the effectiveness of nonviolence. Like many social scientists before them, they use statistics to obscure more complex truths. They claim to have compiled a list of 323 major nonviolent campaigns or violent conflicts from 1900 to 2006, and then superficially rate these as "successful," "partially successful," or "failed." They do not use revolutionary criteria for success, and in their mind the "Color Revolutions" and many other reformist, dead-end, or self-betraying movements were successful. Although they rate campaigns as objectively violent or nonviolent, they do not define violence, and they also uncritically use loaded terms like "the international community." They credit nonviolence with victory in cases where international peacekeeping forces, i.e. armies, had to be called in to protect peaceful protesters, as in East Timor, and they define victory simply as the achievement of a movement's goals, as though movements ever had a consensus on their goals.

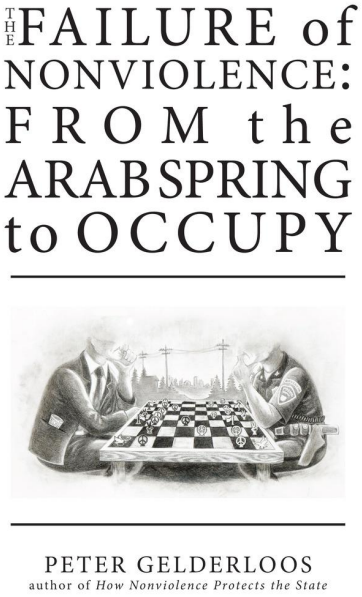
They do not publish the list of campaigns and conflicts with their original study, and after extensive searching I was unable to find it. They explain that the list of major nonviolent campaigns was provided to them by "experts in nonviolent conflict," in other words, people who are almost exclusively proponents of nonviolence. Given widespread manipulation by such "experts," who frequently describe heterogeneous struggles as "nonviolent," such as the independence movements in South Africa and India, the Civil Rights movement, or the uprisings of the Arab Spring, we can only assume that many of successful nonviolent campaigns on the list included armed and combative elements. The violent conflicts that they include in their study come from a completely different source: lists of armed conflicts with over 1,000 combatant deaths. In other words, wars. They are comparing apples and oranges, lining social movements up against wars, as though these different kinds of conflicts arose in the same circumstances and were merely a product of the choices of their participants.

One methodological weakness they do admit to, in a footnote, is that by focusing on "major" nonviolent campaigns, they weed

The Failure of Nonviolence

From the Arab Spring to Occupy

Peter Gelderloos



2013

narratives of those in power, who would also have us believe that a nonviolent Gandhi carried the day in India, and that the workers in Russia opened a Pandora's box by rising up.

Anti-authoritarians who support a diversity of tactics do not claim a victory in the revolutions in Russia, Spain, Haiti, and elsewhere. They are forced, therefore, to analyze how people empowered themselves to defeat the government and begin to self-organize society, what went wrong, and what was the interplay between different revolutionary currents. To make sense of their defeat, they have to investigate whether people achieved a meaningful freedom in the Maroon villages,[2] the Russian soviets, or the collectives of Aragón; and whether these liberated zones were effective or ineffective at defending themselves. This has led to years of research and debate to hack out nuanced answers to organizational questions regarding movement unity and coordination, volunteer militias, guerrilla forces, clandestine cells, and labor unions; socioeconomic questions like the role of the struggle against patriarchy within these revolutions, the possibility of alliance between wage slaves and unwaged slaves, whether the productive logic of the factory can ever be liberated, whether intensifying attacks on capitalism and efforts to collectivize a society's resources strengthen or weaken the attempt to defeat fascist or interventionist militaries, and a long et cetera. In moments of social peace, this can seem like an obsessive escapism into the distant battles of history, but when social movements reemerge in times of renewed conflict, the people who have participated in these debates have been able to apply historical lessons to ongoing struggles and avoid the repetition of old errors.

Social scientists Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan are the authors of a study that is among the only statistical analyses of

[2] For more on slave revolts and anticapitalist movements in Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname, and elsewhere, see Russell Maroon Shoatz's short but succinct "The Dragon and the Hydra: A Historical Study of Organizational Methods" (2012).

the Russian Revolution as a victory. Why should they? Although they participated, along with other currents of struggle, the world they talked about did not come about, and in fact they were slaughtered as other elements took over the revolution. Things clearly changed in Russia, but it was not an anarchist change.

However, these exact same criteria apply to the nonviolent movement in India. They were but one of multiple currents, their leaders were killed off, and the peaceful, just society they spoke about never came into being.[1] Nonetheless, proponents of nonviolence jump at the chance to declare victory, no matter how many embarrassing details they have to ignore. This is not simple opportunism, but an outgrowth of the functional complicity between nonviolence and the structural violence of the State. The very philosophy of nonviolence leads to a misleading distinction between good and bad government, based on whether a government must make use of shocking, visible forms of violence or whether it can control society through other, invisible means.

By chalking up the failure of the revolutions in Russia, Spain, China, Cuba, and elsewhere to one simple factor, the revolutionaries' use of this thing called "violence," they save themselves the need for any nuanced, thorough historical analysis. Nonviolence, in sum, encourages superficiality, false expectations, dishonesty, and sloppy thinking. Even more troublesome, it conforms with the

[1] The movement was not exclusively nonviolent, and the armed or riotous parts of the movement were an important force in convincing the British to leave. And while the ejection of the British was an important achievement, it was not a final victory. Furthermore, the British colluded with the nonviolent and dialogue-oriented segment of the movement to isolate and repress the "violent" radical currents so they could stage-manage a transition of power that would be favorable to British interests, and that would put Gandhi's disciple Nehru in power. In other words, we cannot talk about a meaningful victory in India, so much as a partial victory that was fully recuperated within the capitalist system. Whereas the combative part of the movement played a major role in forcing some kind of change, it was the nonviolent part that was most instrumental in the recuperation.

Contents

3. The Revolutions of Today

After demonstrating that the historical victories of nonviolence have not been victories from a revolutionary standpoint, that they did not bring an end to oppression and exploitation, they did not fundamentally change social relations, much less create a classless, horizontal society, one often hears the rebuttal, *But violence has never worked!*

Moving past the moralistic simplemindedness contained in the belief that "violence" is a method, this statement conceals an important fact. Unlike the proponents of nonviolence, we (and here I only mean to speak for other anarchists who believe in revolution, though many other anti-authoritarian anticapitalists as well as indigenous people fighting for their freedom from colonialism may identify) have never claimed victory. We have pointed to specific battles won, ground gained, or small steps ahead as sources of inspiration and learning, but we are not trying to offer easy solutions, cheap hopes, or false promises to anyone. If we liberate ourselves in one area, all we gain will be lost again until the State is defeated on a worldwide scale.

The State does not brook any independence or externality to its rule, and that is why it has brutally colonized the entire globe. The tendency of nonviolence to claim superficial, false victories reveals its inclination to seek accommodation with ruling structures by identifying oppression with the spectacular violence of "bad government," thereby covering up the deeper mechanisms that "good governments" use to accomplish the same ends. Supporters of nonviolence claim Indian independence as a victory for their method, whereas anarchists who support combative methods do not claim

identified their enemy as one specific political party, and declared victory when a new political party came into office, even though none of the structures that caused their poverty and powerlessness had changed. Nonviolence played a key role in all of these processes of recuperation by enabling dialogue between powerholders and movement leaders, by preventing people from taking power into their own hands, giving them instead an ideology of glorified powerlessness, and by ensuring peacefulness and stability in critical moments of transition from one form of oppression to another.

Anyone who believes in revolution needs to have an analysis of recuperation and a strategy for how to keep their rebellion from being twisted to suit the needs of the State. Not only does nonviolence lack this analysis, it frequently serves as a vehicle for recuperation.

can make money. We can't overcome the destruction of our communities, but we can have a hundred friends on Facebook. We can't keep the forest we played in as children from getting cut down, but we can start a recycling program. Indigenous people cannot have their land back, but one or two of them might get elected to Congress. Poor neighborhoods of color can't get rid of the police who occupy their streets, harass them, and occasionally shoot them down, but they might get the city to pay some NGO to give the cops cultural sensitivity trainings.

For recuperation to work, those who participate in social struggles must play along in some way. Enough people need to agree to play by the new set of rules being imposed from above. They need to accept the new police training requirements or recycling program as a victory, they need to vote for the new candidate or support the new worker-friendly business. They will do this only if they do not see the system as a whole as their enemy; they will accept domination at the hands of the police as long as it happens in more subtle ways; they will be content with the destruction of the planet as long as it happens a little more slowly.

For this reason, nonviolence tends to be a necessary component for recuperation. Nonviolent resistance is less likely to help people develop an antagonistic consciousness of the State. It gives the guardians of law and order more opportunities to put on a friendly face. And it also prevents the disruption of the social peace during the necessary period of institutional pressure and dialogue in which radical movements allow themselves to be recuperated. The Civil Rights movement in the US was recuperated when it was convinced to fight for voter registration instead of any material equality or meaningful freedom. The independence movements in India and South Africa were recuperated when they set their goal on new capitalist states that played by the same rules that had enriched investors during the colonial or apartheid regimes. Popular outrage in Ukraine, Serbia, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, and other countries that experienced the "Color Revolutions" was recuperated when they

bosses, for example accepting voluntary pay cuts for the good of the company. Liberation movements in India, South Africa, and many other countries were recuperated when they decided to seek common ground with their colonizers and fight for a new government that would carry out all the same economic projects of the old government, becoming local managers for international finance. ngos profit constantly off the State's need to recuperate popular rage. Rich donors and government agencies give away huge amounts of money to pay dissidents to feel like they're making a real change in the world by running services that constitute a bandage on the gaping wounds of poverty and structural violence, while training those in need to passively accept aid rather than fighting to change their circumstances. Thanks to charity, the powerful can throw some crumbs to those who wait obediently, allowing them to more effectively crush those who rise up to create change directly.

Struggles in democratic societies are defeated by recuperation more often than by repression. Though a democratic state is perfectly capable of shooting down protesters in the street or torturing rebels in prison—and every democratic state does this with more regularity than many of its citizens suspect—democracy's greatest strength is in winning the consent and participation of the exploited. To do this, a democratic government has to pretend it is open to criticism. Democracy requires social peace, the illusion that, in a society based on exploitation and domination, everyone can get along and nobody's fundamental well-being is under threat. If a democratic government cannot successfully project the idea that its use of the bullet and the baton is exceptional, the social peace is disrupted, investors grow cautious, and state subjects stop participating.

To preserve the social peace, businesses and politicians constantly deploy measures to convince those who rise up to make demands, to instead enter into dialogue, reform the system, play politics, or turn their critiques and anxieties into something that

This book is dedicated to Marie Mason, Eric McDavid, & all those who support them.

When they poured across the border
I was cautioned to surrender,
this I could not do;
I took my gun and vanished.
[…]
"Oh, the wind, the wind is blowing,
through the graves the wind is blowing,
freedom soon will come;
then we'll come from the shadows.

—Leonard Cohen, "*The Partisan*"

Introduction: Nonviolence has lost the debate

Nonviolence has lost the debate. Over the last 20 years, more and more social movements and rebellions against oppression and exploitation have broken out across the world, and within these movements people have learned all over again that nonviolence does not work. They are learning that the histories of purported nonviolent victories have been falsified, that specific actions or methods that could be described as nonviolent work best when they are complemented by other actions or methods that are illegal and combative. They are learning that exclusive, dogmatic nonviolence does not stand a chance at achieving a revolutionary change in society, at getting to the roots of oppression and exploitation and bringing down those who are in power.

At best, nonviolence can oblige power to change its masks, to put a new political party on the throne and possibly expand the social sectors that are represented in the elite, without changing the fundamental fact that there is an elite that rules and benefits from the exploitation of everybody else. And if we look at all the major rebellions of the last two decades, since the end of the Cold War, it seems that nonviolence can only effect this cosmetic change if it has the support of a broad part of the elite—usually the media, the wealthy, and at least a part of the military, because nonviolent resistance has never been able to resist the full force of the State. When dissidents do not have this elite support, strict nonviolence seems like the surest way to kill a movement, as when pure nonviolence

sistance. The specific strategies vary greatly, but for the last half century, governments across the world have used the paradigm of counterinsurgency for defeating rebellious movements. The idea of counterinsurgency comes from the State itself, based on experiences in Kenya, Algeria, Vietnam, and urban ghettos in the United States and Europe. Its basis is the hypothesis that conflict is the inherent condition of society under the State. The goal of government, therefore, is not to eliminate conflict, but to manage it permanently, and make sure it remains at lower, less threatening levels, which according to the military authors of this idea, includes nonviolence.[3]

Insurrectionary anarchists often divide counterinsurgency into repression and recuperation. Together, these two motions constitute a carrot and a stick that can discipline social movements into adopting behaviors that do not threaten the fundamental basis of the current system. Nonviolent activists very rarely talk about recuperation, and some would say this is because they tend to play the role of recuperators.

Recuperation is the process by which those who attempt to break away from current power structures to rebel are induced to rejuvenate those power structures or create more effective ones. They either turn their rebellion into the mere symbol of rebellion, as a way to exorcise whatever anger or discontentment led them to rebel, or they direct it against only a small part of the system, creating a change that allows the State to function more effectively overall. Recuperation is when countercultural movements like punk or the hippies become just new ways of buying and selling, new product lines, a new niche within the diversity of capitalist democracy. Recuperation is when workers' movements around the world form political parties that enter into government and sell out their base, or when labor unions come to convince workers of the needs of

[3] For more on counterinsurgency, see Kristian Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*; or *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, p.106.

in social movements does not at all require having an anarchist vision.

Although some folks participate in social struggles simply to recover lost privileges (especially in these times of austerity measures), a deeper unhappiness with exploitation, oppression, and the destruction of the planet drive many more people to the streets. Most of these folks understand their problems within the dominant discourses of the day, which tend to be democratic or religious. In other words, they reject the problems caused by the system, but they adopt the language, the philosophy, and the range of solutions given to them by that same system. As such, they often set themselves the goal of getting the right leaders in power. But all social ills flow from the fact that we are robbed of power to make the decisions and solve the problems that directly affect us. No one knows what's best for us more than we ourselves do. Once we are turned into spectators of our own lives, any manner of abuses can be heaped on us with ease.

This book is not only for anarchists, but it is written from an anarchist perspective, based on the belief that no matter how people understand their problems, rising up to solve them will necessitate conflict with the State, and those problems will not be solved until the State is destroyed.

Many readers may not agree with this contention, but if they continue struggling for their own vision of freedom, the debate will come up again and again, because their struggle will bring them into conflict with the State, and if they should ever win, and have the opportunity to build a better state supposedly compatible with their liberation, they will be sorely disappointed, and all their dreams will be corrupted, as has happened so many times in the past. In the meantime, we can agree to disagree, and focus on the fact that struggling for a better world means conflict with the current system.

If we are going to challenge that system, it will help to familiarize ourselves with how governments themselves understand re-

led to the total collapse of the anti-war movement in 2003[1], or an enforced nonviolence led to the collapse of the student movement in Spain in 2009[2].

In dozens of new social movements around the world, people have gone into the streets for the first time thinking that nonviolence is the way, because contrary to the claims of many pacifists, our society teaches us that while violence may be acceptable for governments, people on the bottom who wish to change things must always be nonviolent. This is why from the Occupy Movement in the US to the plaza occupation movement in Spain to the student movement in the UK, tens of thousands of people who were participating in a struggle for the first time in their lives, who only knew about revolution and resistance from television or from public schools (which is to say, from the media or from the government) overwhelmingly believed in nonviolence. And around the world, experience taught many of these people that they were

[1] This argument is documented in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*. In sum, nonviolent organizations predicted, after the largest protests the world had ever seen, that their peaceful methods would prevent the war. When they were proven wrong, many people who believed in this nonviolent model for change became disillusioned and dropped out, whereas other people became frustrated with the enforcement of nonviolence and the parade-like, self-congratulatory character of the movement, as well as its refusal to express rage at mass murder or condone the sabotage of the war effort. The movement imploded and disappeared with spectacular speed.

[2] In Spain, self-appointed student leaders prevented a discussion of a diversity of tactics and physically ejected students who tried to mask up or practice self-defense in the protests. They organized a series of huge protests and university occupations in response to the privatization of higher education, and after the largest of these protests, strictly nonviolent, the movement swiftly disappeared (until reemerging with a strike and riots three years later). After the university occupations were evicted in Barcelona, a part of the students used direct action and combative tactics to occupy an empty building in the city center and set up a "Free University." The space for self-organization and alternative education was won only because some students decided to practice combative street tactics. Thanks to this illegal experience, the student movement was kept alive, and the self-appointed leaders were no longer in control of it when it reemerged in 2012.

wrong, that the pacifists, together with the media and the government had lied to them, and in order to change anything, they had to fight back.

This has been a collective learning process that has taken place around the globe, and the direction of that process has overwhelmingly gone from nonviolence to a diversity of tactics—the idea that we cannot impose a limitation of tactics or one method of struggle on an entire movement, that we need to be able to choose from a wide range of tactics, that struggles are more robust when such a variety of tactics are present, and that everybody needs to decide for themselves how to struggle (peaceful tactics, therefore, are included within a diversity of tactics, where nonviolence excludes all other tactics and methods).

Eight years ago, there were frequent debates between proponents of nonviolence and proponents of a diversity of tactics. In the fall of 2004, I wrote *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, one of several similar polemics to appear at the time (the arguments I make in that book, as well as criticisms of it, are outlined in the appendix). In the climate of the antiglobalization movement, which was heavily skewed towards nonviolence thanks to the disappearance or institutionalization of the social movements that came before us, and thanks to the heavy NGO participation, the debate felt like an uphill battle, although most of us were aided and inspired by the discovery or republication of texts from earlier generations of struggle, like Ward Churchill's *Pacifism as Pathology* or Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

At that time, proponents of nonviolence frequently emerged from their ivory towers to debate with proponents of a diversity of tactics. But in the intervening years, something has changed. Insurrections have occurred around the world, while nonviolent movements have proven themselves stillborn or morally bankrupt (see Chapter 3). Even within the confines of the antiglobalization movement, the most powerful and communicative protests were those that openly organized on the basis of a diversity of tactics,

Government violence is not the result of violent revolutions, but the product of government itself. Any movement that leaves the State intact will fail in ending the oppressions we are fighting against. A nonviolent movement that replaces one government with another—and this is the greatest victory a nonviolent movement has ever achieved in the history of the world—ends up betraying itself, allowing Power to change its masks without addressing the fundamental problems of society. Nonviolence as an analytical tool has no means of understanding this kind of defeat—the kind that looks like victory.

When evaluating the possibility for a revolutionary social change, it is necessary to set our sights on a complete transformation that does away with coercive hierarchies of any kind, including governments, capitalism, and patriarchy. Governments are by their nature aggressive and dominating. No society is safe if its neighbor is a state. Capitalism, for its part, is based on the endless accumulation of value, which requires exploitation, alienation, the enclosure of any commons, and the destruction of the environment. Capitalism has proven to be the strongest engine yet for state power, which is why every state in modern history, even those that call themselves socialist, link themselves to the accumulative processes of capitalism. And patriarchy is perhaps the most insidious, longest lasting form of oppression on the planet, constituting itself as a plague in our own families and communities as much as an external force to be combated.

An anarchist revolution opens the door to many different forms of self-organization, but it must do away with all these hierarchical systems. Being critical of nonviolence is not essential to being anarchist, as there are many anarchist pacifists, and participating

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ment, and other supposed nonviolent victories did not actually achieve their long-term goals. The book is available for free on the internet, at *theanarchistlibrary.org* and *zinelibrary.info*.

live up to their pretenses of being either liberating or realistic. The end result of this debate is not a single definition of revolution nor a common, correct practice, since we do not represent a homogenous humanity with the same needs and experiences. The result is a multiplicity of practices that are more intelligent and more effective, and that either complement one another or clearly evince the unbridgeable chasm between themselves.

The present criticism of nonviolence, therefore, does not seek to convert its adherents, but to disprove their pretenses, suggest new directions for those interested in a revolution against all forms of domination, and let them make up their own minds.

The primary flaw in a majority of nonviolent discourses is to view revolution as a morality play. According to their morality play, revolutions lose because they open the Pandora's box of violence, are corrupted, and end up reproducing what they intended to abolish.[1] But not only the so-called violent revolutions have suffered this fate. The government of India continued to mete out humiliation, exploitation, beatings and killings after the victory of the supposedly nonviolent independence movement. In the United States, the desegregated South continued to preserve white supremacy northern style, through gentrification, judicial lynchings, structural discrimination, and other measures. And in recent years, where the "Color Revolutions" have forced out the ruling political parties in Serbia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and elsewhere, we still find government corruption, police brutality, the forcible exclusion of common people, and widespread apathy.[2]

[1] Many proponents of nonviolence try to say, more pragmatically, that "violence" is simply less effective, but they have no historical revolutions to show, and therefore no basis for claiming effectiveness. When pressed to answer for the violent revolutions that were successful in overthrowing a particular government, they will almost always claim dissatisfaction with the revolution in question due to its authoritarianism, a quality they often blame on the means used to bring it about.

[2] See *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, particularly Chapter 1, for detailed arguments about how the Civil Rights movement, the Indian independence move-

while the rebellions in the Global South that kept the movement alive were nothing close to pacifist.

Many of the proponents of nonviolence were drawing on a rich if somewhat flawed history of peaceful movements for change, like the Latin American solidarity movement in the US or the antimilitarist and anti-nuclear movements in Europe. But many of these older, principled pacifists have disappeared, while those who have remained active were scarcely present in the emergence of the new nonviolent mass movements. In the face of its defeats, nonviolence nourished itself not in the experience of social movements, which repeatedly counseled against it, but rather anchored itself with the support of the mass media, the universities, wealthy benefactors, and governments themselves (see Chapter 8). Nonviolence has become increasingly external to social movements, and imposed upon them.

As this has happened, direct debate between the idea of nonviolence and that of a diversity of tactics has become increasingly rare. The criticisms of nonviolence that were published in those years made a number of arguments that would have to be either rebutted or acknowledged for any honest debate to continue. These include:

- the accusation that proponents of nonviolence, in conjunction with the State, have falsified the history of the movement against the war in Vietnam, the struggles for civil rights in the US, and the independence movement in India to portray movements that used a diversity of tactics as nonviolent, and to make a partial or limited victory seem like a full victory;
- the argument that the State was able to prevent the movement from attaining full victory, both in the case of civil rights and Indian independence, thanks to the role of pacifists in dialoguing with the government and attacking others in the movement who used more combative tactics;

- the fact that proponents of nonviolence, particularly those who are white and middle-class, have heavily edited the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi to cut out those figures' own learning processes and their radicalization in later years, and to silence their criticisms of white progressive allies or their support for non-pacifist movements including urban rioters and armed liberation movements;

- documentation of government, police, and media encouragement of nonviolence within social movements, including government strategy papers that show that the State prefers to go up against a peaceful movement rather than a combative movement; –evidence of paternalism and racism by nonviolent organizations towards the struggles of poor people and people of color;

- the argument that government and business institutions are structurally immune to a "change of heart" and that historically a strictly nonviolent resistance has never provoked massive mutiny from the military, police, or other institutions, as has combative or diverse resistance;

- a long list of gains won by movements that used a diversity of tactics;

- the argument that "violence" is an intrinsically ambiguous category that enables more analytical manipulation than precision;

- the argument that most of the alleged problems with revolutionary violence are in fact problems that can be attributed to authoritarian movements that use violence and not to anti-authoritarian movements that use violence.[3]

[3] All of these arguments are explained at length and documented in *How Nonviolence Protects the State.*

Some people understand revolution as the abolition of classes, while others see it as the proletariat achieving political dominance. Some focus on the abolition of the patriarchy, and others on ending white supremacy and imperialism. The idea of revolution can apply to all aspects of life. If I do not talk exclusively about my own vision of revolution, it is because my goal in this text is not to convince others of that vision, but to deal with a problem that has arisen in spaces where people with very different ideas of revolution try to work together.

Even though revolution is a term with many definitions, it is informed by experiences of the struggle we often share. This vague commonality, the fact that we are on some level struggling together even though our reasons and concepts differ, is why we can criticize one another's concept of revolution without necessarily agreeing on what revolution means: because concepts inform practices, and practices meet with different results when they are put to use in the streets. When these results are counterproductive, sometimes we refuse to see our own failings and need to hear criticism from a different perspective. This, in my mind, is the complicated, suspended nature of reality, often lacking any objective coordinates but still full of pressing needs and imminent truths. An academic approach demands that we establish objective definitions and shared criteria for evaluation. This method has its uses but it is not always realistic in a situation of struggle. The criteria we choose might be incorrect, or the definitions misleading, and we will not know until we put them into practice. We each know why we are fighting, but perhaps we cannot articulate it, much less agree about it with others. Perhaps the demands for a philosophical unity are themselves antithetical to the project of liberation, since we ourselves are so obviously neither identical nor unified. Despite lacking a common definition of revolution, we can criticize the nonviolent vision of revolution for betraying that nameless refusal, that urge for freedom we all have inside of us. Through collective debate, we can dismantle visions of revolution that do not

2. Recuperation is How We Lose

The reason I am talking about methods of struggle is because struggle is a vital part of the lives of many people around the world. Sometimes we meet in the streets—in protests, occupations, demonstrations, festivals, talks, and debates—and sometimes we are separated by a wide gulf in our practices. What we have in common is that we want to fight against the current state of things, but we don't even agree on how to phrase this. Some would say we want to liberate ourselves from colonialism, others that we want to abolish oppression, and others that we want to change the world. One person might say we are working for social justice, and others, myself for instance, would counter that justice is a concept of the ruling system.

I am an anarchist, but I fight alongside many people who do not define themselves the same way. We may all say that we want revolution, but we mean different things by this. Many people believe in political revolution, which would be the overthrow of the existing political structure and the installation of a new, presumably better political structure. The revolutions in the American colonies, France, Russia, China, Cuba, and Algeria were political revolutions. Anarchists generally believe in a social revolution, which means the destruction of the existing political structure and all coercive hierarchies, without the imposition of a new political structure, therefore allowing everyone to organize themselves freely. But again, those are my terms; others would describe it differently.

Yet proponents of nonviolence in recent years have not acknowledged these criticisms, neither to rebut them nor to revise their own positions. They continue repeating the clichés, the misinformation, the broad statements, and the name-dropping of Gandhi and King that sparked the criticisms in the first place. But more often still, they avoid any direct communication altogether. In social movements across the world, they have begun spreading the claim that the Black Bloc in particular, or masked rioters in general, are police provocateurs and government agents. Never mind that in every single one of the many countries where this cheap accusation has been made, there are comrades in the social movements who argue in favor of self-defense against the police, of taking over the streets, and of smashing banks; never mind that they have already published explanations of their actions and that they would also be willing to sit down with those of another opinion to debate these things; and never mind that many of them have dedicated their lives to social movements for years—not just to the task of attacking banks but also to solidarity in all its forms, as well as many kinds of creation and self-organization.

With increasing frequency, unscrupulous supporters of nonviolence have spread the accusation, often without any evidence, that other members of a social movement are police provocateurs, and they have done this precisely because they are afraid to debate. They have to rob their opponents of any legitimacy and prevent bystanders to the debate from realizing that there is indeed any debate going on, that the social movements contain conflicting beliefs and practices. And by spreading false rumors of infiltration and dividing the movement, they expose those they accuse to violence, whether that is the violence of arrest or the violence of fellow protesters. On a number of occasions, police have tracked down and arrested those "bad protesters" who are accused of being infiltrators in order to clear their names. Supporters of nonviolence

have often aided police in identifying the "bad protesters."[4] And after organizing or participating in debates on nonviolence over a hundred times in Europe, and North and South America, I am convinced that those who have most often physically attacked fellow protesters have been supporters of nonviolence. This is certainly confirmed by what I have seen with my own eyes. The episode has played out so many times that it has lost all its humorous irony: proponents of nonviolence attacking those they disagree with for not using peaceful tactics.

There was a time when the only people dishonest enough to toss around the accusation that the Black Bloc or other masked protesters are police infiltrators were Stalinists. Now, this has become a stock argument, not only by conspiracy nuts but also by pacifists who claim the mantle of Gandhi and King. Lies and manipulations are a resort of those who have lost an argument but don't have the decency to admit it.

In the plaza occupation movement in Spain, self-appointed leaders imposed strict adherence to nonviolence, even prohibiting the blocking of streets or the painting of banks, and they boycotted any debate on the subject. In Barcelona, they even made the paperwork disappear when anarchists tried to reserve the sound system to organize such a debate. And during Occupy, a number of mainstream journalists posing as friends of the movement published denunciations filled with manipulations and misinformation in a bald-faced attempt to criminalize a part of the movement.

When one of these journalists, *The New York Times*' Chris Hedges, sat down to debate a member of Crimethinc,[5] he repeat-

[4] One website, violentanarchists.wordpress.com, contains dozens of examples from multiple countries across the world showing how accusations of being provocateurs are made against anarchists with no evidence or contradictory evidence, how the mainstream media often promote these rumors, and how these rumors have sometimes resulted in people getting arrested.

[5] http://www.crimethinc.com/blog/2012/09/17/post-debate-debrief-video-and-libretto/

A lack of unity does not mean a lack of communication. We learn from difference, and we are stronger when we communicate across this difference, criticizing one another but also helping one another, and all the while respecting our fundamental difference. There are many totally erroneous or backstabbing forms of struggle, and these should be criticized vehemently, not protected behind a polite relativism. But the goal of our criticism should be solidarity, not homogeneity. There are a thousand different roles to play within this struggle, if we can learn to support one another in our differences. There is a place for healers, for fighters, for storytellers, for those who resolve conflicts and those who seek conflicts.

All of us can do a better job at seeking this more robust struggle.

gle, are necessary, few are content with our methods to date. Participants of certain struggles, at certain moments, have criticized a fetishization of violence in their struggle, or the lack of a next step once police have been defeated in the street (see, for example, "After We Have Burnt Everything"[7]). Generalizing these criticisms to all "violent protesters" would be dishonest and it would also miss the very valuable and nuanced points they bring up.

In my experience, the unfair and often manipulative generalizations made by supporters of nonviolence make it much harder for conflictive anarchists to make these self-criticisms openly. Ironically, nonviolence advocates have created the exact sort of polemicized environment that "nonviolent communication" tries to avoid, in which two sides close ranks and face off. I could decry this as yet another example of nonviolent hypocrisy, but then pacifists who don't deserve that criticism, along with those who do, would be more likely to block their ears and reload for the counterattack. So, I'll just leave the criticism in the open and reiterate the point that those who support a diversity of tactics are not generally satisfied with our struggle, many are self-critical, *and many want t*o be more inclusive.

A diversity of methods is necessary in our struggle because none of us have the answer regarding the one true strategy for revolution; because there is no one size that fits all and each of us must develop a unique form of struggle for our respective situation; and because in fact our movements are harder to repress when we replace a party-line unity with a broad solidarity, when we attack as a swarm and not as an opposing army. Whether that army is pacifist or combative, the discipline required to coerce or intimidate everyone into following one set of pre-approved tactics, and to exclude those who fall out of line, is authoritarian. In such a contest, whichever army won—the army of the government or the army of the movement—the State would triumph.

[7] http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/08/435985.html

edly contradicted himself, denied some of the arguments he made in his infamous article, and proved incapable of understanding that violence is a social construct that is applied to some forms of harm but not to others, often depending on whether such harm is considered normal within our society. When some nonviolence proponents broke the principles of unity and denounced fellow protesters after the demonstrations against the Vancouver Olympics, one of them subsequently debated Harsha Walia from "No One is Illegal," and got soundly thrashed.[6]

Most proponents of nonviolence have been smarter, and they have avoided any level playing field. They have not chosen the terrain of the movement itself, because collective experiences repeatedly prove them wrong. Instead they have turned towards the elite and gotten support from the system itself. Mainstream, for-profit publishing companies print out their books by the millions, in a stream of titles that increases as combative social movements gain more ground. Mainstream, for-profit media give nonviolent activists interviews while they demonize the so-called violent ones. University professors and NGO employees living off of grants from the government or wealthy donors (and living lush, compared to those of us who make our living working in restaurants and bars, shoplifting, teaching in public schools, driving taxis, doing temp work or sex work, or volunteering for medical experiments), also tend to weigh in on the side of nonviolence, bringing a hefty array of institutional resources along with them.

All of these resources overwhelm the small counterinformation websites, the pirate radio stations, and the all-volunteer independent presses of the movement. For every book we print out, often cutting and binding by hand, they can print a thousand books. The proponents of nonviolence, yet again, have chosen to unscrupu-

[6] The transcript of Harsha Walia's part of the debate, and a link to a video of the entire debate, can be found at http://riselikelions.net/pamphlets/14/10-points-on-the-black-bloc.

lously work with and for the system in a Faustian pact, availing themselves of resources, economic security, safety from repression, and even fame, but make no mistake: they have revealed themselves as morally corrupt. The closer one gets to the do-ityourself, the self-organized, and the crowd-funded structures of our movements for revolution, and the more one is immersed in the streets, in the struggles of those who are fighting for their own lives, the more likely you are to find support for a diversity of tactics. And the closer you get to the ngos, to the corporate publishing houses, to the mainstream media or the richly funded "alternatives," to the elite universities, to the media-conscious careerists, and to the halls of wealth and privilege, the more likely you are to find strict support for exclusive nonviolence.

Nonviolence has failed on a global level. It has proven to be a great friend to governments, political parties, police departments, and ngos, and a traitor to our struggles for freedom, dignity, and well-being. The vast majority of its proponents have jumped ship to cozy up to the media, the State, or wealthy benefactors, using any cheap trick, manipulation, or form of violence (like attacking fellow protesters or helping the cops carry out arrests) that comes in handy to win the contest, even if it means the division and death of the movement. Many have proven themselves to be opportunists, politicians, or careerists. And a principled minority who actually have remained true to their historical movements still have not answered for past failings or current weaknesses.

In response to *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, there were a few principled supporters of nonviolence (writing in *Fifth Estate* or on *Richmond Indymedia*, for example) who criticized the tone of the book but accepted many of the criticisms, and called on other pacifists to read it in order to come to terms with certain mistakes.

In this book also, I argue in favor of a diversity of tactics. At its most basic, the concept of a diversity of tactics is nothing more than the recognition that different methods of struggle exist side by side. My goal is not to make other people think like I do or

"conflictive," or "forceful" actions, as the case may be. But I will try to do so with my eyes set on the necessity for a diversity of tactics.

But "diversity of tactics" should not simply be a replacement term for "violence." I think the criticism has sometimes been warranted that practitioners of a diversity of tactics have done whatever they wanted without thinking about the consequences for anyone else. But also, some of the most effective protests in North America in the last few years—effective in terms of disruption to the summits of the powerful, in terms of spreading awareness, surviving repression, and also allowing a diverse range of protest methods to inhabit the same space in a spirit of respect and solidarity (excepting that method which tries to dictate how everyone else may or may not participate)—used a diversity of tactics. These include the Seattle WTO protests in 1999, the Republican National Convention protests in St. Paul in 2008, the Pittsburgh

G8 protests in 2009, and the protests against the 2010 Vancouver Olympics; and one might also add the 2005 protests against the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, or the 2007 protests against the G8 in Heiligendamm, Germany. And in the aftermath, there were inevitably some proponents of nonviolence who broke the principles of unity agreed on beforehand and denounced the "bad protesters" in the media.

While the debate around a diversity of tactics most often surfaces in major protests that bring together people with very different methods, it also applies to other moments and other kinds of struggle. Likewise, the most effective social uprisings since the end of the Cold War can be characterized as using a diversity of methods, whereas the exclusively peaceful movements have resulted in disappointment. (Chapter 3 is dedicated entirely to this point).

There are other criticisms that have come from the socalled bad protesters, the violent ones, themselves. While many still hold to the ideal of a diversity of tactics, and many believe that combative methods such as sabotage, riots, Black Blocs, or even armed strug-

it makes us more free and opens up space for new social relations, we can avoid the forms of authoritarianism or self-harm the pacifists wish to avoid, without giving the advantage to the media. The media do not talk 24 hours a day about what is liberating, because they do not want us to think about it, and because we have the advantage in that debate. More often than their occasional use of "freedom" as the justification for some war, the government and media have to explain why we need limits on freedom. But when it comes to violence, in a ten-second sound bite they have the upper hand if they want to describe a conflictive social movement as violent, or an austerity measure or capitalist development project seem like a mundane fact of life. Even in an even debate, and the debate is far from even, most people will be persuaded that the thing that triggers a release of adrenaline, that has a sense of danger—a riot, a shooting, smashing things, shouting and running around, crime—is violent, whereas the thing that is abstract, bureaucratic, or invisible—a million slow deaths on another continent, the price of medicine, a prison sentence—is not violent.

Freedom as a concept sides with those who are struggling for theirs, whereas nonviolence as a concept sides with the enforcers of normality and the rulers of the status quo.

By criticizing nonviolence, I am not advocating violence. Many of us believe that the phrase "advocating violence" has no inherent meaning, it is just a form of demagoguery and fear-mongering. Nonviolence requires a strategic usage of the concept of "violence," which is moralistic, imprecise, incoherent, and tends towards hypocrisy. We reject nonviolence because it is pacifying, and because it is incoherent. The category of violence is a tool of the State. In using it uncritically, nonviolent activists also become tools.

I do not want to waste any more time by talking about violence. I will try to talk concretely about the actions we need in our struggles. If I have to refer to a body of methods or tactics that are usually excluded by nonviolence, I will talk about "illegal," "combative,"

support the exact same tactics and methods that I do. To me, not only is it inconceivable that a movement contain a homogeneity of methods, it is also undesirable. It is nothing but authoritarianism to censor a movement for social change so that everyone else uses the same method as we do. This is why I believe that nonviolence—meaning an attempt to force nonviolent methods across an entire movement[7]—is authoritarian and belongs to the State. For the same reason, I do not want to impose my methods on others. And even if this could be done through the pure force of reason, simply convincing everybody (and it couldn't, for no human group ever thinks with the same mind, and thank the heavens for that), it would be a grave mistake. We can never know whether our analysis and our methods are wrong, except sometimes with hindsight. Our movements are stronger when they employ diverse methods and analyses and these different positions criticize one another.

Those of us who have tried to create a more conflictive struggle have often been wrong, and sometimes we have been aided by the criticism of those who are more drawn to healing and reconciliation than to conflict. But that kind of mutual criticism and support is only possible if those who today separate themselves as pacifists decide unequivocally to stand always with those who struggle, and always against the powers that oppress.

My aim with this book is not to convert or delegitimize every person who prefers nonviolence. Within a struggle that uses a diversity of tactics, there is room for those who prefer peaceful methods as long as they do not try to write the rules for the entire

[7] This is by no means a straw man: nonviolence is predominantly expressed not as the idea that sometimes we should use peaceful tactics but the idea that a movement must be nonviolent in its entirety. "A 99% commitment to nonviolence is not enough," as some have said. The concept in its essence presupposes a division of all actions on the basis of the category of "violence," a belief that the nonviolent actions are superior and that violent actions, even in small quantity, will corrupt or pollute the movement as a whole. To be a proponent of nonviolence is not to simply prefer peace, but to sign up to the peace police and attempt to determine the course of the whole movement.

movement, as long as they do not collaborate with the police and the other structures of power, and as long as they accept that other people in the struggle are going to use other methods, according to their situation and their preferences. It would also help if they acknowledged the historical failings of nonviolence, but that is only their concern if they wish to develop effective nonviolent methods that must actually be taken seriously, as contrasted with the *hollow, comforta*ble forms of nonviolence that have predominated in the last decades.

And while any struggle not attempting to enforce homogeneity must accept the existence of a diversity of tactics, I do not wish to give anyone the impression that we, collectively, have been doing a good job of building this struggle, or that the diversity of tactics framework is adequate to our needs. We need much stronger social struggles if we are to overcome the State, capitalism, patriarchy—all the forces that oppress and exploit us—to create a world on the basis of mutual aid, solidarity, free association, and a healthy relationship with the earth and one another. To that end, I will conclude by talking about struggles that have revealed promising new directions, and about how we can move past a diversity of tactics so that different methods of struggle can complement one another critically and respectfully.

rent, when street vendors refused to surrender their wares to the cops (who would harass them at the behest of the store owners), and when anarchists carried out sabotage or held unpermitted marches.

One of the advantages of moralizing elite discourses, and of democratic government as well, is that they train the oppressed to adopt the mentality and the language of the oppressor. Over time, people fighting to better their situation came to care about their image in the eyes of the media, which is to say in the eyes of the elite. They wanted to appear respectable. In some cases, they were opportunists who formed political parties and cashed in their popular support at the first opportunity to obtain a seat at the table of power. In other cases, they were people who took these elite discourses seriously, bit down on the bait, and tried to prove that they were not violent or unhygienic. They debated with the hollow hypocrisy of the elite in an attempt to show that they were not monsters deserving repression. If the justification for repression could be removed, wouldn't the repression also disappear? As the Spectacle grew in strength, many people became so detached from the reality in the streets that their own self-image and moral compass were largely crafted by the media.

As soon as social movements began to listen to the media, the elite could determine which forms of resistance were acceptable, and which were unacceptable. Every day of the week, the media—which are owned by the same people who profit off the current state of affairs—are telling us what is violent and what is normal. The category of violence belongs to them. By using the same category as our moral compass, we are allowing those in power to guide our struggle. One justification for clinging to the category of violence is that violence is oppressive, therefore we need to highlight it and avoid it. This would only have a chance of being true if we controlled the definition of violence, rather than the powerful. If we choose other criteria for evaluating our resistance, for example whether or not a tactic or method is liberating, whether

uniting all the elite, especially in Barcelona, where the elite were divided between Spaniards and Catalans, merchants and landed gentry, Catholics and progressives, much of the conversation about how to rule had to take place in the open. But in the face of general strikes, worker rebellions, and a growing anarchist movement, the factory owners, politicians, aristocrats, and church officials could not communicate openly about their need to keep the lower classes down. Doing so in a newspaper would only hasten their loss of control over the hearts and minds of their subjects, and it would also contradict with their own self-image and the philanthropic discourses they used to justify why they got to sit on top of the social pyramid. So they turned to moralistic euphemisms. The elite, as has been the case at most times in history, did not have a single set of interests, but conflicting interests and differing strategies regarding how to maintain and amplify their power. Different sectors of the elite generally had their own newspapers, and these usually held competing discourses. However, when popular movements were particularly strong, such that they presented a threat to the social pyramid, it was crucial for the elites to get over their differences and join their forces to trample down those on the bottom. Therefore, the newspapers began to deploy some of the key euphemisms they were already circulating to signal a moral panic, an ungodly threat to the ruling order that required the whole ruling class to unite.

Aside from uncleanliness or hygiene, the principal term used to unleash a moral panic and mobilize elite action was "violence." Among the elite, then as now, in Barcelona as in the English-speaking world, "violence" was a euphemism for a threat to the ruling order and its illusion of social peace, with which the class struggle, the brutality of patriarchy, and the murderousness of colonialism are hidden. The newspapers did not talk about violence when cops killed strikers, when landlords evicted families, or when poor people died of hunger. They talked about violence when workers went on strike, when tenants stopped paying

1. Violence Doesn't Exist

Perhaps the most important argument against non-violence is that violence as a concept is ambiguous to the point of being incoherent. It is a concept that is prone to manipulation, and its definition is in the hands of the media and the government, so that those who base their struggle on trying to avoid it will forever be taking cues and following the lead of those in power.

Put simply, violence does not exist. It is not a *thing*. It is a category, a human construct in which we choose to place a wide array of actions, phenomena, situations, and so forth. "Violence" is whatever the person speaking at the moment decides to describe as violent. Usually, this means things they do not like. As a result, the use of the category "violence" tends towards hypocrisy. If it is done to me, it is violent. If it is done by me or for my benefit, it is justified, acceptable, or even invisible.

In the last eight years, I have organized or participated in dozens of workshops on the topic of nonviolence. Whenever I can, I ask people to define "violence." The curious thing is that no group of people, whether they number five or a hundred, has ever agreed on the definition. And we're not talking about a random sample of the population, but relatively homogeneous groups who participate in social movements, who live in the same town and often know each other, or in a few cases a neighborhood association or study group. Excepting the occasional university class, we're talking about a self-selecting group of people who come out to a talk critical of or in support of nonviolence. And even in that narrow sample, there is no consensus about what violence actually means.

