Mandela 2003:118). It is extremely difficult to have a definitive answer whether or not

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<sup>6</sup>“For a robust discussion on this question, see Hamilton, L. 2014. *Are South Africans Free?* London: Bloomsbury”

<sup>7</sup>“I do not intend to claim that the suffering in South Africa was much less or much more as compared to other African and decolonising nations. Instead, this assertion seeks to highlight the need for violence as highlighted by political movements in other nations as well. I am of the view that a comparison of suffering between different nations is unlikely to yield any valuable input—suffering remains evil and morally unjustified regardless of geographical location.”

<sup>8</sup>“In *Crito*, Socrates argues that it is wrong to disobey unjust laws. In his view, whether just or unjust, every citizen ought to obey such a law. As Jowett puts it, “The *Crito* seems intended to exhibit the character of Socrates ... simply as the good citizen, who having been unjustly condemned is willing to give up his life in obedience to the laws of the state...”

violence is the best solution to address political conflict. Nevertheless, it might be fair to argue that those who argue against the use of violence for political ends have been in a privileged position hence they have never had to make the most difficult decision of resorting to violence.

One doctrine that is openly anti-violence is pacifism—a position that, “all violence is wrong, even in individual self-defence, or in defence of another innocent person<sup>9</sup>” (McMahan2010:44). While this might seem plausible for those who hold such views, it is inconsistent with the idea of liberating oneself from the shackles of domination. These people argue that there are better ways of dealing with violent oppressors than resorting to violence. Thus, the actions of Mandela together with his fellow ANC members will be condemned by pacifists. What these people fail to answer is how to proceed from the position of domination. They do not offer the solution as to what needs to be done in order for the oppressed to liberate themselves. The suggestion of nonviolent action is excessively optimistic of human nature and does not take into account the nature of some repressive governments. To use the case under consideration, Mandela quotes the words of Chief Luthuli who points out “who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately, and modestly at a closed door?” (Mandela 2003:117). The question that those who argue against violence fail to answer is what happens when all forms of mediation have failed. What happens when the very same nonviolent action is legislated against? As such, arguing against the use of violence can only come from a privileged position. It is extremely easy to make these moral judgements condemning revolutionary violence when we are not affected by the actions of these repressive governments<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>“See also, Farbstein who highlights her struggle on which position to adopt because she thinks that pacifism, as a doctrine, cannot be fully or completely justified. As such, she writes: “Part of me is very much drawn to the pacifist’s response: violence is never justified in struggles to transition from one regime to another; violence is bound to have a dehumanizing effect on those who perpetrate it and therefore a negative impact on any social or political arrangement that emerges.” “Reflections on the Question of When, if Ever, Violence Is Justified in Struggles for Political or Social Change” *Based on Remarks Delivered in Honor of Nelson Mandela, 1918–2013*” p.2”

<sup>10</sup>“This argument seems to encompass what Leon Trotsky, Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon put forward, in different versions of course, when they argue that “non-violence and pacifism are an attempt to impose the morals of the ‘bourgeoisie upon the proletariat’, and that violence is a necessary accompaniment to revolutionary change or that the right to self-defence is fundamental.” See, Dean, L. (2005). *An Analysis of the Justification for the Use of Violence for Political Purposes*. Mountbatten Journal of Legal Studies, December 2005, 9 (1 & 2), p.80. Also Nielsen argues that “pacifism is not a rationally defensible moral position...”, see, Nielsen, K. 1981. On Justifying Violence, in *Inquiry* 24:1, p.23”

Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha*<sup>11</sup> is another idea of resisting domination through nonviolent means. Tinker (1971:776) writes: "Persuasion violence is part of the well-known story of mankind. *Satyagraha*, however, attempts to persuade without violence." I think Tinker(1971:776) should be lauded for he asks the important question: "In what manner does non-violent resistance persuade" Drawing on the work of Gandhi, Tinker says it is posited that nonviolence persuades by employing practices that highlights the tragedy of suffering. As such, the oppressor is likely to have a change of heart thereby influencing him to abstain from violence. It is for this reason that Gandhi writes: "the sight of suffering on the part of multitudes of people will melt the heart of the aggressor and induce him to desist from course of violence; even a Nero had a heart."<sup>12</sup> As I have argued above, this position is too optimistic of human nature. This is not to deny that there have been cases of change of heart on the part of oppressors. However, the apartheid government could not be moved simply by the presence and evidence of suffering multitudes. If anything, this was the intention of the system – to subjugate people of colour and dominate them in all ways possible. The serious question that ought to be probed is whether or not this notion of suffering is a sufficient condition in and by itself. Thus, the effectiveness of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* is highly questionable. Perhaps a charitable view of this concept is to point out that there are instances where the hearts of oppressors will be "melted" but if that doesn't work out, revolutionary violence might be the only viable alternative<sup>13</sup>.

