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Intro to Peace and Justice

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The Non-Violent Struggle Against the Changes in the Regis Cafeteria

Due to the renovation of the cafeteria and pub at Regis, food prices have more than doubled recently, resulting in an outrage from many students who can no longer afford to eat more than one or two meals a day. These students have contested the change and rise in prices, stating that this change forces students that cannot afford the food at school to take unhealthy, processed food from the student pantry rather than the cafeteria, where they can get the amount of nutritious food they need to be fully functional, hard-working students. While many would like to resort to violent, aggressive actions to make a statement, non-violent protesting of this unfair change in price is the most appropriate and effective line of action in standing against this change in prices. Using the methods demonstrated by Gandhi, protests in South Africa and Chile, and the Bosnian group Otpor, the students of Regis will be able to stand and fight against an unfair policy without submitting themselves to acting violently.

Mohandas Gandhi, a lawyer from India who was tired of the British occupation of India, decided to create a new way of standing against his oppressors -non-violence- in which people can rebel and stand against unjust laws and rules without resorting to the violence that does not lead to change. Gandhi's first method of protest was against the salt tax, a spice that everyone needs to survive, much like the current situation at Regis, where students are not able to afford an amount of food that they need in order to be productive. According to the docuseries *A Force More Powerful* produced by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Gandhi first

decided to create his own salt by marching down to the beach. He organized the march in order to get an increased amount of publicity, and then broke the law by making his own salt which got him arrested, giving him even more publicity since he went to jail for producing salt, a necessary part of the human diet (Episode 1). A different way of adapting Gandhi's methods to the students at Regis could be someone producing food outside of the cafeteria for a more affordable price that can be more accommodating to students that need it. While it may be on a far smaller scale than that of Gandhi, if the group became large enough to get a response from security or the police, the media may be inclined to shed light on the issue and aid these students in getting their voices heard, and putting outside pressure on the University.

Another method of protest that has proven to be effective in multiple cases is the boycott. Protests in South Africa have proven the effectiveness of boycotts in getting the attention of the people and politicians. An episode in the docuseries *A Force More Powerful* states that while the boycott is supposed to last ten months, "Observers [reported] 100% compliance... In five days, it has proven the most effective yet" (Episode 1). By cutting off the flow of money in a certain area, there is no source of income for the people who are often the oppressors and this halts the economy. The sudden stop in the flow of goods creates problems for the people in power because of the effect on the economy, which leads to lower ratings, and often causes people to quit their jobs since there is no money coming in to pay them. The students at Regis could use this to their advantage by boycotting the food in the cafeteria altogether, thereby forcing the catering company Bon Appetit to either lower their prices in order to make enough money to keep the company's employees happy and working for them, or for the company to lose a substantial amount of money by losing a client.

Striking can also be an effective method that can be used in a non-violent protest to stop the exchange of goods and services in an establishment such as the Regis Cafeteria. Two examples of this take place in another episode of *A Force More Powerful*, where workers in Poland and Chile occupied the shipyards of Poland and the mines of Chile in protest of many regime policies. In the case of Poland, many shipyard workers occupied the shipyards, day and night, every day of the week in order to prevent the communists from getting their unfinished projects out of the shipyards and made retrieving the ships a lost cause, bringing attention to the needs of the people (Episode 2). By standing in the way, the only possible method for the regime to get what they want would be acknowledging and negotiating with the people. The use of a strike such as a stand-in, where students could block up ordering and delivery areas in the cafeteria in order to prevent any food being ordered by someone, would consequently stop the flow of money and harm the institution by making the cafeteria no longer profitable for the catering company and forcing a compromise. Another form of strike that has been proven effective is the walk-out performed in Chile by mine workers. An episode of *A Force More Powerful* describes the walkout which caused panic among Pinochet's regime due to the vast amount of revenue generated from these mines that are the heart of the Chilean economy (Episode 2). These miners were able to get the attention of a widespread regime due to the huge amount of wealth brought by the mining industry, and throughout their march through the streets the miners were able to gain supporters for the cause, much like Gandhi's approach to getting the attention of the people. One thing that students can do in order to get the attention of the people and the University is perform a series of walkouts where they take time away from their classes. This will effectively cause the University to act on their demands because the lack of students in classes would mean that the University is paying their professors to do nothing, and the test

scores for all students will be greatly reduced, harming the reputation of the University and effectively causing the school to lose out on far more than just food money, but also tuition revenue in the future.

An issue that is faced by some non-violent movements is being seen as a nuisance and often can be viewed as aggressive and extreme in some cases, such as protestors who chain themselves to trees and buildings. A strategy that the students at Regis can use to combat this viewpoint among the rest of the University is an approach similar to the satirical methods used by Otpor in Bosnia. In the documentary *Bringing Down a Dictator* produced by The International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Otpor, a group of students in Bosnia sought to protest the crimes against humanity committed by dictator Slobodan Milosevic. These students used marches, acts of civil disobedience such as playing rock music during a celebration of the new year, and an aspect of satire in order to light-heartedly bring attention to the acts of this regime. Some of their satirical forms of protest involved: celebrating Milosevic's birthday by making a big cake cut into pieces that represent the country's lack of unity, inviting many people to come and watch an eclipse, giving out devices to see the eclipse that had an image of Milosevic in it, and after being described as terrorists by the regime, describing a harmless college student, stating how dangerous his look was (*Bringing Down a Dictator*). By bringing a satirical element to the protests against the raising of prices in the Regis cafeteria, these students may be able gain more supporters for their cause.

While all of these methods have been proven effective, they will never be effective unless all of Regis' students are able to unite to fight against these changes. The satirical methods demonstrated by Otpor in Yugoslavia would allow Regis students to create awareness of the issues in a way that would appeal to everyone. Satire has been proven to draw the attention of

large groups of people without taking an approach that is seen to be more “in your face”, such as walkouts and marches. Another method that can be used to unify the students is using social media in order to raise awareness and contribute to the cause; due to the fact that almost everyone at the University has at least one social media account, one post describing the effects of the drastic change in the cafeteria at Regis could cause a chain reaction and possibly go viral, getting more than just individuals at the University involved.

The problem with using these methods individually is that no single one of these methods will ever be effective enough on its own. However, if used appropriately in unison with one another, the students of Regis can fight against the economic injustice brought upon by the increase in prices and decrease in portions in the cafeteria. By using non-violent protests to contest this injustice, they will be able to effectively make change for the better of the community.