Sometimes I would try teasing it out by asking folks to stand or raise their hand if they thought a specific action or situation was violent. Then I named cases like, "a protestor punching a cop who is trying to arrest someone," "breaking the windows of a bank that evicts people from their houses," "buying and eating factory-farmed meat," "buying and eating factory-farmed soy," "a person killing someone trying to rape them," "carrying a gun in public," "paying your taxes," "driving a car," "the police evicting someone from their house," "making a cop feel good about their job," "a predator killing and eating prey," "a lightning bolt killing someone," "imprisonment" and so on.

After doing this exercise dozens of times, I noticed a few clear patterns. First, as I have already mentioned: there was no agreement. But even more interesting was what happened if I asked people to close their eyes while answering. If they could not see how their peers were responding, there was an even greater divergence. If people had their eyes open, most questions had a clear majority describing the case as "violent" or "not violent." If their eyes were closed, many more cases were divided clearly down the middle (this divergence was even more evident if I asked people to position themselves on a spectrum rather than giving a simple yes or no). In other words, "violence" is not necessarily a category that is reasonably defined, so much as one that is defined by the reactions of our peers. What is considered normal or acceptable is much less likely to be defined as violent, no matter how much harm it may cause.

Something that critics of nonviolence have long said is that nonviolence hides structural violence or the violence of the State, yet it is this kind of violence, and not riots or liberation struggles, that harms far more people around the world. It was no surprise, then, that many people, especially outside the United States,[1] thought

[1] This detail is extremely significant, as it shows that if something is legal and therefore normalized by the State, it is less likely to be considered violent: in

vinced whether "nonviolent" lines up with "good" and "violent" with "bad" as they are intended to. In other words, they still will not have learned anything about the proper methods for struggle. And more importantly, nearly everyone else in the world will still be using another definition.

How was the category of "violence" introduced in our strategic debates? I would argue that it was introduced by the very institution that serves as the gatekeeper to people's perception of violence: the media. It is the media who constantly discipline social movements to adopt these categories and defend themselves from the ever-ready accusation of being "violent." As soon as dissidents try to defend themselves by arguing that they are not violent, they have fallen into the trap, taking up the values of the State and adopting its preferred category.

There are also histories that suggest the media's role in introducing this category in earlier struggles. Even Gandhi, who saw how the liberation struggles before his time were maligned by the powerful, and who went to study at an elite university in England, his country's colonizer, would have been highly sensitive to how rebels and revolutionaries were characterized in the discourses and the media of the ruling class. He certainly would have gotten such a perspective when he voluntarily rallied his fellow Indians in South Africa to support two different British wars, winning a War Medal for his efforts.

Discussing the history of popular movements and elite responses in the city of Barcelona, Chris Ealham reveals the media's use of "moral panics" to unify the city bourgeoisie against the threat of revolution from below.[6] At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the major newspapers were primarily a tool of communication among the bourgeoisie—the class of rulers and owners. Because there was no single effective conspiracy

[6] Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counterrevolution in Barcelona 1898–1937* (San Francisco: AK Press, 2010).

pacifying those who are fighting against power, because the act of rebellion will always appear to be the most violent act in our society. For this reason, many proponents of nonviolence denounce any combative form of rebellion while normalizing and even justifying the repressive response of the State.[4] This is not by any means true of all practitioners of nonviolence, but it is the logical outcome of the contradictions in the idea of nonviolence, and therefore it is the path that many or most practitioners will take.

It is no surprise, then, that one of the largest nonviolent movements of recent years, the "*indignados*" of Spain,[5] declared any illegal actions including blocking streets or even guerrilla gardening—turning the grassy lawn of a public plaza into a garden—to be violent. In contrast, many self-described pacifists I have met have decided that self-defense or even assassinating dictators would not be violent because they were aggressors and such an action would avert a much greater harm. Violence is a very flexible term that people can bend and twist however they want to morally justify or condemn the actions they have already decided are acceptable or unacceptable.

Violence is so vague, so hard to define, it is useless as a strategic category. It would be silly to abolish it as a word, because it can succinctly describe a certain emotional reality. But to use it analytically, to use it as a guiding criterion for our strategies of struggle, is an invitation to confusion.

It can take hours of debating and only sometimes will a group of people agree to a common definition of violence. But they have accomplished nothing, because some of them will still not be con-

[4] *Pacifism as Pathology* documents many examples of this tendency to blame the victims of repression or claim that repression is justified.

[5] Because not all of the 15th of May plaza occupation movement was nonviolent nor unified behind a progressive populism, I use the largely media-assigned label of *indignados* only to refer to those who saw themselves as peaceful citizens indignant with the direction their government was going in. Many other people in the movement believed in revolution and were beyond indignant.

that it was violent for someone to carry a gun in public, whereas hardly anyone considered working as a cop to be a violent act, even though being a cop means, among other things, carrying a gun in public. In other words, the category of violence makes the legal force of the police invisible, whereas it highlights anyone who fights back against this commonplace. This is why we say that nonviolence privileges and protects the violence of the State. This is why the most respected, longstanding pacifist organizations will prohibit people from coming armed to their demonstrations (even armed with things as innocuous as sticks or helmets) but will make no move to disarm the police, whom they often invite to oversee their protests. And this is why the police, in turn, try to urge protesters and protest organizations to be nonviolent, to publish nonviolent codes of conduct, and to expel or help arrest *any "bad protest*er" who doesn't follow the law.[2]

Only people who are involved in radical causes, or who have experienced it first hand, tend to see structural harm as violence. People in a typical college class do not identify paying taxes or buying clothes made in a sweatshop as violent. People who have been

the US, carrying a gun in public is legal, whereas in Europe and South America, generally it is not.

[2] In *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, I document police manuals, FBI memos, military counterinsurgency experts, and studies of the police that show state attempts to convince social movements to be nonviolent, or evaluations that a popular nonviolent movement is less of a threat than a popular armed movement. A much more recent example occurred after the March 29, 2012 general strike in Spain, which led to heavy rioting in Catalunya. The Catalan Interior Minister Felip Puig (in charge of the police and public order) was fried by the media for losing control over the streets. A large part of his comprehensive response, the government's plan of repression, was to pressure organizations that plan protests and strikes to assume responsibility for security and peacekeeping, to criminalize the wearing of masks, to encourage "the citizens" not to stand by the rioters (during the day's events, even those who were not directly participating in the clashes stayed close to the riots, making it impossible for the police to counterattack), and to set up a public snitching website in the hopes that fellow protesters would reveal the identities of rioters who had been caught on camera.

foreclosed, or participants in a group that fights foreclosures, will identify an eviction as violent. Animal rights activists will identify eating meat as violent. Small farmer advocates or rainforest advocates will identify soy as violent. Almost no one will identify driving a car as violent, even though in objective terms it is the item on the list that has caused and will cause the most deaths, without a doubt.

What about natural violence? What about the harm caused by weather, by predators, by lack of predators, by the simple fact so many people still have not come to terms with, which is that everybody dies? How much does the concept of a "right to life" owe to Christian morality, founded in the idea that our lives belong to God and not to us? What is the relationship between this fear of violence and a fear of the naturalness and inevitability of harm and death? Categorically separating harm that is inevitable in nature and harm caused by humans is inextricable from a separation of humans from their environment, both philosophically and materially. How much suffering is caused by this separation?

Does violence mean causing harm? If we participate in a nonvoluntary structure (like the State or the capitalist market) that tortures, kills, or malnourishes millions of people, are we off the hook, just because we would face negative consequences for refusal (to pay taxes, to engage in any market exchange because, let's face it, even if you buy green, all economic activity fuels overall economic activity)?[3] This would make a joke of nonviolence, if those who fight back against structures of oppression are considered worse than those who accept them passively. And if complicity with violent structures is also to be defined as violent, then how much

[3] Which is to say that the company that produces green or worker-friendly products still contributes directly to exploitation and ecocide, because the commodity is simply not an earth-friendly or human-friendly form, and that same company produces other products that are even more blatantly abusive, or if it's one of the few companies that only markets eco- and worker-friendly products, it puts its money in a bank that funds all sorts of other activities.

resistance is required of us so as not to be violent? If we participate in a protest once a year, that after over thirty years has still not succeeded in closing one military school, can we now be considered nonviolent? What if we get arrested for civil disobedience, even if we know that our arrest will probably change nothing?

These questions are impossible to answer. We are all forced to participate in a society that is held together by structural violence, and rewarded for our participation with various privileges, though these privileges are spread unevenly across society. Given that those who use some form of visible, antisocial violence are often the least likely to enjoy the privileges of structural violence, there is no feasible way to determine who is violent and who is not. And if we define passive complicity as support for violence, there is no way to judge which methods of struggle are more or less violent, since a peaceful method may be more complicit with structural violence. Given that we do not yet know for sure which methods will be most effective at finally abolishing the structures that are oppressing us and destroying the planet, no one can make a solid claim to having a truly peaceful method, unless we understand "peaceful" as "non-conflictive" and perhaps also as "at peace with existing structures of violence."

Therefore, nonviolence is not an absence, avoidance, or transformation of violence. That would be impossible to certify. Nonviolence is an attempt to resolve, transform, or suppress those things in our society and in our social movements that appear to its practitioners to be violent. Because violence cannot be understood objectively, nonviolent groups will tend to focus on eliminating or discouraging the forms of violence that are more obvious, and in their reach; the kinds of violence that are not normal, but that go against normality; the kinds of violence that are not invisible, but spectacular. This means nonviolence will privilege the struggle against open war, against dictatorships, against military rule, while downplaying or even cozying up to the less visible violence of democratic government, capitalism, and structural warfare. This also means

their own volunteer peace police to help cops maintain order in the protests. Though many people did not go to work that day, police controlled the streets, and people generally left with a sense of defeat and powerlessness. The pacified strikes are universally recognized to be less significant than the earlier, combative strikes. The riotous general strike of March 29, 2012 created a palpable sense of freedom in the streets, with people smiling, playing amidst the fires, and laughing with strangers; and it sparked a whole new cycle of activity, with an energetic anticapitalist May Day protest and another round of general strikes in October and November. But those pacified strikes, even though they achieved a similar level of participation in terms of work stoppage, failed to inspire many people to throw themselves into organizing after the smaller, radical unions announced they would join the major unions in establishing peace police and working with the police to prevent riots; the mood in the streets was more often one of desperation, fear, or defeat; and the experience did not inspire a new wave of activity in its aftermath, but months of stagnation, directionlessness, and social peace. The government reaction also shows how much less threatening they considered the peaceful strikes. After the March strike, they were on the defensive, trying to place blame and justify their loss of control, using the media to villify the strikers and announcing new repressive measures (some of which were repealed after generating heavy resistance). After the relatively peaceful November strike, the government was much more calm and composed. They did not have to deal with a challenge to their rule, nor reveal their antagonistic relationship with society in such clear terms.

1. The diverse movement which in reality includes the 15M movement, the general strikes, and the various movements against austerity, has probably done more to win space than any other movement in Spain since the end of dictatorship. People have negated the power of the State to demand permits for the use of public space, they have won the

out the many ineffective nonviolent campaigns that never assumed large proportions. But none of the measures they took, ostensibly to correct that bias, could possibly have any effect. Circulating "the data among leading authorities on nonviolent movements to make sure we accounted for failed movements" is useless since there is no objective distinction between major and minor campaigns, and the biggest failures never become major campaigns. Running "multiple tests both across nonviolent and violent cases and within nonviolent cases alone to ensure robustness on all results" is worthless if the study sample is stacked from the start.[3]

Their entire method is superficial to the point of being useless. They are using statistics to obscure complex realities. But even in this flawed endeavor, they have to manipulate the statistics in order to affirm their preconceived conclusions. Most of their paper centers on a detailed explanation of their hypotheses, and pseudo-logical arguments for why their hypotheses must be correct. For example, they cite psychological studies on individual decision-making, with the unspoken assumption that complex social conflicts between institutions and heterogeneous populations will follow the same patterns.[4] They provide no evidence for key arguments like "the public is more likely to support a nonviolent campaign" (p. 13) nor do they interrogate the figure of "the public." They also make convenient use of non sequiturs, as in the following paragraph:

[3] Quotes from Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Resistance" *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Summer 2008). Footnote 41.

[4] The 1965 "Correspondent-Inference Theory" they cite explains how an observer infers the motivations behind an individual's choices. They do not mention the highly individualized scope of the study when they trot it out as proof for a geopolitical argument. Ironically, research around the theory demonstrates that observers often overlook or underestimate the situational, socioeconomic, and institutional factors that may constrain a person's choice.

> Second, when violent insurgents threaten the lives of regime members and security forces, they greatly reduce the possibility of loyalty shifts. Abrahms finds that terrorist groups targeting civilians lose public support compared with groups that limit their targets to the military or police.[footnote removed] Surrendering or defecting to a violent movement […] [p. 13]

All the subsequent arguments in the paragraph, which are rhetorical arguments lacking any documentation or data, refer to the topic sentence of the paragraph. All of them are intended to convince readers that so-called violent movements are less effective at provoking defection or "loyalty shifts" among state forces. The only sentence that makes any reference to evidence is the second one, quoted above. But notice how the study cited actually has nothing to do with the topic sentence, no bearing on the question of defection nor the variable violence/nonviolence (Abrahms' study only addresses violent groups, distinguishing between those that do and do not target civilians).

Elsewhere in the study, the authors ambiguously admit that the statistics do not reveal more defections in the face of nonviolent movements, but they structure the entire article to hide that inconvenience and advance their preconceived arguments.

> Such operational successes occur among violent campaigns occasionally, but nonviolent campaigns are more likely to produce loyalty shifts. Although in the quantitative study these findings are qualified by data constraints, our case studies reveal that three violent campaigns were unable to produce meaningful loyalty shifts among opponent elites, whereas such shifts did occur as a result of nonviolent action in the Philippines and East Timor. [p. 42]

government buildings, and collective resistance against evictions, layoffs, and the privatization of healthcare and education.

The 15M movement (the plaza occupations beginning on the 15th of May) was an attempt by nonviolent activists in Madrid to refocus the growing anticapitalist movement on strictly political demands, primarily the reform of the electoral laws. This attempt was based on a manipulated version of the Egyptian uprising that portrayed it as a nonviolent movement constructed around exclusively political, electoral demands. There was a major debate around nonviolence within this movement (though would-be leaders generally tried to suppress the debate). The mass media, politicians, and police consistently weighed in on the side of nonviolence. After the plaza occupations began in May 2011, what had been at least a partially combative anticapitalist movement suddenly became an overwhelmingly nonviolent democratic movement. But this began to steadily change. The critical participation of labor unions, anarchists, and others, and the struggles against mortgage evictions and hospital privatizations soon replaced naïve demands for electoral reform with far-reaching critiques of capitalism and government. And in Barcelona, the brutal police eviction of Plaça Catalunya and the absolute inability of nonviolent resistance to defend the plaza was a first step in eroding the stranglehold of nonviolence on the movement's strategic discourse. Similar experiences in other cities had the same effect.

Within months, more and more people openly supported a diversity of tactics. Pacifists in the movement tried to criminalize anarchists who assaulted politicians in the blockade of the Catalan parliament in June 2011, but when those anarchists were identified and arrested later that year, thousands of people came out to protest in solidarity with them. By the time of the March 29, 2012 general strike, people were fed up with nonviolence, and hundreds of thousands participated in riots that rocked cities across the country. The labor unions, pressured by the government, took steps to prevent riots in the subsequent general strikes, such as organizing

ever it does not seem to have accomplished as much as the Egyptian revolution to spread new ideas and social critiques.

3. In the beginning, the uprising did not have elite support, though it gradually gained support from some sectors of the domestic elite not included in the ruling government, and an increasing amount of support from Western media and NATO governments.

4. In the midst of a bloody civil war, which has claimed 70,000 lives and counting, it is hard to talk about gains, although the article cited above is not without its sense of optimism.

15M Movement and General Strikes

On the 29th of september 2010, millions of people across Spain participated in a general strike against the first round of austerity measures, protesting, carrying out blockades, sabotaging transportation infrastructure, and in a few cities, rioting, looting, and fighting with police. Anarchist labor federations played an important role in the preparation, as did horizontal neighborhood assemblies. The force of the day's events initiated an intense cycle of other protests and strikes, with a largely anticapitalist character. Further general strikes were held the 27th of January 2011, and in 2012 on the 29th of March, the 31st of October, and the 14th of November. Concurrently, there was heavy rioting on May Day, 2011, and two weeks later, on May 15, plaza occupations directly inspired by the uprising in Egypt spread to hundreds of cities and towns across the country, winning the participation of millions of people. In the plaza occupations, people organized protests and matters of daily survival in open assemblies. The movement also led to the expansion of neighborhood assemblies, the occupation of empty buildings by people who had lost their homes to foreclosures, the occupation of hospitals, the blockade of highways and

To put it more plainly, these "data constraints" are a lack of data supporting their argument, or "insignificant effects" as they admit on page 20. The three case studies they call in to save the day are three examples cherry-picked to prove the point they are trying to make. We can do better: the Vietnam War, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, partisan resistance during World War ii in Yugoslavia and in Italy, and the anarchist resistance in Ukraine during the Russian Civil War. Five examples of armed movements provoking major defections among the armies sent to crush them, all of them more definitive and on a higher scale than the "loyalty shifts" provoked in the Philippines and East Timor.

In one paragraph summing up her research, Chenoweth acknowledges that the impact of a "violent wing" on the success rates of a movement is "not statistically significant" and then in the next paragraph say that "the most troubling possibility is that the armed wing will reduce the movement's chances of success." Later, she commits the most basic error in statistics, confusing correlation with causation, to say that "an *armed wing can reduce popular participation* [her emphasis]" even though her own data do not support this assertion.[5]

It is significant that mention of this study made the rounds on a number of nonviolent websites. From what I saw, the nonviolence advocates who used the statistics to prove the superiority of their method never linked directly to the study. They probably never even read it.

In order to evaluate the successes and failures of the major uprisings of the last twenty-odd years since the end of the Cold War, we need a fair and sensible set of criteria. We can set aside the superficial question of "who won?," given that nobody has won, except for those who continue to rule us.

[5] Erica Chenoweth, writing about a follow-up analysis of the same data set (with Kurt Schock), in "Armed Wing in Syria: To What Effect?" *Rational Insurgent*. 10 October 2011. https://rationalinsurgent.wordpress.com/2011/10/10/armed-wing-in-syria-to-what-effect/

We should also avoid the criterion of whether or not a movement leads to increased repression. I can remember countless arguments in which supporters of nonviolence have tried to paint a struggle as a failure on the grounds that it was heavily repressed. The semi-effective nonviolent movements of the past all provoked an increase in government repression whenever they could encourage widespread disobedience. The belief of modern pacifists, which was not shared by King or Gandhi, that peaceful struggle can avoid brutal consequences at the hands of police and military, has been effectively used as a selling point to flood the ranks of nonviolent movements with opportunists, weekenders, fair-weather friends, cowards, careerists, and naïve citizens who think that changing the world can be easy and hassle-free.

Repression is inevitable in any struggle against authority. It is important to be able to survive this repression, but in the worst case, a struggle that is completely crushed by repression is still more effective—because it can inspire us today—than a struggle that allows itself to be recuperated for fear of repression, as happens with many nonviolent movements. Therefore, because the long-term effects of repression still remain to be seen, we will not include this as a criterion, but we will note if a particular rebellion was successfully defeated by repression or recuperation, so that readers will notice a pattern if the combative movements truly are unable to cope with repression, as their critics claim, or if nonviolent movements are frequently recuperated, as we claim.

One criterion of the utmost importance is whether a movement succeeds in seizing space in which new relations can be put in practice. New relations mean: do people share communally and enjoy direct access to their means of survival, or is the social wealth alienated; are people able to organize their own lives, activity, and surroundings, or is decision-making authority monopolized by government structures; do women, trans, and queer people enjoy means of self-defense and self-determination, or are they fully exposed to the violence of patriarchy; do people of color and

activist who began handing flowers to soldiers, demonstrating the unsustainability of that tactic (as I stated in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, a flower does not in any way impede the ability of the gun to fire). People began to arm themselves, and gradually the uprising turned into a civil war. According to Lina Sinjab, writing for the bbc:

But amid the violence, there is a great sense of hope. Among civilians, there is an unprecedented sense of solidarity. People are sharing homes, clothes and food —notably with the hundreds of thousands displaced by the fighting. The sense of freedom is palpable, with opposition voices speaking out. More than 30 new online publications are promoting democracy, despite the crackdown. In some opposition-controlled areas, civilians and rebels are establishing local councils to get the services working. And as people start to look past the civil war, some are protesting against rebel groups that have committed abuses or which, like the Nusra Front, are seeking to Islamise society. Syria has risen against tyranny and will never be the same again.[12]

1. Having liberated a large part of the country, there is no doubt that the Syrian rebels have seized space: whether they are putting new social relations into practice is another question, though it seems that at the very least there are segments of the rebel movement that are solidaristic and anti-authoritarian.

2. Along with the other Arab revolts of 2011, the Syrian uprising has inspired other people to fight for their freedom, how-

[12] Lina Sinjab, "Syria Conflict: from Peaceful Protest to Civil War," *BBC*, http://www.bbc. co.uk/news/world-middle-east-21797661 (3/5/2013). One has to take the article with a great deal of skepticism, as the *BBC* along with other Western media clearly favor regime change in Syria. However, as of March 2013 the rebellion is happening largely autonomously of NATO intervention. As for the accuracy of the description cited above, the historical record is abundantly clear about the increase in solidarity in situations of disaster as in uprisings.

it seems that whatever social content the revolution might have contained was largely eroded by military concerns and realpolitik. Hopefully I am wrong, but it seems the war had an exclusively military character. This is not an intrinsic problem of combative revolutionary movements, as the nonviolent Color Revolutions were even more devoid of social content, but a problem of movements that focus primarily on the conquest of political power, whether peaceful or armed, democratic or military. Revolutionary movements that actually wish to end oppressive social relations must never allow questions of political power or military victory to take precedence. This does not mean that revolutionary movements cannot take up arms, only that a revolutionary movement, whatever tools or weapons it finds itself obliged to use, must always focus on creating emancipatory social relations rather than seizing political power. In any case, the example of the Libyan Civil War is another reminder that when the State decides to unleash its full military force, movements cannot maintain any pretense of nonviolence. They must either fight back, or disappear.

Due to a lack of information and the way the conflict in Libya became a proxy war between external powers, it would be especially reductionist to apply criteria measuring its effectiveness as a struggle for liberation.

The Syrian Civil War

In march 2011, an uprising began in Syria after police arrested schoolchildren painting revolutionary slogans on a wall in the city of Deraa. A relatively small group of people took to the streets in peaceful protest, and soldiers opened fire with live ammunition. The next day people returned to the streets, and again soldiers tried to crush the protests. The revolution spread from there. Peaceful methods proved incapable of holding the streets against bullets and tanks. Government forces even murdered Ghaith Matar, the

indigenous people have means of self-defense and autonomy, or are they at the mercy of colonial structures like the market and the police? While the forms are different, the social relations are fundamentally the same between one capitalist state and another, whereas there is a marked difference in the social relations in a stateless commune or an independent indigenous territory. Even though autonomous space will usually be reconquered by the State, we take the experiences of self-organization away with us. The more of these experiences we win, the more powerful our struggles become, the greater our capacity for selforganization on a higher level, and the more people there are who know that obedience to the existing system is not the only option. This suggests a second criterion: to what extent a movement spreads awareness of its ideas. And this, in turn, needs to be evaluated in terms of whether those ideas are spread as passive information, or whether they are communicated as ideas worth fighting for (or in the case of the nonviolent, taking action and making sacrifices for).

Because of the importance of recuperation in defeating social movements, one important criterion is whether a movement has elite support. If a part of the elite supports a movement, it is much more likely that the movement appears to achieve a victory, when in fact the victory is insubstantial and allows the elite to improve their own situation. This criterion can also show if the pacifists are right when they say the government wants us to be violent, or if the opposite is true, that the elite want us to be nonviolent.

Finally, did a movement achieve any concrete gains that improve people's lives, restore their dignity, or demonstrate that struggle is worth it and that the government is not omnipotent? From this criterion, we must exclude strictly formalistic gains, like pro-democracy movements that achieve free and fair elections, because this is a redundant victory that can only matter to those who have allowed themselves to believe that democratic government is somehow analogous to freedom or a better life.

When the Soviet Bloc countries transitioned from dictatorship to democracy, citizens' freedom of action did not at all increase, whereas their quality of life suffered dramatically. In other words, the achievement of democracy is solely a question of how power organizes itself, and not one that necessarily impacts how normal people live. If, however, successful resistance to a dictatorship means that people can take to the streets without fear of being arrested and tortured, then we can clearly count this as a concrete gain. Hopefully, the critical difference is obvious.[6] In sum, the four basic criteria are:

1. whether a movement seized space for new social relations;
2. whether it spread an awareness of new ideas (and secondarily if this awareness was passive or whether it inspired others to fight);
3. whether it had elite support;
4. whether it achieved any concrete gains in improving people's lives.

Because all of us are still at the mercy of an oppressive system, our focus must be on the strengthening of our struggles for freedom, dignity, and well-being. The above criteria measure the health of our struggles, and whether different methods avail us of what we need to have any chance of creating a new world.

[6] Those who are hopelessly attached to the concept of democracy can consider it in these terms. Voting for one's rulers, as opposed to legitimizing them through some other ritual ordained by law, is clearly a change, but it is not a change that has any bearing on a struggle for freedom, just as a blue t-shirt is obviously different from a red t-shirt, but a person is not more free wearing one t-shirt or the other. As long as one has rulers (and bosses, and creditors, and owners, and bureaucrats), one is not free. This is the difference between changing the process by which those rulers are legitimized, and wrestling some sphere of your life away from their control. Or, on a less liberatory, more slippery slope, forcing them to concede something that lessens their profits and decreases the economic pressure they can leverage against you.

stayed in the street to oppose the authoritarianism of the new Islamic government. Directly as a result of their participation in the revolution, the position of women in society has also begun to change.

2. Even more than the Tunisian revolution, the uprising in Egypt spread critiques of capitalism, as well as specifically anarchist ideas, throughout neighboring Arabic countries, inspiring further uprisings. The Tahrir Square occupation was also the direct influence for the plaza occupation movement in Spain.
3. As in Tunisia, the movement lacked elite support in the beginning, but later saw international media and governments, as well as domestic political parties, jump on the bandwagon to try to steer the movement in reformist and nonviolent directions.
4. People empowered themselves, negated the ability of the government to intimidate them, opened up new possibilities for struggle, and began to change the position of women, workers, and Muslims within Egyptian society.

The Libyan Civil War

Though the 2011 revolution in Libya started out as a spontaneous uprising, because it ended in large part due to foreign military intervention it is difficult to analyze as a social struggle. The militarization of the conflict and a lack of direct communication between the participants and social rebels in Europe or North America (which was not the case with Tunisia or Egypt, where we were in direct contact with participants as the uprisings unfolded) makes it very hard for me, from my vantage point, to know about the social content of the uprising. From what I have been able to ascertain,

police violence and humiliation, but as long as the cops remember the uprising and remain afraid of the people, they will not act as insultingly as they had before.

The Egyptian Revolution of 2011

Sparked by the tunisian revolution, the Egyptian revolution began on January 25, 2011, and as in Tunisia, it continued after the February 11 ouster of President Mubarak. Also like the Tunisian revolution, the movement in Egypt addressed many economic and social issues that were censored by the international media, which wished to downplay the largely anticapitalist nature of the uprising. And in another similarity, proponents of nonviolence (including anyone from Gene Sharp to the US government) blatantly falsified the reality of the struggle to portray it as a nonviolent movement.

Millions of people across Egypt participated in strikes, blockades, peaceful protests, riots, attacks on police, self-defense against government paramilitaries, handing out flyers, running blogs, and organizing the occupations of central plazas. They were primarily influenced by the (violent) struggles in Tunisia and Palestine, though white nonviolence guru Gene Sharp shamelessly tried to take credit. Protesters in Egypt burned down more than 90 police stations, they sent the police running time and again, they defended themselves from government thugs with clubs and rocks, and in Tahrir Square young volunteers went around taking up collections to buy gasoline for the molotov cocktails that were a staple of the movement.

1. As a result of their direct experiences in the assemblies and maintenance of the Tahrir Square occupation, growing parts of the revolution stopped talking about elections and started talking about self-organization. Many of the same people have seen the revolution as the beginning of a movement against capitalism and against patriarchy, and they have

The Oka Crisis

In 1990, mohawk warriors took up arms to prevent a development project on their lands. According to *Warrior Publications*:

> The Oka Crisis of 1990 involved the Mohawk territories of Kanehsatake/Oka & Kahnawake, both located near Montreal, Quebec. The standoff began with an armed police assault on a blockade at Kanehsatake on July 11, 1990, which saw one police officer shot dead in a brief exchange of gunfire. Following this, 2,000 police were mobilized, later replaced by 4,500 soldiers with tanks & apcs, along with naval & air support… The armed warriors at both Kanehsatake & Kahnawake inspired widespread support & solidarity from Indigenous people throughout the country. Protests, occupations, blockades, & sabotage actions were carried out, an indication of the great potential for rebellion amongst Indigenous peoples.
>
> This manifestation of unity & solidarity served to limit the use of lethal force by the government in ending the standoff. Overall, Oka had a profound effect on Indigenous peoples and was the single most important factor in re-inspiring our warrior spirit. The 77-day standoff also served as an example of Indigenous sovereignty, and the necessity of armed force to defend territory & people against violent aggression by external forces.[7]

The Oka Crisis was an armed conflict.

1. It succeeded in seizing space.

[7] Warrior Publications, the source of this quote, "is published in occupied Coast Salish Territory on the Northwest Coast of 'british columbia.' Its purpose is to promote warrior culture, fighting spirit, and resistance movements." warrior-publications.wordpress.com.

2. It spread ideas of indigenous sovereignty and inspired many others in North America to fight back.

3. It did not have elite support.

4. The golf course expansion on their lands was defeated, and the conflict came to a dignified conclusion for the Mohawk.

The Zapatistas

In 1994, the zapatistas, an indigenous army based in Chiapas, Mexico, rose up against the North American Free Trade Agreement and neoliberalism in general. They are an armed movement, though they have also carried out a large number of peaceful actions. In other words, they have employed a diversity of tactics. Although critiques exist of hierarchical organization, nationalism, and other problems among the Zapatistas, for the time being they seem to have distinguished themselves considerably from other guerrilla movements that proved to be authoritarian.

1. The Zapatistas have seized space for new relations, liberating a number of villages, and holding assemblies and *encuentros* for over a decade.

2. The Zapatistas did more than most any other group in the '90s in spreading critical awareness of neoliberalism, and inspiring people to take action.

3. The Zapatistas do not have any significant elite support in Mexico. They do receive support from academics and far-left political parties, but in recent communiqués they seem to have rejected this support for its paternalism or authoritarianism.

4. Although blockades and punitive actions by the Mexican government have made life difficult for Zapatistas, they

of financial institutions and investors' magazines bemoaning the revolution's effects on Tunisia's "competitivity" and "labor flexibility"—shorthand for the vulnerability of workers visà-vis bosses.

2. Although the Western media tried hard to portray the North African uprisings as nonviolent and solely democratic in character, in Arab-speaking countries the revolution sparked an exponential expansion in the critiques of capitalism and government, and it is self-evident that the revolution inspired others to also take action.

3. Initially, the Tunisian revolution did not have elite support. Its primary protagonists were the poor and marginalized. Little by little, trade unions began to take part, and then professional workers. Because the government-controlled media opposed it and tried to silence it, rebels had to rely on the forms of media they could organize. Internationally, elite support began once the revolution was undeniable, but this was a manipulative and disconnected form of support that helped isolate Ben Ali in the hopes of containing the spread of the movement against him. International support was designed to pressure Tunisians into adopting a peaceful and solely political form of struggle. Towards the very end, when the revolution's triumph was already assured, the same police who had been killing rebels tried to join them, in typical rat-like fashion.

4. The Tunisian revolution opened a new range of possibilities for people to struggle for a better life: protests, free expression, blockades, strikes, the ability to face down the police. Because so far their main achievement has been democratic government, the economic precarity that constituted a major motivation for the revolution has not been addressed. Democratic government is also unable to address the problem of

Tunisian Revolution

The tunisian revolution was the first revolution of the so-called Arab Spring, sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010. Bouazizi, a vegetable vendor, had been abused and robbed by a cop, deprived of his sole source of income. In response, he went to the police station and set himself on fire. His death sparked small protests, which police tried to quash with tear gas. A couple other destitute protesters killed themselves, and police bullets killed a few more. Day after day, small groups of protesters returned to the streets, fed up with police humiliations and brutality, poverty, and lack of free speech. Trade unions and students began to get involved. On January 3, when a police tear gas canister landed in a mosque, protesters burned tires and attacked the offices of the ruling party. From that point on, the uprising exploded (which once again, to beat a horse that should have died long ago, disproves the pacifist cliché that "violence alienates people," and shows how rioting and fighting back against authority galvanizes social struggles and wins support from those who do not see the system as their friend). Protests, strikes, and riots spread across Tunisia. Eleven days later, President Ben Ali, in power since 1987, had to flee the country. Protesters continued to hold the streets in defiance of a military curfew, until the ruling party crumbled entirely. 338 people had died, mostly killed by cops.

1. It does not seem that self-organized spaces played a major role in Tunisia as they did subsequently in Egypt. However, the power relations between the people and the government have changed dramatically. People have reconquered their ability to protest and to spread critical ideas. Labor struggles have also grown in strength and number, as people now regularly carry out blockades and protests to press home their demands against employers. There have been no shortage

have been able to protect themselves from paramilitaries, self-organize to meet basic needs, and by many indications reclaim their dignity.

The Pro-Democracy Movement in Indonesia

In May 1998, thousands of people in Indonesia protested and rioted against the Suharto regime and economic conditions. Soldiers cracked down, and more than a thousand people were killed. The military negotiated with a protest leader to cancel a major rally. When the pro-democracy political groups demonstrated they had control over the movement by successfully canceling the rally, Suharto stepped down. In sum, the movement was not peaceful, but its leadership tended towards nonviolence.

1. The movement seized the streets, and student protesters held assemblies in the universities. However, much of the rioting had an internecine character, including attacks on women and ethnic minorities.

2. Although the movement succeeded in ousting Suharto, it was not linked to any social critiques that spread beyond Indonesia.

3. Suharto stepped down after receiving a call from the US Secretary of State, and pro-democracy groups received government support in pushing for a democratic transition. It was also alleged that elements of the military redirected crowd violence away from government buildings and against ethnic minorities. In sum, pro-democracy elements of the movement did have elite support.

4. The movement did succeed in getting rid of a particularly brutal dictatorship. However it did not succeed in chang-

ing the underlying economic conditions that was the main grievance of many participants.

The Second Intifada

In september 2000, palestinians rose up against the Israeli occupation and apartheid system, immediately in response to a visit by then Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon (the highest official responsible for the Sabra and Shatila massacres of 1982) to the site of the al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest place in Islam, annexed by Israel in 1980. In the first five days of fighting, Israeli security forces killed 47 Palestinians, while Palestinian rioters killed five Israelis. The uprising, or intifada, spread across the country and lasted some five years. Palestinians used mass protests, general strikes, slingshots, suicide bombings, and homemade rockets, while the Israelis tried to crush the uprising with tanks, infantry, helicopter gunships, snipers, missiles, starvation, and mass imprisonment. Over 3,000 Palestinians and around 1,000 Israelis lost their lives. The intifada ended in an impasse.

Because of the nature of the conflict, it is extremely hard to evaluate the results of the intifada in liberatory terms. Most of the losses suffered by the Palestinians, both to their quality of life and in terms of the degree of oppression and dispossession they suffer, can only be attributed to the viciousness of Israeli repression. Some proponents of nonviolence would blame the repressive conditions on the violence of the Palestinian struggle but this hides the fact that the idea of Zionism has always been predicated on the obliteration of whatever people happened to already be living in the "promised land," and that in moments when Palestinian resistance has been relatively peaceful, the Israeli government has only been more aggressive in stealing Palestinian lands. I would argue that thanks only to combative Palestinian resistance and international solidarity, is there still a Palestinian people left to speak of. But be-

tual majority created by the media, ever in favor of people at the bottom of the social pyramid staying peaceful, it would be hard to say that the property damage, occupations, and fighting with police were not a part of the collective will of the student movement. As always, the first to break out of the legally sanctioned forms of protest were a minority and their actions generated great controversy, but this minority quickly grew and had a dynamic effect on the movement.

While nonviolence advocates were quick as always to claim that violent protest was the domain of young, white males (often accompanied by the adjectives "spoiled" or "middle-class"), the Daily Mail expressed its surprise (on November 25, 2010) that many of the most aggressive rioters "leading the charge" were young women.

1. The student movement was focused exclusively on presenting demands against austerity measures, rather than the self-organization of education, the seizing of space, or the practice of new social relations.

2. In general, the student movement did not communicate any social critiques beyond their opposition to the austerity measures. However, after the riots of November 10, a debate opened up within the movement about acceptable tactics, with many people arguing in favor of occupations. Subsequently, occupations of universities and government buildings occurred at other marches and in other cities.

3. The nonviolent wing of the student movement enjoyed largely symbolic elite support, although the government across the spectrum was in favor of some form of austerity measures.

4. Although the austerity measures were passed in England, the Welsh Assembly announced in response to the protests that it would not allow tuition hikes.

UK Student Movement

In the autumn of 2010, tens of thousands of students in the UK began to protest a new law that would slash funding for higher education and raise university tuition caps to more than double the current amount. The major protests of the movement, held in November, were jointly organized by the National Union of Students and the University and College Union, which called for nonviolence. In the beginning, most students were peaceful, carrying out sit-ins or simple protests. Other students committed property damage, fought with police, and occupied government buildings. Far from a "small minority," several thousand protesters pushed past police during the November 10 march, surrounded and occupied the Conservative Party campaign headquarters, smashing windows, lighting fires, spraypainting, throwing objects at police, and chanting "Greece! France! Now here too!"

In its attempt to control the protests, London police brutalized peaceful and illegal protesters alike. The leaders of the nus and the ucu, along with the mass media, politicians, and spokespersons for the police, all spoke up in favor of nonviolence, condemned the acts of property damage, and attempted to blame it all on an outside minority. However, despite extra police preparation, this troika of government, media, and would-be protest leaders was not able to enforce nonviolence at later protests, as rioting, attacks on police, vandalism, and property destruction occurred with increasing frequency. When the government approved the proposed austerity measures on December 9, student protesters engaged in another wave of rioting, smashing out the windows of Her Majesty's Treasury, trying to break through police kettles, and lightly attacking the motorcade of Prince Charles and Duchess Camilla.

The popularity of student union leaders suffered dramatically as a result of their collaboration with police and denunciation of the rioters. At one point, students booed and rushed the stage to interrupt a speech by nus president Liam Byrne. Outside of the vir-

cause we are dealing with historical hypotheticals, this argument cannot be proven.

It is not without meaning, though, that the intifada was a popular and spontaneous struggle that had the overwhelming support of Palestinians. People who live in other situations and are not fighting for their own survival—both individual and collective—cannot make the argument without a great deal of arrogance and paternalism about whether or not the struggle was worth it. As outsiders, if we respect their cause the best thing we can do is respect the choices they make for how to struggle.

From a distance, I cannot venture to say whether the struggle opened up more liberatory spaces than the reaction closed down. We can state with certainty that a greater part of the global elite opposed the intifada, though it did have the support of a few governments such as Iran, and that domestically, the much more powerful Israeli elite uniformly opposed the uprising while one wing of the Palestinian elite (Fatah) tried to moderate the uprising and the other wing (Hamas) supported it. As for the spreading of ideas, the Second Intifada is probably directly responsible for bringing the plight of the Palestinians back to the attention of people around the world, generalizing critiques of Israeli apartheid, and spreading theories and debates about neocolonialism, statehood, urban combat and social control.

It would be extremely difficult to talk about concrete gains in such a bloody struggle, but a few things can be pointed out with clarity. Israel was unable to decisively crush the uprising, despite enjoying what may be the most competent military/security apparatus in the world, in terms of being able to project force on a domestic and localized level. Not only that, it proved unable to guarantee the security of its privileged citizens, to rescue hostages, or to protect its own economy. According to the Israeli Chamber of Commerce, in 2002 the intifada caused as much as $45 billion in damage, mostly in tourism losses. This constitutes a whopping one-third of the total gdp.

Because the Palestinian resistance raised the costs of occupation, the Israeli government cannot avoid the consequences. The costly impasse in the Second Intifada cannot be separated from Israel's subsequent failures in its 2006 invasion of Lebanon and its 2009 invasion of Gaza, nor from its decision not to invade Gaza in 2012, nor from its budget crisis in 2013.

In the near invasion of Gaza in 2012, many media analysts declared the conflict a victory for Hamas, the armed Palestinian group that was able to stare down the Israeli military. One mainstream journalist, Chris Hayes, went further to say that the conflict was a victory for violent tactics. In his analysis, Hamas had policy victories to show for their use of rocket attacks. Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, who for years have been counseling non-militant, non-conflictive forms of resistance, along with the nonviolent protesters trying to stop the construction of the Apartheid Wall, have nothing to show. Their nonviolence has failed. Hayes goes on to advise US policy makers to reward nonviolent action so that the violent currents of the Palestinian resistance do not continue winning support. In Hayes' analysis, Palestinians are still the terrorists, the ones who have to prove they are not violent, while Israel is let off the hook. Hayes' advocacy for nonviolent Palestinian resistance is clearly predicated on a view that privileges Israeli power and that sees violent action as the greater threat to existing hierarchies. Because Hayes is not an ideologue of nonviolence, he can be honest about its total ineffectiveness. What he argues for is the modification of the current political system to create the *illusion* that nonviolence is effective, a philosophy of power that rewards nonviolent action and encourages a practice of dialogue in which the needs of those in power will always be honored first and foremost, but a greater number of well placed crumbs are allowed to fall to the floor, into the hands of those at the bottom of the social pyramid who protest in the ways

deal with high prices, low wages, short-term, precarious employment, and exotification in their own homes for the amusement of foreign vacationers.

Because unemployment already topped 50%, the strikers wisely chose to complement their attempted economic shutdown with more forceful tactics. After four weeks of failed negotiation, islanders began rioting, burning cars and businesses, throwing rocks and eventually opening fire on the police.

After just three days, the French authorities came back to the negotiating table with a much better offer: raising the lowest salaries by a whopping 200 euros a month, and acceding to all of the strikers' top 20 demands. President Sarkozy, a hardliner and law-and-order politician through and through, took on an apologetic tone with rioters and promised to review French policy in all its overseas possessions.

1. Although self-organization and collectivization were not primary components of the uprising, in the course of the protests, island residents questioned and directly challenged the dominance of the white elite, and they forced the colonizing country to humble itself at the negotiating table.

2. The strike in Guadaloupe and Martinique inspired solidarity strikes in other French colonies across the world, from Réunion (in the Indian Ocean) to French Guiana.

3. The strikes and the riots were opposed both by the island elite and the French mainland elite.

4. As stated, the actions achieved strikers' demands and changed the racial and class power balance on the islands. In just a matter of days, rioting got the goods.

ment, the Malaysian government has softened its crackdown on the movement and allowed rallies without carrying out arrests.[11]

1. As a formalistic democracy movement, the Bersih rallies constitute no change in the social relations in Malaysia.

2. The Bersih rallies are not connected to any social critique or attempt to achieve a direct change in society, only a different set of representatives. They have not spread new ideas.

3. The rallies are supported and organized by media organizations, ngos, political parties, religious organizations, and a section of the owning class. Among these, the media organizations and ngos consistently try to discipline it as an exclusively nonviolent movement, while some of the religious organizations are ambiguous in this respect.

4. As a purely democratic movement, it is intentionally substituting questions of representation for questions of quality of life, and has not made any concrete gains.