Coupled with the above, Richard Jackson has argued vehemently and passionately that any argument in favour of revolutionary violence is misplaced. Jackson calls for what he describes as "the practice of radical nonviolence....[such that] genuine revolution towards human emancipation necessitates both nonviolent aims and nonviolent means of transformation" (Jackson 2017:1). While this might seem as a solution on the part of Jackson, the argument that he implores seems not to do justice for the oppressed. It remains to be seen as to what "radical nonviolence" entails. Does this "radical nonviolence" amounts to total submission and rests totally on the mercy of the oppressor? Even if this concept of radical

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<sup>11</sup>"This term comes from Gandhi loosely translating to a "technique of non-violent public protest". The author would like to thank Manjeet Ramgotra for her introduction on this concept during the public talk entitled: "The languages of republicanism: self-rule and the public thing". For more on this concept, see Thomas Varkey 2014, "The Myth and Meaning of the Gandhian Concept of Satyagraha" in, *Sophia University Junior College Division Faculty Journal*. pp171-179"

<sup>12</sup>"See Leo Kuper 1957. *Passive Resistance in South Africa*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 84"

<sup>13</sup>"A similar view is shared by Brie, M. 2008. "Emancipation and the Left: The Issue of Violence", in Panitch, L., and Leys, C., eds., *Violence Today: Actually Existing Barbarism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 239-259."

nonviolence is put into practice, what happens when it does not yield the conditions that will liberate the oppressed? Jackson does not address these questions, instead; he defends pacifism “as a radical theory of emancipatory practice which can expand the current limits of political possibility” (Jackson 2017:1). If not properly checked, pacifism, *Satyagraha* and the version of “radical nonviolence” implored by Jackson, I argue; can be apparatus of domination. Care must be given as to how these concepts play out in the real world.

In relation to the above, it might be argued that there is no guarantee that revolutionary violence will produce the intended results. For all we know, such violent action might only be catastrophic to the well-being of the state and might be more detrimental to those who are oppressed. While this might be true and evidence can be produced to support this line of thought, such an argument is one-sided for it ignores the possibility of the good that might come as a result of revolutionary violence. Moreover, while there is no guarantee that violent action will produce the desired outcome, the same can be said about nonviolent action. Whether or not the hearts of the oppressor will be “melted” is a matter of probability. In both circumstances, the result cannot be guaranteed in definitive terms. Thus, to argue against violent action on the basis of its inability to bring about “desirable” outcome is not only a skewed and impoverished form of argument but also one that is problematic for it is characterised with some form of prejudice.

### **Justification of Revolutionary Violence**

Having given a brief summary of Mandela’s justification of violence and discussed at length some of the arguments that have been proffered against the use of violence to achieve political ends, I now turn to the justifiability of revolutionary violence. To implore the often quoted words: “When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty<sup>14</sup>” one might come to the realisation that no one seriously contemplates on practicing violence for the sake of violence<sup>15</sup>. Instead, such an action might come as a result of the pressing need to resist the injustices of repressive regimes. It could be asked, how does resistance assist in the realisation of freedom? Some might argue that resistance only worsens the situation thus subscribing to the idea that one ought to submit or obey such unjust governments. This

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<sup>14</sup>“There continues to be debates surrounding the question of who said these words. For more on this discussion, see:

[https://www.barrypopik.com/index.php/new\\_york\\_city/entry/when\\_injustice\\_is\\_law\\_resistance\\_is\\_duty\\_when\\_injustice\\_is\\_law\\_rebellion\\_is/](https://www.barrypopik.com/index.php/new_york_city/entry/when_injustice_is_law_resistance_is_duty_when_injustice_is_law_rebellion_is/)”

<sup>15</sup>“This can be interpreted as the “random” version of violence.”

argument is obfuscated for it undermines the agency of the oppressed. Hamilton (2017:91) captures the need for resistance by asserting that “resistance and representation are necessary both for individual freedom as power and control over government, but are also necessary for one another.<sup>16</sup>” Resistance then becomes the corner stone of any revolutionary violence. The ability to resist will likely result in ensuring that freedom is achieved<sup>17</sup>.