Guadeloupe General Strike

In January 2009, a general strike broke out in the French colonies on the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The strikes were triggered by poor living conditions, the high cost of living, and low wages, though racial tensions and anticolonial sentiments were also major elements, as the population of these

French colonies, reserved as vacation resorts for rich white tourists, are primarily black descendants of African slaves. Due to forced economic dependence on tourism, island residents had to

[11] This exact causation is claimed by one of those media outlets, *Free Malaysia Today*, "An Uprising for a Better Malaysia," http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/ opinion/2013/01/15/an-uprising-for-a-better-malaysia/ (January 15, 2013).

the powerful dictate they should protest.[8] The lesson is clear: nonviolence is ineffective, which is why those in power want us to use it.

Although applying such straightforward criteria to such a complex situation is necessarily reductionist, we can assert in broad strokes that:

1. The intifada seized and defended spaces.

2. It globally spread a critique of Israeli apartheid, militarization, and urbanization, therefore linking to global histories of occupation and resistance; it inspired solidarity movements and was also a major inspiration for the later revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere.

3. The intifada received support from the Palestinian elite as well as minority sectors of a global elite, although this support was largely directed towards the brokering of a peace settlement.

[8] Chris Hayes, *MSNBC*, 25 November, 2012. Hayes does try to make an argument for the inherent superiority of nonviolence, using a typically fear-based middle-class reasoning. With a shameless logical substitution that only a professional journalist could get away with, he attributes the Palestinians of the West Bank with nonviolent methods (if journalists based their authority on factual credibility, he would have lost it at this point, as Palestinian resistance on the West Bank is far from nonviolent) and the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip with violent methods. From there, he goes on to say that the quality of life is better in the West Bank than in Gaza, *ipso facto* people are more likely to be able to achieve a middle-class standard of life (he leaves this part of the argument implicit) using nonviolence. Here he has confused cause and effect. The Gaza Strip is basically the world's largest open air concentration camp. Residents have few if any opportunities for nonviolent action or nonparticipation. If the inhabitants of Gaza are known for more combative methods, it is because nonviolence is unthinkable in a concentration camp. Meanwhile, whatever quality of life can be claimed by Palestinians on the West Bank, they have defended over the years using a diversity of tactics.

4. The intifada established a limiting factor in Israeli military actions over the next several years.

The Black Spring in Kabylie

Kabylie, a Berber territory occupied by the state of Algeria, was the site of a major uprising in 2001. The police murder of Guermah Massinissa, a Kabyle youth, provoked months of intense rioting that police and military were unable to suppress. In fact, rioting Berbers pushed government forces out of their territory, which remained largely autonomous years later. Around 100 youth were killed while fighting with government forces, and 5,000 injured.

1. In the space of the uprising, people brought back the Arouch, a traditional assembly-based form of direct, communal self-organization, and they also reversed much of the erosion of Berber culture by the Algerian government.

2. The initial riots, conducted by a small number of people, quickly spread until hundreds of thousands of people were participating, including tens of thousands of Berbers in Algiers. The uprising brought Berber demands for autonomy in Kabylie to the world's attention, and their practice of communal assemblies even influenced anarchists in Europe and elsewhere.

3. The uprising did not have elite support, not even within Kabylie. In fact, the uprising permanently changed the politics of the Kabylie liberation movement, leading to the grassroots creation of the Arouch movement and completely undermining the existing Kabyle political parties.

4. The uprising won a large measure of autonomy for Kabylie, led to the withdrawal of the gendarmerie, and to the official recognition of Tamazight, the Berber language.

encouraging rightwing, fascist ideologies, which over the years began to weaken the social struggles.

4. The insurrection made it clear to the police that they could not get away with murder (at least, not without doing a better job of covering it up); and made it clear to everyone that the police could be defeated, notwithstanding the insistence of pacifists that we cannot hope to overcome the armed might of the State. The insurrection also saw a flourishing of neighborhood assemblies, social centers, community gardens, arsons that destroyed debt and tax records, and organized looting that put expensive foodstuffs at the free disposal of people without a lot of money. In short, in the months during and after the insurrection, people (not including cops, politicians, and the wealthy) were looking a lot happier than normal.

Bersih Rallies

The Bersih rallies were a series of democracy protests in Malaysia, occurring in 2007, 2009, and 2012. The demands of the movement are purely formalistic, all related to electoral reform and motivated by the desire to see an end to the decades-long rule of the Barisian Nasional political coalition. The first two rallies,

numbering in the tens of thousands, were exclusively peaceful, whereas the so-called Bersih 3.0 rally was preceded by a *fatwa*, a call for revolt, issued by one of the Muslim organizations participating. This rally was much larger, drawing hundreds of thousands of participants and including some rioting, self-defense against police, and the injury of some 20 cops (providing another example that belies the claim that violent movements will scare away supporters). As of 2013, because of continued media support for the move-

1. The momentum created by the insurrection led directly to the occupation of numerous abandoned buildings, government buildings, and vacant lots for the creation of social centers, neighborhood assemblies, community gardens, and assemblies of artists, critical journalists, medical workers, and so forth. It is important to note that the first Athens neighborhood assembly was created in the midst of a prior struggle in which direct action, confrontation with the police, and sabotage played a decisive role.

2. The insurrection in Greece generated a powerful new cycle of anarchist activity in countries around the world, it disseminated the idea of anarchism and heavily influenced theories of insurrection, renewed debates about clandestinity and discrete armed groups, and also spread concepts that would be replicated elsewhere as specific components of a revolutionary struggle, such as public or temporal occupations, base unions, and the attack. The insurrection would even inspire proponents of nonviolence such as Chris Hedges, who later would run back to the side of law and order as soon as windows started shattering closer to home (see Chapter 8).

3. The insurrection enjoyed zero elite support. The most leftwing parties tried to co-opt and pacify it, and were rebuffed. The police tried to suppress it, and were set on fire, trounced, and sent running. The military tried to threaten it, and its own soldiers circulated a letter saying they would hand their arms to the insurgents. The academics tried to explain it away, and were ignored. The media slandered it, and the insurgents covered the walls with their own words. The media, however, were the most effective of all the institutions of control. After a month, they succeeded in turning a large part of the participants back into helpless spectators, and then they began a major campaign of openly

The *Corralito* in Argentina

In December 2001, the Argentine government froze all bank accounts and floated its currency in response to a mounting debt crisis. As a result, many people lost their savings while private businesses were able to decrease their debts and buy up suddenly cheap properties. A massive social uprising followed on the heels of the *corralito*, forcing out one government after another in a few short weeks. Many participants have noted that the rioting, in which tens of thousands of people took to the streets, smashed banks, looted supermarkets, and fought with the police, finally shattered the terror that the military dictatorship of 1976–1983, which murdered around 30,000 dissidents, had left in its wake: only by rising up were people able to conquer their fear, and since then Argentine politics have not been the same. Whereas previously, the country had remained in the military's shadow, with the government controlled by the rightwing and the neoliberals, since 2003 Argentina has had a leftwing government that has supported the prosecution of figures from the dictatorship and opposed the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ftaa) and other free trade agreements with the US. In the streets, many things also changed. Neighborhoods in all the major cities formed assemblies to facilitate their self-organization on economic, cultural, and political levels, upgrading neighborhood infrastructure, organizing soup kitchens, food and clothing banks, libraries, and theaters, and coordinating protests. Workers took over factories and other workplaces that had been paralyzed by debt, often linking these occupied factories in a productive network, and defending them from police with the help of neighbors.

The uprising had diverse roots that predated the *corralito* by many years. One root was the struggle of people from poor suburbs who seized unused land and built their own communities, or blockaded highways to win their demands. These were the people who made up the bulk of the revolt, until it was taken over by

middle-class families who generally only got involved once their bank accounts were frozen.

Another root was the association of Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group of mothers whose children had been disappeared by the military dictatorship, who began gathering weekly in the Plaza de Mayo in central Buenos Aires in 1977, demanding to know what had happened to their children. The Mothers are largely credited with drawing attention to the atrocities of the dictatorship and creating pressure for the transition to democracy. Pacifists seize on this as an example of the force of nonviolence, but they leave out the bigger picture. Many of the people disappeared by the dictatorship, whose disappearance the Mothers were protesting, were members of armed leftwing organizations that made up a larger anticapitalist movement. The resistance of the Mothers only makes sense in the context of their struggle and sacrifice. Furthermore, the Mothers were not able to put an end to the dictatorship. The democracy that followed continued the exact same political project that the military had pursued with an iron fist during the Dirty War. Many of the exact same people stayed in power and the dominance of the military remained unquestioned. It was not until people fought the police in the streets and toppled one government after another in 2001, that the military's immunity was finally revoked. The Mothers played an important part in this process, but in all fairness it was a process that used a diversity of tactics, from blockades to riots to peaceful vigils.

1. By rioting, taking the streets, occupying land or factories, and defending their gains against police, people in Argentina were able to seize space in which self-organized communities, neighborhood assemblies, and self-managed workplaces could flourish. This movement, anything but pacifist, constituted a major experiment in self-organization and self-management. Many people, including myself, have argued that autonomous factories producing for a capitalist

whereas armed rebel movements like those of the Karen ethnic minority will be excluded from the history books. But if such a change comes about, the vast majority of the pressure will have come from international governments and institutions. Military governments around the world have shown a tendency to transition to democracy on their own because democratic government tends to be more stable and allows the elite to enrich themselves more than they can under a dictatorship. If Burma one day achieves such a victory, they will still face poverty, a high cost of living, and all the other vagaries of a global capitalist market.

The 2008 insurrection in Greece

On the 6th of december 2008, Athens police shot and killed a teenager in the largely anarchist neighborhood of Exarchia. That same night, riots began in several major cities, quickly transforming into an insurrection that gripped the entire country for a month. Millions of people participated, young and old, immigrants and citizens. The arson attacks on banks and police stations that in the previous years had been the sole practice of anarchists instantly generalized to the point of becoming common. By some accounts few police stations in the whole country escaped attack. The insurrection made a joke of the pacifist claim that "violence alienates people" by bringing together people from across Greece and inspiring people all over the world. The momentum of the uprising galvanized social struggles in the country and brought them to a new level.[10]

[10] Interviews with participants in the insurrection and the forms of struggle that flourished afterwards can be found in AG Schwarz, Tasos Sagris, and Void Network (eds.), *We Are an Image from the Future, the Greek Revolt of December 2008* (Oakland: AK Press, 2010).

1988 coup when a mostly peaceful prodemocracy movement was utterly crushed, with 3,000 killed and many thousands more tortured. Within a few months, the military government had gotten the protests under control, arresting thousands and killing between 13 and hundreds, depending on the source.

1. The protest movement was unable to hold the streets or open up space for the organization of new social relations, and it was a complete failure measured in terms of its ability to defend itself against the police.

2. The protest movement succeeded in expressing opposition to economic conditions, but domestically it shied away from expressing ideas of opposition to the government or visions for new forms of social organization. This content was inserted by international commentators and supporters, though it may have constituted the true aspirations of at least part of the movement.

3. It is rumored that the Burmese military was divided on its response to the protest movement. What is certain is that the movement enjoyed widespread elite support on an international scale, counting on no less an institution than the United Nations. Whatever message or ideas might be associated with the movement were spread almost exclusively by the international corporate media (creating a problematic dynamic, and forcing a critical observer to question why protesters were making economic demands about the cost of living while media characterized it exclusively as a prodemocracy movement).

4. The movement was a failure in restoring government fuel subsidies or lowering the cost of living, its principal demands. If, one day, the military junta is replaced by a democracy, this movement will no doubt receive a part of the credit,

economy reproduce the same alienated social relations as a traditionally managed factory. Nonetheless, the workplace occupations in Argentina constitute an experiment in new social relations, even if they provide a negative example, one proving that the new social relations lead back to the old ones; because negative examples such as this one help illuminate the way for future struggles. And this criticism is not to mute the insistence of many participants of these workplace occupations that theirs has indeed been a liberatory experience.

2. There can be no doubt that the uprising in Argentina spread an awareness of new ideas and inspired other people to fight. The experiences in neighborhood assemblies and the self-management of workplaces were transmitted directly to similar experiments in other countries. The uprising in general strengthened the antiglobalization movement and helped spread critiques of neoliberal capitalism across the globe.

3. Until the popular movement was co-opted by Nestor Kirchner, representing the leftwing of the Peronist party, and conducted into supporting the charity programs of a populist government and accepting a chauvinistic, South American capitalism (in rejection of the dominant, North American model of capitalism), it did not have significant elite support, although the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo enjoyed important support from ngos and international legal organizations.

4. The revolt probably led to the defeat of the ftaa in South America, which is definitely a concrete gain, although it would be hard to argue that Kirchner's Mercosur is any better for people or the planet in the long run. More immediately, it shattered the psychological residues of the dictatorship, and allowed poor people to organize their own

form of emergency economic relief, through the looting of supermarkets.

The Day the World Said No to War

That is how many proponents of nonviolence refer to the multitudinous—and almost exclusively peaceful—global protests on February 15, 2003, against the then-upcoming invasion of Iraq. "Our movement changed history," writes progressive journalist Phyllis Bennis for the Institute for Policy Studies on the tenyear anniversary of the protests. She notes that the protests made it into the *Guinness Book of World Records* for their unprecedented size. But what the protests did not accomplish was to stop the war. The peaceful protesters demonstrated that "millions were now willing to show their opposition by marching in the streets,"[9] but the dozens of governments preparing the war shortly proved that people marching in the streets did not matter. Did members of the anti-war movement take that as a lesson to change their tactics? Not at all. Protest leaders and proponents of nonviolence declared "victory" while continuing to exclude non-pacifists and to silence the debate about tactics. The vast majority of participants would quickly disappear, unmotivated to continue protesting in the face of its apparent uselessness, although ten years later nonviolent activists would refer to the day as "inspiring."

In the US, relatively small numbers of anarchists would carry out acts of sabotage against military recruiting centers and infrastructure used in the war mobilization, while also participating in open protests and counter-recruiting drives, sometimes together with war veterans. Proponents of a diversity of tactics worked together with proponents of nonviolence to blockade the ports of

[9] James Clark, *The day the world said 'No' to war: looking back on February 15, 2003*, http://rabble.ca/news/2013/02/day-world-said-no-war-looking-back-february-15-2003 (February 15, 2013).

The 2006 CPE Protests

Throughout france in February, March, and April of 2006, millions of young people rose up against the new cpe law, an austerity measure which would undo decades of hard-won labor protections, allowing bosses to fire younger workers with hardly any restrictions and greatly increasing workers' precarity. They occupied universities and government buildings, blocked streets and highways, protested peacefully, rioted, burned cars, went on strike, and fought with police. In the occupied universities, students held assemblies and debated topics that went far beyond the particularities of the cpe law, to talk about wage labor, capitalism, and the organization of life in general. In the end, they defeated the law.

1. The strikers, protesters, and rioters seized space in which they could practice self-organization and discuss new visions of life.

2. Throughout France, this movement helped regenerate anticapitalist movements and spread social and economic critiques.

3. It did not have elite support, and was generally infantilized or muted by the media.

4. It defeated a law that would have greatly worsened living conditions for workers.

2007 Saffron Revolution

When the dictatorial government in Burma removed fuel subsidies in August 2007, leading to a 66% price increase, students, political activists, women, and Buddhist monks took to the streets in nonviolent protest and civil disobedience. They were careful not to directly challenge the military regime, in consideration of the

The Oaxaca Rebellion

In 2006, indigenous people, teachers, and workers in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca rose up against the government. They set up barricades, kicked out the police, held assemblies and indigenous cultural festivals, and liberated villages. Much of Oaxaca was autonomous for six months. At the very end of the rebellion, movement politicians who had succeeded in taking over the central assembly convinced people not to fight back against the military invasion, although as a whole the movement was not nonviolent, and for months had fought with stones, fireworks, slingshots, and molotov cocktails.

1. The rebellion was one of the most dramatically successful in recent years at seizing space and putting new social relations into practice, questioning government authority, capitalism and privatization, sexism, and the racism of colonization. They put into practice horizontal forms of self-organization, and they employed communal or collective ways of feeding and taking care of themselves. Many of these forms were indigenous in origin.

2. The rebellion spread ideas and served as an example of self-organization for movements in the rest of Mexico and the rest of the world. Texts from the movement or interviews with movement participants were translated and distributed in several other languages.

3. The movement did not have elite support. It was slandered in the media, and attacked by police, paramilitaries, and the army.

4. While it lasted, the rebellion greatly improved people's quality of life in a revolutionary way. Arguably, some of the experiences won in the rebellion still form a basis for ongoing social struggles in Oaxaca.

Olympia and San Francisco, stopping military shipments. However, on the whole the latter excluded the former from broader movement spaces, denied them support, and left them to fend for themselves when they were targeted by repression. Practically the only case of a broad movement using a diversity of tactics was the San Francisco port blockade, though in a typical betrayal nonviolent organizers later described the action as a victory for peaceful methods.

The movement failed to stop the war. The people in Iraq had to resist the invasion and occupation as best as they could, and the methods they chose overwhelmingly involved the use of arms. Some of these groups were fundamentalist and authoritarian in ideology, many were leftist, and a few were anti-authoritarian. Nonetheless, pacifists and proponents of nonviolence who were ostensibly opposed to the war never spoke of Iraqi resistance. For them, Iraqis only gained mention when they became victims. It is noteworthy that public opinion in the US did not turn against the war and occupation—eventually becoming a major election issue that helped Obama win on a platform of troop withdrawal—until US casualties started piling up thanks to the effective armed resistance of the Iraqis. This should not be a surprise, as the same thing happened in the Vietnam War.

The armed resistance of the Iraqis and the global protest against the war were separated by a broad gulf. Focusing on the protest movement, we have to admit that it was overwhelmingly nonviolent.

1. On the whole, this was exclusively a movement of protest, and did not propose or practice the development of new social relations.

2. What the movement communicated was a simple word, "No," which can hardly constitute an idea in a world in which colonization, domination, and mass murder can be carried out

with many means aside from military invasion, means which were already being used against Iraq. And given the fact that the movement vanished almost overnight, this peaceful "No" cannot be considered inspiring, not even to the bulk of the movement's participants.

3. The protest movement was supported by cultural elites (actors and other celebrities), progressive rich people, a part of the mass media, and numerous political parties and other elite institutions.

4. The movement accomplished nothing. It did not stop or limit the war, it did not end the occupation, and if it made any real difference in its participants' lives, it did so without a trace, since they so promptly abandoned it.

The Color Revolutions

In 2000, the civic youth organization Otpor in Serbia led a movement that brought about the ouster of President Slobadan Milosevic. This became known as the "Bulldozer Revolution." The movement was nonviolent, organized according to the same model that later brought about regime change in Georgia's "Rose Revolution" in 2003, and Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" in 2004. Because of their overwhelming similarity, I will deal with these three movements simultaneously. All of them were nonviolent, all of them succeeded in ousting the political party in power, and all of them do rather poorly when evaluated by the criteria for an effective revolutionary movement. Chapter 4 is dedicated to a more thorough study of these movements.

1. These movements did not put new social relations into practice. Although they often occupied central areas in capital

Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution

The tulip revolution was intended to be another nonviolent Color Revolution, but the opposition was neither united nor disciplined sufficiently to enforce strict nonviolence or herd the masses into a single strategy. In fact, they had not even agreed on a slogan and a color, and the same uprising was sometimes referred to as Lemon, Silk, Pink, or Daffodil. The name "Tulip Revolution" actually comes from the Kyrgyz president who was ousted.

In March 2005, when police tried to suppress a protest against a disputed election, rather than responding nonviolently, crowds threw rocks and molotov cocktails, beat up cops, and seized government buildings. The regime change was consummated when huge protests in the capital fought past police and soldiers, seized numerous government buildings, and forced President Akayev to flee the country by helicopter.

However, as their demands were purely electoral, they proclaimed victory once an opposition politician was installed in power. They did not attempt to put new social relations into practice or spread social critiques, and within a few years they were all thoroughly disillusioned with the new government, under which all the same problems continued. Nothing had changed.

1. They did not put new social relations into practice.

2. They did not spread social critiques, beyond complaints of corruption.

3. They enjoyed partial elite support.

4. They succeeded in ousting a government but not in changing the underlying system.

country rose up, blocking highways and fighting with the military to prevent the privatization of the natural gas reserves. Dozens of people died in the fighting, but they held their ground and defeated government forces. In the meantime, in numerous indigenous villages throughout the country, residents would lynch the mayor—often the only representative of the government in their village—as a direct action for the preservation of indigenous autonomy and against neocolonial interference.

The cumulative effect of these actions was to defeat the legacy of decades of dictatorship and military government, preserve indigenous autonomy in the face of ongoing colonialism, and reverse the advance of neoliberalism at a time when the experts insisted there were no alternatives.

1. These violent movements successfully seized and defended spaces for self-organization, for more communal forms of living, and for indigenous culture.

2. The earlier battles of a local character inspired the later battles of a countrywide character, and all of these in turn inspired movements against capitalist globalization across the world.

3. Up until 2005, the movement did not have substantial elite support. After that point, a political party formed out of the unions and other movement institutions was suddenly "taken seriously," given elite support, and elected into power. That political party has succeeded where the military failed, recuperating the social movements and putting neoliberal development projects back on track.

4. These various uprisings achieved multiple concrete gains, in people's quality of living, in their psychological ability to stand up to the government, and in their cultural resistance to colonialism.

cities, they did not initiate practices of self-organization, because their central point of unity was to dispute fraudulent elections and to bring the opposition party into power.

2. These movements did not spread new ideas. They mobilized people on the basis of the lowest common denominator of politics. In Ukraine, for example, their slogan was "Yes!" and their symbol was the color orange. Their social critiques remained at a superficial level.

3. These movements not only received elite support, they thrived on it. In every case, they had media support, funding from the US government and/or wealthy backers like billionaire George Soros, and a direct relationship with the major opposition political party in their country. It is doubtful that these movements would even have been noticed without all the elite support they got.

4. These movements did not improve the quality of life in the countries where they succeeded. They usually did not even improve the transparency of government. In every case, a year, or two, or three years after the so-called revolution, basic economic conditions were unchanged, and political corruption and elitism continued.

Kuwait's "Blue Revolution" and Lebanon's "Cedar Revolution"

In 2005, nonviolent movements inspired by the methods of the Color Revolutions sprang up to win women the right to vote in Kuwait, and to end Syrian military occupation in Lebanon.

1. The movement in Kuwait did change social relations by giving women full citizenship, although the relations

reproduced by voters are still marked by alienation and passivity, rather than selforganization or collective well-being. The movement in Lebanon, similar to the other Color Revolutions, did not change social relations.

2. Neither of these movements spread new ideas or social critiques. The idea that women should be able to vote was already a foregone conclusion, and quickly accepted by the government. The idea that women should be equal, or autonomous from male control, has still not taken hold in Kuwait.

3. Both of these movements received elite support. Kuwait was something of an international embarrassment for not allowing women suffrage, and much of the Lebanese government favored independence from Syria.

4. Voting does not usually improve people's lives, although being considered an equal citizen can improve people's psychological well-being. In the case of Lebanon, ending a military occupation can improve people's lives, although Syria still maintained heavy influence. In both cases, the improvements are not steps towards a revolutionary change in society, as they leave state and capitalism completely untouched, and patriarchy only slightly altered.

The 2005 Banlieue Uprisings

In October 2005, youth in the *banlieue*, or urban slums, in cities across France began a month of rioting, triggered by a police killing. They burned cars, government buildings, and schools, and attacked police. The media, government, and the Left treated the riots as an entirely irrational phenomenon, and repressed them in a series of police and political operations. The rioters made no demands, nor could anyone claim to lead them.

1. The rioters seized the streets; however, the unrest centered almost exclusively around attacks and arsons, rather than assemblies or other activities. Nonetheless, the self-organization of marginalized youth in immigrant neighborhoods, for the purpose of fighting back against a system that has only given them racism and precarity, should not be overlooked. And winning the capacity for self-defense constitutes a change in social relations.

2. This point is also inconclusive. The rioters made it obvious that racism, poverty, and police violence were huge problems in the heart of a wealthy country at the peak of economic prosperity. Their attacks constituted a sharp condemnation of democracy and capitalism. But they generally did not try to communicate with the outside world, leaving everyone to interpret it as they would. Their influence has perhaps been most present in the medium of hip-hop.

3. They received absolutely no elite support.

4. Although the banlieue residents were cynically criticized by the well-to-do for burning down their own neighborhoods, they definitely caused the police to think twice before abusing them.

Bolivia's Water War and Gas War

In 2003, hundreds of thousands of residents of the Bolivian city of Cochabamba rose up against the police and the military to take over the city and prevent the privatization of the water supply. For years, poorer neighborhoods, organized into water committees, had already been using direct action to build their own water infrastructure, providing themselves drinking water without the interference of government or private corporations. In 2005, the whole

continue to election day. As the Spanish Constitution expressly prohibits any political demonstrations on election day or the day before—the legally mandated Day of Reflection—the move was presumably designed to provoke a constitutional crisis that could force the adoption of their demands: electoral reform aimed at ending the historical dominance of the two leading parties (the Socialist Workers' Party and the Popular Party).

Another founding principle of the 15M movement was nonviolence, and true to democratic form, this principle was never put up to debate nor were participants allowed to collectively decide what constituted "violence."[1] Because of the size, scope, and duration of this movement, it is to my knowledge the most important manifestation of nonviolence so far this century. The Color Revolutions or the anti-war movement of 2003, though some of them might have been quantitatively larger, were hardly more than flashes in the pan that lacked the complexity and the breadth of practice of 15M.

While we can speak of the *indignados*—those who never went beyond the indignation of concerned but loyal citizens—as nonviolent, it is not at all accurate to describe the 15M movement itself as nonviolent, as hard as its would-be leaders tried to keep it that way.

In reality, the 15M movement arose at a time when other social struggles with much older roots—and a much greater pool of experience, to point out the obvious—were already gaining ground. These other movements tended to be anticapitalist, whereas Real Democracy Now were superficial democrats, reducing complex problems of oppression and exploitation to the corruption of bad politicians, which they proposed could be solved with the reform of the electoral laws (ironic, since at that moment, Germany, the

[1] It is a common feature of democratic government that certain ground rules are never on the table for discussion, whether this is the regime of private property, the principle of unitary decisions by majority, the concept of territorial sovereignty, or in this case the constitution of a nonviolent, reformist movement that could not go beyond loyal opposition.

ability to take over the streets in protest or to take over plazas for meetings, they have organized neighborhood assemblies, workplace assemblies, hospital occupations, the "autogestion" or horizontal self-guided direction of primary care centers, urban gardens, collective housing, and other anticapitalist projects.

2. They have spread anticapitalist and anarchist ideas throughout Spanish society and to neighboring countries, spread critiques of democracy within social movements, and inspired other people to take action. The plaza occupation movement was a major inspiration for similar movements in the United States and Greece.

3. In general, the only powerful institutions that supported the movement were the major labor unions, whose participation aimed at bringing peaceful masses into the streets to hold their signs, listen to their speeches, and dutifully accept the compromises they signed with the government. When the 15M movement was just a nonviolent gathering, the mass media gave it a huge amount of attention, but when it became a more complex movement that did not issue demands and that began pushing at the constraints of nonviolence, the media turned against it.

4. The neighborhood assemblies allowed many people to meet their neighbors and gave them practice in direct decision-making. The plaza occupation assemblies gave people practice in selforganization (if not in decision-making, due to their unwieldy size) and they also created police-free zones where immigrants and others could be safe for over a month. The related movement against home evictions has saved many people from foreclosure and homelessness, the supermarket sackings have given workingclass people free food, and the movement against the privatization of

healthcare has maintained primary care access for several neighborhoods that otherwise would have lost it.

2011 United Kingdom Anti-Austerity Protests

Although the 2011 anti-austerity protests hardly constitute an uprising or a revolutionary movement, I am including them to make it clear that I am not weeding out nonviolent movements. After all, many proponents of nonviolence believe that simply by being large and peaceful, an event becomes important. This movement was marked by a major day of protest on March 26, with 500,000 people marching in London, a protest and

day of strike on June 30, and another one-day strike in November. The protest movement was entirely peaceful. According to polls, 52% of the population supported the protests, though 55% believed the government spending cuts were necessary. However, we should be clear that in polls, "support" does not mean that someone would participate in a movement, only that they like the idea of the movement enough to say or click "Yes," depending on whether the poll is verbal or written. This is democratic support, where ideas are alienated from actions. The results of the movement show exactly how powerful a passive majority can be, and how wise are those activists who seek the support of the majority over that of a committed minority.

1. The movement neither attempted nor managed to seize space for new social relations.

2. The movement did not talk about ideas, only about budget cuts, and its practice did not spark similar movements in other countries.

6. Real Democracy Now

In the 15th of may 2011, thousands of people took to the streets in coordinated protests in cities across Spain. That night or the next, the protesters held assemblies in the

central plazas of their respective cities and began encampments. The protests had been convened by a Madrid activist group called "*Democracia Real Ya*" or "Real Democracy Now," which had been influenced by the nonviolent Color Revolutions, the watered-down, pacified media version of the uprising in Egypt, and—if appearances are any indication—by the third installment of the populist/conspiracy theorist *Zeitgeist* videos. What happened next, though, went far beyond their designs. The plaza occupations multiplied in size and number, growing from just a few dozen or a hundred people in each to upwards of 100,000 in the larger cities, spreading to little towns across Spain, sparking similar movements in Greece, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, leading to a year of major mobilizations domestically and across Europe, transforming the Spanish social movements, and eventually serving as a major influence for the Occupy movement in the US.

Two founding principles of the 15M or "*indignados*" movement were its rejection of political parties and its use of self-organization through open assemblies, showing how widely anarchist ideas had spread over the years, given that they had even taken root in the stridently anti-anarchist "Real Democracy Now" group. But these fundamentally anarchist practices clashed with the democratic demands of the movement's founders. They had called for the protests on the 15th of May to coincide with the date one week before the general elections, in the hope that the plaza occupations would

not stand up to a government that has decided to annihilate them. Against a dictatorship, a government that has decided not to let questions of image or a fictitious social contract stand in the way of its power, nonviolent movements have always been powerless. And against democracies? In truth, there is no fundamental difference between a dictatorship and a democracy. These forms of government exist on the same continuum. Democratic governments have all the capacity for violence, repression, mass murder, torture, and imprisonment as their dictatorial counterparts. In moments of emergency, they can and do use this capacity. However, democratic governments tend to tolerate nonviolent movements, to keep them around, because such movements can be most useful to those in power.

3. The movement was organized primarily by major trade unions and the Labour Party, and supported by a part of the media.

4. The movement achieved zero changes in government policy, zero reductions to the austerity measures, and zero changes in people's daily lives.

2011 England riots

In august 2011, people in cities across England rioted after police shot and killed Marc Duggan, an unarmed black man, in a traffic stop. As per the standard procedure, police initially lied to the media, claiming that Duggan had opened fire on them, and media uncritically repeated the lie as they always will. When friends and family spread the truth of the incident, rioting and looting broke out in Tottenham, spreading to other neighborhoods in London and then across England. Participants were multiracial, and their targets included the police, government buildings, public infrastructure, stores, and people perceived to be rich or middle-class. The rioting, which was described by many as an allout insurrection, also included a significant amount of poor-onpoor violence or simple opportunism. Regardless of a perceived lack of social analysis or political criticism on the part of the rioters, some of the basic causes were obvious, and the immense costs to government and police constitute an effective punishment for the police murder. The insurrection also divided English society into one camp that stood on the side of law-and-order, attempting to criminalize or pathologize the rioters and favoring harsh measures like the very stop-and-search policies that triggered the rioting in the first place, and another camp that rejected the government discourse of security and sympathized with the rioters, while perhaps trying to encourage a sense of solidarity and a revolutionary perspective.

1. As far as I can tell, the movement did not seize space for new social relations.

2. Although the insurrection made a rejection of the police, the reality of social exclusion, and the failure of tough-on-crime policies obvious, it did not in its own words spread social critiques. However, the very act of rioting proved eloquent enough to be replicated by tens of thousands of people across the country.

3. Unsurprisingly, the insurrection did not have the slightest bit of elite support. Even the handful of leftists who dared express any sympathy treated the phenomenon like some poor, rabid animal.

4. I have been unable to ascertain whether the rioting led to a gentler approach by police or other concrete changes. But at the least, it temporarily interrupted the social invisibility of those who rioted and allowed them to put the police on the defensive for a change. Looters also took direct action to improve their economic position.

Occupy

Similar to the plaza occupation movement, but on a smaller scale and with more wingnuts, the Occupy movement in the US spread to cities across the country and centered around assemblies in public parks and the inevitable confrontations with authorities. Occupy Wall Street, the original franchise, began with a commitment to nonviolence, but Occupy in a few other cities respected a diversity of tactics. Occupy Boston, one group that supported a diversity of tactics and that used some light forms of self-defense to resist an attempted police eviction, outlasted Occupy Wall Street by a whole month. Occupy Oakland, which was far from nonviolent, triggered a general strike, spread critiques of capitalism that

> out of the facility, although the IDOC [Indiana Department of Corrections] claimed there was no connection between the riot and the decision to move.[6]

There is also the case of a major resistance movement at Walpole State Prison in Massachusetts in 1973. Through years of confrontation, protest, riots, and strikes, the prisoners at Walpole overcame racial divisions to build solidarity and fight against their abuse at the hands of guards and bureaucrats, eventually taking over the entire prison for several months. Their supporters on the outside, largely pacifists, used their position of privilege to manipulate the prisoners' struggle and portray it as nonviolent. But the prisoners did not have the luxury of nonviolence. In addition to numerous peaceful actions, they rioted, they fought with guards, and many of them went around armed.[7]

In 2009, anarchists in Barcelona struggling for the freedom of long-term prisoner Joaquin Garcés won his release after a campaign of over a year that used a true diversity of tactics: hunger strikes, legal appeals, posters, graffiti, radio shows, protests, sabotage, road blockades, the smashing of banks, and arson. Garcés, an anarchist bank robber, had participated in the struggle of prisoners in Spain in the '80s, a movement that included mutinies, protests, and other actions, and for that reason, the authorities were punishing him by keeping him locked up after the completion of his sentence.

Against the totalitarianism of the prison system, the need for a diversity of tactics becomes obvious. Nonviolence is a defenseless methodology for social change. Nonviolent movements can-

[6] Anonymous, *Down: Reflections on Prison Resistance in Indiana* (Bloomington, Indiana: 2012), pp.10–11, 13.

[7] See Jamie Bisonette, *When the Prisoners Ran Walpole: A True Story in the Movement for Prison Abolition* (Boston: South End Press, 2008). Although Bisonette does not directly make this criticism of outside supporters, some of whom collaborated on the book, all the facts and contradictions that support this criticism are evident in its pages.

so much control over the prisoners that there is hardly anything they can do to resist besides refusing to eat. But most prison struggles use a diversity of tactics, combining protests, strikes, and legal appeals with attacks on guards, riots, and property damage. Radical prisoners and people supporting them in the state of Indiana have put out an invaluable book, *Down*, that rescues some of these stories from oblivion. In 1985:

> At Pendleton Indiana State Reformatory, a prisoner named Lincoln Love was badly beaten by guards, who also used tear gas in the cellblock. In response, two inmates, John Cole and Christopher Trotter, fought the guards who beat Love, stabbing two. They also fought guards in the infirmary, where Love had been taken, then held three staff members hostage in a cellblock for 17 hours. 6 guards were hospitalized with stab wounds; four in critical condition. The standoff ended when Department of Corrections agreed to the 22 demands of the prisoners, including an FBI investigation into abuse by guards, establishing a grievance committee, setting minimum wages for inmates, allowing prisoners to be politically active without intimidation or reprisals and ending censorship of all letters, magazines, and newspapers. At least 100 inmates participated in what reporters described as a "full-scale riot." Some of the principal instigators in these actions have spent the last 25 years in solitary confinement isolation units.
>
> [...]
>
> 2001: Hundreds of inmates from Indiana riot at a private prison in Floyd County in southeastern Kentucky, tossing sinks out of windows and burning their bedding. All Hoosier [Indiana] inmates were later moved

surpassed ows's populist rhetoric, and disrupted the functioning of the government and economy far more than any other Occupy.

1. In a hyperalienated society, the Occupy movement gave people (in many cases for the first time in their lives) an experience with collective decision-making and self-organization. Thousands of people held assemblies, learned how to live together, fed one another, organized protests and other actions together, and tried to create a collective atmosphere in which patriarchal and racist behaviors were questioned and overcome (the extent to which they advanced on this front is a trickier question, but in many cities the attempt was there). Given the advanced degree of American social disintegration, such that many occupiers had never participated in a real debate before, much less an assembly or an encampment, Occupy was filled with an innumerable quantity of ugly, miserable, or just plain absurd experiences. But because that ugliness was an ever-present part of North American society, Occupy constituted a step towards overcoming it. In sum, in the spaces seized by the Occupy movement, liberatory social relations were experimented with, if only in a very nascent way.

2. It is sad that the watered-down, populist concept of the 99%, a weak stand-in for class consciousness, could count as a radical idea, but social awareness in the US was so withered at the get-go that even this slogan might be counted as an accomplishment. What is beyond question is that many radical ideas and social critiques were debated and spread in the space of the Occupy movement, ideas that were new to many participants. The example of Occupy Wall Street inspired people to take similar action in other cities around the country.

3. Numerous academics, media outlets, and even some city governments presented Occupy in a positive light, trying to curry its favor and influence its course. This elite intervention always pushed in the direction of maintaining strict nonviolence and issuing demands.

4. During the course of Occupy, hundreds of homeless people could sleep a little sounder, knowing they had a place to stay that was relatively safe from police. People also shared food and other resources. However, Occupy probably did not lead to any lasting gains.

The 2011–2013 Chile student protests

Millions of high school and university students took to the streets of cities across Chile starting in May 2011, protesting the underfunding of education and the lack of public universities. Students carried out massive protests, strikes, and riots. They erected barricades, fought with police—sometimes sending them running—attacked banks, and even burnt down a department store. Anarchists have played an influential part in the movement, and many students have begun adopting anarchist tactics. As of this writing, the movement is still ongoing.

1. The students have occupied schools and public places, though communal spaces have remained in an incipient state.

2. The first student protests quickly inspired others and spread across the country. Students began discussing and circulating critical analyses of the role of education, public or private, in a capitalist society. As of 2013, these conversations were still going on. Both the fel—the Student

subdue and dominate.[4] One of the most effective instances of disobedience and defection was the wave of revolt that incapacitated the US military in Vietnam and led directly to the end of the war. The soldiers participating in that revolt were faced with the effective armed resistance of the Vietnamese and were influenced not by the overwhelmingly white peace movement in the States but by the combative black and latino liberation movements. Furthermore, their disobedience took on decidedly non-pacifist tones.[5]

We have argued that a nonviolent movement cannot stand up to a government that decides to use mass incarceration to repress it. This brings us to the important question of struggle within the prisons. What better example of a totalitarian system than the prisons, and what better indication of democracy's proximity to totalitarianism, as at the heart of every democracy what we find is a prison. From one country to the next, those who continue their struggle behind bars rarely frame that struggle in terms of nonviolence, since self-defense in prison becomes a matter of survival. In many cases, prisoners will engage in hunger-strikes or sit-downs, but this is generally understood on the inside as the result of a situation of weakness, in which the prison regime has succeeded in winning

[4] Proponents of nonviolence such as Mark Kurlansky will mention the collapse of the Warsaw Pact countries as an example of an institutional change of conscience. They will not mention how across the world, developing capitalism has shown a tendency to pressure the elite into adopting more liberal forms of government as long as rebellious movements are not out of control; how the elite in Warsaw Pact countries often stayed in power and benefited richly from their "change in conscience," such that in countries such as Romania the secret police orchestrated a fake popular uprising to justify the change in governmental forms; nor will they mention the crucial Soviet loss in Afghanistan, a far more critical and immediate factor than the peaceful Czech resistance in 1968. I will deal with this more in Chapter 8.

[5] Readers interested in a more thorough description of GI resistance in Vietnam can look up *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, pp.13–15, and Matthew Rinaldi, *Olive-Drab Rebels:*

Subversion of the US Armed Forces in the Vietnam War (London: Antagonism Press, 2003).

of nonviolence cannot offer examples of a nonviolent movement that survived the guns, the torture chambers, the prisons, and the death camps. The anecdotes from the Holocaust all deal with groups that managed to avoid the violence of the Nazi regime by escaping rather than confronting it.

Some proponents of nonviolence claim that this evasion is a strength of their peaceful practice; that a government cannot risk the negative image of annihilating peaceful opponents. But we have numerous examples of governments doing just that, even in the 21st century. What's more, most states around the world, democratic or otherwise, annihilated totally peaceful groups at some point in their territorial expansion. That's what states do.

Other proponents of nonviolence imagine that they are protected not by the elite and those that give the orders, but by the possibility that soldiers ordered to open fire on them will desert and mutiny against the government. Nonviolent methods pretend to change the conscience of an institution, which is an impossible task. Countless psychological studies have demonstrated that institutional power succeeds in making its members feel free of responsibility and immune from any pangs of conscience.[3] Institutions have been designed and perfected over the years with precisely this objective in mind: to foster an inhuman loyalty to the campaigns of the State, no matter how brutal or absurd. In the last half century, there is no case of nonviolent resistance causing massive defections from powerful institutions and halting a government's efforts to

[3] The Milgram experiment, in 1961, demonstrated most famously how people would follow orders from an authority figure that went against their conscience, even it meant torturing and killing. The results of the study have been replicated numerous times. But in most institutions, the degree of separation between one's actions and the consequences is far greater. There is not a single boss and a victim on the other side of the door, but multiple layers of authority to whom the buck can be passed, and the consequences usually unfold out of sight and out of mind.

Libertarian Federation[13]—and the practice of Black Blocs within the student protests, have expanded exponentially throughout the course of the movement.

3. The students have not had significant elite support, although some small political parties and unions have influence in the movement.

4. Although structural changes have not been won at the time of this writing and the students repeatedly rejected government compromises, the movement forced the government to offer multiple concessions, and to return to the negotiating table again and again, each time with a better offer. Their commitment in rejecting these compromises is inspiring.

The Quebec Student Movement

In February 2012, students in Quebec, first at one university, then others, voted to go on strike in response to a government proposal to increase tuition. The strike soon involved 300,000 students, and included protest marches with over 400,000 participants, a quarter of the population of Montreal. The movement organized itself in assemblies and also engaged in heavy confrontations with the police, with many injured on both sides. "Prevented from occupying buildings as it had in 2005, the student movement shifted to a strategy of economic disruption: blockading businesses, interrupting conferences, and spreading chaos in the streets."[14]

1. The Quebec student movement has given hundreds of thousands of young people direct experience in self-organization

[13] Everywhere except the US, libertarian means anarchist.

[14] "While the Iron is Hot: Student Strike and Social Revolt in Quebec, Spring 2012," http://www.crimethinc.com/blog/2012/08/14/the-2012-strike-in-quebec-full-report/ (August 14, 2012).

through debate and assemblies. Many of the processes of organization in the movement were accomplished through collective direct action, without representatives. Students changed the balance of power so much that elected student leaders, despite substantial support from major labor unions with the aim of pushing them to accept a compromise, could not agree to a deal with the government that would have left the tuition increase intact.

2. The movement spread critiques of debt, austerity, and capitalism throughout Quebecois and Canadian society. It also inspired the anglophone universities in Montreal to begin using assemblies, whereas before this was only a characteristic of the francophone universities. The students linked their movement with ongoing indigenous and environmental struggles, denouncing and attacking elite structures as a whole rather than only those structures exclusively concerned with university tuition decisions.[15]

3. The student movement received support and funding from major labor unions, but was uniformly denounced and slandered by ruling politicians and the media.