I am of the view that revolutionary violence, as I have it, is a *necessary* not a sufficient condition in and by itself. It only becomes necessary when all other means have been explored and failed. In such instances, its sufficiency can then be actualised. The reason why violence becomes necessary for freedom when all other forms of negotiations have failed is simple—you cannot beg or plead for freedom from the oppressor because in the eyes of the oppressor, the subjugated or the oppressed are not worthy of the freedom they are clamouring for. The so-called pious and virtuous Christians, who are usually but not always, in the camp of pacifism forget that their same God used violence in certain circumstances to get things done. One example is when the God of the Israelites wanted to free the people of Israel from Pharaoh. Moses’ negotiations were met with a stumbling block at every corner until “violent” miracles were performed. Still, Pharaoh could not be moved and he was determined not to let the Israelites go. Thus, in as much as the ANC tried to engage with the apartheid regime, it could not succeed. This consolidates the argument that I have advanced above that the issue of suffering is highly optimistic of human nature. Nonviolent action remains highly questionable. Although Jackson (2017:3) argues that there are “infinite possibilities for the expression of resistant agency in any social situation, including violently oppressive ones,” he does not elaborate on these “infinite possibilities”. What are these possibilities that are likely to be effective in bringing about the desired change and real freedom to the people? I think invoking these “infinite possibilities” is theoretically flawed and injurious. I therefore claim that coming from two different worlds (oppressor and oppressed), speaking two different languages (force or violence as opposed to peace); the only language that the oppressor might

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<sup>16</sup> Also, see Hamilton’s third dimension of freedom as power. This third dimension encapsulates freedom as power in the sense of being able to “resist the disciplining power of my community and state.” For more on this, see Hamilton, L 2014. *Freedom is Power: Liberty Through Political Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.95

<sup>17</sup>“Also see, Foucault, M., 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, London: Penguin Books. p.95 who writes: “where there is power, there is resistance”

be willing to listen, understand, and engage with is that of violence<sup>18</sup>. Since the oppressor believes in the tenets of violence, s/he will be forced to pay attention to the cry of the masses.

The freedom that is enjoyed by many in South Africa could not have come so easily given the ruthless regime that was in power. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963:35) captures this view by arguing that whatever the formulas that may be introduced, “decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon.” The long painful histories of suffering and the curtailing of people’s freedom that Fanon draws upon shows how at times people are left without a choice than to fight back. He goes further to show that it is the belief of the “colonised masses that their liberation must, and can only, be achieved by force” (Fanon 1963:73). As I have pointed above, force or violence is the only language that the oppressor has the capacity to understand. One strange thing about violence is that the oppressors who are the instigators of such violence are the first to condemn the same violence that they have so long perpetuated. They regard acts of violence as barbaric and their own as civilised actions. Revolutionary violence should be seen as one way of reclaiming the dignity of the oppressed.

Drawing also upon the work of Fanon, Jean Améry (2005:16) enunciates the view that violence has a redemptive character. Améry goes further to argue that “Freedom and dignity must be attained by way of violence, in order to be freedom and dignity<sup>19</sup>.” I am moved by Améry’s analysis that violence has a redemptive character—pacifists might take this with a pinch of salt. This redemptive character is both on the part of the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressed is given back what was lost (his/her freedom/liberties) and the oppressor is also made to realise that in the process of inflicting suffering to others, he had lost his humanity. As Améry describes it, the “oppressor ...becomes a brother in humanity<sup>20</sup>.” Revolutionary violence should be seen as highly humane for it is a correction of the injustices of society. While there might be no direct causal relation between the violence that Mandela justified and the freedom that is enjoyed in South Africa today, one might argue, following Améry’s line of thought, that the peaceful co-existence<sup>21</sup> that is witnessed in South Africa today comes as a result of the violence of the past. No one wants to turn back the wheel and go through the same experience again. Thus, the redemptive character of

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<sup>18</sup>“For a detailed discussion on this, see also Srivastava, N., 2010. “Towards a Critique of Colonial Violence: Fanon, Gandhi and the Restoration of Agency”, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 46(3-4): 303-319. p.305”

<sup>19</sup>“*Ibid.*, p.16”

<sup>20</sup>“*Ibid.*, p.16”

<sup>21</sup>“This is not to deny that there might be and there have been cases of animosity between races or tribes. However, such cases cannot cloud the liberties enjoyed by many.”

revolutionary violence not only empowers individuals but also transforms and shapes society<sup>22</sup>.