4. In September 2012, the pressure and disruption created by the student movement caused the new government (the old one had been voted out, in part thanks to the strike) to scrap the austerity bill and declare a tuition freeze. First some and then the rest of the universities voted to end the strike. Many students saw this as a weakness of the movement, as the struggle was about more than a simple tuition hike. By ending the strike, they also derailed the spreading articulation of the deeper issues of state violence, elitism, and capitalism

[15] Andrew Gavin Marshall, "10 Things You Should Know About the Quebec Student Movement," *Counterpunch*, May 23, 2012.

next day, but if the government still shoots at them, they will run away all over again, and in short order no one will come back into the streets, and the movement will disappear. A government will rarely have to shoot more than a hundred bullets to get rid of a movement that insists on being nonviolent. Other methods are to arrest the most active organizers, and torture them, kill them, disappear them, or give them long prison sentences. Some totalitarian governments complement this with mass arrests of supporters and participants. Once the most active organizers are out of the way and everyone else has seen that they might go to jail if they don't keep their mouths shut (with the mass arrest of hundreds or thousands of supporters) the resistance disappears. This has happened dozens of times, including in recent decades, from Burma to China to Belarus. Nonviolent movements have no way to protect themselves, once the government decides to eliminate them.

The only protection for nonviolence has come from members of the elite. If no one in power will prevent the decision to open fire, to open the torture chambers, or to carry out mass arrests, nonviolence is defenseless. This is why nonviolence systematically tries to preempt its own repression by currying favor with the people in power, by appealing to values they share with the dominant system (peace, social order, lawfulness, democracy), by minimizing critiques of capitalism, the State, and other foundations of power, and by disguising a reformist, pro-authority movement as "revolutionary," communicating to the elite that they can serve a useful purpose. The systematic tendency of nonviolence towards reformism, cowardice, bootlicking, and the betrayal of other currents in a social struggle stems from its unconscious recognition of its own defenselessness and need to gain favor with the authorities.

Some ideologues of nonviolence have attempted to mask the powerlessness of nonviolence in the face of dictatorship by making bold claims of nonviolent successes against the Nazis or other brutal opponents. Aside from the historical and analytical flaws in these claims, which will be dealt with later, advocates

kgb headquarters. Their attacks garnered a great deal of attention and sympathy.

In the cases of the independence movement in India and the Civil Rights movement in the United States, the government used a great deal of violence, but they allowed the nonviolent segment of the movement to choose its own level of confrontation. Often, the police inadvertently created situations that helped protesters set up a media-friendly spectacle and a clear moral contest: a line of police, beating down any marchers who tried to step forward; cops attacking activists who refused to get up from the "whites only" lunch counter. These strategies of repression allowed proponents of nonviolence to show off their bravery in an unmistakable way in front of the cameras, and to choose their own degree of engagement.

It is no coincidence that police rarely create such situations today. In countries described as democratic, police do not generally go after nonviolent protesters in their homes, try to lock them up in large numbers and for long periods of time, or try to kill them off. Democratic strategies of repression against nonviolent movements usually attempt to discipline them, to encourage them to dialogue and coordinate their protests with the police, to give them easy opportunities to express their conscience by being arrested for symbolic civil disobedience in a way that does not disrupt the flow of the economy or the functioning of the government, and to beat them up or press criminal charges if they cross the line and cause an actual disruption. In the last two decades, such light forms of dissuasion have nearly always been enough to keep nonviolent movements in line, a loyal opposition to the ruling order rather than a real threat.

In a few countries, however, the government has taken off its gloves, and in every case, nonviolent activists have been unable to defend themselves. If a government is willing to open fire on unarmed protesters who refuse to fight back, those protesters cannot hold the streets. If they are very brave, they may return the

as a whole. However, in March 2013, Quebec students were again beginning to take to the streets and riot in response to new government attempts to raise tuition.

The Mapuche struggle

The mapuche, an indigenous nation whose territory is occupied by the states of Chile and Argentina, have been fighting back since the arrival of the Spanish colonizers, who were never able to conquer them. The Mapuche, a horizontal or "circular" (meaning reciprocal, non-hierarchical) society, effectively used armed resistance to defend their independence long after most other South American indigenous populations had been conquered or exterminated. They were finally occupied during a joint invasion by Chile and Argentina, backed by Great Britain, at the time the most powerful state in the world.

Mapuche resistance continues to the present day, with sabotage actions against multinational mining and logging companies as well as against major landlords who have usurped their *lands. They also* carry out protests, road blockades, skirmishes with police, hunger strikes, cultural activities, religious ceremonies, riots, and the forceful retaking of usurped lands. In January 2013, on the five-year anniversary of the unpunished police murder of Matias Catrileo, a young Mapuche *weichafe*, or warrior, Mapuche youth rioted in Santiago, the Chilean capital. In the countryside, unknown people set fire to the mansion of major landlord and usurper of Mapuche territory, Werner Luchsinger, whose cousin owned the estate police were protecting when they shot Catrileo in the back. Werner and his wife were killed in the fire. At the time of this writing, the Mapuche have resisted the attempted criminalization of their struggle.

1. Within the autonomous Mapuche communities, community members revive their traditional language, culture, and

spirituality, they practice the traditional horizontal forms of social organization; and the traditional forms of collective agriculture, and property rights, imposed by colonialism, no longer hold sway. In Mapuche communities, the land is collectivized and inheres to the community.

2. The Mapuche struggle has popularized methods of resistance to colonialism that do not rely on the same leftist framework that was also imported via colonialism. The Mapuche have inspired other indigenous struggles across the world, and has also inspired anarchists and other anticapitalists who are willing to give up their leftism.[16]

3. Although the Mapuche struggle is heterogeneous and includes reformist elements, the part of the struggle that fights for full independence and does not adhere to nonviolence receives no elite support; quite the contrary, it is branded as terrorist by the media and government.

4. The Mapuche struggle has made an impressive number of concrete gains in liberating large tracts of land, removing environmentally destructive exotic tree species planted by timber companies, protecting their territory from environmentally harmful development projects, and achieving food sovereignty in multiple autonomous villages.

[16] For example, many Mapuche in struggle reject the Marxist framework that sees indigenous people as peasants or members of the international working class. As some have expressed it, "we are not poor, we are a society apart." For the Mapuche to accept the workingclass identity and the narrative of progress fundamental to leftism, they would have already lost their struggle, as the colonial identity and political framework would have supplanted the indigenous one.

the US and Europe but inside occupied Tibet people can't even get away with hanging up a picture of the Dalai Lama.

In Burma, the country that was in some ways the target audience for *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, people were crushed by repression any time they attempted to put the nonviolent method into practice. Ironically, the unwritten part of Gene Sharp's method—reliance on businessmen, international media, and powerful governments—is the only thing causing an impact, as the Burmese government slowly begins to liberalize. But because it is the Burmese state's desire for investment and not the actions of oppressed Burmese people that is achieving this liberalization, the operative concern is what is good for the Burmese elite, what will help them get richer, what will help them cement their power in the eyes of "the international community." Given that the desire for cheap labor in southeast Asia is explosive, we can imagine just what a "free" Burma will look like.[2]

The case of Belarus, one of the failed Color Revolutions, is particularly interesting. The rulers of Belarus have little interest in cultivating business relations with the West, because their economy is fully integrated with Russia's. Elite support, that secret weapon of the Color Revolutions, could not make a showing here, and the police did not have their hands tied in dealing with demonstrators. To get rid of the peaceful protesters, the government did not even have to use the military. Beatings, arrests, kidnappings, and death threats sufficed. Laws are so harsh in Belarus that participating in any unregistered organization or organizing activity is a crime. To have a simple public gathering, you need to register your organization with the government and get permission. In response to the situation of totalitarianism, some anarchists turned to a clandestine practice, carrying out secret actions and even firebombing the

[2] Just before this book went to print, Coca-Cola announced the opening of a new bottling plant in Burma. Progress.

away with using useful lethal force. This hypothesis is confirmed by the record. In the US, where the media toe the line of all government policy that is fundamental (roughly speaking, bipartisan) and their saturation of social dialogue is so advanced one must more accurately speak of a social monologue, the democratic government can get away with murdering people every day. In countries like Greece, where the media until recently were less cooperative with the government and where there are many networks of communication that do not rely on mass media as intermediaries, killings by police are less frequent and cause a greater erosion to the democratic peace.

To simplify, although a powerful media apparatus can allow a democratic government to wriggle past this contractual limitation on lethal force, as a generalization let's say that democracies cannot carry out domestic mass killings to keep order, whereas dictatorships can.

In this sense of the word, dictatorships are immune to nonviolent movements for change. In every case since the end of the Cold War, peaceful movements that went up against a government perfectly willing to torture and kill them in large numbers failed. Every time.

The Color Revolutions, so successful against governments that decided to tolerate the protests, failed in Belarus and Azerbaijan when those governments decided to crack down. The initially peaceful uprising in Egypt adopted the use of gas masks, clubs, rocks, and molotov cocktails in order to defend themselves against the brutal attacks of cops and government thugs. When the governments of Libya and Syria went so far as to use the military against protesters, the movement had to take up arms. The government of China successfully crushed the nonviolent Falun Gong movement, torturing to death 2,000 or more practitioners, and they used equally harsh methods to put an end to the peaceful Free Tibet movement, which can hold concerts with popular bands in

A Cumulative Evaluation

The foregoing evaluations are neither perfect nor indisputable. Subjecting the successes and defeats of social rebellions and revolutionary movements to a rigorous scientific objectivity destroys what is most valid in them and produces only the illusion of knowledge. My goal was not to produce a framework with the pretension of objectively or more accurately understanding such movements, but to take a moment to compare in a simple way, with clear criteria and without double standards, the accomplishments of nonviolence and those of heterogeneous struggles. All of the rebellions mentioned above are more complex than a single book could do justice to, much less a few paragraphs, but by highlighting central features and obvious achievements, we begin to see a number of patterns.

Some of my characterizations could definitely be disputed: I do not claim to be an expert on the struggles presented above. However, after a fair evaluation based on the readily available information, what becomes indisputable is that since the end of the Cold War, nonviolent movements have had their greatest successes in effecting regime change, helping to inaugurate new governments that subsequently disappoint and even betray those movements. They have not succeeded in redistributing power in any meaningful way, or putting revolutionary social relations into practice, despite claiming victory numerous times. On the other hand, heterogeneous movements using conflictive methods and a diversity of tactics have been the most effective at seizing space and putting new social relations into practice.

I would also argue that these movements have been most effective at inspiring other people and spreading new ideas, but different people are inspired by different acts. A pacifist could argue that being peaceful is a new social relation. To an anticapitalist that argument should be entirely unsatisfactory as it does not in any way address the question of power or alienation in society. Nonethe-

less, if one believes in revolution as the end of all violence, and understands oppression as a cycle of violence, simply being peaceful is a way to break the cycle and spread an important new social relation.[17] But one could make the opposite argument that fighting back spreads a new social relation, since our relationship with authority is supposed to be one of obedience and passivity. In an attempt to be fair, I have not included a redundant spreading of ideas. A nonviolent movement that only inspires other people to be nonviolent, or a combative movement that only inspires other people to fight back is doing nothing more than spreading its own methods. Therefore, I have only included the spread of practices of self-defense (either violent or nonviolent) as an achievement where they directly conflict with other ruling structures, for example when marginalized and oppressed people whom our society trains to be defenseless and to accept their victimization reject this role. Nonetheless, I have not encountered any movement in the last two decades that has spread an effective practice of nonviolent self-defense, as existed to a certain extent in the Civil Rights movement.

The forms of self-defense that have been spread by marginalized people in the rebellions mentioned above have overwhelmingly tended towards the decidedly not pacifist. This may be because the exclusively nonviolent movements have tended to be movements of citizens, a normative identity that further marginalizes the marginalized.

[17] In *How Nonviolence Protects the State* I argue why this view is flawed, but in basic terms, suffice it to say that the violence of the State is unilateral. Police shoot and torture people not because they have had rocks thrown at them, but because it is their job. Politicians rule and make decisions that kill thousands not because they were beaten as infants but because institutions of power manufacture their own interests and impose them on what might be considered human or biological interests. Cycles of violence do not explain oppression. The State is pyramidal and accumulative, not cyclical.

dictator usually remain in the ruling coalition, but that coalition now includes potentially everybody, as long as everybody prioritizes social control first, and their personal interests second. In governments recognized as democratic, charisma is invested in the institution of government itself, rather than in individual leaders. By ousting a dictator and demanding elections, a nonviolent movement allows a government to clean its image, rebuild its legitimacy, and mask a smooth transition to a more powerful form of government as though it were some kind of grassroots revolution or responsiveness to popular pressures.

There is another de facto distinction between dictatorship and democracy. It is the common understanding of democratic citizens nearly everywhere, that one of the principal rules in the unwritten, unsigned social contract holds that democratic governments will not use lethal force against unarmed social movements. Of course, in the whole world there is not a democratic government of any size that does not occasionally kill dissidents, protesters, prisoners, and others. Since democracy is a question of form and image, what this means in practice is that democratic governments need to be able to portray their violence against social rebels as exceptional, accidental, or justified on grounds of national security.[1]

It follows that the greater the control over public opinion and information a ruling structure can exercise (and this depends on the degree of saturation by mass media and whether any part of the mass media will act critically towards the government or subvert the social peace), the more a democratic government can get

[1] National security, for its part, is a discursive terrain where a systematic function of government—the maintenance of its own power—must be enacted as a constant exercise in exceptionality, in which predictable and repetitive state activities must perform as though they were improvisational. The common idea that civil liberties are inviolable except in cases of national security is about as meaningful as an agreement among castaways on a desert island that it is strictly prohibited to eat one another except in cases of hunger. A government has to see to the maintenance of its own power on a daily basis; therefore it encounters motives to suspend civil liberties on a daily basis.

5. Nonviolence Against Dictatorship

There is no clear distinction between dictatorship and democracy. All governments dictate, many dictators are elected, and the subjects of typical dictatorships often have ways to influence the government that are more direct than the means enjoyed by citizens of typical democracies. Paid hacks in the media, universities and think tanks make the distinction that democratic elections are "fair and free" whereas the elections that confer office on dictators are manipulated. But all elections are farcical, and all elections are manipulated. That is the nature of elections. No democracy in the world allows everyone a chance to vote, and the very rules that determine the legality of elections are set by those who are already in power. Every set of voting rules, in its turn, allows a whole range of legal and extralegal means for power-holders to influence the outcome of the vote.

Nonviolent movements that replace supposed dictatorships with supposed democracies do power a great service. They mistake the dictator for the center of power in a dictatorship, when dictators are really only charismatic figures (or puppets placed by charismatic figures) who succeed in linking together a coalition of power-holders strong enough to keep down other power-holders not included in the coalition, and to control coalition members who might want more power than the present arrangement grants them. If a dictator is ousted in favor of a democracy, this represents the expansion of the ruling coalition and the development of a more stable ruling structure. The power-holders who backed the

Moving beyond the extension of peaceful or combative methods, there can be no doubt that heterogeneous, conflictive movements have consistently been connected to the proliferation of profound social critiques and ideas of new ways to live, while exclusively nonviolent movements have been systematically linked to superficial, populist, lowest-common-denominator politics. In fact, such politics are a key feature of the most "successful" nonviolent movements of the last two decades, the Color Revolutions, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In sum, a review of revolutions and social uprisings since the end of the Cold War demonstrates the following:

1. Movements that use a diversity of tactics are overwhelmingly more effective at seizing and defending space, and using that autonomy to put new social relations into practice, whether through practices of self-organization, collective self-defense, the reanimation of indigenous ways of life, or collectivization and communization (ending the alienation of capitalist property, which dictates that everything can be bought and sold, and putting our resources in common in a spirit of mutual aid rather than profit).[18]

2. Movements that use a diversity of tactics are more likely to spread, to inspire other people to take action, and they are much more likely than nonviolent movements to spread radical ideas and social critiques, whereas the majority of nonvi-

[18] In very broad strokes, the collective and the commune both subsist on the logic of the commons—that we are part of an interconnected web and nothing necessary for our survival and happiness should be enclosed or privatized—in contradiction to the logic of Capital—that everything must be reduced to its abstract monetary value, relations and beings processed and exploited to maximize their potential to produce value, and value employed to accumulate more value—but the idea of collectivization emphasizes a group of autonomous individuals who interact with the commons in different ways, as long as they do not privatize or destroy it, whereas the commune emphasizes cooperation and the elaboration of mutuality and shared relationships in the group's interaction with the commons.

olent movements are connected to populist complaints and watered-down slogans either lacking in social content or relying on the same social analysis disseminated by the mass media.

3. Nonviolent movements are exponentially more likely to receive substantial elite support. The primary case in which combative movements receive elite support is when they crop up in opposition to governments that are at odds with ruling states (as when NATO will support people rebelling against the Libyan government).

4. Excluding the achievement of free elections, which both combative and peaceful movements have proven effective at winning, movements that use a diversity of tactics have a better track record of achieving concrete gains.

Beyond these four criteria, we have seen that peaceful movements are much more likely to fade away after winning a token gain like electoral reform, whereas combative movements are more likely to continue in the pursuit of deeper, more meaningful social changes; combative movements are more likely to be connected to a critique of capitalism and state authority whereas nonviolent movements hold democratic government, regardless of actual conditions, as the absolute good; movements with the greatest participation tend to display a diversity of tactics, whereas strictly nonviolent movements tend to be smaller or shorter-lived (bringing huge crowds together for a protest, but rarely for more extended action); within the time period under examination, nonviolent movements have never been able to stand up to military force, whereas under certain circumstances, combative movements have been able to defeat police and military; democratic as well as dictatorial governments sometimes do use lethal police and military force against peaceful protesters, contrary to pacifist claims that governments

where people rioted, beat up cops, and took government buildings by force, and the Orange or Rose Revolutions, where people were entirely peaceful. That difference is absent. Violence is a false category. It is only a question of what actions are effective at overcoming structures of power without reproducing them.

buildings and physically ousted the ruling party, whereas the peaceful protesters in Ukraine could only push the ruling party to agree to step down.

But to avoid prioritizing the forceful tactics over the peaceful ones, we should emphasize that where forceful tactics can be effectively coupled with creative and other non-combative tactics, movements are most effective in the long-term at sustaining struggle, surviving repression, and elaborating revolutionary social relations.

ularly cycle out candidates, they will think freedom has another chance of flourishing with each new change of masks.

On inspection, a peaceful coup in the name of democracy is only a contradiction if we swallow liberal rhetoric about the rule of law. Law is always coercive, but it is legitimized through a variety of illusions or rituals. The nonviolent coup, in which people are mobilized without being empowered, provides the perfect illusion. It is democratic, *par excellence*.

The Color Revolutions put nonviolence at the service of democracy without questioning the underlying power dynamics and unwritten rules that actually affect people's lives. By being exclusively political movements that only seek a legal reform or a change of politicians, they can accomplish no real change. In this context, nonviolence is revealed not only as a naïve practice that has been co-opted to provide an illusion useful to government, but as an illusion in its own terms as well.

Compare a violent (Tulip) and nonviolent (Orange) Color Revolution, and you will find there is no difference in the results. In both cases, the movement accomplished a regime change, and within a couple years, everyone was disillusioned because the new government proved to be the same as the old government. This is an especially critical observation, given how proponents of nonviolence frequently insist that the presence of violence exercises an almost magical effect in turning on police repression, driving away support, or reproducing authoritarian dynamics. In a direct comparison between two highly similar political movements, we see that violence is a non-factor.[3] If the pacifist hypothesis were correct, we would see quite different results between the Tulip Revolution,

[3] Lest anyone take this argument out of context, let me reiterate that tactics likely to be described as violent are a non-factor in a movement that only seeks political reform, according to all the criteria listed in the text. In the pursuit of seizing space, self-defense, or interrupting a dominant social narrative, more forceful tactics are often more effective. We can see this at the tactical level in how Kyrgyz protesters were unique in that they actually stormed government

cannot effectively repress nonviolent movements because public opinion would prevent them.

And aside from the dramatic examples of revolutions and uprisings, we can also perceive a similar pattern in simple protests and movements that have not achieved the same dimensions.

Although nonviolent organizers frequently claim that protesters who use combative or illegal tactics ruin "their" protests—clearly demonstrating an ownership issue—anticapitalist protests in which people damage corporate property, fight with police, and interrupt the spectacle of social peace or disrupt whatever elite summit world leaders have planned, are clearly more effective than protests in which people get arrested, carry out civil disobedience, hold witty placards, but do not go on the attack.

Compare the various antiglobalization protests in Washington, DC or New York City between 2000 and 2004—where there were huge crowds but little or no rioting—with the the 1999 Seattle WTO protests. No one even remembers the former anymore, whereas the latter is often referred to (incorrectly, but capitalism tends to have a corrosive effect on memory) as the birth of the antiglobalization movement. Hardly anyone disputes that Seattle did more to spread an awareness of the antiglobalization movement than any other summit protest in North America or Europe, and no one nominates the strictly peaceful protests such as the ones in Washington, DC for that honor.[19] In the heart of the empire, at the pinnacle of Clintonian peace and prosperity, people were rioting.

Some proponents of nonviolence have claimed that the resonance of Seattle was caused by the major participation of organized labor, or by the nonviolent lockdowns of activists. Nonviolent organizers Rebecca and David Solnit have written critically about the media and Hollywood portrayals of the protesters, but with an ev-

[19] Runners up might include Genoa, Quebec City, or Heiligendamm, none of which were particularly nonviolent.

ident desire to erase the participation of those who rioted. David writes about "50,000 ordinary people" and "tens of thousands" who "joined the nonviolent direct action blockade" but takes a big eraser to the Black Bloc and the many others who practiced forms of property destruction and self-defense against police.[20] Writing on the Stuart Townsend movie, *Battle in Seattle*, he objects to the portrayal of the protesters as professional activists (ironic, really) lacking "everyday grievances shared by most Americans," but expresses no problem with the portrayal of Black Bloc anarchists as unsympathetic thugs or police infiltrators. In his "People's History," ideological competitors evidently deserve to be whited-out, and in this regard media lies suddenly become acceptable.

One seemingly intentional effect of the Solnits' intervention in historical revisionism is to portray the Black Bloc as a mere blip, a few dozen people who smashed a few windows during the space of a few minutes. Speaking with other people who were in Seattle, including one who also organized with dan (the Direct Action Network that had established nonviolent guidelines, though it was not responsible for all the blockades, much less all the forms of protest), we get a very different picture of the day's protests. First of all, the Black Bloc lasted the whole day, carrying out decentralized attacks

[20] See David Solnit, "The Battle for Reality," *Yes Magazine*, http://www.yesmagazine.org/ issues/purple-america/the-battle-for-reality (July 30, 2008). A further irony is that in this same article, Solnit acknowledges that 52% of Americans polled as sympathetic with the Seattle protests. He claims this is "despite" the media portrayals, but he has no basis for arguing that popular support was not in some ways caused by the images of people smashing symbols of wealth and power. After all, those images, spread by the media accompanied by a disparaging or frightening tone, were the extent of the information most people had about the protests. And regardless of the game of majorities, it is a fact that there are a great many people who are more likely to sympathize with a struggle if they see people taking risks and fighting back than if they see people carrying giant puppets or dressing up like turtles. And this brings up the question, who would we rather have on our side? Those who want to fight back or those who just want theater? In any case, supporters of nonviolence have once again failed to back up the claim that "violence alienates people."

The line between democracy and dictatorship is fictitious. Whatever difference there is is primarily one of formalism and ritual. The two classes of government are often interchangeable, and when a government changes from one to the other, many of the same people tend to stay in charge.

The truth is, revolution is anti-democratic. Revolutions in their beginnings are always opposed by the majority, which is nothing but a virtual herd controlled by the media. A minority of one knows its own interests better than the rest of society, and the rest of society can only be convinced of a truth if people start putting it into action rather than waiting for validation from the majority. The struggle for a world free of domination is the insistence that we are the only ones who can define and meet our needs, and that our needs are more important than the ever-manipulated bylaws, due process, and sacred pieces of paper that democracy holds so dear. The principle of direct action is fundamentally at odds with following the rules and getting permission. Gene Sharp has taken the strike, in various pacified forms, and wed this fundamentally anarchic practice to its antithesis.

Only through the pacification of direct tactics can democracy be presented as freedom, but from the Philippines to Serbia, the contradiction is still there. There is no real contradiction in the forcible imposition of democracy. More than anything else, democracy is a good business model, and it has always been spread by invasions or bourgeois coups. The contradiction is in using the masses to overthrow one government (one that has become an obstacle to business) without letting them lose their respect for government or think they could overthrow it again on their own initiative. But if they are only ever given experience in nonviolent methods, they will never become an independent threat. And if they are encouraged to rise up in the name of democracy, they will reject the current government only on the grounds that it does not live up to the ideal of legitimate government. As long as future elections reg-

tiveness, thereby seducing social rebels in other countries to take up a method designed to fail.

This brings us back to the earlier questions. Democracy is merely another way to organize exploitation, oppression, and social control. Democratic governments have coexisted with slavery, colonialism, warfare, the most patriarchal societies with some of the most unequal concentrations of wealth, the destruction of the environment, starvation, extreme poverty, the pathologization or murder of trans people, labor exploitation, job and housing precarity, homelessness, exclusion from healthcare, genocide, and any other bad thing we can think of. The most brutal forms of poverty and the worst destruction to the environment have occurred since democracy became the predominant form of government on the planet. The US government is a democracy. The German government is a multi-party democracy in which even the Green Party has been in power. Take a moment to think about the horrible things that democratic governments do on a regular basis.

Democracy in and of itself isn't worth toilet paper.

This list of abuse and misery is a result of a host of structures related to capitalism and government. Capitalism is based on the endless accumulation of wealth, extracted from the environment and from our labor, and government is based on the accumulation of power and control directly stolen from all the rest of us. A marriage between these two systems, which has defined the social reality for at least 500 years, means everyone gets fucked.[2] Governments can be democratic or not, more or less corrupt, but they will still pursue the same basic goals, and they will still be controlled by an elite. Government by its very nature concentrates power and excludes people from making decisions over their own lives.

[2] For a good history of this marriage, see Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long 20th Century*. New York: Verso, 1994.

in the morning, and converging on Nike Town in the afternoon for another bout of well-justified smashing. When the union leaders refused to march downtown in an effort to help police restore order and segregate their supporters from the rioters, a large contingent of the labor march broke away and came downtown. Though labor leaders and supporters of nonviolence are loathe to admit this, "they were mad […] and some of them were also smashing stuff—windows and newspaper boxes. And then just a lot of people not in black joining in as often happens." My recollection, though it was a long time ago now, was that as the day descended into what felt like an apocalyptic war, nonviolence was not the main sentiment in the air–anger and shock were. That does not mean people were 'violent', whatever that means, but some were definitely angry and defending themselves in the street with dumpsters and rubbish.[21]

It is absolutely true that the marching workers and the locked-down activists were important parts of the Seattle protests, and the cancellation of the first day of WTO meetings would not have happened without them. Equating Seattle with the Black Bloc is narcissistic at best. But it is hard to trust people who complain about media manipulations and police brutality and then join sides with the media and police in criminalizing people in the *movement whos*e tactics they disagree with.

This is especially the case when it is self-evident that those tactics deserve the lion's share of credit for the victory activist leaders subsequently wish to manage. If it was the union march that was the most decisive, important element in the Seattle protests, the element that inspired the most people across the country and energized a new cycle of struggle, why did union activity only continue to stagnate in the aftermath of the Seattle protests? If it was the nonviolent civil disobedience, was there a boom in such practices after the whopping success outside the Kingdome? In the years af-

[21] The quote is from an email from a friend who personally participated in the preparation for the Seattle protests.

ter 1999, there was in fact a major upsurge in "nonviolent direct action" trainings all across the country, though the pool of people conducting these trainings was decidedly small, such that one saw the same faces coast to coast. As to the actual practice of what some seedily referred to as nvda, it seems that the upsurge was minor at the most. Part of this is probably due to several facts: that those who learned these tactics on the fly, rather than through years of experience blocking clearcuts, did not tend to use them very well; the police quickly learned to dismantle such blockades with ease; in practice, few people were actually inspired by the experience of submitting themselves to the mercy of the police and subsequently having their eyelids swabbed with pepperspray, such that for most people, once was enough; people were also disillusioned by nvda because of how frequently they were treated like sheep or cannon fodder by the professional organizers giving the trainings or conducting the meetings. I have seen with my own eyes how well David Solnit can manipulate a large consensus meeting to get a bunch of hyped-up college students excited about locking down and going to jail to satisfy a strategy plan formulated in advance.[22]

In short, after Seattle there was a modest upsurge in nonviolent actions that quickly fizzled out on its own shortcomings. And how about the Black Bloc?

[22] At the November 2001 protest against the School of the Americas, I overheard protest organizers talking about a more creative action plan designed to result in arrests and capture media attention. Later that same day, a large consensus meeting consisting of numerous affinity groups from all over the country and facilitated by Solnit coincidentally happened to formulate that exact same action plan, as though it were their own idea. The affinity group in which I was participating withdrew from the process, in part because the idea did not interest us and in part because the facilitation was manipulated. A couple times, for example, facilitator Solnit avoided a debate that was leading away from the predecided action, saying things like "We're getting stuck on this question, so let's put it aside for the moment and come back to it." Naturally, the conversation was herded back towards its imposed destination and the point of debate was never retaken.

Serbia and Ukraine, the aei trained the activists, but the US government and a number of business foundations funded those activists. For the most part, they did not funnel their money through Gene Sharp or the aei, they gave it directly to the activist and media organizations that were conducting regime change efforts.

The fact of elite support for these movements is inseparable from their results: the Color Revolutions have not improved the lives of their participants (except for the opposition political parties to come out on top) but they have improved the prospects of Western investors and governments.

The Color Revolutions in general, and Gene Sharp's method in particular, are completely lacking in social content and revolutionary perspective. Sharp gives us "a conceptual framework for liberation" that does not even begin to address the concept of liberty. He assumes, uncritically, that a democratic government sets its people free and allows them to change the fundamental social relations that govern their lives.

This is why governments and capitalists support the method and have become its primary backers: because it does not challenge any of the fundamental power dynamics of society, and it does not seek to reveal or abolish the unwritten laws that allow them to profit off of our exploitation and powerlessness. As an added bonus, the method is nonviolent, and because nonviolence is intrinsically weaker, those who use it will never be able to take over space and change the basic power dynamics of society, they can only present an obstacle and demand that others change those dynamics for them. Because nonviolence is helpless, it will not deliver those who fund it any unexpected surprises, as when an armed movement overthrows an unwanted regime, but later misbehaves rather than being the obedient puppet (the Taliban is only one of numerous examples of this outcome). Ironically, the weakness of nonviolence is exactly what makes it a fitting tool, what wins it funding, and what allows it the appearance of strength and effec-

whenever a previously ignored country started getting ink in the *New York Times*, from Haiti to Georgia, it was clear that regime change was on the way). And in every case, the organization responsible for conducting the so-called revolution received funding from progressive capitalists like billionaire George Soros, or from US and EU governmental institutions like usaid, the National Endowment for Democracy (ned), the International Republican Institute (iri), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and Freedom House.

Gene Sharp's own think tank, the Albert Einstein Institute (which trained activists from Otpor in Serbia and Pora in Ukraine), receives funding from some of these same institutions. The aei refutes the charge that they are funded by the government. Stephen Zunes, writing in defense of Sharp for *Foreign Policy in Focus*, claims that "Absolutely none of these claims is true [...] Such false allegations have even ended up as part of entries on the Albert Einstein Institution in *SourceWatch*, *Wikipedia*, and other reference web sites." On *SourceWatch*, we find the information that aei has received funding from the Ford Foundation, the International Republican Institute, and the National Endowment for Democracy (the first name should be well known to readers, the latter two are funded by the US Congress). Are these false claims? Buried in a single paragraph in the middle of his 42-paragraph article, Zunes mentions in passing "a couple of small grants" from the iri and the ned. Evidently, these allegations are not so false after all. We also find the interesting tidbit that Gene Sharp's doctoral dissertation was funded by the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency.

But these evasions, and the ultimately true and factual assertion that Gene Sharp's activities in support of nonviolence are funded by the government, along with several very rich people, ignore the bigger picture: the Albert Einstein Institute works in parallel with these elite institutions. Although the aei is a small operation, it works alongside much bigger players for the same ends. In both

Curiously, the Black Bloc tactic exploded, becoming a commonplace at protests across the country. If the tactic really were unimportant, if the resonance of Seattle truly had nothing to do with its masked rioters, why is it that this tactic more than any other has resonated with people across the country since 1999? Even now, 13 years later, the use of Black Blocs has continued to expand. 13 years later, proponents of nonviolence, including the Solnits, still have to use the same tired lies and manipulations to try to minimize or criminalize a practice that continues to leave their nvda in the dust.

The lesson is clear, for those willing to face the music. In order to show people that we are serious, that we are committed, that we are fighting for our lives, it is better to express unambiguously that we are the enemies of the established order, that we negate their laws, their offers of dialogue, and their false social peace, it is better to attack (and to come dressed for the occasion) than to dress up as clowns, tote about giant puppets, play hard to get with the police, locking down and expecting them to treat us humanely, or wait for the cameras to give our witty protest signs a close-up.

This is not to say that we must be ever grim and serious, nor that our only activity is to smash. Just as we need the full range of tactics, we will express a thousand emotions in our rebellion, from street festivals to funeral marches to riots. But it is our negation of the present system that gives everything else its meaning. Only because we do not frame this as a popularity contest, but as a revolution, as a struggle to destroy the present system and create something wholly new, do all the festive and creative aspects of our struggle break out of the usual cycles of loyal dissent and counterculture that are co-opted from the beginning.

4. The Color Revolutions

Since 2000, the most prevalent method of nonviolent action has been, without a doubt, Gene Sharp's method for regime change, as laid out in his bestselling book, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*. No other method has been explained in such concise, unambiguous terms, and no other method has been as reproducible. Whereas the previous heroes of nonviolence, people like Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., made complicated, intuitive strategic decisions in the midst of a movement that can inspire but that cannot be reproduced, what Sharp offers is not an example, and not a strategy, but a template. It is no coincidence, then, that so many people have seized upon this most reproducible of methods and attempted to reproduce it. *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (*FdtD*) was published in English and Burmese in 1994, and since then has been translated to over thirty languages, especially after 2000 when it was used as "the Bible" of the Serbian Otpor movement, in the words of its members.

The main "Color Revolutions" have already been mentioned: Serbia's "Bulldozer Revolution" in 2000, Georgia's "Rose Revolution" in 2003, Ukraine's "Orange Revolution" in 2004, and, following a slightly different model, Lebanon's "Cedar Revolution" and Kuwait's "Blue Revolution" in 2005.

Sharp's method offers unique opportunities for analysis because, unlike any other nonviolent method since the end of the Cold War, it has achieved success in its own terms. And unlike other nonviolent methods, such as that of Gandhi or King, which overlapped with and are ultimately inseparable from contemporaneous combative methods, the use of Gene Sharp's method

common soldiers, but because the top brass was already amenable to the regime change.

The clever media strategy of the activist organizations behind the Color Revolutions would be so much wasted time if the media simply did not give them any coverage. For decades, the media have disappeared anticapitalist movements from the public eye and edited out any reference to the histories that show a continuity of struggle against capitalism. In the absence of the television cameras, a crowd of people all wearing the same color and holding signs that proclaim "Yes!" would only appear to be a strange sect to the occasional passerby, rather than something to join. The alienated masses of a Color Revolution have not even begun the process of debate, self-education, and expression (not to mention any apprenticeship in writing, editing, layout, printing, broadcasting, and so forth) necessary to assume responsibility for spreading their own ideas without the help of the media. They do not have to do any of this work because the media is already on their side.

In every single Color Revolution, the movement had a large portion of the domestic elite on their side from the beginning. This includes rich people, the owners of the mass media, opposition political parties, academics, religious authorities, and so on. No military organization in the world is going to open fire on protesters who are supported by the country's business elite. Whether in democracy or in dictatorship, military hierarchies form close relationships with a country's "business community." And it is not only the domestic elite that have supported the Color Revolutions. It's no coincidence that every single Color Revolution has replaced a government that had a close relationship with Russia with a government that wanted a closer relationship with the United States and European Union. Each and every Color Revolution received positive media coverage in Western media, usually beginning before the revolution had even started, so that the public was already trained to think of Ukraine, Georgia, or Kyrgyzstan as a corrupt regime in need of changing. (As friends and I discussed at the time,

crowds in a mass and create the pseudo-movement they need to ride to power is to ardently avoid any theoretical debate, any collective discussion of strategy, any envisioning of new worlds or elaboration of social critiques, any truly creative processes. What they want are sheep. Sheep who will dress in orange or pin a rose on their t-shirt, baaa "yes" or "no" in unison, and go home when those entrusted with the thinking have decided it is time.

A Color Revolution is nothing but a putsch, a bloodless coup, a regime change. And this regime change is not in the interests of those who take to the streets. The nonviolent protesters in a Color Revolution never stop being spectators. They are spectators to their own movement, and at no point are they allowed to collectively formulate their interests. The interests, like the strategic decisions, come from above. Because the fundamental characteristic of every Color Revolution, the glue that holds the strategy together, is elite support.

The mass protests and encampments would come to naught if the government simply sent in the military and cleared them out. Not only do nonviolent movements have a track record of powerlessness in the face of police or military force, the particular kind of nonviolence promoted by Gene Sharp and put into practice by Otpor and other groups is the cheapest, flimsiest, most prefab brand of nonviolence imaginable. Gene Sharp is the Sam Walton of nonviolence. Passive participants in Color Revolutions do not go through years of civil disobedience, arrest, and torture to learn how to conduct a sit-in when the police come in with dogs, batons, or tear gas to kick them out. And they are not allowed to have any ideas, properly speaking, that might give them the strength of conviction to stare down the barrel of a gun and accept the possibility they might get killed. The only thing they have is the assurance that the military will not shoot them because it is already on their side. Every successful Color Revolution has been able to count on either the support of the military or military neutrality from the very beginning, not because they battled for the hearts and minds of the

has in fact occurred in a vacuum, in the near or total absence of competing methods for social change. In other words, the histories of the Color Revolutions can tell us accurately what a strict adherence to nonviolence can accomplish.

Otpor, the Serbian movement to overthrow Slobodan Milosevic, was the first real articulation of this nonviolent template, for which Sharp's book offers the materials but not the precise configuration Although Otpor activists seem content to give him all the credit—they were, after all, personally trained by Gene Sharp's Albert Einstein Institute—they also drew on numerous characteristics of Philippine's 1983–86 Yellow Revolution, not explicitly dealt with in *FDtD*. The specific configuration of tactics they chose served as the undisputed model for all subsequent Color Revolutions.

The nonviolent Yellow Revolution used a disputed election and years of frustration with a longstanding chief executive for political leverage; it was protected from government repression by elite support, including the media, an opposition political party, and none other than the archbishop of Manila; it was exclusively a regime change effort with no revolutionary perspectives or social content, only the demands for the abdication of the current ruler and electoral reforms that would allow for the regular cycling of rulers; subsequent regimes were also plagued by corruption and politics as usual; victory did not lead to any structural changes in Philippine society; and the new regime did not close down the sweatshops, obstruct private property or foreign investment, refuse to pay the national debt, or do anything else that might have upset world leaders (they did end the lease on the US military base at Subic Bay, but only after the end of the Cold War; in 2012, with the growth of Chinese naval power, they invited the US military back).

To its credit, this method did lead to people in the Philippines overthrowing another unpopular government in 2001, though this lack of respect for democratic process that the use of disruptive mass protest evidently inculcates should be most embarrassing to Mr. Sharp, who holds democratic government as the highest good.

When Filipinos used the methods of the Yellow Revolution to oust then-President Joseph Estrada, the US government immediately recognized the new regime as legitimate with a diplomatic agility that some might regard as suspicious. In fact, many international and domestic critics regarded the 2001 movement as a form of "mob rule" and alleged a conspiracy among top politicians, business leaders, and military and church officials. The *International Herald Tribune* aptly expresses elite sentiments:

> The peso and stock markets will rise, some investment will return, neighbors and allies will be visibly happier dealing with a hardworking, well educated, economically literate president used to mixing in elite circles and behaving with decorum. However, far from being the victory for democracy that is being claimed by leaders of the anti-Estrada movement such as Cardinal Jaime Sin, the evolution of events has been a defeat for due process.[1]

This criticism opens up much larger questions about democracy that are the focus of another book. For now, we can dismiss this journalist's handwringing with the simple historical recognition that democratic due process has always been imposed by force. With regards to nonviolent methodology, several questions arise that must be dealt with: if nonviolent regime change is best suited to achieving democracy, how can it be that the same method also tramples basic democratic principles like due process? If it is democratic to oust fraudulently elected dictators using mass protests and obstruction, but a "de facto coup" to oust an unpopular, corrupt but elected and impeachable president using those same methods, what is the line between dictatorship and democracy? If due process can be twisted or stacked by dictators, but respect

[1] Philip Bowring, "Filipino Democracy Needs Stronger Institutions." *International Herald Tribune* January 22, 2001. Retrieved January 27, 2009.

for due process is the elemental characteristic of democracy, then are mass protests and disobedience fundamentally democratic or anti-democratic? And why would business, military, political, and religious elites conspire to use a nonviolent movement for greater democracy? The answer to all of these questions is in fact simple, but not within the framework of Gene Sharp, Otpor, or any of the Color Revolutions.

In order to understand that framework, it would help to emphasize a fundamental characteristic of every single Color Revolution. The more obvious features of the Color Revolutions relate to unified, nonviolent mass action subordinated to a viral media strategy. Receiving directions from above, movement members take to the streets in protest, occupy a public square, or carry out some other form of mass disobedience on the same day. They adopt an aesthetic designed to transmit easily via television and internet. A color and a simple slogan, often just one word, are chosen to represent the movement (in Ukraine, for example, the color was orange and the slogan, "yes!"). The movement discourse is equally symbolic, such that discourse, slogan, and color are interchangeable. It is a marketing strategy *par excellence*. To understand the meaning of the color, the public, watching on the television or surfing on the internet, need not read any text or understand any social analysis that the color and slogan refer to. (By contrast, the circle-A or the hammer and sickle designate certain concepts—anarchism and communism—that are not self-explanatory in the present context; to understand them a viewer would have to conduct a certain amount of investigation, ceasing, therefore, to be a passive spectator).

This marketing strategy requires the discourse of the Color Revolutions to be as simple as a color or a slogan: opposition. They are against the current politician in power. The social critique of all the Color Revolutions goes no deeper than that. This lowestcommon-denominator politics serves another function. The only way for a media-savvy activist organization to bring together such diverse

In one particularly stark example of this problem from a December 4, 2011 Occupy Oakland general assembly, "white allies" from a local social justice nonprofit called "The Catalyst Project" arrived with an array of other groups and individuals to Oscar Grant/Frank Ogawa Plaza, in order to speak in favor of a proposal to rename Occupy Oakland to "Decolonize/Liberate Oakland." Addressing the audience as though it were homogeneously white, each white "ally" who addressed the general assembly explained that renouncing their own white privilege meant supporting the renaming proposal. And yet in the public responses to the proposal it became clear that a substantial number of people of color in the audience, including the founding members of one of Occupy Oakland's most active and effective autonomous groups, which is also majority people of color, the "Tactical Action Committee," deeply opposed the measure.

What was at stake was a political disagreement, one that was not clearly divided along racial lines. However, the failure of the renaming proposal was subsequently widely misrepresented as a conflict between "white Occupy" and the "Decolonize/Liberate Oakland" group. In our experience such misrepresentations are not accidental or isolated incidents but a repeated feature of a dominant strain of Bay Area anti-oppression politics which—instead of mobilizing people of color, women, and queers for independent action – has consistently erased the presence of people of color in interracial coalitions.

White supremacy and racist institutions will not be eliminated through sympathetic white activists spend-

government that might be most to blame for Spain's austerity measures, already had an electoral system similar to what Real Democracy Now was demanding). The previous autumn, a general strike had shut down the country for a day and brought the concepts of solidarity and struggle back into common parlance. And just two weeks before May 15, thousands of anticapitalists in Barcelona celebrated the centuries-old tradition of May Day by marching to the wealthy neighborhood of Sarrià and dedicating an hour to the burning of dumpsters and the smashing of banks, car dealerships, and luxury boutiques. The media suppressed news of the march, despite their profit-driven hunger for dramatic images, precisely because they knew how popular that act of violence would be among the lower classes.[2]

Real Democracy Now avoided any mention of this rich history of struggle against capitalism and authority, neglecting everything from the experiences of the previous century to the accomplishments of the prior months, specifically in order to resituate a poten-

[2] The media in general encourages nonviolence, although it also habitually spreads images of violent protest. Although this practice often serves to spread combative forms of protest among the most marginalized, the media's goal is not to "encourage violence" as some would argue. On the contrary, they always editorialize disapprovingly on the images of lower class violence, casting them in a tone meant to train viewers to perceive such violence with the same fear or scorn felt by members of the upper class. This fact is upheld by numerous anecdotes: the fact that Barcelona media suppressed images of the riots on May Day 2011 and the March 29 general strike in 2012 (see "The Rose of Fire Has Returned," fully referenced among the Works Cited); or that several days into the insurrection of December 2008, the Greek media began suppressing images of rioting or only showed images that reinforced the dominant narrative: immigrants looting, students protesting legally. The media try to recuperate images of forceful rebellion, but they recognize that these images are dangerous. Levi's withdrew a major advertising campaign in England that tried to capitalize on the image of rioters—robbing them of their meaning as a rebellious force and turning them into a sexy symbol meant to inspire consumption—when real riots broke out in Tottenham and spread to the rest of the country (Natasha Lennard, "The Selling of Anarchy," *Salon.com*, http://www.salon.com/2012/01/10/the_selling_of_occupy_wall_street/ (January 10, 2012).)

tially revolutionary movement in the reformist terrain of electoral demands. And when their baby turned out to be a giant, some of them (in a pattern that has been repeated so many times throughout history) contemplated forming a political party to ride this giant into power, but they were stopped cold in their endeavor by a sharp backlash from the base.

Nonviolence in the 15M movement, as in so many other movements, meant amnesia, the suppression of a collective memory of struggle and all the experience and wisdom that comes with that memory. People who remember hundreds of years of struggle against authority cannot be tricked into a simple reform that promises to make things better by changing the election laws. People who remember hundreds of years of struggle know that what little they have, they won by fighting. They remember how to make barricades, how to assemble molotov cocktails, how to use guns, how to survive in clandestinity, how to protect themselves against infiltrators. Just as the reformists of Real Democracy Now erased the true history of the uprising in Egypt, full of street battles and burnt police stations, they tried to erase the rich history of anticapitalist struggles in Spain. They tried to tell people who had spent their lives in the streets that the only way to win was to be peaceful because that's what the television says.

It is no coincidence that in precisely those places where social struggles were still alive and well—Barcelona, Madrid, the Basque country—nonviolence failed to control the movement. In cities that did not have strong social movements at the outbreak of 15M, the *indignados* bought into the reformist and nonviolent discourse en masse, and often disappeared after about a month. In Barcelona, it was disconcerting to suddenly shift from one reality, in which the 100 or 1000 people you might meet in the streets all knew that nonviolence was a bad joke, to another one in which the streets were suddenly filled with 500,000 people and 90% of them thought that to accomplish anything we had to discourage vandalism and look good in the media. Given that most of these hundreds of thousands

A similar process of racist silencing happened at a protest in Phoenix in 2010. Indigenous people in struggle together with anarchists called a "Diné, O'odham, anarchist/anti-authoritarian bloc" at a January 16 demo against the notoriously racist sheriff, Joe Arpaio. Threatened by this example of direct, unmediated cross-racial organizing, their willingness to use self-defense, their embrace of a diversity of tactics, and their dissemination of a radical, anti-state, anti-colonization critique, ngos and reformist immigrant movement leaders claimed the indigenous youth in the bloc were ignorant and manipulated pawns being used by their white allies. In the name of anti-racism, they used a paternalistic, racist trope to silence Diné and O'odham protesters, stripping them of their agency.

Identity politics were also used at Occupy Oakland to divide participants, preserve the mediating role of ngos and professionals, and discourage direct attacks on the system. A number of critiques of this discourse arose from the space of debate that Occupiers had created. I want to quote one such critique at length:

> Communities of color are not a single, homogenous bloc with identical political opinions. There is no single unified antiracist, feminist, and queer political program which white liberals can somehow become "allies" of, despite the fact that some individuals or groups of color may claim that they are in possession of such a program. This particular brand of white allyship both flattens political differences between whites and homogenizes the populations they claim to speak on behalf of. We believe that this politics remains fundamentally conservative, silencing, and coercive, especially for people of color who reject the analysis and field of action offered by privilege theory.

by both the patriarchal, trans misogynist, and racist system and the individuals who replicate the attitudes and oppressive actions of the state. For any of us who are not poor and Black or Brown, anarchist or not, we may not usually fear for our lives when police are near, but it is plain as day that if we don't all start acting like it's our very lives at stake as well, not only are we an accomplice to these racist deaths, we foolishly assume we will not be next. For whites who joined in this chorus of "We are all Oscar Grant," this declaration meant that we refused to be another white person, if being white means letting this shit continue to slide for the bogus justification that this racist violence keeps society (read: white people) safe.

The naïveté of identity politics fails us in this way, both in its obsessions with ranking and compartmentalizing privileges and disadvantages and in ignoring instances where actual human beings, their struggles and relationships to one another are far more complex than their identities would tell us.

The spirit behind "We are all Oscar Grant" is indicative of the attitude of the Oscar Grant rebellion as a whole. Despite the fact that many of us did not generally know each other before those nights because of the racial divisions imposed by society and maintained by ourselves, we found glorious moments of struggling with one another in the streets where our identities or experiences were not collapsed into a faux sameness.[14]

[14] From "We Are All Oscar Grant (?), Attacking White Power in Rebellions and Beyond" in *Unfinished Acts* Revised Edition, Oakland, 2012.

were fresh off the couch and new to the streets, the situation confirmed our argument that authority trains people in nonviolence whereas experience trains people in an antagonstic approach, but it was frustratingly slow going. But little by little, people overcame nonviolence. The stronger parts of the 15M movement reconnected with a longer history of struggle, and the weaker parts blew away like dust in the wind.

Those who already had experience in the struggle debated, argued, passed out flyers, put up posters, painted the walls, thought up chants, and carried out actions designed to break the stranglehold of nonviolence. The police, for their part, tried to put an end to the movement with a heavy use of the truncheon, helping people to realize that unlike on the silver screen, in reality the idea that sitting down and getting beaten is dignified is a load of crap. When police brutality successfully overcame the nonviolent resistance of crowds of thousands in Plaça Catalunya, many people started checking their assumptions. Little by little, people began to realize that the police were their enemy, they began supporting the vandalism of banks and political party offices, and they began supporting a diversity of tactics. The debate is still ongoing at the time of this writing. Those who favor pacification still enjoy superior resources and can occasionally mobilize large but passive crowds. And in a few places, activists that flirt with combative methods but still set a limit on acceptable tactics have developed practices of civil disobedience and confrontation interesting enough to maintain an independent activity. But on the whole, the two years since the beginning of the 15M movement have demonstrated a loss of support for strictly nonviolent practices and an exponential growth of support for combative practices.

In October of 2011, when police arrested a number of anarchists accused of assaulting politicians during the June blockade of Parliament—organized from within the framework of the 15M movement—3,000 people came out in a spontaneous solidarity protest (larger than any other spontaneous protest seen

in Barcelona in years) and marched down a central street that is usually closed to protests, interrupting the spectacle of commercialism and spraypainting all the banks. In January 2012, a massive protest during a student strike broke out of the control of its self-appointed leaders and deployed an effective diversity of tactics that confounded the ability of the police to control the streets. The development is especially significant considering that the student movement had previously been controlled by proponents of nonviolence and with the massiveness of 15M, nonviolence was supposedly in a moment of triumph.

Two months later, on March 29, 2012, a general strike brought out crowds that easily rivaled the masses summoned by 15M. But in many cities, these crowds had decided that nonviolence did not meet their needs. In Barcelona, to name the most potent of many examples, as many as 10,000 people participated directly in heavy rioting, the burning of banks and multinationals, and intense fighting with police that lasted for hours. The number of rioters represented a critical growth from earlier occasions. But even more important was the fact that tens of thousands of people remained on the scene, indirectly supporting the rioters, whereas in past riots in Barcelona everyone who was not an ardent supporter of combative tactics would run away at the sound of breaking glass or the arrival of the police. This time, people stayed on, refusing to abandon the rioters, preventing police from surrounding them, cheering, arguing with pacifists and journalists, and helping to remove the injured.

And in the months after this, people upheld solidarity, opposing the new repressive measures the government adopted to crush resistance, and supporting the dozens of people arrested.

At the beginning of the 15M movement, most of the people who responded to the call of Real Democracy Now were content to submit themselves to a nonviolent discipline. But nonviolence proved insufficient to defend the space they had begun to conquer, and the

place at the front-lines, participating in the supposedly masculine rebellion without apprehension. Their participation is significant as it throws a wrench into the logic of peace-loving, docile femininity and what self-determination looks like for some who live on the axis of gender tyranny and white supremacy.

Although most police shooting victims are Black and Brown men, the Oscar Grant rebellions show us that their deaths affect and outrage masses of people across race and gender lines. During each demonstration and riot where folks gathered to express their rage in the face of Oscar Grant's murder and what his death represented, the chant "We are all Oscar Grant!" rang through the downtown streets of Oakland. For those indoctrinated into the logic popularized by the non-profit organizing culture that treats identity and experiences of oppression as one in the same, it is inappropriate for anyone other than people of color to yell this slogan. This critique falls flat for many as it is assuming that we yell this to declare collective victimhood rather than a collective proclamation to not be victims. We'd be hard pressed to find any individuals in this society who are victims, but have never been victimizers or vice-versa.

For those of us who are poor and Black or Brown, anarchist or not, we cannot claim to share every experience with Oscar Grant, but we do live our days with the knowledge that we could have the same fate as him if this class-society, with its racialized implications, is not reckoned with. For women and queers, especially those of us who also are not white, our experiences may not mirror Oscar Grant's life and death, but we too live with the sick threat of violence on our bodies

with people from different churches and ngos, donned bright vests and linked arms to protect property and prevent rioting. Many accused any white person they saw (some of whom were Oakland residents, some of whom were not) of irresponsibly endangering youth of color. They didn't say anything about all the white people who stay home every time the cops kill a young black man. It's only natural that when people go into the streets, they will join up with those who want to use the same tactics. Combative anarchists who came in solidarity rioted alongside black youth. Proponents of nonviolence from outside Oakland, on the other hand, joined up with religious leaders, ngos, and black Democratic Party figureheads to try to control the protests. The claim that outside white anarchists were responsible for the riots is the truly racist one, as it silences the many black youth—some of them friends and neighbors of Oscar Grant—who were the main protagonists of the clashes in the streets.

> The Oscar Grant rebellions gave us a little glimpse of people in the Bay Area doing just this. In the riots we saw the collective power of Black and Brown young people battling with little fear, against the established white supremacist order. Surprisingly there was also a small showing of white people in the rebellion as well. This brief show of solidarity from white folks—both those who do have experiences of being criminalized poor young people and those who grew up with relative comfort—reveals that white people can have agency to violently oppose a clearly racist institution side-byside with non-whites without pretending to share identity or experience with them when it is not the case.
>
> Also, contrary to dominant narratives that paint the essence of riots as male-dominated affairs, many queer and female (mostly non-white) comrades took their

accompanying democratic rhetoric lacked the words to describe all the ways power was screwing them over.

This insufficiency cannot be attributed to an incomplete development of nonviolence. Far from being just a passive mass, the *indignados* attempted to develop a full repertoire of peaceful tactics. Protests, sit-ins, blockades, press conferences, refusal to pay new taxes, marches to the European Parliament or to Madrid, internet protests, and campaigns to "hit them where it hurts the most" by withdrawing from personal bank accounts all on the same day (not the place where it really hurts them the most). None of it worked.

The nonviolence of the *indignados* quickly became a parody of itself. Blocking the streets became "violence," writing on the walls became "violence," even turning a bit of lawn in the plaza into a guerrilla garden became "violence" because it was a violation of the law. Quickly, they turned "violent" into a synonym for "illegal," which was especially hypocritical given that the very premise of the plaza occupation movement—to maintain the protests throughout the election weekend—was a violation of nothing less than the Spanish Constitution (at the last minute, a judge decreed—in the face of the size and determination of the protests—that according to some loophole, the occupations were legal and the police therefore did not have to evict them; which would have marred the elections with a huge scandal that neither of the political parties wanted, proving once again that law and justice are nothing but theater, the formalized negotiation of underlying power relations).

On more than a few occasions in the name of nonviolence, activists tackled, hit, or tried to arrest people guilty of spraypainting, wearing a mask, or committing some minor form of vandalism. Their commitment to nonviolence also compelled them to justify the actions of the police, declare that the police were friends and public servants, while simultaneously claiming that masked protesters were "police provocateurs." In the name of nonviolence, they formed committees charged with keeping out antisocial elements, and they organized citizen patrols that attempted to kick

out the illegal immigrants that took refuge in the occupied plazas or to hand them over to the police.

> There were also problems with certain junkies and drunkards who had taken up residence in the plaza and constantly harassed or even assaulted women. Pacifist organizers and the Convivencia Commission tried to prevent the feminist assembly in the plaza from organizing self-defense classes and taking care of the problem on their own, instead paternalistically offering to protect them.[3]

This interpretation of nonviolence is not a perversion particular to the 15M movement in Spain. In countries across the world, nonviolence has constituted a slippery slope towards increasingly pacified tactics. As explained in Chapter 1, placing strategic importance on the category of violence surrenders power to the media to tell us which tactics are acceptable and which are not. Nonviolence, by being anti-conflictual in a society predicated on an irreconcilable conflict, seeks reconciliation with the same authorities who dominate us, and this means a tendency to avoid that which is most controversial in the eyes of power. It was only a matter of time until pacifists define "violence" as a "violation of the law." After all, law and peace are related concepts. In practice, they do not refer to freedom or well-being, but to order, and in this society order is founded on subjugation to authority by any means. Finally, because proponents of nonviolence defer the task of building popular support for difficult methods of struggle, it is natural that they rely on the media to win a virtual popularity or to spread their message (which must be reduced into an image). This reliance on the media requires them to adopt certain values of the media, and these are the values of the corporations that own the media.

[3] From "Fire Extinguishers and Fire Starters: Anarchist Interventions in the #SpanishRevolution," http://www.crimethinc.com/texts/recentfeatures/barc.php (June 2011).

with anarchist) was in fact an undercover cop allowed the power of suggestion to alter what hundreds of thousands of people were seeing.

There are many people out there who want to destroy banks or kick the police off the streets, and they have impeccable reasons for doing so. The fact that proponents of nonviolence have been using any means necessary to hide those reasons only shows how incapable they are of justifying their own practices.

Another common discourse that serves to criminalize rioting is the idea that breaking the law, rioting, or using "violence" is a privileged activity that puts oppressed people in danger. Taking advantage of the fact that people in a Black Bloc are often so well masked that it is impossible to tell their race or gender, some aficionados of identity politics have made the claim that Black Bloc anarchists are all white males, even coining the term "manarchists" to describe them. To ridicule this idea, someone created the website, *Look At These Fucking Manarchists*[13], featuring hundreds of images of riots and armed struggles from around the world, showing women, people of color, people with disabilities, transgender people, and queer people building barricades, fighting with police, burning banks, or physically defending themselves, juxtaposed with ironic captions. A picture of armed women from an anarchist militia in the Spanish Civil War is captioned, "C'mon manarchists, fascism has to be fought by using our nonviolent feminine wiles, not hypermasculine aggression!" A photo from a February 2013 protest in Bolivia in which people in wheelchairs fought with riot police after traveling hundreds of miles to the capital was captioned, "This week in Bolivia, a bunch of ableist manarchist rioters clashed with police forces over the country's broken welfare system. Don't they know that fighting cops is really privileged and fucked up?"

During the January 14, 2009 protests for Oscar Grant, a week after the first riots, white activists from the Catalyst Project, together

[13] http://latfmanarchists.tumblr.com/

> ment is susceptible to police provocateurs. The actual police provocateurs that were ousted on February 12th were posing as journalists, not the black bloc. Another very clear example of this is what happened in Montebello when police provocateurs did present themselves as the black block, they were first outed by the black block themselves.

The most upsetting part of this conspiracy theory is that it is clearly designed to sabotage debate. It becomes impossible to debate masking up or damaging property if such tactics are presented as police provocation strategies. And the mass media themselves help to spread the theory in a clear attempt to discredit enemies of the State. In one case after a protest in France, the conspiracy theory against the Black Bloc was so widely spread by bloggers, nonviolence proponents, and the corporate mass media themselves, that the police got angry about this attack on their reputation. Mobilizing all their resources, they identified, tracked down, and arrested the masked anarchist who conspiracy bloggers had supposedly proven was a cop (in a typical stunt, they took advantage of a grainy video to claim that a stick the anarchist was holding was a police club). Once the person was arrested and proved to be a fellow protester, the nonviolent activists and conspiracy nuts suddenly went silent.

Conspiracy bloggers have been extremely effective at using underhanded means and the superficial medium of the internet to fabricate "proof." In the case of a protest in Madrid, they circulated proof that the masked protesters were police infiltrators by showing a video of an undercover cop mistakenly tackled and beaten by fellow cops. The remarkable thing that no one commented on despite hundreds of thousands of views, is that the video shows an undercover cop who is not wearing a mask and not even dressed in black. The simple fact that the video was tagged by a title claiming that an "*encapuchado*" ("masked one," practically synonymous

Nor is it a contradiction that proponents of nonviolence would physically attack other protesters in the name of their peaceful method. The first time I was ever assaulted in a protest, it was not at the hands of the police but by a peace cop, a pacifist appointed to prevent disorder in a protest. This is a logical extension of the nonviolent position. A fundamental tenet of nonviolence is that it is legitimate to impose a singular method and a limited set of tactics over an entire movement. This is authoritarian thinking. Nonviolent activists confer upon themselves the right to force other people to participate in a particular way, or to exclude them. As such, nonviolence is the usurpation of a social movement, of public space, of a collective activity. Whether they carry out this coup by hitting protesters they disagree with, silencing or ostracizing them with peer pressure, or exposing them to arrest by police, they are only acting out the authoritarian nature of nonviolence.

Real Democracy Now believed that it owned the 15M movement and could therefore impose decisions on it, like the commitment to nonviolence. But the movement was not created by Real Democracy Now, even though they authored the call-out. It was created by the many people who took to the streets and began to self-organize, for a diversity of reasons and with a diversity of goals. If they can, nonviolent activists will use the decision of some assembly or coalition to legitimize their enforcement of one method of struggle on a diverse movement. But when there is no such façade of legitimacy, their ideology will still compel them towards the same act of enforcement. In numerous protests where organizers have agreed to a diversity of tactics, from the Toronto G8 to the rnc in St. Paul, without fail there have been nonviolent activists who have broken the agreement and denounced the "bad protesters" in the media. In the 15M movement, the ideologues of nonviolence imposed a decision made in an assembly of a few dozen on an entire movement that came to include hundreds of thousands.

If a speaker in the general assembly criticized the practice of nonviolence, the moderators would often cut them off, saying "We

have agreed to be nonviolent, and besides if we are violent we will lose," before ending the debate and handing the microphone to the next person waiting in line. When anarchists reserved the sound system and the central space in the plaza to hold a debate on nonviolence, the paper on which the reservation was written down suspiciously disappeared. When they reserved it again, it disappeared again, and a new paper appeared with another event written down for the same day and time. Without the sound system, no more than 100 people could participate in the event, which had to be held on the margins of the plaza. The group that assembled included anarchists as well as democrats, and no few supporters of nonviolence, but none of them were in favor of the kind of nonviolence imposed on the movement. However, the debate was unofficial. Shunned to the margins, it had no weight in the general assembly and could not contradict the decisions of movement leaders. Nonetheless, the movement would eventually come to disobey those leaders and abandon the practice of nonviolence. After about a month, most people had left the plaza occupations to the die-hard activists and would-be politicians. Those who had not given up on the struggle, and these were still a numerous group, began to participate in the neighborhood assemblies, in a labor union, in the mobilizations to resist home foreclosures, in the occupation of universities, hospitals, and primary care centers, or in other areas of struggle. All of these were structures or spaces that predated the 15M movement and included a deeper critique of capitalist society and a better sense of history.

But the experience of the 15M movement had entered into that history of struggle, and the lesson was clear: nonviolence served the interests of the media, the police, and would-be politicians, but for people who wanted to get to the roots of the problems they faced and transform society, nonviolence did not work.

their deportation of thousands of immigrant anarchists. And they used it again during the Red Scare. Given the history of nonviolent support for repression, it should be no surprise that some proponents of nonviolence are using it now.

A more virulent strain of this discourse has suddenly become popular over the last few years, spread by conspiracy nut bloggers like Alex Jones. This is the conspiracy theory that the Black Bloc is infiltrated by police provocateurs, or even that the bloc is entirely a creation and tool of the police, used to "discredit legitimate protests." Stalinists have been making this claim for years, first against anarchists in general and then against Black Blocs in particular when these appeared on the scene. The accusation dates back at least to the Spanish Civil War, when Stalinists tried to neutralize anarchists by claiming they were secretly fascist agents. An especially hypocritical claim, given how it was later revealed that Stalin was partially supporting, partially sabotaging the antifascist effort in Spain in order to draw out the conflict and convince Hitler to sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. With such a great pedigree, it was only a matter of time before the less principled proponents of nonviolence began using this argument. The website *In Defense of the Black Bloc* (violentanarchists.wordpress.com) documents and disputes examples of this conspiracy theory used by pacifists, journalists, rightwing bloggers, Stalinists, and others, in dozens of cases in Canada, the US, Mexico, Chile, Spain, France, Greece, the UK, Italy, and elsewhere. They also compile histories showing how practices of masking up or carrying out anonymous attacks or acts of sabotage have constituted a legitimate part of social struggles from below for hundreds of years.

Harsha Walia, in her "Ten Points on the Black Bloc," hits the nail on the head once again:

> There is this idea, relating to anonymity, that the bloc is more susceptible to provocateurs. The entire move-

> the presence of unruly anarchists has elicited much hand-wringing concern from them, especially when anarchists steal the show with their violent antics (which, by the way, not once causes the least bit of introspection among Leftists about why their politics and tactics are just so damn uninteresting in the first place).[12]

Notwithstanding the widespread critique of their behavior, NIMBYs continue to express their absolute rejection of any tactics of struggle that might put them in danger. Usually, this happens as an emotional condemnation that is not juxtaposed with their hypocritical support for revolutionary movements in other countries, allowing the NIMBYs to hide the contradiction. But on the few occasions that they express both contradicting poles of their position, they never explain why people over there can fight back and suffer the consequences of an uncompromising struggle, while over here people should stay calm, not do anything that might provoke repression, and follow the law, except for the occasional misdemeanor.

One of the most common discourses to demonize the Black Bloc is the argument that they are outside agitators. During the Oscar Grant riots, the media, the police, and proponents of nonviolence spoke with the same voice, claiming that the rioters were white anarchists from outside Oakland, come to take advantage of the situation and cause trouble. Delegitimizing rioters as outside agitators, and equating the categories of "anarchist" and "outside agitator" is nothing but the regurgitation of a longstanding government smear tactic. The US government used it when anticapitalist struggles heated up after World War i to justify the Palmer Raids and

[12] Ashen Ruins, "Against the Corpse Machine: Towards a Post-Leftist Anarchist Critique of Violence," http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ashen-ruins-against-the-corpse-machinedefining-a-post-leftist-anarchist-critique-of-violence (2002).

7. Policing the Black Bloc, Disappearing the Ghetto

One of the main functions of nonviolence, both in the last two decades and historically, has been to attack currents of struggle that actually threaten the State. In recent years, this has meant that nonviolent activists increasingly assume the role of peace police who help criminalize and marginalize those who riot, whether they be anarchists in a Black Bloc or residents of an urban ghetto.

When they take on the role of peace police, they are acting in tandem with the government and the media, and in multiple cases they have in fact been working directly with or for the police or the corporate media.

In the late '90s and early '00s, people throughout the US Midwest struggled against the construction of i-69, one of the new nafta superhighways designed to accommodate an increase in north-south traffic with the intensification of market integration from Canada to Mexico. Centered in Indiana, farmers, environmentalists, and anarchists tried to stop the construction. Their resistance included blockades, protests, awareness-raising, and sabotage. Some farmers destroyed construction equipment or shot at surveyors, while a number of sabotage actions were carried out by radical environmentalist and anarchist groups. As the resistance grew, it also became fashionable, and a large number of people from the folk-punk music scene who had been influenced by environmentalist and anarchist ideas flocked in and began to take part. However, these musicians and folk punks showed a strong adherence to nonviolence and shied away from

any real social conflict. On a number of occasions, they spoke out against property damage, in favor of the right of bankers to be bankers, explaining that sabotage against banks was a violation of that right, and at one major protest they organized patrols to prevent vandalism against companies connected to the highway construction. This was especially hypocritical because many of them, aspiring to be professional musicians, sang about resistance, some would say exploiting histories of struggle where people had used the very tactics that they were trying to criminalize.

Nonviolent activists in the Bay Area joined religious leaders and politicians in trying to discourage riots in the aftermath of the police murder of Oscar Grant on January 1, 2009. During the protest on the day of Grant's funeral, would-be protest leaders tried direct the crowd in a non-confrontational direction. White activists tried to protect property and discourage rioting. Afterwards, the media, politicians, ngos, and nonviolent activists blamed the rioting on white anarchists from outside Oakland. A look at the photos confirms what participants themselves asserted: that the majority of those rioting were not white, and in fact many were friends and neighbors of Oscar Grant. But proponents of nonviolence, together with politicians and the media, disappear all of these people in order to portray rioting as something inappropriate, opportunistic, privileged, and even racist. In the end, what they are criminalizing is solidarity, by reinforcing the idea that when the police murder someone, it is only the concern of the family members, and the rest of us should look the other way. But far from being a bad idea, the riots in response to Oscar Grant's murder brought results. They generated a strong new cycle of struggle across the West Coast, gave birth to a practice of fighting back against police violence, and directly influenced Occupy Oakland to transform into something more powerful than any other Occupy. More immediately, they led to the first case in California state history of an on-duty police officer charged with murder. In the seven days after the shoot-

avoided debate while using the media to spread the typical clichés of nonviolence.

This was a major change from the years after the Seattle protests of 1999, when the "nonviolence/diversity of tactics" debate was held ad nauseum.[11] It became clear in more recent movements that proponents of nonviolence knew they had already lost the debate.

Many anti-authoritarians who denounce the Black Bloc claim not to be pacifists, and in fact they often fetishize armed revolutions or insurrections in other countries, but as soon as any kind of disturbance or property destruction happens anywhere near them, they freak out and invent all sorts of reasons why property damage, self-defense, or fighting back are wrong, short of condemning these things categorically.

Critique of this Not In My Backyard tendency has circulated widely for decades. In a widely distributed pamphlet written in 2002, one anarchist wrote about critics of "violence" who were:

> really just a bunch of racist NIMBYs [footnote removed] who, while supporting the violent struggles of non-white people abroad, fear its implications at home (Chiapas but not here; East Timor but not here; Colombia but not here, etc). In fact, many North American Leftists strongly condemn the State's increasing war against the farc and other violent authoritarian communist groups while effectively blaming the anarchists here in America for the police repression at mass actions. Until the World Economic Forum protest in New York and the September 11th attacks weeded most of them out, the Left has claimed exclusive ownership over the major protests, while

[11] To be clear, the nonviolent side used a whole array of manipulations to control those debates, and it was in response to one such manipulated debate in 2004 that I originally wrote *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, but in those days at least they engaged with opposing ideas.

in social movements on a desire to impose one methodology on everyone else, and agents of the State, who want to make sure that all efforts to change society pass through the legal channels sanctioned by the same people who own society and are responsible for its worst problems. Because activists in the very social movements that supposedly oppose police violence, precarity, poverty, exclusion, and a host of other problems actively spread the value of nonviolence, politicians, police spokespersons, and reporters can subsequently utilize the principle of nonviolence to rein in social movements that are starting to misbehave. And they can pressure proponents of nonviolence to adopt the functions of police by attacking or marginalizing Black Blocs and other rioters and troublemakers.

Some of these peace police operate by physically attacking lawbreakers in the name of nonviolence. Others by unmasking or filming those who try to protect their identities, and making these videos available to police (whether by handing them over directly, or putting them on Facebook, which has become the primary investigative tool of police agencies across the planet). Still others form cordons to control protests and keep people on the sidewalk or prevent them from vandalizing banks and corporate stores. Here we see another common trait that many principled supporters of nonviolence share with police: more concern for the well-being of corporate property than for the well-being of fellow protesters.

These heterogeneous supporters of nonviolence use a wide range of discourses to justify their actions or to further exclude those who fight back. It is interesting to note how some will comment to the media about the merits of nonviolence, but very few willingly debate in favor of nonviolence with its critics. In the Occupy movement in the US, the student movement in the UK, or the plaza occupation movement in Spain, most of the people to engage in these debates were those who had no prior experience in social struggles. Those with experience either justified themselves in other ways, used arguments that made debate impossible, or

ing, prosecutors made it clear they preferred to look the other way. Only after the riots did they decide to press charges.

In the wake of the Oscar Grant riots, stronger resistance against police killings spread across the West Coast, sometimes thanks to the family or friends of those killed, in part thanks to anarchist activity, and in part thanks to lone individuals such as Christopher Monfort or Maurice Clemmons shooting back and killing cops in retaliation for various acts of police brutality or murder. On the whole, the reaction of leftists, ngos, and even many anarchists—people who supposedly condemn police violence or the institution of the police as a whole—was silence or even condemnation. People were not supposed to resist *like that*, nor should we sympathize with "cop-killers" nor explore their common-sense reasons for shooting back. Monfort, for his part, explained his actions eloquently, referring to several high-profile cases of police brutality that had occurred in prior months, in a speech the media passed off as "rambling," their typical strategy of portraying rebels who go beyond protest as insane. Activists nominally opposed to police brutality did nothing to counter this misinformation.

Obviously, many people sympathized with Monfort, Clemmons, and others who dared shoot back at cops, interrupting the weekly cases of killings by police, but their applause had to occur in silence. Anarchists were probably the first in the Pacific Northwest to openly speak out in support of the men of color who had shot back at the cops. And starting in 2010, they began taking to the streets and carrying out attacks against the police in direct response to police murders. In part, they were influenced by anarchist participation in the Oscar Grant riots at the beginning of 2009, and by the dignified response of anarchists in Greece to the police murder of a young comrade with a month of heavy rioting. But already back in 2001, anarchists had participated in riots in Cincinnati in response to the police murder of Timothy Thomas, at a time when many were debating why anarchists were often absent from urban rebellions or unresponsive to police murders.

On March 23, 2010, 50 to 100 anarchists in Portland, Oregon, responded with a spontaneous march when police murdered a homeless man, Jack Collins. An article from anarchistnews.org details how the protest developed, the psychological atmosphere it created, and how a few supporters of nonviolence attempted to control the actions of others:

> When word spread that the Portland police had just shot a man to death at the Hoyt Arboretum, we knew we had to make a choice: to allow ourselves to be human, or to participate in our own murders, to hide away in sleep and the unfolding of a routine that ends, for all of us, in death. It's a choice that has been made for us so many times before: by the media, by community leaders, professional activists, bosses, teachers, parents, friends who do not push us to confront this fear with them. We are killing ourselves with so much swallowed rage.
>
> Tonight, we would not go to sleep with this sour feeling in our stomachs. Tonight, we gave a name to what we feel: rage. This is how it started.
>
> Within hours of word getting out, local anarchists met in a park, and decided we had to march on the police station. Not the central precinct: that neighborhood would be dead at this hour. We wanted to shout at the police, but also to find our neighbors, to talk to the other folks in our community, to let them know what happened and call them down into the streets with us. To not let them find out about this murder in the sanitized commentary of the glowing screen but to meet them and cry out to them, the rage and sadness plain in our faces: we cannot live with what has happened. We cannot allow this to go on.

The actions of another person working for the system show how much damage can be caused by someone taking advantage of the weaknesses of nonviolence. Chris Hedges, a *New York Times* journalist, posed as a movement participant when writing his opinion piece, "The Cancer of Occupy," a poorly researched hatchet job on the Black Bloc. Supporters of nonviolence were willing to let this elite journalist pass himself off as one of us and redefine movement debates. Once Brandon Darby was revealed as a snitch, he was ostracized by the movement. But after Chris Hedges carried out a dishonest attack on anarchists in the Occupy movement, many supporters of nonviolence not only continued to take him seriously, they helped him win a larger audience. Evidently, nonviolent activists consider fellow protesters who reject nonviolence a greater enemy than opportunistic, highly paid journalists from the most powerful newspaper on the planet. Brandon Darby succeeded in feeding information about a few dozen activists and anarchists to the FBI. Chris Hedges succeeded in spreading misinformation about one part of the movement (another common repressive tactic) to tens of thousands. What's more, his discourse dovetailed perfectly with FBI efforts to criminalize anarchists and the Occupy movement, supplying the repressive machine with more fodder. Hedges' yellow journalism and FBI repression had the same aims, to pacify the movement, and the fears they produced fed into one another. I talk more about Chris Hedges in Chapter 8.

All of these cases involve very different types of people, from committed, principled pacifists, to opportunistic NGO activists or journalists, as well as would-be protest leaders, authoritarian socialists, and random wingnuts. The attempt to control or marginalize those who riot is an activity that unifies a broad spectrum of participants in social movements, together with the journalists, police, and politicians who want to pacify or destroy those movements. At the heart of this activity is a desire to control and a fear of the rebellion of the most oppressed. This authoritarianism is shared by proponents of nonviolence, who predicate their participation

Occupy movement from his new column on the rightwing Breitbart.com, Darby's rejection of the use of violence by political movements is crystal clear.

Trying to score an easy point, many proponents of nonviolence will argue that since an FBI informant like Darby convinced people to make molotov cocktails, the government wants us to use violent means, and that by "using violence" we are doing the work of the government. This thinking is superficial. Darby and other FBI informants convince people to break a law so that they can be caught in the act. The two Texas anarchists arrested in St. Paul thanks to Darby's snitching were arrested just for conspiring to make molotov cocktails, similar to how Eric McDavid is serving 20 years in prison just for conspiring to bomb a dam, in a plot concocted, funded, and advanced entirely by an FBI informant. In his case, no bomb was even constructed.

The FBI does not try to spread combative tactics within a social movement, they try to catch people red-handed and lock them up for life. Because they aren't the sharpest crayons in the box, nearly the only way they have been able to do this is by threatening people until they agree to snitch, or by using psychologically manipulative informants to convince impressionable targets to take on an action they are not ready for. The FBI focus on those willing to go beyond peaceful protest clearly shows what kind of activities worry them more.

Nonetheless, Darby's action took advantage of a major weakness in the practice of anarchists who reject nonviolence. By posing as a supporter of extreme tactics, he was able to get two people imprisoned because the broader scene left themselves vulnerable to someone who used intimidation, bullying, and macho posturing, someone they did not know well enough to trust in a situation of such great risk. For this reason, the damage that Darby caused reflects more poorly on the supporters of a diversity of tactics in the two cities where he was active than on the supporters of nonviolence.

The march left the park and headed through a residential neighborhood, interrupting the dead Monday night silence of consumer-workers recovering from another day ripped from their grasp. Chanting at the top of our lungs, we encountered our own anger, our own sense of power. "And now one slogan to unite us all: cops, pigs, murderers."

Many expected this march to be only symbolic. Few were prepared for anything more. But we encountered a collective force that amplifies the individual rather than smothering each one of us in the mass. The two who took the initiative to drag a dumpster into the street changed the history of this city. This small sign of sabotage spread. We all made it our own.

When the first little garbage containers were brought into the road, a couple people put them back on the sidewalk, trying to clean up the march, to make it respectable. They were confronted, shouted at. "This doesn't send a message," they said. "You can do that if you want, but go somewhere else," they said. But we have nowhere to go, except for the spaces we violently reclaim. And our message is unmistakable: we are angry, and we are getting out of hand. People continued to be uncontrollable, and soon those who had appointed themselves the censors of our struggle saw that it was they who were in the wrong place. No one attempted to control their participation. They were not allowed to control ours.

Once we got on Burnside Avenue, dumpsters were being turned over every hundred feet, blocking both directions. Folks had scavenged rocks and bottles and sticks and drums. One person had had the foresight to bring a can of spraypaint, also changing the history of

our moment. We were no longer a protest. We were vengeance.

When the crowd passed the first bank, a few individuals erupted into action, while others watched their backs. The atm got smashed. A window got smashed. Rocks and bottles were thrown. Sirens began ringing out behind us. A Starbucks appeared one block ahead. A race: could we get there before the pigs arrived? We won. More windows broke.

When the police tried to get us on to the sidewalk, they were shocked by the intensity of rage they faced. "Fuck the police!" "Murderers!" Their lights and sirens had no effect. Someone shoved a dumpster into the lead cop car. They were temporarily speechless.

Only when the cops outnumbered the people did they try again, with some pepper spray and brute force finally succeeding to push us onto the sidewalk. But we were smart. We knew we couldn't win a fight just then, and every chance we got we took the street again. We didn't surrender: they had to work for it. And never did we surrender our power over the mood of the night. Louder than their sirens were our ceaseless screams, our chants, focusing our range and wiping the arrogant smiles off the pigs' faces. They were visibly upset by the level of hatred they encountered.

We got to the police station and yelled at the line of police waiting there for us, yelled at the media parasites standing by with their cameras, calling out their complicity in police violence and racism. Most of us didn't worry about sending the proper message or appearing respectable. We expressed our rage and the power of

anarchists to make molotov cocktails for the Republican National Convention protests. They were arrested before they could use them. It was only in the course of their trial that Darby was outed as an informant.

The example of Darby may seem like a strawman to principled proponents of nonviolence, because Darby is not a pacifist. However, to those of us who have to share the streets with pacifists, the distinction is not always so clear. We have been hit by pacifists, snitched on, filmed, turned over to the police, or ejected from protests, all in the name of nonviolence. The fact of the matter is, violence is an ambiguous category, so nonviolence inevitably becomes an exercise in hypocrisy. Even Gandhi organized a volunteer effort

to support two British colonial wars in South Africa. The same criteria that can label Gandhi a supporter of nonviolence can also be applied to Brandon Darby. Darby might have been a fan of Che Guevara, but nowadays most people who side with nonviolence also fetishize Guevara or the Zapatistas or violent rebellions that happen far away. This is the "Not In My Backyard" tendency, and it has long been a part of nonviolent practice on the Left. Violence over there is always seen as exciting, violence here is seen as dangerous and inappropriate. Furthermore, a large part of Darby's violent posturing was intended to entrap activists who might be inclined to use combative, illegal means.

The fact of the matter is, Darby was motivated by a political condemnation and a philosophical rejection of violence in social movements. In a December 29, 2008 open letter he published on *Indymedia*, Darby denounced those who take action motivated by "anger and hatred" and explained how "The majority of the activists who went to St. Paul did so with pure intentions and simply wanted to express their disagreements with the Republican Party," making a distinction between good protesters who only want to voice their opinions, and bad protesters who wanted to take action and, in his mind, deserved to go to prison. In subsequent writings about the

> from the green and orange zone have not denounced the black block, so why are other people doing it? […]
>
> There is this idea that because we have now been denounced in the media, we have lost our credibility. As far as I am concerned, the media was never on our side! The media is not the gauge of the success of our protests, and the corporate media and the police should not be let off the hook by us replicating their smears and their denunciations. Instead, we should be very clear about not denouncing our comrades as violent. The fact that the media is not picking up on why there is property destruction against the Hudson's Bay Company is not the fault of the black block. The media has not picked up for seven years on why people are protesting the Olympics.[10]

The 2008 protests in St. Paul against the Republican National Convention were also organized with a diversity-of-tactics framework, the "St. Paul Principles." To undermine what was on the whole a powerful protest that included a diverse group of people and partially interrupted the spectacle of the Republican convention, one activist went far beyond working *with* the police. Brandon Darby, an activist who had previously participated in the Common Ground Collective in New Orleans, was working *for* the police since 2006 or earlier. Riad Hamad, a Palestinian activist he informed on, had his house raided by the FBI and turned up dead a short while later, bound and gagged in a lake (the police ruled it a suicide and the FBI refuses to release their files). Multiple times, he had suggested carrying out arson attacks to anarchists in New Orleans and in Texas, in an effort to entrap them. In 2008, in direct collaboration with the FBI, he successfully convinced two younger

[10] Harsha Walia, *Ten Points on the Black Bloc* published as a pamphlet by Rise Like Lions in 2011. http://riselikelions.net/pamphlets/14/10-points-on-the-black-bloc.

our analysis, our ability and willingness to take initiative and change this world.

The first TV news clips, ironically, were the best we could have hoped for, but we do not put our hope in the media. We will communicate our critique of the police to the rest of the city with our protests, our fliers, our bodies, our communiqués. With graffiti and smashed windows.

It should also be noted that the police have not yet released the race of the person killed. We don't know yet which community is "most affected" by this murder. We respond because police violence affects all of us, because we want to show solidarity every time the State executes someone. We know that racism is a critical feature of control in this society, and we also believe we must find ways to act responsibly as allies to communities that are not our own. But solidarity must be critical, and it can only be practiced by those who are struggling for their own freedom. It is clear from tonight's actions that we fight against police violence because we feel rage and sadness whenever they kill someone.

We fight in solidarity with everyone else who fights back. And by fighting, we are remembering what it is like to be human.

In these moments when we surprise ourselves, we catch little glimpses of the world we fight for. Running down the streets, stooping to pick up a rock, we realize that in our hand we have nothing less than a building block of the future commune.

Our commune is the rage that spreads across the city, setting little fires of vengeance in the night. Our com-

> mune is the determination that comes back to the public eye the next day, meeting in the open, not letting the rest of society forget this murder, not letting our neighbors numb themselves with routine. Our commune rattles the bars of our cages, and this noise is our warcry: "out into the streets."[1]

Anarchists continued with multiple sabotage actions, attacks against police stations, protests, open assemblies, and occupations. Authorities took the unusual step of firing the cop who two months earlier had killed an unarmed black man, Aaron Campbell, shooting him in the back with an assault rifle. Not content with any reforms, anarchists across the West Coast organized the "West Coast Days of Action Against State Violence" on April 8 and 9, which connected ongoing efforts of solidarity with those arrested in the Bay Area during the Oscar Grant riots, and with responses to recent police killings in the Pacific Northwest. In Seattle, the "Days of Action" saw an anti-police protest with a Black Bloc that took the streets and engaged in scuffles with the police. However, in the fallout of the protest many fractures appeared among those who had participated. One part, focused largely on music and cultural activities, denounced the distribution of a pamphlet, "Some People Shoot Back," that offered a critical but sympathetic perspective on the case of Christopher Monfort. These activists, disturbed that anyone would sympathize with a cop-killer, subsequently distanced themselves from political activity outside of their immediate diy scene. Others, including NGO employees, criticized the Black Bloc for endangering youth of color who were participating.

Many of those who preferred nonviolent methods subsequently avoided street protests against police violence. Evidently, they preferred not to be associated with a movement against police that used combative methods, instead of finding ways to comfortably

[1] Anonymous, "Police Murder in Portland, anarchists respond with vengeance," http://anarchistnews.org/?q=node/10921 (March 23, 2010).

clear indication that we would not behave, we would not negotiate, and that the world we are fighting for has no place in it for them. That is exactly the kind of message that would-be politicians and ngos cannot find any way to profit off of.

In the aftermath of the riots in Toronto, at least one conspiracy theorist blogger who claimed that the Black Bloc anarchists were police provocateurs contradictorily helped police identify and arrest one such anarchist.

When indigenous people, anarchists, and immigrants fought with police or carried out property destruction in the protests against the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, protesting the capitalist spectacle, the gentrification that always accompanies such mega-events, or the fact that the Games were being held on stolen indigenous land, some nonviolent activists denounced the riots, portraying them as the work of privileged white male anarchists endangering more "vulnerable" people. Subsequently, activists in Vancouver organized a debate on the controversy, and Harsha Walia, of the "No One is Illegal" immigrant march, tore apart her adversary's arguments point by point.