In as much as non-violence might be an option, I still question its effectiveness. This process of nonviolence is likely to take too long to solve the issue at hand because the oppressed will rely solely on the mercy of the oppressor. In other words, the oppressed have to wait until the heart of the oppressor is “melted” – to use Gandhi’s term. I contend that even if we justify the use of violence, we have no guarantee of the results that are likely to come about as a result of that action<sup>23</sup>. However, I hold the view that revolutionary violence is a speedy process to draw attention to the unjust sufferings experienced by the masses. Many have argued against the use of violence in a democratic society with the view that such acts can only disrupt democratic values. While this might be true, we can also see it in another light that such acts are a cultivation of democratic values because in a healthy democracy, people should have a voice to register their complains and if the system is not salubrious for them to do so without resorting to violence, then revolutionary violence might be the best way to proceed.

Condemning violence without analysing it from its context is not only a biased position but also one that is infested with prejudice. Any critique of revolutionary violence must always be ready to interrogate the histories of the people and the conditions that gave rise to such violence. Thus, a one size fits all mentality is not viable and cannot be justified. Albeit Arendt’s (1970:52) conviction that “Violence can be justifiable, but it will never be legitimate,” such universalized statements do run the risk of being oppressive in other context. The context of South Africa is different and when analysing the use of violence and its justifiability, one cannot fail to appreciate its legitimacy. As eminent as Arendt’s work, *On Violence*, is; the work is problematic for it grants too much power to the state and retains all power from the people. This is why Shruti Kapila (2010:438) argues that: “Arendt’s reflection on violence and power... assumes that the state is the legitimate, all powerful author of violence and indeed holds the monopoly on it.” The question of which powers rightly belong to the state and those that belong to the people is too broad to answer in this short piece of work. However, if Kapila’s reading of Arendt is correct, it is problematic to think that the state should be the author of violence and have monopoly of it.

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<sup>22</sup>“Fanon (1963:94) writes: “At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and action; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect”

<sup>23</sup>“Also see, Dean, L. 2005. An Analysis of the Justification for the Use of Violence for Political Purposes, in, *Mountbatten Journal of Legal Studies*, December 2005, 9 (1 & 2), p.81”

The justification of violence in this paper can be seen in the light of utilitarianism. One might even go further to point out that most debates on justifiability of violence or just war will end up, either implicitly or explicitly, with the question of utility. However, as Singer (1994:256) argues: “the difficult issue is not whether the end can ever justify the means, but which means are justified by which ends”. Thus the violence that took place in South Africa can be justified by the ends that resulted from this action. If not violence, what else could have worked when all these other means were blocked? Thus, in as much as South Africans may not be totally free given the levels of inequality<sup>24</sup>, one cannot deny that through revolutionary violence and other dialogues that later unfolded; today South Africans are politically free.

An adversary to the thesis that I have advanced in this paper might argue that once we commit acts of violence, whatever the good that comes out will no longer be a good. In other words, it is a tainted form of good. It is a good that is characterised by suffering and inflicting pain and force on other people. As such, revolutionary violence cannot be justified and should be totally ruled out. Hence, defenders of nonviolence believe that an act devoid of violence will produce a better good as compared to the good that result from violent acts. This line of thought is jaundiced for a number of reasons. If we are to draw from Morreall’s (1976:38) analysis that “Acts of violence are always acts which “get at” persons,” we can then infer that all forms of civil disobedience be it nonviolence or violent acts always ‘get at’ people. Thus to discredit revolutionary violence because it involves violent acts is misguided. We could also argue that when nonviolent protests are carried out, we have no idea of the psychological effects it has on the participants and those that view from afar.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have presented Mandela’s justification of violence for political ends in South Africa. In that section, I have tried to highlight that the use of violence for political ends, at least in decolonising republics, can be seen as a universal condition as witnessed in the work of Cabral. While people hold different views with regard to violence, I have argued against the position of pacifists by pointing out that such a position can only come from a privileged position. As seen in the works of other scholars, pacifism should be seen as an imposition of “bourgeoisie upon the proletariat.” As opposed to nonviolent scholars, I have highlighted that

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<sup>24</sup>“See Hamilton (2014:154) who brings to light the fact that: “South Africa has one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world, and inequality has widened since 1994.”

we should be careful on what nonviolent means because if not properly checked, all these considerations can be tools of domination. In this concluding section, it is worthwhile to add that any morally humane person hates violence in itself yet in the circumstances of apartheid and others that history has to offer or will offer in the future, we tread on the path to its employment. Although subscribing to this tenet, I do not fantasise that agreeing as to what constitutes the right time and mode of intervention will be an easy path. Thus while constellation is the fertile ground on which our knowledge is cultivated and grows, we should avoid too much mystification of what is practically evident before us.

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