> February 13th was explicitly called as a diversity of tactics. As someone who marched on the 13th unmasked, I did not feel endangered. I can't speak for everyone else, but I can speak for myself. I was happy to be there and I was happy to see the black block doing their thing. For those who did not know what to expect there were various spokes councils, some of which were publicly announced, for anyone who was interested in getting information beforehand. Within the demonstration, there was an escalation of zones from green to red and at no point did I see the black block trying to hide under the cover of other zones. And I think that's important to reiterate because the people who were actually arrested on February 13th

> person may need to know that if they are arrested, they will be supported, regardless of what the state may allege they have done. We know that the way to work through these needs is to hear each other with respect, to strive to understand each other and support each other even if we do not agree.[9]

This spirit of respecting different forms of participation was put into practice. The Black Bloc that engaged in major rioting—burning police cars and trashing Canada's major financial street—broke away from the main march so as to avoid taking refuge in a peaceful crowd, "ruining" a nonviolent action, or doing other things that might have harmed or upset other protesters. In fact, many city residents not connected with the protests came out to participate in the riots, showing just what kind of atmosphere the Black Bloc succeeded in creating. Regardless, proponents of nonviolence bashed them all the same, showing that in at least some cases, their criticisms of the Black Bloc are not real concerns but just opportunistic ways to attack a group that they evidently prioritize as their political enemy. When police brutalized protesters many blocks away and hours later, nonviolent activists used the internet or the media to blame the masked anarchists, breaking the diversity of tactics agreement. Several of them went so far as to claim that the masked protesters were police provocateurs. It was perfectly reasonable of them to resort to such underhanded attacks, because it would be difficult for them to argue that carrying out a major sabotage in the heart of Canada's preeminent financial district and temporarily overcoming police during the most expensive security operation in the history of the world does not constitute a strong message of rejection of the authoritarian and exploitive policies of the world's leading governments. Perhaps the more problematic message the actions of the anarchists sent was a

[9] Available at http://torontomobilize.org/SolidarityRespect. The full text is included in the Appendix.

participate using their own methods. For a few months, the brief upsurge of struggle in Seattle disappeared. But then in the space of just one week between August and September of 2010, police murdered five people in the Puget Sound (between Seattle and the smaller cities of Tacoma, Olympia, and Federal Way).

When the protests, Black Blocs, and attacks resumed, many more people began to appear in the streets, some of them marginalized youth or friends of those who had been murdered by police. The "alienation" caused by using forceful tactics drove away a large number of college-educated activists, among them NGO-employees and members of the "creative class," but attracted at least as many people from other social strata, people who were more comfortable with putting the idea of revolution, of the negation of state authority, into practice.

In the meantime, anarchists tried to make connections with other people protesting the police killings. In response to the most visible of the murders, by Seattle cop Ian Birk against homeless Native man John T. Williams, some activists formed the John T. Williams Organizing Committee.

> The John T. Williams Organizing Committee was a coalition of various groups focused on winning small reforms in police department operations: cultural sensitivity trainings, policy changes, appointed liaisons with the Native community. They also asked that "consequences for Officer Birk may include loss of his job and badge but must at least take him off the streets until he has demonstrated he understands the newly instituted protocols developed in this process."[Footnotes from original text have been removed.] Their strategy was to work with city officials, as demonstrated by the committee's decision to deliver their demands to a city council member along with a gift —an offering of peace. The

> Committee's analysis of police violence indicated that they accepted the brutality of the larger system. They shied from the word murder, instead referring to Williams' death as "a tragedy that could have and should have been avoided," if police could "serve to increase public safety and peace in our community by employing a variety of de-escalation tactics with the greatest potential to avert violence against the public and the police."

Despite apparent political differences, anarchists did attend Organizing Committee protests, bringing their own banners and leaflets and seeking to make connections with other angry groups and individuals. The primary significance of these protests was the involvement of John Williams' family and other members of the Native community. His brother, Rick Williams, spoke at most Organizing Committee events; the Committee had moved to make sure the Williams' family was on their side almost as fast as the politicians of the spd[Seattle Police Department] had. Most of the other speakers at these rallies were mainstays from Seattle's liberal-left NGO scene. These activists —some salaried —lectured the crowd on responsibility, civility, and non-violence. In a context where no violent tactics had yet been used except by police [this was before the new cycle of resistance had started up, and half a year after the mildly combative protest in solidarity with Portland and Oakland], this betrayed the activists' fear of losing control of the situation. Their aim was to channel others' anger into their strategy to achieve meager reforms —a strategy doomed to fail. As shown in Oakland and in Greece, the state only turns the legal system against murdering police to the extent that it fears an actual upheaval. But the managers of social revolt

who is from a posh neighborhood in London and whose parents were able to send her to a private high school where tuition ran to nearly $20,000 a year, taking to the streets may have just been a matter of going with the flow or freeing up some more cash to spend on her wardrobe, but for many other students, struggling against the policies handed down by the rich has everything to do with fighting against the police who enforce those policies and protect those rich people.

In the protest against the G20 political summit in Toronto in 2010, a coalition of protest groups had agreed to a framework based on a diversity of tactics, in the hopes of allowing people and groups with very different methods to participate. They released a statement explaining the philosophy behind their diversity of tactics framework:

> We believe that we must embrace honest discussion and debate. We trust that our movement is strong enough, resilient and mature enough to embrace open differences of opinion. We believe that if we are to truly build a socially just world, it will take many different tactics, much creativity and many different approaches. It is this that allows us to work together even when we disagree.
>
> We work together in solidarity and respect. This does not mean we endorse everything each of us does, or that we agree on all things. But we will listen to each other, we will discuss our differences openly and honestly, where necessary, we will agree to disagree and we will support each other when attacked.
>
> We understand that people have different needs regarding safety. That while one person may need to be on the streets in a situation where someone else's actions do not put them in danger, another

ping stone on the career track to professional politician, the failure to control the herd constituted an embarrassing resumé-killer. Fortunately, the black students' officer and the lgbt students' officers of the National Union of Students, along with several lower-level student bureaucrats, a trade unionist, and a playwright, released a criticism:

> We reject any attempt to characterise the Millbank protest [in which the ruling party offices were occupied and trashed by a crowd that fought with police] as small, "extremist" or unrepresentative of our movement. We celebrate the fact that thousands of students were willing to send a message to the Tories that we will fight to win. Occupations are a long established tradition in the student movement that should be defended. It is this kind of action in France and Greece that has been an inspiration to many workers and students in

Britain faced with such a huge assault on jobs, benefits, housing and the public sector. We stand with the protesters, and anyone who is victimised as a result of the protest.[7]

Student President Porter was booed off the stage when he tried to scold his herd. Needing a figurehead down in the streets, those who own the media turned student Zoe Williams into a temporary celebrity. Williams and some classmates helped protect a police van that was being vandalized by fellow protesters, yelling at them "It's not going to help our cause!" As she later told the media, "I was just trying to get across to [the vandals] that the cause that we're here for today isn't about 'I hate the police, I want to burn the police and I want to destroy everything they represent.'"[8] For Williams,

[7] Vasagar, Jeevan; Taylor, Matthew, "Student protests planned on a national scale on 24 November," London: The Guardian Online (11 November 2010).

[8] "The other face of the student protests," *Metro* (25 November 2010).

[e.g. the ngos, reformist activist groups] fear this as much as city officials do.[2]

Another organization that tried to co-opt popular anger at the police killings was the October 22nd Coalition, a front group for the Maoist personality cult, the Revolutionary Communist Party. The rcp called and tried to lead several protests calling for police reform. One member suggested that police should use their tasers more (never mind that two of the deaths in the week of police killings were in fact caused by tasering) or shoot people in the knees first (never mind that Jack Collins, killed in Portland in March, died after a police bullet severed an artery in his pelvis, not his abdomen or his head). For the rcp, taking to the streets was not about struggling against the police, but about creating a space where they could pass out the texts of their leader and try to win recruits. And this required that the protests be not only nonviolent, but completely passive.

> The attempted management of the protest continued to tire the crowd throughout the evening. The strategy for the march, the event managers announced, was to proceed through busy areas in an attempt to draw more numbers. But no passersby paid attention to the small procession. After the crowd subverted the chants of those holding bullhorns —changing the answer following *What do we want?* from *Justice!* to *Dead cops!* — the sidewalk march throughout downtown was halted for a reminder: *This is a non-violent protest aimed at building a mass movement!* The anarchists very nearly left at this point —the course seemed set for as disheartening an outcome as the previous rally.

[2] Both block quotes from "Burning the Bridges They Are Building: Anarchist Strategies Against the Police," http://riselikelions.net/pamphlets/16/burning-the-bridges-they-arebuilding-anarchist-strategies-against-the-police.

But something unexpected happened. As the march wandered through the crosswalk of a busy intersection, a woman —unknown to the anarchists, unaffiliated with the rcp, and holding only an umbrella — refused to leave the crosswalk. She blocked a city bus, which in turn blocked several lanes of traffic, which quickly backed up for blocks. While she stood there defiantly, she began to mock the other demonstrators for their passivity and cowardice. The few anarchists quickly joined her in the intersection. Next, a handful of street youth, known to congregate on that corner, walked into the middle of the street and sat down. As one stepped off the sidewalk, another cautiously commented, eying the nearby cops, "Hey, I don't want to be around here if something is gonna go down."

His friend replied, "I don't want to be around here *unless* something is gonna down!" Talking to the anarchists, some of the youth explained that John Williams had been a friend of theirs, and that tonight they were ready to fight and go to jail in his honor.

Dismayed at their failure to corral the demonstrators and their anger, rcp members used their bullhorns to announce that this blockade was not the organizers' intention and that anyone in the street could be arrested. But it was no use. Now passersby were interested in what was happening. Anarchists insisted that the bullhorns be passed around to allow anyone to speak out against the police. One woman came running from down the block and upon reaching the bullhorn announced, "I just want to say —fuck the police!"

Anarchists and others intent on using a diversity of tactics outmaneuvered the professional NGO activists and obscure vanguardists who insisted on pacifying popular responses to police

government, but when the protest leaders take on the functions of the police, everybody watches in silence.

The general strikes of October 31 and November 14, 2012, in which the supposedly alternative or anticapitalist labor unions conceded to government and media pressure and imposed nonviolent discipline on their crowds, were largely seen as failures, and were followed by an evident decline in activity in the streets. On the contrary, the general strikes of September 29, 2010, January 27, 2011, and March 29, 2012, in which anarchists, anticapitalists, and marginalized youths had free rein and used that leeway to riot or carry out sabotage, were applauded as major events in the struggle, and were followed by clear upsurges in movement activity. What's more, because many different sectors—from neighborhood assemblies to the alternative unions—showed solidarity with the arrested rioters, the repression did not have its intended effect of chilling the social movements. This effect was only achieved when the alternative unions began enforcing nonviolence. The overlap between this activity and what the police were trying to accomplish through repression, or the media through fear-mongering, is remarkable.

In the UK student movement, the president of the student union went before the media to denounce and insult students who had chosen to protest tuition hikes by trashing the offices of the ruling party. President Aaron Porter stated that he was "disgusted that the actions of a minority of idiots are trying to undermine 50,000 who came to make a peaceful protest."[6] The General Secretary of the University and College Union also tried to present the rioters as a "minority," a category that in her mind connotes a total lack of legitimacy or freedom of action. Most upsetting for these bureaucratic leaders was that those who were supposed to be followers had taken action on their own initiative without receiving any orders. For the student president, a position that generally serves as a step-

[6] Lewis, Paul; Vasagar, Jeevan; Williams, Rachel; Taylor, Matthew, "Student protest over fees turn violent," London: The Guardian Online (10 November 2010).

proponents put all their emphasis on an authoritarian insistence that everyone adopt their form of protest, often devoid of any content. Even in the heart of nonviolent movements, one is often hard-pressed to find any real articulation of a critique against exploitation, domination, or the power structures that create these problems. Those who support a diversity of tactics, on the other hand, tend to remain on point, with no alienation between their ideas and methods, attacking capitalism in their discourse as well as in moments of protest and action. The macho, authoritarian nonviolent tackler spent both his physical energy in the protest and his ten seconds in the media spotlight attacking other protesters. Nonviolent activists in the 15M movement in Spain lined up in front of banks to protect their windows from vandalism, and in front of cops to shield them from the insults of the crowd. It should be no surprise that when the police started shooting rubber bullets at the crowd, these same activists ran away instead of putting their bodies on the line. They protect the State, and not the movement. And while a minority of them were brave enough to stand in the way of bank representatives trying to deliver foreclosure notices, none of them stood up to police when it came time to actually enforce the evictions. At most, a handful sat down, "blocking" an eviction until the cops pulled them on the arm and led them away. In protests throughout the country, these peace police tried to pull off the masks of people protecting their identity, or they took pictures of rioters which they shared with police, exposing people to the violence of prison and in numerous cases endangering immigrants. In the strike of October 31, 2012, the cgt labor federation organized a security cordon in collaboration with the authorities, a member of which at one point punched and expelled someone who threw eggs at a bank. As the group "Nihilist Anarchists" pointed out in a communiqué claiming responsibility for sabotage actions carried out against over a hundred banks, if it had been the police who had punched the demonstrator, everyone would have yelled about what a shame it was when such things happen under a democratic

murders. Their forceful attacks put the police on the defensive, smeared their image, and developed tactics of direct response to police violence that made it impossible for police to do what they had done in all the preceding years—kill with impunity. And those who took to the streets accomplished this without trying to play to the media, without limiting themselves to calls for police reform based on the absurd idea that police violence is the result of professional mistakes or bad apples. In fact, they put up posters, published online articles, printed newspapers, painted walls, and distributed flyers in a large quantity, spreading the idea that police violence is an integral part of a racist system based on elite ownership of our collective means of survival.

What did nonviolent activists have to show? The increase in sensitivity trainings police might have to take can hardly be considered a step in the right direction. Such measures only allow the police to clean up their image, to win greater trust from oppressed communities, and to carry out their job as thugs for the ruling class with greater efficiency. Cops don't kill homeless people, trans people, black, latino, Asian, and Native men because individual officers are prejudiced, although the patriarchal, racist subculture in most police departments can certainly lead to especially flagrant acts of brutality. The police are the institution that protect those who have stolen everything from all of us—the commons, our ability to decide over our own lives, clean air and water, a future, our history, our dignity—and they are the ones who stand between those who have been rewarded some small privileges and comforts in exchange for obedience, and those who have nothing. Teaching the police to be more sensitive to the most exploited and oppressed is only a strategy designed to prevent police heavy-handedness from unintentionally sparking rebellions as they trample people in the performance of their duties.

As Kristian Williams documented in his monumental study on the evolution of the police, "soft" or community policing developed hand in hand with the first swat teams and othermanifestations

of the militarization of police. The one would be used to reduce conflict between the police and heavily policed communities, and the other would be used to destroy those who insisted on seeing the police as their enemy.[3] Activists who try to reform the police help to isolate those who resist the police.[4]

During the general strike organized by Occupy Oakland on November 2, 2011, there were multiple cases of nonviolent activists attacking fellow protesters who damaged property. When the Anti-Capitalist March stopped at the Oakland branch of Whole Foods, the major corporate supermarket that engages in greenwashing and gentrification, and in this case had allegedly threatened workers with termination if they participated in the strike, several people wearing masks to protect their identity began spraypainting "STRIKE" on the side of the building, breaking windows, and throwing chairs. The action successfully effected the temporary closing of Whole Foods, which had remained open in spite of the strike. But nonviolent activists in the crowd were displeased. One supporter of peaceful means, enraged by the damage to corporate property, tackled a protester who was trying to break a window. Talking to the media later, a privilege he could afford with no risk despite having just committed assault—a crime for which anyone but a pacifist or a cop would be facing several years in prison—he justified his actions:

[3] Kristian Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (Boston: South End Press, 2004).

[4] This is not to say that there are no ways to try to make things better in the short-term. The tactic of Cop Watch, for example, watching and filming the police as they stop, frisk, or otherwise harass people, and encouraging others to not consent to searches or answer police questions, is a form of direct action that makes it harder for the cops to mess with folks. However, some Cop Watch groups participate in movements to reform the police, when they should be spreading a deeper critique of the function of police in society. The latter course helps more people take action, whereas the reformist course funnels action into political channels where college-educated, professional activists and politicians are just about the only ones with direct access.

> This isn't about violence, this is about changing the system. And if people cause violence then they are going to disrupt the narrative and they are going to take focus away and they are going to give police the justification to crack down… Violence does not change. Nonviolence is the most powerful weapon that we have as citizens…I don't know who these people are, but they have masks, they have black flags, and they're trying to smash up. And I'm going to stop that if I can [by attacking people] because I want this march to remain peaceful.[5]

Another protester defended the window smashing, claiming she had not seen it take place but did not understand what the fuss was about:

> I don't see any people hurt here. The people that I see hurt are the people outside that are being hurt by the police, that have been hurt by the city, by the police, by the banks. And I see workers inside that are being screwed by their employers and also screwed over by the banks. so seeing a window smashed [as violent], a window that whatever insurance company is going to replace tomorrow, seems ridiculous to me.

Who do you think was more effective at spreading their message? The pacifist assaulter did not mention any of the issues at stake, he only flung mud at other protesters. The one in favor of a diversity of tactics, on the contrary, focused on the harm caused by capitalism and the police. Over and over again, nonviolence

[5] Both block quotes from "One Protester Tackled by Another Over Smashed Whole Foods Window" *KQED*, http://blogs.kqed.org/newsfix/2011/11/03/video-one-protester-tackledby-another-over-smashed-whole-foods-window/ (3 November 2011).

et cetera. The rule of law has always been on the side of those who rule, and those who rule have never been on the side of those who are ruled. Institutions have always been able to overcome the decisions of conscientious individuals. That is in fact the primary purpose of an institution: to ensure that rulers need not cultivate personal ties in order to ensure loyalty, a formula that only works in hierarchies much smaller than the State.

The Cherokee were forced on the Trail of Tears, thousands died, and if all their hopes were pinned on the decision of a judge, they never had a chance. Beyond Kurlansky's pathetic "except," we should also examine Cherokee nonviolence. Many indigenous nations were far more peaceful than the Cherokee, and they were exterminated entirely, without any legal ritual or chance for protest. Why were the Cherokee given this dubious courtesy? Because they were the "civilized Indians," who gave up a large part of their culture to imitate European dress, economy, language, and social institutions. The myth of the "pristine Indian" or "noble savage" has done almost as much harm as the myth of the dangerous savage. It is not at all my place to criticize them for adapting to genocidal pressures. But it is worth pointing out that this strategy was controversial among the Cherokee themselves, that it was a strategy designed to accept cultural genocide in an attempt to avoid the loss of their homeland or their complete extermination, and that this strategy failed.

The Cherokee won their first defensive war against British invasion, but they lost the second war, and the British burned many villages in the aftermath. Subsequently, most of the Cherokee decided to assimilate on the premise that they were not powerful enough to resist. They opted for what Kurlansky characterizes as nonviolence out of pragmatism, but also out of weakness and defeatism—in an attempt to stay safe, not realizing that no one is safe from the State. They also, and this is no small detail, fought alongside the British against the indigenous nations allied with the French during the Seven Years War, and then they fought alongside the

> ing several thousand dollars for nonprofit diversity trainings which can assist them in recognizing their own racial privilege and certifying their decision to do so. The absurdity of privilege politics recenters antiracist practice on whites and white behavior, and assumes that racism (and often by implicit or explicit association, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia) manifest primarily as individual privileges which can be "checked," given up, or absolved through individual resolutions. Privilege politics is ultimately completely dependent upon precisely that which it condemns: *white benevolence*.[15]

The examples keep coming. Just as this book was undergoing the final edits, anarchists and other folks in Seattle commemorated May Day 2013 with a little riot. The media quickly deployed the discourse that nonviolent activists had prepared for them: the rioters were clearly privileged white youth throwing a temper tantrum. But it later came out that many of those arrested for smashing windows or fighting with police were homeless.

In the above cases, opponents of combative methods had to take a position because spaces of revolt were being claimed and justified on a political and social level. They had to lie about these revolts, whether by portraying them as racist or alleging them to be police conspiracies, in order to distract attention from the eloquent justifications by which social rebels explained why they were rising up. In other situations, when revolts erupt without their participants expressing a written social critique or justifying themselves to the outside world, proponents of nonviolence frequently ignore them, while leftist academics seek to explain them away. When such revolts make themselves impossible to ignore, nonviolent activists

[15] From the highly recommended essay by Croatan "Who Is Oakland: Anti-Oppression Activism, the Politics of Safety, and State Co-optation" on the website *Escalating Identity*, https://escalatingidentity.wordpress.com/ (April 30, 2012).

and academics typically victimize them, denying them agency or a legitimate position of attack against the system. When the major wave of rioting spread from Tottenham to the rest of England in 2011, websites and magazines inclined towards nonviolence took up the opposite pole from the mainstream media, which typically shifts to the right in instances of lower class revolt and true to form was calling for the merciless punishment of the "nihilistic and feral teenagers." But this opposite pole is based on a presentation of the rioters as mere victims of an unfair system who are engaging in an activity that is paternalistically assumed to be ignorant and counterproductive. By casting rioters as victims, whether they know it or not, proponents of nonviolence are preparing the way for the structural violence of a sociological intervention in which the government further invades the life processes of potentially rebellious subjects, imposing surveillance and welfare measures that have control as their fundamental criterion.

To authoritarian leftists like Slavoj Žižek, David Harvey, and Zygmunt Bauman the UK riots were the "meaningless outburst" of "mindless rioters" and "defective and disqualified consumers."

Then there are the commentators who see the riots as simply misguided, rather than as reflections of capitalist ideology. Such writers understand the riots as an engine lacking the proper tracks. The failure then belongs to the decrepit left in general, who have failed to provide an "alternative" or "political programme" which might harness, shape and direct the rage of the rioters. Asks Žižek: "Who will succeed in directing the rage of the poor?" Forget the possibility that the poor might be able to direct their own rage.

One can see the fundamentally patronizing lines common to all these responses. In each, the intellectual imputes a kind of false consciousness to the rioters, in order to make himself (and it is usually a him) all the more necessary as the voice of missing authority. These intellectuals hear in the riots a question to which they must

failed to make a revolution in their homeland—Europe—and were now taking refuge in North America deploying a combination of pacifism and colonization, a little bit of wisdom would have shown them that they were not the ones with something to teach, but something to learn. They might have mutinied from colonial society, run off with the native inhabitants, learned how to live in harmony with nature and how to fight back against oppression, as did the thousands of kidnapped Africans and poor Europeans who joined or formed new indigenous nations, such as the Seminole who waged a partially successful guerrilla war for independence that lasted decades.

In the end, the Quakers of Pennsylvania were much like the pacifists during the invasion of Iraq, who did not want there to be a war, but who also did not want the Iraqis to fight back, did not want to stop driving cars, and did not want the property of the companies most directly involved in the war to be smashed or burned to the ground. They are also, significantly, the main protagonists of Kurlansky's chapter on colonization. The Quakers could not convince the British and French empires to be nonviolent. They cannot be faulted for this: no one has ever convinced a leading state to be nonviolent, nor an entire institution to see reason. But some of us do not attempt to convince brick walls. Our proposal, rather, is to destroy them when they confine us. The only thing pacifists can accomplish is to convince those of us who actually care about doing the right thing—and neither states nor institutions nor abstract forces such as Capital have ever been included in this category—to disarm ourselves, and refuse the only possibilities we have of taking apart the structures that dominate us.

Kurlansky cites Cherokee nonviolence as an example of dignified peacefulness winning over a hostile authority: Chief Justice John Marshall ruled in favor of Cherokee sovereignty and Congressman Davy Crockett left Washington in protest of the Removal Act. "This would have been a great triumph for nonviolence and the rule of law, except that President Andrew Jackson" et cetera

nificant part of their stolen lands in the face of heavy government repression.

At one point, Kurlansky lauds the pacifist Quakers in Pennsylvania for the kind of relations they established with the native inhabitants:

> "Had Quakers controlled all of the colonial legislatures and not just that of Pennsylvania, the history of North America [...] might have been different [...] In North America they not only tried to teach Quakerism to the Indians by example, they also directly preached it to them" (p. 64).

This is his example of resistance to colonialism? A case of colonialism by pacifists? WTF?

In the next paragraph, Kurlansky relates how one Quaker prisoner tried to convince a group of indigenous prisoners of the merits of pacifism. The latter were skeptical given that as long as the British and French empires did not turn to pacifism, they would be exterminated if they did not defend themselves. And on the previous page, Kurlansky notes that the Pennsylvania colony, while controlled by the pacifists, "assigned land on the western frontier to the warlike settlers" whereas colonists from pacifist sects "were given more secure eastern lands."

What we have here is a very disturbing, albeit accurate, picture of nonviolence. The Quaker pacifists do not question their role as colonizers. On the contrary, they settle on stolen land, they colonize, they let the non-pacifists do the dirty work on the western frontier and directly benefit from these acts of genocide, they unquestioningly carve out a niche in an oppressive system while trying to shelter themselves from the conflict generated by that oppression. And what's more, they choose a position of moral superiority with respect to the natives, *preaching* to them and trying to convert them. Given that the anabaptists as a whole had utterly

provide the answer. They do not realize that the riots are, rather, an answer to the question they refuse to ask.[16]

Similarly, after the insurrection in Greece in December, 2008, which proponents of nonviolence together with sociologists also tried to explain away, the leftwing media aided the subsequent anti-immigrant policies and pogroms by casting the immigrants as victims of inhuman conditions. By helping to produce a discourse of humanitarian crisis, they required the government to take action with a predictable combination of reforms and police operations; simultaneously by focusing on the poor conditions and unconscionable hygiene in immigrant ghettos, they only aided fascist propaganda that portrayed the immigrants as dirty and subhuman. By presenting the immigrants as victims, they denied the very methods many immigrants had chosen to respond to their situation, and they made them that much more vulnerable to whatever solution the government would impose, which clearly would not be for the good of the immigrants.

State responses to the UK riots will follow a similar track. If the riots brought up very real problems of self-destructive behavior or poor-on-poor crime, those need to be addressed by people who are not outside spectators. Other people in struggle can offer criticisms of the rioters' practice, but only if we first recognize it as a practice, a position of attack against the system or a strategy for coping with systemic oppression. And to criticize a struggle we do not directly participate in, we should acknowledge its unique perspective, along with the probability that we do not share the exact same goals and analyses. As long as those who are supposedly critical of capitalism and police delegitimize the responses of those most negatively affected by precarity and police violence, those who riot will be alone in resisting the solutions imposed by the combined force of the government, the media, and the nonprofits.

[16] Jasper Bernes and Joshua Clover, "History and the Sphinx: of Riots and Uprisings," *LA Times Review of Books*, September 24, 2012.

Whereas anarchists embracing a diversity of tactics have been developing a practice of direct solidarity with spontaneous riots, and an ability to spark riots of their own, proponents of nonviolence have cozied up to the institutions of government, the media, and the ngos that continue to discipline the most marginalized as victims and to impose solutions that always prioritize the interests of power.

Although Kurlansky notes the violent tendency of states and the incompatibility of nonviolence and government, when talking about violent revolution he only focuses on revolutionaries who were trying to create new states. Thus, he entirely avoids the critical question that could make or break his hypothesis that authoritarianism is caused by the use of violence: do those who struggle forcefully (in his terms, violently) against all forms of authority end up recreating authority? Kurlansky sidesteps the question. His examples of violent revolution, therefore, come from authoritarian movements. On the Russian Revolution, he cites Trotsky but not Makhno, and he makes only passing reference to the Spanish Civil War without discussing the accomplishments of the anarchists who fought there.

In the hundred-plus examples he mentions throughout his book, he builds an aura around nonviolence to make it seem effective, even though many of his examples end in defeat. His analysis tends to be superficial, and he does not cite or back up most of his claims. I will take apart three of his examples to reveal the sort of argumentation he uses.

Unlike many proponents of nonviolence, Kurlansky does not argue for a contextual use of nonviolence within democratic societies. Instead, he claims that nonviolence also makes sense in the face of an enemy bent on your extermination. Colonization of the indigenous was one such process of extermination. Generally, the indigenous nations that resisted colonization peacefully or tried to accommodate European settlers were exterminated, whereas the indigenous nations that resisted forcefully, using a variety of tactics, are still around today, and they also tend to be the nations with the strongest liberation movements. The Mapuche, Six Nations (Iroquois), Lakota, and Coast Salish all went to war against colonization, many still consider themselves to be at war, and they represent some of the strongest indigenous struggles on the planet. Some of those peoples, such as the Mapuche, have recovered a sig-

ity. However, "peace," "peacefulness," and "pacifism" used to be more all-encompassing terms before some pacifists decided to differentiate themselves from others with the term "nonviolence." If pacifism has come to be associated with passivity, it is due to the complacence of pacifists themselves. If "nonviolence" expresses the negation of violence rather than something positive in its own right, that is the fault of its proponents and those who introduced the term. Kurlansky blames these failings on the dominant culture, which he claims constantly trains us to accept violence and blind ourselves to nonviolence. It is curious, then, that children in public schools are taught about Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi, but not about Malcolm X, Angela Davis, Bhagat Singh, or so many others.

In fact, there are very different kinds of violence, and the violence of the powerful—the prisons, the police, wage labor, working conditions, pollution, deforestation, sex reassignment surgery on infants, structural adjustment programs, rising food costs, the forcible reeducation of queer youth at "ex-gay" boot camps, gentrification, and a long et cetera—is not legitimized as violence. It is normalized, hidden, and justified as natural and necessary, as an element of the social peace (social peace being the basis of consent and acceptance that allows the dominant power structures to function). In the dominant discourse, the term "violence" is reserved for those acts that disrupt the social peace. Contrary to Kurlansky's claim, we are trained to see nonviolent rebellion as comforting, and violent rebellion as threatening or stupid. World leaders and politicians from Bill Clinton and Barack Obama to New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg have congratulated protesters who remain peaceful. Major corporations also do their part. In one of the coveted commercial spots during the 2013 Superbowl, a Coca-Cola ad featured a hooded person spraypainting "PEACE" on what appeared to be a bank window, as part of a collage of images all designed to be heart-warming and reassuring.

8. Who Are the Pacifists?

Nowadays, nonviolence is promoted by a very diverse group of people. I have tried to select the examples of those individuals who have been most influential, either on a world scale or domestically, in spreading the exclusive insistence on nonviolent tactics, or in providing a functioning example of nonviolent action. Additionally, I have also provided examples that represent certain categories of people that have been instrumental in spreading ideas of nonviolence or discouraging the use of any other methods of social change. I came up with this list of exemplary proponents of nonviolence, supporters of nonviolent methods, or enforcers of nonviolent discipline before analyzing the traits they might have in common. In other words, I did not select examples that met preconceived criteria; I came up with a list of those who (at least as far as I could tell) have done the most to spread nonviolence since the end of the Cold War.[1]

Despite the vast differences that separate the members of this group, readers might notice a few common traits. First of all, none of the people listed have faced grave consequences for their commitment to nonviolence, and in fact nearly all of them have been rewarded by dominant society, several of them holding positions of power that are based in part on their espousal of nonviolence. This should disprove the pacifist claim that our society encourages us to be violent. In the moment we rebel, the dominant institutions all insist that we remain peaceful.

[1] There are certainly others who deserve mention, such as George Lakey, Helen Woodson, or Roy Bourgeois, but it is beyond my means to come up with an exhaustive list.

Another common trait is that many of those listed pass themselves off as experts and attempt to exercise authority over social movements on the basis of that expertise. This trait is closely related to a third one, that most of these people, especially the experts, do not participate directly in social movements or the struggles they attempt to instruct from their positions of expertise. Writing as distant spectators, they often reveal themselves to be extremely ignorant about the struggles they attempt to counsel. A final trait is that many of these people get paid to participate—in the limited ways in which they actually do participate—in the social movements they push towards nonviolence. They are professionals and careerists, and their flirtation with social movements is often a step on the road to personal advancement.

Gene Sharp

Probably the most prominent advocate of nonviolence today is Gene Sharp. Between 1953 and 1954, Sharp spent nine months in jail for protesting conscription in the Korean War. In the following years he served as secretary for pacifist A. J. Muste and Assistant Editor for London's *Peace News*. Since then he has acted primarily as an academic (receiving the degree of Doctor in Philosophy in 1968) and an analyst of social movements rather than a direct participant. He is a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, where he has taught since 1972, and he has held research appointments at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs. In 1983, he founded the Albert Einstein Institute, a non-profit dedicated to "advancing the study and use of strategic nonviolent action in conflicts throughout the world" and exploring "its policy potential, and to communicate this through print and other media, translations, conferences, consultations, and workshops." As noted earlier, the Albert Einstein Institute has received funding from the Ford Foundation, the In-

they cannot even imagine. "Talented and bright young people" should be able to see why someone in authority would want those on the bottom to believe that "violence doesn't work," and be able to conclude that a judge who has never participated in social movements is talking out of her ass when she tries to instruct us about what methods work and what methods don't.

Mark Kurlansky

Mark Kurlansky is a journalist and writer. He worked for major newspapers such as the *International Herald Tribune* before turning largely to the writing of books. In 2006, he weighed in on the side of nonviolence with his sweeping text, *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea*, published en masse by a division of Random House.

At the beginning of his tome, Kurlansky does not define "violence," but he does claim that all of us are indoctrinated in its use, whatever it may be. His only evidence for this is a spurious linguistic proof: the claim that there is no word for "nonviolence"; that in our culture we can only conceive of nonviolence as the negation of violence and not a constructive practice in its own right. This is completely false. The words "peace" and "peacefulness" represent positive states and behaviors, respectfully, and "peace" probably took on its current meaning long before "violence" did. Our culture gives us many ways to say what Kurlansky claims to be inexpressible: *to spread peace, work for peace, turn the other cheek, turn swords into plowshares, to reconcile, to make reparations, to restore harmony, to carry out civil disobedience*, and so on.

It is true that "pacifism" now means something different from "nonviolence" and that it has come to be associated with passiv-

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that rewards scummy behavior. If we ever destroy that system, the people who currently rise to the top will be harmless, because no one will want anything to do with them.

records about illegal spying, prosecutors agreed not to seek the life imprisonment they were initially aiming for.

While sentencing Daniel MacGowan, Judge Aiken told him didactically:

> Don't use Gandhi just when it's convenient. I hope you'll go back to your website and tell who you were, what you did. […]To the young people, send the message that violence doesn't work. If you want to make a difference, have the courage to say how the life you lived was the life of a coward… It is a tragedy to watch these extremely talented and bright young people come in and do damage to industries.[15]

Fortunately, most of the people targeted by this repression could see the hypocrisy of a judge calling a person a coward when they are about to be locked up in a cage for acting on their beliefs. Judges, after all, are the ultimate cowards, bureaucrats who force moral lectures down the throats of those whose freedom they hold captive,[16] who make their living sending people to prison to endure forms of psychological and sometimes physical torture

[15] CrimethInc. Ex-Workers Collective, "Greenscared? Preliminary Lessons of the Green Scare," *Rolling Thunder* no.5, 2008.

[16] When I was arrested at an anti-war protest in 2001, the federal judge gave me the maximum sentence of six months because I was an anarchist, because I pointed out his hypocrisy and the exclusive foundation of his authority on state coercion, and because I debated his trite moralizing. Handing down the maximum prison sentence for misdemeanor trespassing charges against someone without any priors is fairly unprecedented, unless you recognize the politically vindictive nature of the legal system as a whole. This judge, like most judges, had the psychological level of a kindergarten bully who smashes your science project if it's better than his, or a friend who breaks the toy you have lent him after an argument, except a judge is invested with immense power over people's lives. Typically, the State will find the most immature, pedantic, and pathological specimens to serve as its functionaries. Pacifists are right when they say our enemies are also human, but we should be honest about the fact that those in power are the very scummiest members of the species. Ultimately, our enemy is a system

ternational Republican Institute, and the National Endowment for Democracy (the latter two funded by the US government), while Sharp's doctoral research was partially funded by the Defense Department.

Gene Sharp has been richly rewarded by dominant society for his commitment to nonviolence. He has not been the target of repression, unless one can consider as such a voluntary, conscientious prison sentence that has largely served as a springboard to a lucrative, prestigious career. Sharp is a member of the intellectual elite, and in 2012 he was even the favored nominee to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, an award he would have shared with mass murderers and war leaders like Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter, and Menachem Begin. In Sharp's case, the prize would have been another element in the international operation to portray the Arab Spring as a series of nonviolent movements obediently following the tutelage of Western experts on democratic social change. Sharp was shamelessly being given and taking the credit for revolutions he had nothing to do with and that were not following his template for regime change. Western media coverage of Gene Sharp's influence in the Egyptian revolution produced a backlash from some Egyptian bloggers. One, journalist Hossam el-Hamalawy, stated that:

> Not only was Mubarak's foreign policy hated and despised by the Egyptian people, but parallels were always drawn between the situation of the Egyptian people and their Palestinian brothers and sisters. The latter have been the major source of inspiration, not Gene Sharp, whose name I first heard in my life only in February after we toppled Mubarak already and whom the clueless *NYT* moronically gives credit for our uprising.[2]

[2] Nabil Fahmy, http://www.arabawy.org/2011/04/17/fm-nabil-fahmy-this-revolutionactually-serves-israel-as-well/ (April 7, 2011).

While some democracy groups and the authoritarian Muslim Brotherhood distributed his work, his nonviolent methodology was barely present in the uprising. This is a far cry from the self-serving claim Sharp makes on the jacket of his book, which talks about "Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and Syria, where the leaders of the Arab Spring view Sharp's ideas as the guiding light of their movement." While he may want to be a Great White Father shining his "guiding light" for the benighted Arabs, by claiming any affinity between his nonviolent methodology and the uprisings not only in Egypt but also in Libya and Syria, he only comes off as a megalomaniac clown.

What Gene Sharp promotes is not revolution but regime change devoid of any social content. The same forms of oppression, exploitation, poverty, and state violence occur in all the countries where successful "revolutions" following his method have taken place. His legacy has not been revolution or the betterment of humankind, but his own self-promotion and the spread of a different form of domination. It is hard to tell if Sharp is motivated by a desire for fame (in addition to the multiple Peace Prize nominations, he has been proclaimed "the most influential proponent of nonviolent action alive" by *Progressive Magazine*) or by an aesthetic obsession with democracy, a sort of formalistic neurosis that people across the world should be exploited, marginalized, starved, imprisoned, tortured, humiliated—in a word, ruled—by democratic governments and never by dictatorships. This could be reasonably classified as a form of insanity.

Perusing the pages of *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, we find abundant evidence of his authoritarian thinking and lack of concern for vital questions like freedom, health, and well-being.

His only concern with elections is that they be "free," by which he means not rigged in favor of one political party or another. He expresses no critique of political parties, of the power of mass media to limit the range of acceptable political opinion and to

bative tactics, proving the supporters of nonviolence wrong once again.

Judge Ann Aiken

US Federal Judge Ann Aiken is just one of many government authorities who believe that dissidents must be nonviolent. It's really a no-brainer about why they would want those they rule to remain peaceful, even though nonviolent conspiracy theorists continue to pretend that the FBI is engaged in a secret plot to make us all violent (see Rebecca Solnit and Chapter 7).

Aiken was the judge who sentenced radical ecologist Daniel MacGowan to seven years in prison for a series of Earth Liberation Front arsons that harmed no one but damaged property connected to businesses and institutions that were destroying the environment. After September 11, 2001, the FBI named radical ecologists and anarchists as the domestic counterterrorism priority. One of the primary blows of repression that made up the Green Scare was "Operation Backfire," which targeted 18 people for participation in such arsons. Their case was based entirely on the word of snitches—many of whom were people who no longer had the support of a community that accepted the validity of illegal direct action. Daniel was one of those who refused to snitch, but because he and his legal team were threatening to subpoena government

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only on the particular aspects of austerity—the loss of jobs, state-funded welfare, and social infrastructure—as was the case with many of the miners and most of the "*indignados*." Others, making an actual attempt to understand the roots and causes of the austerity measures, along with those of us who were already in the streets fighting authority in the years when nearly everybody could get a decent job and the system was supposedly working well, connect austerity to capitalism and fight not to restore the previous status quo but to get rid of the roots of the problem and create a world in which neither a brutal precarity nor a hollow capitalist prosperity defines people's lives.

many participants. What I gathered was that, on arriving and learning more about the uprising, he learned that the movement was not nearly as peaceful as he had been led to believe, but that people had had to use a great deal of violence to defend themselves from police and government thugs, they had incurred many sacrifices, and now they had to keep on struggling because a new authoritarian government was in power.

Two things were evident from his story. The Egyptians he met were enthusiastic and committed to their struggle, but he on the other hand was shocked and scared by what it actually means in practice to rise up against power. He pointed out all the violence, all the buildings burned down, all the people injured and killed, and kept asking, *was it worth it? What was achieved?* These were not questions being asked by the participants in that struggle, who all seemed to agree that it was indeed worth it, and who are evidently still committed. They were the questions of someone who had a naïve vision of what is meant by "struggle" and all the sacrifices that go along with revolution, someone who is finding out that we cannot win in the space of a few months and our path will not be as easy or as pretty as it sounds in the songs, someone who has the possibility of living comfortably in coexistence with an oppressive system, and maybe prefers that to the immense commitment of fighting for our lives.

Before I could approach him to question him more thoroughly on these sentiments that had troubled me so, the musician ran off to Asturias where the miners, with full social support, were engaged in pitched battles against the police, masking up, blockading roads, swallowing tear gas, setting fires, and shooting at the cops with slingshots, powerful fireworks, and homemade rockets. In the process, they inspired all of Spain, attracted more people to the struggle against austerity,[14] and encouraged others to adopt more com-

[14] I want to clarify that when I speak about a struggle against austerity, I am referring to a struggle against an intrinsic part of capitalism. Some people focus

marginalize any political party that exceeds this limit, or of the very concept of representation as inimical to freedom.

He entertains no criticism of capitalism or democratic government, the structures by which the commons—the land, the water, the forests, knowledge, skills, history—have been robbed from all of us, enclosed, privatized, professionalized, and sold back to us as commodities. Given these basic economic laws, which are not questioned or put to the vote in any democratic system, all of us are denied what once was inalienable from us, what we require for our survival. Capitalism and the governments that deploy and subsidize it, whether democracies or dictatorships, have forced us into dependence on the institutions and economic classes that were constituted by the conquerors, by those who robbed us of our survival and now force us to work for them to buy back lifeless pieces of what was ours.

Sharp does not even discuss poverty in the superficial, reformist framework of helping the poor, forgiving debt, or creating structures that will protect people from the worst ravages of economic exploitation. In fact, he views interclass alliances—between those who exploit and those who are exploited—as a fundamental part of his nonviolent method. His list of nonviolent actions include action by the upper classes, by property owners, capitalists, and bosses: withdrawal of money from bank accounts, severance of funds and credit, revenue refusal, refusal to let or sell property, a merchants' "general strike," and even workplace lockouts. It's amazing, because several of these are tactics historically used by the wealthy to control the working class.

Sharp also lists a number of actions that can be carried out by governments to effect nonviolent change, showing that he has no critique of the State as a coercive power structure. Neither does Sharp propose the abolition of the military. Having a civilian population trained in his nonviolent method can "avoid the need to establish a strong military capacity" for national defense (p. 121),

but clearly, nonviolence is a complement to the military, not a replacement.

Nor does he propose the abolition of murderous institutions like the police and the prisons, institutions for social control like the mass media or government-run schools, or any other oppressive institution. Far from it, the mass media are an essential element in his template.

He claims that "nonviolent struggle contributes to democratizing the political society" because it "does not reproduce a means of repression under command of a ruling elite" (p. 57), but Sharp's superficial "political society" never addresses questions of self-organization, and therefore it never replaces or eliminates the "means of repression" forming a part of every government, whether democratic or dictatorial. On the contrary, the political parties that come into power after a nonviolent campaign on their behalf take charge of the coercive institutions—the police, military, prisons, schools, and so on—that already existed in society. In none of the Color Revolutions did the movement lead to the abolition of those institutions (nor even to suggesting such a radical action).

If proponents of nonviolence can fault authoritarian, armed revolutions of the past for creating *new* institutions of repression (and we make the same criticisms, no less because we anarchists were often the primary target for liquidation), we can fault them for neither abolishing nor fundamentally challenging the *existing* institutions of repression. Society, as it undergoes a process of revolution as conceived by Gene Sharp, does not change in any way whatsoever, except to multiply the number of political parties that are actively fighting over the spoils.

And the nonviolent movement itself reproduces authoritarian thinking. "One must develop a wise grand strategic plan for liberation" (p. 12). Sharp's method is based on a hierarchical resistance movement with a pyramidal structure and undisputed leaders. He never discusses the possibility of multiple plans, of other currents in the movement that have different strategies, and he does not dis-

bands make noise to get the crowd riled up and ready to fight with the police. Bands play at May Day in Berlin to rev people up for the riot. I'm not sure if the US marching bands envision their form of activism as simply a free, mobile venue, and the other marchers as mere spectators, or if for some unexplained aesthetic reason they think that music and riots don't mix. Even when artistic activities can be separated in time and space from destructive activities, radical artists throw on the brakes, as when Plan-it-X—a DIY folk punk record label that at least in its beginnings posed as radical—took on the role of peace police during the resistance against the i-69 highway construction.

And then there was Ryan Harvey, the anarchist folk singer from Baltimore who wrote an article denouncing the 2009 riots during the protests against the G20 in Pittsburgh. His article has already been taken apart. He bases his criticism primarily on the false dichotomy between rioting and community organizing, which is especially superficial given that Harvey did not participate (a common pattern: see Chris Hedges, Gene Sharp, and Rebecca Solnit) and he apparently did not know that one of the anarchist groups organizing for the protests had engaged in months of community outreach of the exact type that Harvey seems prepared to recognize. Moreover, in a rebuttal that group wrote of Harvey's piece, they mention that in the working-class neighborhoods where they centered their outreach, a lot of people were supportive of the anticapitalist protesters and even joined in on the streets. Harvey also fails to mention that the most violent bloc in the protest was the queer anarchist bloc, shattering another stereotype about violence.

I want to share a story about one of these anarchist musicians who passed through Barcelona after touring in Egypt in the aftermath of the uprising there. This was someone who sings about revolution, about rising up and fighting power, who writes songs and sells CDs about heroic struggles that have happened in the past. He had gone to Egypt supposedly in solidarity with the recent uprising there (this was in 2012), he had played concerts and spoken with

countries, those who sing about fighting authority don't stop when they step down from the stage, in fact they put those ideas into practice. In Barcelona, one of the better known anarchist hiphop artists was a part of the circles that were targeted by police in their 2003 repression against anarchists who had formed an armed group. In La Paz, Bolivia, three people were imprisoned and framed by the Evo Morales government in 2012 in an anti-terrorism investigation looking into several acts of sabotage, arson, and nonviolent bombings[12] carried out as part of the resistance to a new superhighway. All three of them were members of different punk bands.[13] Timur Kacharava, the antifascist and anti-authoritarian of immigrant origins murdered by fascists in St. Petersburg in 2005, played in a rock band. Mauricio Morales, the anarchist who died in Santiago de Chile while transporting an explosive device in 2009, was also a musician.

But it seems that in the US, artists will sing or paint or make plays about struggle without directly taking part in those aspects of a struggle they most romanticize. And in many cases, it seems their relation to the movement is strictly parasitic. In the beginning, they live off the movement, playing shows or selling posters, and if they "make it," they start selling to a wider audience and no longer have to depend on the solidarity of their former comrades. In the absence of a success story, they play a pacifying role, discouraging people from actually putting what they often romanticize into practice.

On numerous occasions, supposedly radical marching bands have led a protest through the streets, but when people start breaking things, they stop playing and demand that the violence stop. This is odd, because in other places people use music specifically to create a combative mood. In Chile, on the popularly celebrated Day of the Combatant Youth, traditional *tinku* dancers and marching

[12] I use this term tongue-in-cheek to denote a bombing that did not hurt anybody and that was specifically designed to only damage property.

[13] To avoid any potential confusion, I want to point out that one of the three snitched after a month in jail and was rewarded with house arrest.

cuss the possible problem of dealing with strategic or theoretical differences within the movement. In fact, in his book on creating democratic "liberation" movements, the concept of debate is suspiciously lacking. On the contrary, "resistance leaders," also referred to as "resistance planners," create the grand strategy, draft the plan, and "[make] it known" (p. 81). Sharp clearly envisions a command structure befitting a political party or an army, in which a small cabal of leaders make unitary decisions, and sheeplike masses carry them out. "The large numbers of people required to participate may be more willing and able to act if they understand the general conception, as well as specific instructions" (p. 81). The masses, in this framework, are simply a required element, who should be educated as to the general conception (evidently formulated without their input) and whose "instructions" should be explained to them.

Sharp is a shameless authoritarian and militarist. Appropriately called the "Clausewitz of Nonviolence," he uses hard talk, like the term "political jiujitsu" (p. 49) to beef up the image of his anemic method. Sharp's nonviolent masses are nothing but a disciplined, paramilitary force, civilians who are not trusted with the use of violence, which is the property of the state institutions they must work in tandem with. They are not trusted to formulate their own ideas, but must be convinced of the appropriate strategies.

Any use of "violence" (he does not explain what this actually means), is "counterproductive." "Nonviolent discipline is a key to success and must be maintained despite provocations and brutalities by the dictators and their agents" (p. 49). Debate and political difference do not figure into his method, and violence, if it appears, is presented as the result of provocations by government agents. Sharp trains his disciples in a practically Stalinist mindset in which any dissent is blamed on the machinations of an external enemy. Dissent, in this framework, must be suppressed and expelled. If Sharp is the most influential proponent of nonviolence alive today, no wonder that so many supporters of nonviolence have attacked those of us who choose to struggle by other means, or have exposed

us to the brutality of the police. It is worth noting that in his book Sharp never condemns using violence against fellow protesters.

He claims that "political defiance, unlike violence, is uniquely suited to severing" the obedience that governments need to rule. This is a bizarre claim, and he does not explain how a riot, an insurrection, or an armed revolutionary movement does not constitute a much greater severing of obedience. In fact, those who use nonviolence often maintain allegiance to the ruling system and only attempt to function as a loyal opposition. But those who position themselves in the social war,[3] not as victims but as combatants, unmistakably negate their obedience to power. Sharp's other superficial argument against "violence" (we can only assume that with this vague concept he means any tactics that do not appear in his approved list) is simply that it will "shift the struggle to one in which the dictators have an overwhelming advantage."

And here we find the central contradiction of Gene Sharp's work. He pretends to win the debate against other methods of struggle with an absurdly simplistic cliché. In Chapter 1 he explains that military resistance hits a government where it is strongest, whereas nonviolence hits a government where it is weakest. This falls short of a reasoned argument for several of reasons. Contrary to the manichean reasoning of most pacifists, there are more than two methods of struggle, and many methods that embrace a diversity of tactics do not adopt a military resistance, but rather popular insurrection, widespread sabotage, and other means. We could also look through the thousands of examples in

[3] For readers unfamiliar with this term, it is the idea, held by many anarchists, that capitalism and the State constitute an often invisible war that is constantly being waged against all of us. This view is supported in the aggressive nature of capitalism, and in the fact that democratic governments employ counterinsurgency policing strategies as a matter of course. In other words, the social war is being fought against us whether we fight back or not. Social peace is the illusion of peace that reigns when people do not fight back, and when they accept the idea that the ruling class has their best interests at heart.

claims only result in a slap on the wrist. Even if she knew about Marie Mason, a mother and someone who has participated in the struggle for decades, she would not have mentioned her, since part of her politics includes silencing any woman who contradicts her dogma that violence is a dude thing.

And though Solnit is talking about Oakland, she ignores the 100 people who were arrested, with three facing serious felony charges—not slaps on the wrist—for their participation in the Oscar Grant riots two years earlier. Those people were white, black, and brown, women, men, and queer, and she ignores them because they contradict her preconceived notions. Nor does she mention the anarchists—proponents of a diversity of tactics—who were supporting the Oakland 100, making sure that they were not alone. And then she has the gall to talk about solidarity.

Unmasking every single false or misleading statement Solnit makes in this one article would take up more pages than I think she deserves, and the further I go in her article, the more I start to believe I am making a mistake in taking her seriously at all. With startlingly few exceptions, it seems that pacifists' use of rhetoric is just a complement to their authoritarian and often violent use of the mass media, the police, social convention, or their fists to get rid of us "bad protesters" and "troublemakers." If what they say has any resemblance to the truth, it is at most a coincidence. I know from personal experience that there are many practitioners of nonviolent action who are sincere in their commitment to revolution and honest in their criticisms of different tendencies in the struggle, but as I look out over the panorama of the major manifestations of nonviolence in the last few years, I have to ask: where are they?

Movement musicians

A problem that may be particular to the US is a sharp divide between the artists and the militants in the struggle. In many other

ongoing debate, being high-profile is neither an option nor a goal.[11]

Her self-serving use of identity politics again leads her to butcher the truth. A little research would show that some of these "white kids" who put their beliefs into practice include Eric McDavid and Marie Mason, anarchists serving 20-year and 22-year prison sentences respectively, for doing the sort of things she

[11] Then there is the question of signing your name to texts like this one. Anarchists back in the day usually wrote under their own names, unless there was a good risk of getting arrested for it, something that doesn't happen so much anymore. Openly expressing ideas that might lead to imprisonment is another form of defiance and propaganda, one that Alfredo Bonanno has used as recently as the '80s.

Using anonymity to decrease the amount of information the government has on us, even where it is not an immediate question of imprisonment, is a good idea, but the practicality of an anonymous book is far from straightforward. Short of hand-binding thousands of copies, few authors can protect their identity in the long term, especially if they are dealing with an official publisher, have internet on their computer, or use email to send in the manuscript. The anti-authoritarian communists arrested in Tarnac, France, in a major anti-terrorism operation were accused of being the authors of a major sabotage action and an anonymous, insurrectionary book. The very anonymity of the book made it easier for the government to portray it as a criminal text, whereas the authors used a publicity campaign very much at odds with the opaque, clandestine methods they advocated, in order to extricate themselves from the police frame-up. In the end, one's peers and the government often end up knowing who the author is, and the text only remains anonymous for a random person who chances upon it and may want to find other writings by the same author.

One real advantage to anonymity is the protection it offers against those who would cash in on authorship for status or leadership within the movement. This mechanism does not prevent in-group status for anonymous authors who put themselves at the center of a clique of people cool enough to be in the know (in this case anonymity amplifies the author's status, as knowledge of their authorship becomes a rare commodity), but it does prevent the rise of public figures, those who attempt to be spokespersons for the movement, like a Daniel Cohn-Bendit or a David Graeber. A more direct mechanism is to simply approach public figures and high-profile revolutionaries with distrust, to always attack self-appointed leaders or cults of personality, and to value other types of activity within a struggle more than writing.

history in which governments were in fact overcome by military resistance, disproving Sharp's claims about the impracticality of this option. But taking his cliché seriously, as though it were an idea with which to debate, is missing a larger point.

Gene Sharp's central thesis is that all governments, even dictatorships, rule not by military force but by winning the participation and compliance of those who are ruled, by manufacturing consent, to borrow a phrase. In other words, even according to Sharp's own framework, military or police force is not a government's strong suit. If we elaborate this idea that Gene Sharp mentions only in passing, probably to keep his theoretical house of cards from crumbling, we see that the most developed aspect of social control, that which all governments use most in order to stay in power, are those means that win hearts and minds, spread elite values, misinform people, convince them that government has their best interests in mind, persuade them to participate or at least to obey. This activity of the State is primarily carried out by the very institution that Gene Sharp never questions, that he relies on to carry out his pseudo-revolutions: the media.

It seems that the State, in an impressive act of political jiujitsu, has used its strong suit, its ability to spread elite values (nonviolence) and to convince people of the need for obedience (with the option of protesting, but never fighting back) to successfully hijack the social movements that are meant to oppose it, twisting their arm and getting them to serve the State's own purposes. And while nonviolence has always served to protect the State, in the last decades elite support has succeeded in eliminating every vestige of critical or conflictive practices from nonviolent movements, which in the past had at least constituted an inconvenience or a stepping stone to real forms of struggle, leaving nothing that in any way challenges or questions the social hierarchy.

US Military

We can learn something about the nature of nonviolence from the fact that, on a worldwide scale, the institution that has probably dedicated the most resources towards the promotion of nonviolent resistance movements has been the US government. In 2005, during the height of armed resistance to the US occupation of Iraq, the Pentagon got caught running a multimillion dollar covert propaganda campaign, paying to plant articles in Iraqi media made to appear as though they were written by locals, urging Iraqis to use nonviolent tactics to resist the Americans. This fact alone should suffice to discredit all the arguments and pretensions of nonviolence, were not an ability to ignore embarrassing facts a prerequisite for believing in nonviolence.

And those facts pile up. We also have the example of US government funding for the Color Revolutions, Defense Department grants to doctoral students researching nonviolent regime change, and the US government's intervention in the Egyptian uprising, encouraging nonviolent pro-democracy groups and attempting to portray the movement as nonviolent.

On a domestic level, there are also numerous cases of city mayors and police chiefs working together with nonviolent activists to ensure the peacefulness of a major protest. During the 2012 Republican Convention in Tampa, Florida:

> Jane Castor, Tampa's Police Chief, got props from the mainstream media for presiding over a peaceful Republican National Convention in 2012. Working closely together with ngos and pacifist-inclined protesters, she made sure that no negative incidents that could have disrupted the Convention or given the city a bad image took place. According to the Tampa Bay Times, the protest was "Less anarchy, more parade." Castor herself gloated that she "needed

to a far greater extent than Rebecca Solnit does. In comparison with them (a large, amorphous, and not exclusively white or young network of people who have participated at one time or another in a CrimethInc. publication), she is nothing but a well paid writer, careerist, and voyeur.

She also claims that the "two most high-profile advocates of violence on the left" only talk the talk. She does not name them, probably because she is afraid of being proven wrong, but I would assume she is referring to Derrick Jensen and Ward Churchill. Derrick Jensen, for his part, was roundly criticized by anarchists for just that. Since he evidently could not take these criticisms, he went to the other side, aiding journalist Chris Hedges in a smear article against anarchists. Meanwhile, many people have put into practice the eco-anarchist ideas Jensen made himself a figurehead for. They have taken great risk, and some of them have gone to prison, while most of them have never been caught. Judging by the few who have been caught, eco-anarchist saboteurs also participate in aboveground campaigns, free clinics, gardening, outreach, workplace organizing, and a range of other activities. Ward Churchill, on the other hand, does participate in social struggles and organizes solidarity for people like Leonard Peltier who are paying the price of repression for participating in non-pacifist struggles. But far more influential than Churchill and Jensen, for those of us who believe in a diversity of tactics, are anonymous texts that arise in the heart of uprisings and insurrections that have been occurring around the world. They are communiqués that are published to claim responsibility for attacks against the system, or the writings of people sitting in prison for putting these beliefs into practice.

That's the whole point: unlike proponents of nonviolence,proponents of combative methods of revolutionary struggle cannot be high-profile. We cannot flirt with the movement and also become respected, professional writers like Solnit. While the question of clandestinity versus anonymous visibility is an

meant to learn from struggles in other countries or develop true solidarity with them. They are only useful insofar as they can be mined to provide ideological fodder for the political positions that are comfortable in a privileged North American context.

Let the poor people in Argentina or Syria face down the military and give their lives in the struggle, says the nimby. *It doesn't matter that they are fighting the same system we are, or that in some cases the guns and economic policies turned on them originated here in North America or Europe. It is simply irresponsible to learn from their struggles and to fight in this country—not even with the same*

tactics but just with the same sense of antagonism—because all the people here who want their cheap soy or cheap oil, the people who side with the police against the poor when urban residents in this country rise up, would stop supporting us, stop occasionally coming out to the hassle-free protests we organize, and stop writing checks to the ngos we work with.

In a later paragraph, she packs several false claims in just a few short sentences. The anarchist group CrimethInc., which wrote an open letter criticizing nonviolence in Occupy,

> doesn't actually cite examples of violence achieving anything in our recent history. Can you name any? The anonymous writers don't seem prepared to act, just tell others to (as do the two most high-profile advocates of violence on the left). And despite the smear quoted above that privileged people oppose them, theirs is the language of privilege. White kids can do crazy shit and get slapped on the wrist or maybe slapped around for it;

In many other texts that CrimethInc. makes widely available, they do cite such examples. Her claim that the anonymous writers don't seem prepared to act is patently false. In fact, CrimethInc. bases its political writings on direct experience in social struggles

> a box of beads. It was actually a festive atmosphere." The good results for police, the Republicans, the city government, and Democratic politicians or high-paid NGO directors who don't want to be associated with street fighting or revolutionary social movements can be attributed to the pacifist protesters who gladly worked hand in hand with the cops.[4]

Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama, an international celebrity and the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, is a renowned figurehead for nonviolence. Unlike Gene Sharp or Gandhi, he has not contributed to the development of a pragmatic nonviolent method, though he is a tireless spokesperson for the principles of nonviolence and compassion.

Due to the brutal Chinese occupation of his homeland, he has lived most of his life in exile, a tribulation I do not wish to minimize in any way. But within the hard reality of exile, he has been richly rewarded for his advocacy of nonviolence. His general lack of criticism for those in power (excepting the Chinese government, whose reach he is beyond) makes his message of peace nonthreatening, equally palatable for world leaders, business elites, middle-class altruists, and people at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Some people find his nonviolent philosophy moving, perhaps for the very reason of its universal, non-critical palatability mentioned above. Others would point out that his rhetoric is trite and superficial, or that his commitment to peace has never led him to put himself in harm's way or intervene in any of the brutal wars

[4] Quoted from the website *In Defense of the Black Bloc* https://violentanarchists.wordpress. com/2013/01/02/tampa-police-chief/. The original cites an article in the *Tampa Bay Times* that praises the police chief for her work with protesters, successfully preventing any interruptions to the Convention.

or occupations occurring around the world, except to lightly scold world leaders from time to time, without ever naming names, framing every conflict as an engagement between two equal sides incapable of understanding the other, and using the same language of peace and dialogue that those same world leaders employ to hide the unequal nature of the conflicts they are responsible for. Compassion, in the end, is a meaningless concept if we do not embrace the reality of certain antagonisms or take a clear position against ongoing systems of oppression.

In 1989 the Dalai Lama was given the Nobel Peace Prize.

George Soros

George Soros is a billionaire investor and philanthropist who has given away $8 billion to charitable causes. Soros has

amassed billions of dollars through currency speculation and business deals, and dedicated a part of that money to encourage the spread of democratic capitalist governments. In 1993, he founded the Open Society Institute, primarily to make grants to his multiple foundations in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. On numerous occasions, Soros has funded nonviolent social movements that work for more democratic government within a Western and capitalist framework. Several of the activist groups that organized Color Revolutions and received training from Gene Sharp's Albert Einstein Institute also received funding from Soros. Soros is largely credited with aiding the transition to neoliberal capitalism in Hungary. It is clear what this billionaire's vision of an ideal world consists of.

Generally, major capitalists (banks and speculators) prefer democratic governments because these increase their profits and minimize their risks. Whereas dictators can impose capital controls or default on loans without warning, democracies usually allow bank technocrats to control their monetary policy, and

the wrong decision. Demagogues, populists, and authoritarians like her always believe the majority is on their side. We could reveal how absurd her reasoning is by claiming that, since the majority of the US population would never consent to the admittedly radical visions that Solnit is working towards, her political activity constitutes a violent imposition on the body politic.

It is no coincidence that Solnit chooses the only body politic in which the majority might feasibly agree with her: not the US population, not the world population, not the general population of Oakland, and not Occupy Oakland, but the national Occupy movement. I wonder if she would ever be willing to honestly answer, at what point did the Occupy movement agree that the decisions of all local Occupys had to be ratified in a general Occupy congress? Of course, Occupy never had such a decisionmaking structure. All local Occupys made their own decisions, based on their unique situations. Another fact that gets in the way of Solnit's argument.

Like many other proponents of nonviolence, Rebecca Solnit is a nimby.[10] She employs a double standard between movements in the Global North and in the Global South that some might call racist or colonial:

> Many of us anarchists are not ideological pacifists; I'm more than fine with the ways the Zapatista rebels in southern Mexico have defended themselves and notice how sadly necessary it sometimes is, and I sure wouldn't dictate what Syrians or Tibetans may or may not do. But petty violence in public in this country doesn't achieve anything useful.

That depends on one's definition of "useful." When she talks about "tactics learned from Argentina's 2001 revolution" she does not mention that that revolution was violent. Evidently, we are not

[10] For those who missed the earlier chapter, NIMBY is an acronym for "Not In My Backyard."

Solnit is also trying to mislead her audience when she attributes a refusal of nonviolence with "clueless[ness]." She can claim that criticisms of nonviolence or justifications of other methods of struggle are mistaken, but she would be lying if she openly said that these currents do not have richly elaborated theoretical backing.

Honesty, though, is not her strong suit. She clearly prefers the tropes, clichés, stereotypes, and false dichotomies of the demagogue. This seems to be a trait inherent to nonviolence. Instead of taking on the arguments of those she disagrees with, she tries to make them disappear. Another clear sign that she is knowingly spreading a lie.

Piling up lie upon manipulation, she uses the authoritarian trope of the majority to delegitimize the actions of those she claims to be a minority:

> Bodily violence is a means of coercing others against their will by causing pain, injury, or death. It steals another's bodily integrity or very life as property to dispose of as the violator wishes. Since the majority in our movement would never consent to violent actions, such actions are also imposed on our body politic against our will.

Moving past her questionable use of such emotionally triggering language and her metaphorical conflation of a person's body with "our body politic," we might also point out that Occupy Oakland, which she claims to represent though she was not a participant,[9] agreed in its general assembly to a framework of a diversity of tactics, and rejected attempts to enforce a commitment to nonviolence. Like most democrats, Rebecca Solnit's commitment to "direct democracy" does not apply when a majority makes

[9] I don't know if Solnit participated at any point in Occupy Oakland, though I can say with certainty that she was not a consistent participant, and that she, like Hedges, writes as a distant and often ignorant spectator.

they lack a potentially erratic strongman figure who might defy investors.

The political class in a democratic government have made themselves voluntarily dependent on financial backers. Up for reelection every few years, a politician who has not made investors happy will not receive the money they need to stay in power. This is a brilliant mechanism, because the members of the political class are also rich people with their own investments to worry about, and because effective statecraft rests on acquiring sufficient funding, so one of a state's principal concerns is to constantly procure that funding.

Bono and Bob Geldof

Both famous pop musicians, both founders of major charities, both advocates of peaceful tactics, both knighted by the English crown, and both nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Bono and Bob Geldof are celebrity activists who have used their fame to insert themselves into leadership positions in the antiglobalization movement. Charity reproduces dynamics of power that maintain the dominance and reproduce the values of the one giving the charity over the one receiving it (and the one giving often acquired their wealth through the same processes of exploitation that led to the poverty of the one receiving). It is only consistent, then, that these two pop stars tried to exercise power within major movements against poverty that had grown up over the course of years in Africa and Europe, despite their lack of experience or participation in these movements on the ground.

Their brilliant solution to poverty was the organization of televised charity concerts to direct world attention to the problem, as though it were a simple question of ignorance or public opinion. They denounced people struggling in the streets, people who put their lives on the line in the fight against the effects of capitalism, preferring to turn everything into a big show. A perhaps megalo-

maniac Bob Geldof claims to have mobilized world leaders to take poverty seriously. Several years later, we have yet to see any results of this supposed change of heart, although Geldof and Bono have been repeatedly celebrated and rewarded for their commitment to peaceful reform, a process that in their minds has to be directed from above. "Like it or not the agents of change in our world are the politicians. Otherwise you're always outside the tent pissing in."[5]

Chris Hedges

On february 6, 2012, journalist Chris Hedges published his now infamous article, "The Cancer of Occupy" on the website *Truthdig*. His article was a virulent attack on the anarchist Black Bloc within the then-ongoing Occupy movement. Hedges, writing as though he were a movement participant and someone with the movement's best interests in mind, makes a number of claims: that the Black Bloc is a group or movement inspired by John Zerzan, who wrote for the magazine *Green Anarchy* which was so dastardly that it even criticized the Zapatistas; that the Black Bloc members hate the Left more than they hate the 1%; that the Black Bloc is a sexist group based on "hypermasculinity"; that the violence of the Black Bloc is a perfect excuse for police repression; and that people should take action to purge their movement of this cancer. He extensively interviews author Derrick Jensen, who had previously supported violent tactics but subsequently denounced socalled Black Bloc anarchists because they had the gall to criticize him (for acting like a celebrity, for saying that some people should write books in favor of dangerous tactics and other people should carry out those tactics, for supporting authoritarian methods in the environmen-

[5] An eloquent Bob Geldof, quoted in "Bob Geldof condemns lame and ineffective antipoverty campaigners," *The Guardian*, http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/apr/02/bobgeldof-anti-poverty-campaigners-starsuckers (2 April 2010).

"when the FBI or other government agencies infiltrate a movement or an activist group, they seek to undermine it by egging it on to more violence." In all the recent cases of FBI provocations that have been documented, what actually happened was the FBI informants convinced a closely monitored group of people to commit a crime, and arrested them before any act of violence was committed. Proponents of nonviolence have not provided, to my knowledge, any documentation for police agencies encouraging the spread of combative, illegal tactics across a movement, and we, on the other hand, have provided a large number of documented examples of government and police doing the opposite: encouraging the spread of nonviolent tactics across a movement.

I doubt Rebecca Solnit is unaware of all the evidence and analysis that contradict her claims. Rather than engaging in honest debate, though, she hides all the counterarguments and erases all the evidence with an avalanche of clichés and unsupported allegations.

Elsewhere in her article, Solnit props up two harmful myths that we have already dealt with: that when "episodes of violence break out as part of our side in a demonstration, an uprising, a movement" it is the work of either "a paid infiltrator or a clueless dude." Here she is feeding into the conspiracy theory that masked rioters are police provocateurs, a theory that has directly led to multiple people getting assaulted or getting arrested and subjected to the violence of the prison system. This is a phenomenon that Rebecca Solnit cannot help but be aware of, revealing yet again that supporters of nonviolence are willing to use violence to silence their ideological opponents. Solnit must also be aware of the many feminist and queer critiques of nonviolence, and feminist and queer participation in combative and illegal methods of struggle, including at the heart of the Occupy Oakland movement that she is criticizing. Yet again, the imperative of nonviolence trumps both honesty and any qualm she might have as a feminist in silencing her sisters.

She begins her article with the conventional pacifist argument that "Violence is Conventional. Violence is what the police use. Violence is what the state uses." I doubt that she is unaware that the category of violence, the idea that rebellion and repression are the same, has already been roundly criticized, disputed in numerous studies, essays, and personal accounts. And I doubt she could point to any source where proponents of nonviolence have been able to show that all violence is the same either historically, socially, or psychologically. I suspect that for many it is a religious conviction, but in any case the argument functions as a form of manipulation, the demagogic use of a category that cannot be defended.

From the beginning of her article she is categorically stating that what the police do and what rioters do are the same, but she does not make the assertion explicit because she cannot back it up. In other words, Solnit is consciously lying to her audience and hoping that they are too accustomed to demagoguery and pseudologic to notice.

Solnit goes on to claim that images of New York City police pepperspraying peaceful protesters, who do nothing more than raise their voices, "brought the nation along with" them. Her evidence for this is the number of views videos of these incidents received on *YouTube*, not, tellingly, any increase in action against police brutality. If it is true that the "nation [came] along," then perhaps they just stayed at home raising their voices and being just as ineffective at stopping police brutality as the peaceful protesters in New York who complained but let it happen.

In the next section, she makes the claim that "The state would like us to be violent" (I believe I have demonstrated the opposite to be true, with reference to a large body of evidence[8] which Solnit does not provide). Then she misleads her audience by saying that

[8] In *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, I also quote leaked police and FBI documents that discuss their strategies to discourage or neutralize violence and encourage nonviolence.

tal movement, and so on). Jensen, audibly nursing a wounded ego, goes on record to portray Black Bloc anarchists as intolerant thugs who use others as "human shields." In a word, Hedges portrays the Black Bloc anarchists as "criminal."

The responses to Hedges' article were immediate and widespread. Nearly everyone commented on Hedges' embarrassing ignorance of the subject. The Black Bloc is not a group or a movement, but a tactic, and as a tactic it is primarily used for anonymity and visibility, and only sometimes used for property damage or confrontation with the police (these latter are the preferred motives of many participants, but the fact is many Black Blocs have occurred without such incidents). John Zerzan and *Green Anarchy* have very little to do with the Black Bloc. Although some Black Bloc participants have no doubt read the writings of Zerzan or *Green Anarchy*, there is no single political perspective or theory that pertains to the Bloc. Its participants over the years have held a far wider range of opinions than what we might find in, for example, *The New York Times*, Hedges' employer (and, if I'm not mistaken, another rag that is not terribly sympathetic to the Zapatistas). Furthermore, Zerzan and *Green Anarchy* are not the wingnut fanatics Hedges presents them to be, but publishers of a number of sensible critiques of industrial society.[6]

Some Occupiers responding to Hedges pointed out that in Occupy Oakland, probably the most radical, diverse, dynamic, and influential of all the Occupy encampments, and also the one with the greatest presence of the Black Bloc, the Black Bloc generally positioned itself between the police and the other protesters, literally shielding them rather than using them as "human shields";

[6] Although I don't agree with all of Zerzan's framings, definitions, or standards of evidence, I think it is telling that mainstream or leftist detractors nearly always discredit him either by presenting him as a loopy extremist, without ever quoting his argumentation at length, or by arguing that his primitivist vision means a massive and abrupt population reduction, again without engaging with his arguments against industrial civilization.

far from a space of "hypermasculinity" the Black Bloc included a Feminist and Queer Bloc that was among the most active during the combative march on "Move In Day"; and that old people and young, including parents with babies, participated in the anarchist marches. Ironically, Hedges claimed that the Occupy movement was so strong that it had created spaces where "mothers and fathers with strollers felt safe." He does not mention that anarchists were a part of this phenomenon, nor that nonviolence was not a prerequisite for it.

Hedges claims that the occupations were shut down because they were nonviolent and this presented a threat. It's curious reasoning, since at other moments he claims that the use of violence allows the police to shut down the movement. And even more curious since, without a doubt, the far-from-nonviolent Occupy Oakland was the most threatening version of the movement in the country, the one the authorities tried hardest to shut down, the one that proved most difficult to shut down (being much more resilient than the nonviolent Occupy Wall Street), and the one that generated the most opprobrium from journalists on the right and the left. Oakland Mayor Jean Quan was one of multiple authority figures who asked the national Occupy movement to "disown" Oakland because they were combative and uncompromising,[7] and the proponents of nonviolence came running to the call, eager to do the work of the ruling class.

Chris Hedges was not an Occupy participant, but he used his social position as an elite journalist to try to act as a spokesperson for the movement. Because his article was so full of mistakes and misinformation, and because his rhetoric so closely mirrored the media attacks by the rightwing, many readers saw through him. But many more continue to take Hedges seriously, and he continspread by the mass media. They remember the long history of combative methods and remember that those methods belong to them, that sabotage has always been the best friend of the underdog, that what little we still have, we have won by fighting back.

[7] Don Gato, "To Be Fair, He Is a Journalist: A Short Response to Chris Hedges on the Black Bloc" *Revolution By the Book: the AK Press blog*, February 7, 2012.

Rebecca Solnit

Rebecca solnit is one of the few influential proponents of nonviolence who actually participate in social movements on

the ground, rather than as an elite journalist, academic, or celebrity. To her credit, she actually puts her money where her mouth is. It is worth noting that her influence is probably due to her being an accomplished writer, rather than (as far as I can tell, having overlapped with her to a certain extent) an inspiring example of the development of an effective practice in actual nonviolent movements. I point this out only to clarify her role, and to underline my earlier argument that Gene Sharp's is perhaps the only nonviolent method that has effectively been put into practice, though with horrible results as we have seen. Rebecca Solnit advocates a more radical, involved, and committed form of nonviolent action, though I get the feeling that, given the stagnation of such action in practice, she has turned largely to slinging mud at ideological opponents.

Rebecca Solnit is not a careerist or an elitist like Gene Sharp and Chris Hedges. But I do want to cite a few less-thanhonest arguments she makes in favor of nonviolence, in order to point out the sort of underhanded discourse that even sincere proponents of nonviolence sometimes engage in.

Solnit weighed in on the debate around nonviolence that came to the fore during the Occupy movement in an article published on the website *CommonDreams* on November 14, 2011, "Throwing Out the Master's Tools and Building a Better House: Thoughts on the Importance of Nonviolence in the Occupy Revolution."

have a good idea of how powerless and unhappy most of us feel, and if we could spread this information as news, that would be a first step against our powerlessness. But as things stand, "the news" is a produced sphere that places all importance on the actions of politicians or bankers and the dramas of celebrities. The news is the mechanism that silences us.

And it is exactly this institution that proponents of nonviolence expect to spread images of our dignified resistance and win us more support. The media will never do this. Not in a million years. In Spain, the coverage they gave to the peaceful 15M movement was meant to distract people from the growing wave of strikes and riots, to show people how they should protest. As soon as the 15M movement started misbehaving, the media flicked the switch and either cast it in a negative light or simply made it disappear from the screen. At no point did they ever spread the actual ideas that were being circulated in the movement. A similar thing happened with the Occupy movement in the US.

The media are owned by the same corporations that rule the world. They are not our friends. They want us to lose. If we really want to do something as bold as changing the world, we cannot be so lazy that we rely on the existing institutions to spread our message. A vital task of the struggle is to create our own means of communication, counterinformation, and dissemination of radical ideas. Without this we are doomed. Rather than catering to superficial or safe visions of social change, we have to challenge our ideas about how to win and above all we have to build popular support for the methods of struggle we will need to use in order to take on the rich and powerful. There can be no doubt; in those countries where the struggles against oppression are strong, those countries whose struggles we admire, people are not afraid of sabotage, they do not run away when a riot starts, and they do not wring their hands when people fight with the police. Their struggles are stronger precisely because they have carried out the vital task of keeping their collective memory alive, resisting the amnesia

ues to publish articles for the movement, to advocate nonviolence, and to work towards the criminalization of the anarchists.

The only difference, in this regard, between the rightwing attacks against ongoing social struggles and the pacification campaign carried out by supporters of nonviolence like Hedges is that the rightwing tries to criminalize any social movement that attempts to change society whereas the supporters of nonviolence only attempt to criminalize the most radical elements, the parts that seek to do away with the existing power structure rather than negotiate with it.

And Chris Hedges is a part of that power structure. A longtime journalist with *The New York Times*, Hedges' loose relationship with the facts makes it clear how much he deserves the Pulitzer Prize—named for the inventor of yellow journalism—that he was awarded for his work as a war correspondent.

In typical fashion, he tried to use his professional status as a paid spectator of warfare to pass himself off as an expert on war, and by extension, on violence. This was exactly the stance he used to defend himself from the criticism of his atrocious article, in a debate with a proponent of Black Bloc tactics. In this debate, he refused to acknowledge how he was exposing other people to the violence of repression by helping to criminalize them (making it easier for the police to arrest them, beat them, shoot at them, or lock them up in prison for a long time); and he refused to see, or was mentally incapable of seeing, how violence is a category that conflates very different situations.

The wars that he has covered have been conflicts between different authoritarian powers, and he was always present as a privileged, protected outsider. Although war correspondent is a somewhat risky job (though never as risky as they make it out to be), it is still just a job. Hedges has never had a personal stake in the conflicts he has observed, and he has never fought for his own freedom or for the lives of his loved ones. In sum, he cannot in the least understand the conflicts he has been handsomely paid to write about.

But in typical elitist fashion, he passes himself off as an expert. Cashing in on his years of war voyeurism, Hedges wrote the book *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, released in 2003 by an imprint of megapublisher Random House. Evidently, that giant corporation did not find what he had to say threatening, nor did the many magazines that reviewed the book and helped it become a bestseller. In this book, Hedges tries to make a psychological argument about how people can become addicted to warfare. He does not make a distinction between wars of conquest and wars of liberation, nor any other distinction that could make his findings useful for those who are engaged in a struggle for their own freedom. (In that regard, the works of Frantz Fanon, who actually participated in such struggles, are far better). He does little more than allow a comfortable audience to vicariously partake in his voyeurism.

Hedges seems to lack the strategic clarity that might allow him to extract anything useful from a lifetime of vicarious experiences. As many critics noted, when he witnessed the fierce social struggles in Greece in 2010, Hedges nearly swooned:

> Here's to the Greeks. They know what to do when corporations pillage and loot their country […] Call a general strike. Riot. Shut down the city centers. Toss the bastards out. Do not be afraid of the language of class warfare—the rich versus the poor, the oligarchs versus the citizens, the capitalists versus the proletariat. The Greeks, unlike most of us, get it […]Think of the Greek riots as a struggle for liberation.

But when people in the US, learning directly from the comrades in Greece and struggling in direct solidarity with them (rather than being a spectator, like Hedges), use some of the same tactics, but not even approaching a tenth of the intensity, Hedges and other NIMBYs freak out, denounce it, try to scare other people away from supporting it, and call it "criminal." This is not someone whose opinions we can trust.

Perhaps what is most disturbing about the whole sordid affair is that Chris Hedges had any credibility to begin with among people who supposedly want to change the world. If we really want to regain power over our own lives, abolish capitalism, get rid of the government, get rid of all the obstacles that prevent people from organizing their own affairs and meeting their own needs, if we really want to realize the centuries-old dream of *omnia sunt comuna*, "everything for everyone!," then whenever some highly paid journalist (and from one of the most powerful media organizations on the planet, no less) comes around and starts telling us how we should be struggling, our response should be a pie in the face.

Many proponents of nonviolence lack a critique of the media, despite the fact that this has been one of the most important parts of the power structure, one of the most important mechanisms for social control, for the last 120 years. Noam Chomsky and many others have published numerous studies showing how corporate media misinform us or train us to view the world through a lens that privileges the interests of the powerful. But the problem goes deeper.

The mass media need to be abolished. They turn something that should be a daily activity shared by everyone—informing us about our world, fact-checking, sharing stories—into a professional activity controlled and profited off of by elite institutions. They alienate the sharing of stories and information and enclose it within a separate space—the television screen, the newspaper—that creates passive spectators and privileged narrators who direct their gaze. The specific medium of a radio broadcast, a printed newspaper, or an internet article could have a different social meaning if they were projects we could all engage in, but in the current, hierarchical society, the totality of the media can only serve to keep us passive and train us to view the world through the eyes of the powerful. The truth is, all of us have lives that are newsworthy, even and especially if we have nothing more to share than how boring or miserable our lives are. If news were simply sharing, then we would

kill for other motives. The lesson is clear: patriarchal society wants women to be passive victims who accept the violence done to them and who depend on ruling institutions like the police or charity organizations to protect them. They must not take up the problems of self-defense, vengeance, or healing on their own.

In the United States, Bash Back! spread the practice of queer self-defense and revenge.[10] One of the primary targets of Bash Back! and similar queer actions has been the forceful reclaiming of Gay Pride. Originally the commemoration of the Stonewall Riots, a series of clashes in 1969 that saw queers, trannies, lesbians, and gays battling with cops, Gay Pride had been pacified and turned into a commercialized event trying to sell a new normality and the integration of middle-class gays who could afford to buy into that normality. The response? At the Queers Fucking Queers action in Seattle in 2011, radical queers started an illegal dance party, attacked police, smashed a bank and an American Apparel store, damaged a yuppie beer garden, and generally discredited the idea that queer and trans people can be peacefully assimilated into a patriarchal, capitalist society, bought off with legal marriages and military service.

> What had started as a dance party, quickly transformed into a confrontational presence of anti-Pride rowdy queers, the lack of music hardly matter what came apparent was that a large number of people present there were most interested in being loud and defiant in the street. Being out and proud in a way that Pride was supposed to originally represent, in the way of Stonewall. Regardless of the yuppie lgbt community's agenda of assimilation into capitalism, tonight has made it clear again that there are always

[10] See Fray Baroque and Tegan Eanelli (eds.), *Queer Ultraviolence: Bash Back! Anthology* (Oakland: Ardent Press, 2012).

(white) Americans—led by none other than Andrew Jackson—to put down a rebellion by the Creek in 1814, which was part of a larger indigenous uprising against settler expansion organized by Tecumseh.

In conclusion, Cherokee nonviolence was a blatant failure, and rather than a decision based on pure principle, it was a decision that came on the heels of military defeat and that entailed economic, cultural, and military collaboration with the conquerors.

Kurlansky claims that

> "In the vast history of European colonialism, there are few incidents of nonviolent resistance by indigenous people, leaving unanswered the question as to whether this would have worked." (p. 65).

This is false. On countless occasions, indigenous people ran away rather than fight, they protested attempts to steal their land, they gave gifts to European settlers and sought reconciliation, they avoided participation in imposed slavery, they sang in the face of firing squads, and on and on. These peaceful tactics had their usefulness, and some of them, especially running away, prolonged survival, but none of them stopped the onslaught. Kurlansky continues: "What is answerable is that nothing they did try worked."

It is remarkable that this bestselling author, who makes a considerable amount of money spreading the gospel of peace, has the gall to call indigenous resistance a failure. Kurlansky talks as though indigenous people are extinct and their struggles are all lost. Indigenous people are still in struggle. Many battles they have fought throughout history slowed the assault of European settlers and won small pockets of autonomy, some of which they still hold on to today.

Indigenous people made tough choices about how to resist, and those choices shaped their possibilities for resistance today. Sometimes they resisted with peaceful means, and sometimes they took

up arms and fought back. There is no objective criterion for measuring that resistance, especially for those of us who are not indigenous and therefore stand outside looking in. At certain moments, one must choose between dignity and survival, and what may seem like a suicidal course of action was necessary in the struggle for freedom, or what may seem like capitulation was necessary for living to be able to fight another day. Hopefully we can be forgiven for criticizing Cherokee resistance, since it included going to war for the colonizer against those who were fighting back. It is important to differentiate between criticizing as an outsider and criticizing as someone directly affected or directly involved, but in the end we must always maintain our critical capacities and be true to our own point of view. Part of this means choosing what inspires us, but it is hard to see why Kurlansky is inspired by the choices made by the Cherokee. It seems his admiration is predicated on the erasing of indigenous struggles that continue to this day, and that have included a diversity of tactics within combative methods.

But Kurlansky does not talk about these struggles. He instead shifts his gaze to another continent and relates how one Maori leader, Te Whiti, led a campaign of nonviolent resistance to the theft of indigenous lands in Parihaki, a small part of the northern island of what is now called New Zealand. At least he is honest enough to admit that the campaign failed.[17] Te Whiti was arrested, the Maori who resisted alongside him removed, and all their lands stolen. But Kurlansky arrives at a curious conclusion.

[17] To preempt the next round of manipulations by nonviolent reviewers (see Appendix), I would argue that we can talk about a specific war or campaign as a defeat, even though we are outsiders and descendants of the colonizing nation (and therefore we run the risk of being wrong in imposing our criteria, assuming that a victory claimed by the colonizer means a defeat for the colonized, when this is not always the case). Kurlansky's arrogance, I think, is in declaring all indigenous resistance a failure as though it were a closed chapter in history rather than an ongoing struggle. By using such a broad brush, he also plows over specific histories of indigenous victories, such as Red Cloud's War or the battles fought by Lautaro.

Fighting back against the police has created a collective tool for self-defense against killings that generally happen with impunity, are blamed on the victim and quickly forgotten about. It is no mistake that the Oscar Grant riots caused the state of California to arrest an on-duty cop for murder in the first time in its history.

Self-defense is also an important component in the struggle against patriarchy. In Barcelona, where I live, one of the main activities of radical feminists is the organization of self-defense courses for women and lesbians. The skills learned can be put to use in clashes against the police or fascists, in actions against people within the social movements who have committed assault and not taken responsibility for it, or in defense against random assailants in the streets or at a party. These are real and frequent situations in the lives of many of our comrades who are women, lesbians, trans, or queer. A knowledge of self-defense opens up the possibility of individual solutions, where one person alone can kick out an aggressor or fend off an attacker without having to wait for a collective response; it also expands the range of collective responses, as a large group unable to defend itself is not much help in certain situations.

One project that was a major priority of feminist comrades in Barcelona was the publication of the magazine, *Putas e Insumisas* ("Whores and Insubmissives"), finally released in 2013. The texts they compiled were all about a taboo and often invisible topic, the use of violence by women. They present numerous histories of women who killed abusive men, or in one case, a woman who helped dozens of other women in her village poison their husbands and achieve the relative freedom of the widow. This publication project was carried out in recognition of the importance of recovering capacities of struggle that have been stolen and disappeared by a patriarchal historiography. It also focuses on the ongoing monopolization of violence by a patriarchal State, showing how women who kill their abusers are punished by the judicial system more harshly than men who abuse, and more harshly than people who

against the present system because we expect to one day be rewarded with a better world. The State is so powerful, it is very possible that we will never win, that capitalist civilization will make the planet uninhabitable or that new technologies will make revolt or even simple transgression impossible. Or, less dramatically, that we continue to fail in our revolts and we have to put up with this miserable system forever.

Without creating any false hopes, I think it is important to fight to win, but much more immediate than the question of the future is the fact that many of us fight for our lives, that struggle is survival and that no life worthy of living can be had in complicity with a society that steals everything that is ours and gives us only the opportunity to participate in our own domination.

Many people whom the system seeks to victimize have a need for self-defense now, and nonviolence only acts as an obstacle to meeting this need. Gene Sharp and many other proponents of nonviolence are silent about the need for self-defense now. When pressed, they will typically throw out a quote from Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., but it becomes clear that self-defense now, or solidarity with those who defend themselves from the brutality of racist police or a patriarchal society, does not figure prevalently in their vision of struggle.

We have already looked at the growing wave of combative responses to police killings in the US. As I finish up this chapter, a new anti-police riot has occurred in Atlanta, a city with more than its fair share of police killings but in recent memory few collective responses. An anti-police protest organized in a central Atlanta neighborhood facing heavy gentrification ended with neighbors attacking police cars and chasing them away. Tellingly, the responses to the protest were sharply divided. The higher-income neighbors condemned it and continued to work with police to transform the neighborhood according to their tastes, whereas the longtime neighbors from the low-income apartment blocks more often supported the protest and in many cases participated.

> "What might have been the fate of the Maori with more Te Whitis? What might the Spanish and French have done in the face of nonviolent resistance on Hispaniola? What if there had been a Te Whiti among the Cherokee or the Iroquois?" (p. 71).

It is hard to grasp what he imagines might have happened had there been more Te Whitis among the Maori. According to his own account, resistance in Parihaka continued after Te Whiti's arrest, so evidently the campaign was not dependent on him. What happened to these other people who were doing the same thing Te Whiti did? They were arrested and dragged away, just as he was, and they lost their lands, just as he did.

What would have happened had there been a Te Whiti among the Cherokee? If the history of the original Te Whiti is anything to go by, then the Cherokee would still have lost their lands, but maybe fewer of them would have taken up arms against native people in resistance, which, in the best possible scenario, would have meant that Tecumseh and the Creek would have won more battles against the settlers. A happy outcome indeed, although not a victory for nonviolence. More probable, though, is that Andrew Jackson would have just killed the Cherokee Te Whiti.

And if there had been a Te Whiti among the Haudenosaunee (the Six Nations, referred to by settlers as the Iroquois)? They would probably have less land than they have today, as they saved themselves from extermination in part through effective armed resistance and in part by effectively playing different colonial powers off one another. More recently, a Te Whiti might have kept them from renewing indigenous resistance against the Canadian state through their successful armed standoff at Oka in 1990. But they might have had the consolation of being mentioned favorably in books by rich white journalists.

The Maori have survived, and some of them continue to resist colonization. Kurlansky claims that "Te Whiti and his movement in

Parihaka are credited with stopping a war of genocide that would have meant the end of the Maori people" (pp. 70–71) but true to form he provides neither citation nor argument to back this up. On the whole, Maori resistance to colonization was armed and combative, both before and after Te Whiti. They did not make it easy for the European colonists to take away their lands. Their survival is a consequence of the totality of their choices of resistance, along with other factors. It is hard to make hypotheses with history, but a contemporaneous example shows that not taking up arms is no guarantee for safety or survival. Around the same time as the Maori were being colonized, the peaceful Tasmanians were exterminated to the last man, woman, and child.

Mark Kurlansky does not conduct any comparative analysis. He does not look into whether the Maori in Parihaka retained more of their lands than in regions of armed resistance. He does not investigate the possibility that what the peaceful Maori gained, if anything, was the consequence of the authorities trying to stave off armed resistance by rewarding peacefulness. Many times in history, governments have conceded minor victories to peaceful movements because they feared that not-peaceful movements would grow; these are, therefore, victories achieved through a diversity of tactics, because without the presence of the scary radicals, the government would have no need to bargain with the harmless pacifists.

If Kurlansky cannot make any of the distinctions mentioned, the only honest conclusion to his research is that Maori survival was won by the diversity of methods the Maori employed, from shooting colonists to peacefully plowing the lands they had usurped. But Kurlansky is not interested in honesty, he is interested in proving his preconceived notions.

Kurlansky's take on the Holocaust is even more dishonest. He makes the very good point, backed by actual research, that the Allied governments were not at all interested in stopping the Holocaust, and that before the war Allied governments and industri-

Eating local, countercultural movements like punk or hip-hop, environmentalism, or even the idea of the social center or the anarchist bookfair, can all become the latest consumer fad tolerated or even encouraged by capitalism. Local food becomes another overpriced market niche; punk or hip-hop are absorbed by major record labels and give rise to big companies selling the fashion accessories while the music loses its political content; environmentalist organizations quietly begin applying the factor of development as its chief criterion, replacing the question "How can we save this forest?" with "How can we save a part of this forest while allowing the companies that have invested in it to continue making a profit?"; and social centers or bookfairs cease to orient themselves towards the opening of a space for the sharing of ideas and conversations about struggle and instead reduce all their operations to the central question of how to pay rent, a conundrum that is usually answered through the selling of products.

When the participants of a struggle who engage in creative acts—the very acts that capitalism can co-opt and turn a profit off of—wholeheartedly embrace the destructive parts of the struggle, they create a force that cannot be easily recuperated. The negation of the current system, the commitment to destroy that which oppresses us, and a practice of attacking power allow all of those creative acts that might otherwise be mere lifestyle choices or even entrepreneurial initiatives to hold on to their revolutionary potential.

In sum, a combative practice, by which I mean the use of sabotage, a capacity for self-defense, an ability to confront the forces of law and order, and a determination to attack the existing power structures, allows people in struggle to seize space in which the seeds for a new world can begin to take root, and helps prevent those experiments in freedom from being co-opted by the dominant system.

The need to create new social relations also has an immediate aspect that cannot be resolved in a future utopia. We don't fight

ten, that taxation is specifically calculated to put "unproductive" property back into market circulation.[9]

The only way to alter this world, insulated by invisible layers of protection, as though frozen in glass, is to break something.

And the only way to open up space to create something wholly new and sustaining is to seize that space, to disrupt the control of the agents of law and order, and to smash through the asphalt.

It is also worth noting how versatile capitalism is at coopting initiatives that seek to provide an alternative. Capitalism makes sure that nothing is free, but there are always plenty of options for renting or buying. People can encourage whatever different kind of lifestyle they want, as long as that lifestyle pays the rent. All of the means we are presented with for gathering together, for building a community, for creating, sharing, and communicating, must rely on the logic of accumulation, and at some point pass through the activity of buying and selling.

[9] To take the case of Greece, many working-class people owned their own homes, after a lifetime of working, and they passed these homes down to their children. The government deliberately imposed an annual housing tax that many homeowners would not be able to afford. Without the blackmail of forcing people to pay a third or a half of their salaries for the right to live in their own homes, capitalism cannot function. Economists and bankers do not like the idea of people owning their own homes, and not having to pay rent or home loans. The new tax, recommended by economists and bankers, caused many Greeks to lose their homes, forcing them to take out mortgages or start paying rent. In the parlance of those on top, this was "boosting the economy."

This is what the government does when people are not being productive enough. And we should also say it plainly, when people are not being productive at all, government declares ownership void, invades, and gives the land and resources away to those who will use it according to a capitalist logic. The founders of the United States justified robbing indigenous lands with the argument that native peoples had not put those lands to productive use, therefore they did not constitute property. A similar tactic was used when the Pinochet dictatorship, advised by economists trained in the US, gave away public lands to forestry companies in the 1970s. In the seminal philosophy of John Locke, property comes into being when one mixes their (servants') labor with it to make it productive. Such is the nature of property under capitalism.

alists actively supported the fascists in the interests of profit and anti-Communism (or in the case of Spain and Italy, their crusade against the anarchists). World War ii, as Kurlansky rightly shows, was only a "just war" in the most warped, patriotic of imaginations. But his preconceived conclusion, that nonviolence was the answer both to fascism and to the Holocaust, is seriously flawed. "Contrary to popular postwar claims, the Holocaust was not stopped by the war. In fact, it was started by it" (p. 135). Kurlansky tries to prove this point by showing that the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews was put into effect after the war had begun. But he makes no argument to show that the war caused the Nazis to institute the Holocaust. The simple fact that one thing came first does not make it the cause. He mentions that before the plan to start death camps, the Nazis pondered the idea of deporting all the Jews to Madagascar, but the plan could not be enacted because the war disrupted the possibility for mass deportation. The reader is left to imagine that if World War ii had been averted, the European Jews might have been saved. However, Kurlansky himself mentions that the Madagascar plan was formulated after the war had already begun, meaning it was never very serious since it was impractical in the moment it was suggested. Furthermore, mass deportation is still an act of genocide, and hardly a favorable outcome.

A few pages earlier (pp. 131–132), he notes that already in the 1920s, "Hitler had made clear [...] his intention to invade France, take Austria and Czechoslovakia, and destroy 'inferior races'." At that moment, this little bit of information helps Kurlansky make his point that Western support for Hitler counteracted the Allied attempt to avoid war. But just a few paragraphs later, he ignores how the death camps are consistent with the earliest formations of Nazi ideology, formulated in peacetime. In Kurlansky's argument, it is logical that the Nazis went to war despite a policy of appeasement, because they were promising war as far back as the 1920s, yet it is a mere coincidence that the Nazis began exterminating non-Aryans, something they also promised to do in the 1920s, since we

are meant to believe that the Nazis could only have conceived of the Holocaust in the violence of wartime. Kurlansky tries hard to pass the Holocaust off as a product of the violence of the war itself: "Only in the isolation and brutality of wartime [...] did Germany dare to turn concentration camps into death camps" (p. 136). Yet the Nazis had dared to carry out the systematic murder of political opponents before the war broke out. They had dared to herd all the Jews, Roma, and others into ghettos in peacetime. Allied powers like France and Belgium had certainly dared to carry out mass murder during peacetime in their colonies in Africa and Asia. Peacetime, it turns out, offers no special protection to those who are powerless. One might accept the argument that the State constitutes a permanent war against society, but that analysis tends to render Kurlansky's formulation—and nonviolence in general—meaningless.

There is another flaw in Kurlansky's argument (such a concise writer, to fit so many errors into two little sentences!). Kurlansky has to change the meaning of the Holocaust in some disturbing ways in order to make the claim that the Holocaust started *after* the war, which is then twisted into the claim that the war *started* the Holocaust. He only considers the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. On page 130, he mentions that the Nazi regime had already begun its campaign of systematically murdering leftists, but evidently this does not fit into his conception of the Holocaust, despite the well-known phrase, "first they came for the communists..." And he does not mention that the Nazis had already begun the ethnic cleansing of other populations before the war broke out. These people simply do not count. Literally: Kurlansky uses the figure of 6 million victims of the Holocaust, which is curious, because 12 million or more people were killed by the Nazi death machine. In fact, the figure of 6 million is usually only used by the ignorant (which clearly does not include Kurlansky) or by those who widely publicized the figure—Zionists. The motivation of Zionists is clear: they are interested in creating an exceptional status for the state of Israel as the home-

tute a solid threat for authorities, as do riots. Throughout Europe's squat scenes, nonviolent defense tactics have spread since the late '90s, while forceful resistance has progressively disappeared. In the new situation, city governments are able to evict or regulate squats at will. With nonviolence as their ally, squatters are defenseless on all but a symbolic level.

The spread of capitalism around the world has been accomplished by a symphony of fundamentally military operations. The smooth functioning of capitalism requires the effective police occupation of a territory. What it all comes down to is that in order to be exploited and ruled, we must be deprived of everything. The process of deprivation has taken hundreds of years, but it is realized in an ever more intensive way. By force of arms and leaving a trail of bodies, the State has enclosed communal lands, privatized the forests and the water, professionalized traditional skills—like healing, midwifery, or teaching—within exclusive institutions, and punished unlicensed practitioners, asserted its control over public spaces and limited the ways we can use them, criminalized autonomous networks of exchange, and imposed regulations that favor big industry, making self-sufficiency, food sovereignty, or artisanal handicrafts all but impossible.

The citizen of a prosperous democracy must be surrounded by spectacles of *having*, without really being able to directly affect their surroundings or having control over anything. The only activities permitted are buying and selling. The cityscape in its entirety is dedicated to consumption. Cities are increasingly being designed without spaces of encounter or public space, and even what is public is owned by the State. Trying to change just the surface of this carefully arranged ensemble is punished as vandalism. Acquiring a legal right to any bit of space can only come about through purchase—everything is reduced to its status as property—and even then, those who can afford it must put it to an economically productive use, following the accumulative logic of capitalism and private property, because governments levy taxes on ownership. Of-

where they live like the ones in Greece or Oaxaca), we have the example of the squatted social centers in Europe. In these social centers, anticapitalists can hold meetings, debates, film evenings, dinners, performances, concerts, and parties, or set up libraries, hack labs, workshops, free stores, gyms, self-defense groups, alternative medicine and therapy centers, gardens, and bike repair shops, animated by a spirit of mutual aid and solidarity rather than profit and alienation. And whether in Berlin, Amsterdam, Torino, or Barcelona, these social centers have preserved their autonomy and defied state regulation thanks to their tradition of self-defense, fighting back against state attempts to evict or institutionalize them. In 1986 and 1987 in Hamburg, there were major riots when the government announced plans to evict the Hafenstraße squats, and anonymous supporters of the squat even firebombed several major department stores (at night, when they were closed), causing millions of dollars in damage. The damage to the city's image was so bad, the mayor resigned.

In 1996, when Barcelona police evicted the squat Cine Princesa, squatters rioted for hours in the city center, forcing authorities to think twice before evicting future squats. A mostly nonviolent resistance centered on lockdown tactics prevented the eviction of the rural Barcelona squat Can Masdeu in 2002, though we should not forget the anonymous supporters who trashed a McDonalds and other businesses in the city center.[8] In later years police quickly learned how to circumvent nonviolent lockdown tactics, which have not been successful on any other occasion, nor do they consti-

[8] For more on the autonomous movement and the battle for the squats in Germany and Italy, see George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006). For the Netherlands, see Adilkno, *Cracking the Movement: Squatting Beyond the Media* (New York: Autonomedia, 1997). (Original Ravijn Books: Amsterdam, 1990). And for a brief evaluation of the Barcelona squatting movement, see "*La calle desde el tejado: valoración de la okupacion en Barcelona como medida en una lucha anarquista*" (Barcelona: diffuse publication, 2009). Available at http://www.alasbarricadas.org/noticias/node/13034.

land of the victims of what is billed as the single worst episode in human history. This posture requires them to ignore other acts of genocide and to ignore other victims of the Holocaust. It has also been convenient to a number of European states that support Israel and continue some of the same policies used by the Nazis (including pogroms, deportation, and concentration camps) against African immigrants and Roma. I doubt Mark Kurlansky is motivated by homophobia or hatred of the Roma or anyone else. He is only doing what seems to be inevitable when you believe there is only one method, as opposed to a diversity of methods, that people can use to liberate themselves: mashing up the facts, and cherry-picking through history to find factoids that—if assembled in the right way—seem to support your argument.

And what was his argument? With all the misinformation we have to wade through to examine the claim that the Holocaust was caused by the war, we miss Kurlansky's central bait and switch. "Contrary to popular postwar claims, the Holocaust was not stopped by the war. In fact, it was started by it." He goes on to argue the second point without ever backing up his allegation that the war did not end the Holocaust. Because even if he were right, even if the war intensified the Holocaust, we would still be left with the conclusion that armed action put an end to the Holocaust, and that would contradict Kurlansky's dogmatic belief that all violence is wrong.

Instead of admitting that the Holocaust was brought to an end decisively and singularly by the destruction of the Nazi state, he makes the valid but unrelated argument that the British, American, and Soviet governments made no attempt to save the Jews (or Roma, or lesbians, or little "c" communists). But he notes that many Jewish and Polish resistance organizations repeatedly pressured the Allied governments to bomb Auschwitz and the other death camps. That's odd. Did we read that wrong? Did Kurlansky make a mistake? Are we sure that these resistance organizations did not ask the Allies to boycott German products, or to sing songs

to the Nazi soldiers and plant flowers along the train tracks to Treblinka? Why on earth would those targeted by the Holocaust want a military assault against the Nazi death machine?

The answer is obvious to everyone. Except to Kurlansky, who believes that "more Jews were saved by nonviolence than by violence" (p. 133). What are his examples of nonviolence? The Danish government helping smuggle several thousand Jews to neutral Sweden, whose government shelters them. The Bulgarian government refusing to deport its Jews. Swedish diplomat Wallenberg giving papers to 100,000 Hungarian Jews. A Protestant minister in France helping thousands of Jewish children escape across the border into neutral Switzerland. Every single case centers on resistance by a government. Governments that have massive resources, and borders, and police, and an army. And while these armies may have been no match for the Nazis, Germany was not about to open another front in Scandinavia, Switzerland, or Bulgaria when they were getting trounced in Russia, bogged down in Africa, shot down over Britain, invaded in Normandy, and confounded if not seriously bruised by communist and anarchist partisan movements in France, Italy, Belarus, Greece, and Yugoslavia.

Kurlansky does not give a single example of grassroots, nonviolent resistance carried out by normal people without the help of any government. But there are examples. German Jews protesting. Lithuanian Jews carrying out a massive sit-down against their deportation. The Jewish councils in several cities refusing to comply. None of these tactics worked.

Kurlansky claims that "Dictatorships are prepared to crush armed resistance, it is non-cooperation that confounds them" (p. 135). This is patently false. The Nazis forced the Jews engaged in a sit-down onto cattle cars, and they executed non-cooperating council members, without blinking an eye. The partisan guerrilla movements, on the other hand, confounded the hell out them. From the Balkans to the Pyrenees, they sabotaged rail lines, rescued prisoners, assassinated officers, blew up factories,

in Egypt, any claims of nonviolence originating from within the rebellion simply meant that they did not have any weapons other than these. But they used them with determination and bravery, fending off the police and paramilitary, and occupying much of the state of Oaxaca for six months. In that occupied space, they created assemblies and collectives, challenged the commercialization of indigenous culture, overcame the patriarchal dynamics that would have relegated women to the role of second-class participants, and created an entire microcosm of self-organization. Their ability to accomplish this is inextricable from their decision to fight back against the police and to hold the streets even after over a dozen people had been killed by live ammunition. When the Mexican government sent in the military, would-be movement leaders who had created a bureaucracy within the appo—the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca—counseled nonviolence and succeeded in spreading fear, convincing people that they could not win and had to take down the barricades. But everything they accomplished in that half year was due to their ability to seize and defend space.[7]

On a much smaller scale (and for that reason perhaps more inspiring for people who are unlikely to experience an insurrection

[7] For more on the Oaxaca rebellion, see Diana Denham and the C.A.S.A. Collective (eds.), *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca* (Oakland: PM Press, 2008). A series of interviews with participants that largely tends towards the voices of Christians, artists, NGOs, and others who might be more palatable to a broad US audience, the book can be faulted for overlooking the very rich conflicts that existed within the rebellion itself, for uncritically presenting (within a relativistic framework of a tapestry of voices) certain attempts to whitewash the movement as nonviolent, and for neglecting the more combative aspects of the rebellion. Nonetheless, the book provides a very good view of the creative aspect of the rebellion, and a fair reader not interested in cherry-picking will have to conclude that self-defense played a central role in the rebellion. One interview describes the groups that formed to protect the occupation and details pitched battles with paramilitaries, and another interview stresses the centrality of the barricades. And although the conflict is generally overlooked, one interview discusses the attempts of movement politicians to take over the APPO and bureaucratize the movement, and what some anti-authoritarians did to resist that.

In the insurrection in Greece in December 2008, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets, attacked police, burned banks and police stations, and occupied or destroyed government buildings. In the months afterwards, the reality in many cities had changed. Groups of neighbors organized themselves in assemblies and began supporting one another in the face of economic hardship, or they took over parking lots and turned them into gardens without asking permission from anyone. Autonomous base unions ransacked the offices of their employers and forced them to relinquish back pay or improve conditions. Students prevented the implementation of repressive laws or austerity measures in the universities. Artists occupied commercial theaters, and anarchists took over abandoned buildings to start new social centers. Rural communities fought against garbage dumps, dams, or other development projects.

All of these cases in which the status quo was interrupted and new social relations were being put into practice were a direct result of the seizing of space. The ability of common people to seize space hinged entirely on their capacity to defeat the police in open confrontation and wrest control of the streets away from the State. Throughout 2009 and 2010, the Greek government had the martial ability to suppress any one of these experiments in freedom, but doing so would have risked sparking another round of clashes and riots that would have further undermined its authority and reduced the profits of its financial backers. The possibility we have of creating a new world rests on our ability to fight.

A similar example arose in an entirely different context: Oaxaca, Mexico. When, on June 14, 2006, the police tried to crush a teachers' strike that had occupied the center of Oaxaca City for several weeks, most of Oaxacan society fought back: teachers, students, workers, and indigenous. They defended themselves with slingshots, powerful fireworks, rocks, molotov cocktails, and barricades. In a common pattern, peace activists and would-be movement leaders tried to describe the movement as nonviolent, but as

defeated entire divisions, liberated cities, and then melted back into the population that supported them, ready to strike again where least expected. These partisans saved thousands of Jews and others from the death camps, often without the support of any government. They liberated trains of deportees, they hid Jews and radicals. In Poland, one group of partisans sheltered over 1,000 Jewish refugees, keeping them safe while fighting back against German occupiers. Interestingly, no one would claim their actions as a victory for nonviolence, whereas the Swedish government, protecting Jewish refugees within a set of borders that are defended with the force of arms, seems to be Kurlansky's main agent of nonviolence. And then there are the acts of sabotage and insurrection in the ghettos and the death camps themselves. Multiple death camps were entirely or partially destroyed by prisoner insurrections. Given that these camps were killing thousands of people every week, for every month that just one of Auschwitz's crematoria was out of commission, huge numbers of people were saved. Sobibor and Treblinka were closed down by rebellion in 1943, early in the extermination phase of the Holocaust, and some 60 of the Sobibor rebels survived. Kurlansky does not mention these victories. Instead, he declares the majority of resistance a failure: "They met their fate either passively or with violent resistance, either of which responses resulted fairly quickly in their deaths." As we have seen, this is another lie. Grassroots nonviolence did exist, and it was ineffective, whereas violent resistance saved countless lives. I deal with this resistance more extensively in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, and a much better book on the subject is Yehuda Bauer's *They Chose Life*.

In one final gamble to prove his point, Kurlansky turns to the scoundrel's last resort: statistics. Denmark, which resisted nonviolently, saved the vast majority of their 6,500 Jews. On the other hand, France lost 26% of its 350,000 Jews, Netherlands lost three-quarters of its 140,000 Jews, and Poland over 90% of its population of 3.3 million Jews "despite an armed Polish resistance and

armed Jewish uprisings" (p. 134). He does not explore any contextual factors. Readers are presented with two facts and two facts alone: whether a country resisted Nazi occupation violently, and what proportion of the resident Jews were saved.

I have already pointed out that Denmark's Jews were saved by the actions of two governments, which can hardly be considered peaceful forces, although pacifists have always been more comfortable with the violence of the oppressor than with the violence of the oppressed. There are some other factors that deserve mentioning. Firstly, Denmark, with that impressive statistic, had roughly only 2% as many Jews to save as did France. If Kurlansky really thinks a nonviolent France could have secretly shipped 350,000 people across the heavily militarized 21-mile width of the English Channel—a bit more of a feat than getting 6,000 across the peaceful two miles of the Oresund between Denmark and Sweden—then he is welcome to say so in writing, but he would only be a laughingstock. He is also mistaken if he thinks Great Britain, or any of the other places France could have sent refugees, would have accepted hundreds of thousands of homeless Jews.

As it stands, the French partisans and Jewish resistance achieved an important accomplishment: France had the best rate of survival of any country with a major Jewish population under Nazi occupation. They accomplished this by fighting back using a diversity of methods, from hiding and transporting refugees to attacking the Nazis. Additionally, a large number of Jews were rescued by Catalan anarchists fighting with the French partisans. The routes the anarchists used to smuggle fugitives across the Pyrenees were later used to smuggle weapons and literature necessary in the fight against the Franco regime. The French partisan movement had roles for those who wanted to take up guns or plant explosives, and for those who wanted to heal the wounded, hide fugitives, pass information and supplies, and encourage disobedience. It was so effective precisely because these diverse forms of resistance were made to complement one another. This

were using Spain as a training ground, Franco's victory served as a green light for war in the rest of the continent. Dutch antimilitarism was powerless to stop it. The radicals that would constitute the Dutch underground, thanks to their nonviolent past, were notably less effective. The Allies successfully used World War ii to wipe out anticapitalist movements across Europe, in some instances massacring radical partisans at the war's end (perhaps, and this is a subject for future study, they were directly following the example set by Stalin in Spain). Across the continent, the war was followed by decades of social peace in which revolutionary movements were absent and the capitalists increased their power and their wealth exponentially. The Dutch anarchist movement fell apart, and the antimilitarist current, once immense, gradually gave up all its revolutionary principles and social critiques, adopting reformist politics and eventually fading into oblivion, as seems to be the fate of nonviolent movements.[6]

There were similar experiences of anarchist revolution in the Shinmin Province of Manchuria that thrived for a few years and was finally crushed early in World War ii by the combined forces of the Japanese imperialists, the Soviet Union, and the Maoists, although the only detailed sources are in Korean; and of liberated areas defended by anarchist partisans in Ukraine and central Siberia that thrived for years during the Russian Revolution.

Today's examples of liberating space and taking steps towards a revolution are less grandiose, but they are far more useful to the present situation.

[6] This history has never before been published in English. I understand that few readers will be able to make heads or tails of a book in Dutch, but I reference it to give some clue as to my source. The book is thorough and excellent, and I recommend it as a project to anyone able to translate it to English. Elly Kloosterman, *De Nederlandse anarchisten en de Spaanse Burgeroorlog. Hoe de Nederlandse anarchistische beweging uiteenviel door de gewelddadige strijd in Spanje tussen 1936 en 1939* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Pook, 1979). The title translates as "*The Dutch anarchists and the Spanish Civil War. How the Dutch anarchist movement collapsed through the violent struggle in Spain between 1936 and 1939.*"

movement had gone in a decidedly different direction from that of their Spanish comrades. Antimilitarism became the prime focus, the obsession even, of the Dutch anarchists, and they made the theoretical and strategic mistake of confusing antimilitarism with nonviolence. Catalan anarchists were not so daft. In what started as a general strike in protest of recruitment for the Second Melillan Campaign in the Rif War, a colonial war the Spanish military was fighting in northern Africa, anarchists in Barcelona launched a full-scale insurrection that took control of the city for a week in 1909. Antimilitarism is even more effective if it is combative.

Unfortunately, the Dutch anarchists obsessed over war as the singularly worst feature of capitalism, and they arrived at the simplistic conclusion that to oppose capitalist war they had to use nonviolence. Their interpretation of the Russian Revolution followed these lines: the Revolution was corrupted not because it was taken over by an authoritarian party, but because it was militaristic, and because the comrades there had tried to forcefully overthrow the State.

Therefore, when their comrades in Spain took up arms to stop the fascists, the Dutch anarchists stood by and watched them be slaughtered, occasionally publishing a criticism of their militaristic means. On the whole, they did not make any differentiation between a war among states and a war for freedom from the State, or between the volunteer militias—in which officers had no special privileges and were chosen and revoked by the troops—and the professional army imposed by the Stalinists. Perhaps because of a lack of information, they did not differentiate features of the Russian Revolution like the authoritarian Red Army or the murderous secret police of the Bolsheviks, and liberated anarchist areas in Ukraine, Kronstadt, and Siberia where there were no pogroms, no gulags, no torture chambers, and people fought on a voluntary basis.

The Dutch anarchist movement, one of the largest in Europe, did not go to fight fascism in Spain. Because Germany and Italy

would have been impossible if those carrying out the peaceful activities had denounced those carrying out the combative and more dangerous actions, as Kurlansky implicitly does.

The Dutch partisan movement was not nearly as effective in saving the Jewish population. Kurlansky makes no explanation as to why, only mentioning that there was "armed resistance" in the Netherlands. In fact, the Dutch partisan movement was rather small, and before the war the Dutch Left and anarchists had largely turned to pacifism, meaning they were much less prepared to resist the Nazis (see Chapter 9 for more on this topic). What's more, the Netherlands was one of the countries with the most developed bureaucracies, so that when the Nazis occupied the country, they had an easy time locating all the Jewish citizens.

Poland's miserable record cannot be explained by the fact of armed resistance, as Kurlansky tries to do. Any critical mind would ask, if the presence or absence of armed resistance versus nonviolent resistance is the key factor, what explains the huge discrepancy between 25% and 90% of the Jewish population killed in two countries where armed resistance was overwhelmingly the method of choice? More cogent explanations include Polish anti-Semitism and Nazi tactics themselves. At the outbreak of World War II, the Poles were perhaps even more anti-Semitic than the Germans, meaning that the 3.3 million Jews there, unlike in France, could not count on anyone else to protect them. They would save themselves or perish, and considering how large a population they were, this was a difficult feat, especially since they had no safe country to escape to. The Polish Jews who survived—and the 10% who did are far more than the Danish, Swedish, Bulgarian, and Dutch Jews combined—did so because they took up arms, because they killed Nazis, because they blew up a crematorium in Auschwitz, and because they created liberated zones deep in the forest. And unlike the Jews in other countries, they had to go up against the brutal Nazi *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing units that were even more effective than the death camps. The Nazis turned

all of Poland into a killing field, quite unlike the situation in blond Denmark or unoccupied Bulgaria. Next to the accomplishments of Polish Jews, Kurlansky's happy stories about diplomats coming along and whisking children away to safety is something of a fairy tale.

But since he gives us the example of Denmark as effective nonviolent resistance to Nazi occupation, we can investigate his hypothesis more empirically. Who slowed down the Nazi war effort more? The Danes or the Yugoslav partisans? Did Danish noncooperation tie down as many Axis divisions as Yugoslav armed resistance? Even for the times when the size of the liberated area or partisan population in Yugoslavia was comparable to the size and population of Denmark, the answer is a resounding "no." The Nazis took over Denmark with ease (it was one of the shortest ground campaigns in history), and the soldiers they left there were mostly busy with dissuading an allied invasion, not trying to overcome domestic resistance. Throughout World War ii, Denmark was a great asset for Nazi Germany, serving as an important source of food, armaments, and raw materials for the war machine. Yugoslavia, or partisan areas in France such as the Vercors, were not an asset but a thorn in their side.

"If they had wanted to save the Jews, the best chance would have been not going to war," Kurlansky says (p. 136). But he is living in a dream world. The war was already going on long before Germany invaded Poland. The Holocaust is one of many histories that show peaceful means are no defense against those who want to destroy you. It also shows that there are no good guys and bad guys in a war between states. Just as Stalin signed a deal with Hitler and Western industrialists invested heavily in Nazi Germany, the US and British Cold War regime recruited Nazi and Vichy officials by the hundreds to prop up their new order. The real heroes of World War II were the dissident communists, anarchists, Jews, Roma, and dissident Christians who subverted or openly fought back against

units and outlawed the volunteer worker militias, another threat to state authority.

In the end, the anarchist revolution was crushed by Stalinist repression and cnt bureaucracy before the fascist troops finally managed to subjugate the whole country. But the revolution, insofar as it flourished, provided an inspiring example of liberation and self-organization that still lives on today, as well as a number of lessons about the strategies of revolution.

One problem George Orwell mentioned in his *Homage to Catalonia* was the difficulty of gaining international support for the revolution in Spain. The Stalinists were the main obstacle to this support. They controlled the International Brigades to filter volunteers, to support their own zones of influence, and even to crush communes and collectives in anarchist areas. Perhaps even more damaging was their international propaganda. Through the Communist Parties and affiliated unions in other countries, they spread misinformation about the ongoing revolution, specifically accusing the anarchists of being fascist provocateurs, a smear they have modified and maintained over the years, recently handing it off to the proponents of nonviolence.

One of the few countries in which Communism had not become the dominant tendency in the anticapitalist movement after the Bolshevik takeover of the Russian Revolution was the Netherlands. Like Spain, the Netherlands had a thriving anticapitalist workers' movement in which anarchists were perhaps the most active, dynamic current. If the proletariat of any country was poised to give the Spanish and Catalan anarchists the aid they needed to overcome the Stalinist repression that ultimately suffocated the revolution and handed victory to the fascists,[5] it was the Netherlands. However, after the horrors of World War i, the Dutch anarchist

[5] This is not to suggest that with the proper strategy, an anarchist victory in Spain was assured. Given that the fascists had the full backing of two powerful countries, it is possible that their cause was doomed. However, with more outside support they would have had a better chance.

cal parties to organize a common defense against the fascists, the more they came to see the revolution from the perspective of political power. In time, they became distanced from the base and began to put the brakes on the revolution in the name of antifascist unity and the need to win the war.[3] Other anarchists tried their best to change this course of action, but the most radical were killed off or repressed by the reconstituted state. Ironically, the cnt delegates' desire to avoid becoming like the Bolsheviks turned them into bedfellows with the Stalinists.[4]

Although in the beginning, the Communist Party was a tiny force in the workers' movement, it soon grew into the dominant force that controlled the Republican government from behind the scenes. Because the ussr was practically the only country to send weapons to the antifascist side, they could dictate policy in Madrid. The fascists had the generous support of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, along with clandestine aid from Great Britain, whereas all the other countries stayed neutral, eager to see Spain's anarchist menace wiped out. But the Stalinists also wanted to wipe out this revolutionary menace, just as they had wiped it out in Russia. And it is important to note that they did not necessarily want the fascists to lose, so much as they wanted to prolong the conflict so they could strike a deal with Germany: the NaziSoviet Non-Aggression Pact. Accordingly, Soviet support was tepid at best. They sent planes and tanks only in exchange for the Spanish gold reserves, and organized the International Brigades more to provide themselves with an underhanded way to kill off Trotskyists, council communists, and dissident socialists, and to suppress anarchist communes, than to effectively combat the fascists. They also set up secret police

[3] Miguel Amorós' book is a great source for these critiques. For those who only read English, try Stuart Christie's concise *We the Anarchists! A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation 1927–1937.*

[4] See Augustin Guillamon, *The Friends of Durruti Group 1937–1939* (Oakland: AK Press, 2001,)

occupation (including, on some occasions, Allied or Soviet occupation at the war's end) using a diversity of means.

The major players of World War ii—the Communists, the Fascists, and democratic capitalists—were all bad guys. They were all mass murderers, they were all authoritarians, and every single one of them carried out acts of genocide. Those that won—the Communists and the democrats—continued to carry out acts of genocide in the decades after the war.

The atrocities of the Fascists tended to be gruesomely obvious. The atrocities of the Communists have been made obvious to those who grew up amidst Cold War propaganda. The atrocities of the democratic regimes of the West are less visible, though they have claimed a higher body count than all the rest. The violence of mass incarceration, the brutality of colonialism, the blood spilled to uphold imposed economic orders in Algeria, Kenya, South Africa, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and a hundred other countries, are only the beginning. In the era of the triumph of American-style democracy and capitalism, millions of people die every year because companies refuse to sell medicine at affordable prices (which would still be well above the costs of production). Even more die because very deliberate policies of colonialism and neocolonialism have robbed food security from almost everyone on the planet, privatizing land and forcing people to produce cash crops or turn to factory work when once they fed themselves.

The regime of democracy and capitalism does not kill with death camps (although concentration camps have been standard fare). It kills silently, with policies and structural adjustments, always covered in humanitarian motives. Hannah Arendt argued that the violence of the Holocaust was "banal" precisely to keep it from being exceptionalized, turned into something special, spectacular, unique, and therefore, distant. The holocaust carried out by capitalism has caused many more deaths, although the violence has been more banal, even easier to ignore.

The system that organizes and profits from this killing was imposed by the winners of the Second World War, who recruited useful Nazi spies and scientists, who protected colonial regimes in Africa and Asia, who disarmed and slaughtered anticapitalist partisans in Greece, Italy, France, and elsewhere, and who sided with the Franco regime to help suppress one of the original antifascist movements: the Spanish anarchists.

Any discussion of freedom in the Cold War must start with this understanding. Kurlansky, however, mines the history of resistance to the Communist regime for examples of nonviolent resistance without mentioning what exactly freedom from Communism means if the alternative is Western democracy. He makes some of his typical false statements and logical magic tricks, such as when he credits the failed nonviolent resistance in Czechoslovakia in 1968 for the collapse of the Soviet Union, without mentioning the Soviet military loss in Afghanistan after a protracted and bloody struggle in 1989. Let's look at that again. In 1968, people in Czechoslovakia resist Soviet power nonviolently, but the Soviets invade and win. In 1989, after years of bloody warfare, the Soviets lose to armed resistance in Afghanistan. At the end of that same year and continuing into 1990, Soviet power collapses. What possible motive can Kurlansky claim, besides dishonesty, for mentioning a nonviolent movement twenty years before the fall of the Soviet Union, but staying silent about a major Soviet defeat the same year as the fall?

When Kurlansky claims that suppressing the Czechs in 1968 damaged the Soviets' legitimacy more than when they crushed an armed Hungarian uprising in 1956, one wonders whom he has in mind. After the Bolshevik takeover of the Russian Revolution, their intentional mass starvation of peasants, their gulags and politisolators, their betrayal of the revolutionary cause in Spain, their appeasement of the Nazi regime, and their conservative stance towards revolutionary movements around the world in the '50s, their military suppression of the revolution in Hungary in 1956 was the

and landlords when they rose up in 1936, the peasants were doing the right thing.

Another example vindicates the strategic choice of those who took up arms in 1936. Two of the cities with the most anarchist workers were Barcelona and Zaragoza. In Barcelona, the anarchists were armed and had already decided on a course of insurrection. In Zaragoza, the anarchists were generally unarmed and favored a strategy of union organizing to create a larger union that could win improvements gradually. In Barcelona, the anarchists defeated the military and were able to carry out a revolution. In Zaragoza, the fascists triumphed in the first days of the coup and lined up all the radicals and rebellious workers before the firing squad. In a few months, there were no anarchists left in Zaragoza.[2]

Where the workers and peasants had weapons and knew how to use them, they were able to seize space and begin creating a new world. But they did not trust themselves to take their revolution to its conclusions. There was a great debate among the anarchists about how to defeat the fascist threat and how to support the revolution. Unfortunately, those who supported an antifascist common front with leftwing political parties won the debate. Using the Russian Revolution as an example, they wanted to avoid becoming authoritarian like the Bolsheviks. Conscious that they were the strongest force in Catalunya and Aragón, but fearful of creating an "anarchist dictatorship," they deliberately decided not to forge ahead with their vision of an anarchist revolution. What they did not realize was that the revolution was being carried out spontaneously by peasants and workers organizing themselves to meet their own needs, and the anarchists had already done their part by defeating the armed force of the government. Now they only had to prevent the revolution from being recuperated by authoritarian revolutionaries. But the more the cnt delegates dealt with politi-

[2] I owe this comparison to Miguel Amorós, *Durruti en el Laberinto* (Bilbao: Muturreko burutazioak, 2006).

medical care to everyone, including to small villages the capitalist healthcare system had never bothered servicing.

In the countryside of Aragón, Catalunya, Valencia, and Castile, peasants collectivized the land, they kicked out the landlords and priests, and they abolished money. Sometimes they arranged the distribution of food and other goods with vouchers, supplying every family with as much as they needed while also sending food to the workers' militias on the front, and in many cases they created communes in which people could go into the storehouse and freely take whatever they needed, writing it down in a notebook for the sake of keeping track.[1]

In the fight to liberate their villages, the peasants killed a good number of priests and landlords, a fact some detractors use to portray them as authoritarian. But these executions should be contextualized. At the time, the Catholic Church was a major part of the ruling structure, and it was common practice for priests to act as snipers and open fire on workers or farmers from the church tower (this was exactly what sparked the burning of churches in Barcelona during the "Tragic Week" insurrection of 1909). What's more, in the workers' and peasants' insurrections between 1932 and 1934 in Casas Viejas, Figols, and Asturias, peasants simply declared libertarian communism, burned the land titles, and informed the priests and landlords that they would be welcome to farm alongside the others and live in peace, but that they could no longer hold onto their authority. When the military came in and brutally repressed the communes, it was those same priests and landlords who gave the military the names of dozens of radical peasants, leading to their execution. By killing the most fascistic of the priests

[1] For more on these collectives, see Gaston Leval, *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*, (London: Freedom Press, 1975). The original, *Espagne Libertaire* (1936—1939), was published in French in 1971. Also, Sam Dolgoff, ed. *The Anarchist Collectives: Workers' SelfManagement in the Spanish Revolution, 1936–1939.* (New York: Free Life Editions, Inc., 1974).

nail in the coffin, robbing them of what little support among critical leftists they still had. It caused important splits in the Communist Party in Italy and Britain, was censured by the UN, and was criticized by internationally influential communists like Camus, Sartre, and E. P. Thompson. I have never heard of any apologists for Stalin excuse the invasion on the basis of the armed nature of the uprising, and Kurlansky does not cite any. Except for the most unrepentant of Stalinists, who just as easily excuse the suppression of nonviolent Czechoslovakia, nearly everybody believes the Hungarians were justified in taking up arms.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 awoke a whole new generation to the jackboot tendencies of the Soviet Union, but for anyone with a sense of history that government's legitimacy was already damaged beyond repair. One thing the nonviolent resistance in Czechoslovakia did not accomplish was to open space for the organization of new relations, or shake the myth of Soviet invincibility. By putting up barricades and seizing weapons, rebels in Hungary did just that. They defeated the first Soviet invasion, destroying tanks with molotov cocktails. Russia had to mobilize a much larger force in order to put down the uprising. But in the meantime, popular assemblies had spread across Hungary, creating an important experience in horizontal self-organization. Hungarians' ability to self-organize, creating something wholly different from the obedience and servitude of everyday life, went hand in hand with their decision to forcefully seize space and defend that space.

Kurlansky's misinformation, however, is benign next to the central flaw in his Cold War argument. Evidently, he views the fall of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet regime as the liberation of the people under that regime, whether in East Germany, Poland, or Russia itself. In this way, he can view nonviolent resistance as a success. But the wave of nonviolent resistance that preceded the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the popular recognition that the Soviet Union was losing its power to command obedience. This

recognition did not spread on the heels of the failed nonviolence campaign in the Prague Spring of 1968, but on the heels of the Soviet military defeat in Afghanistan. Nonviolence did not force the Soviet government out of power; it merely signaled that the game was up. Rather than sending in the military, which might have triggered a real resistance, the Communist Party elite decided to stage-manage a regime change. In most of the countries of the Soviet Union along with several Warsaw Pact countries, the same people stayed in power, but they were able to multiply that power and enrich themselves far beyond what was possible under the previous regime. Even 20 years later, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Romania and other countries are still ruled by elite figures from the Communist Party, and the wealth gap in those countries has increased dramatically. The people have been more fully integrated into a cut-throat capitalist economy, with even fewer social protections. Their lives are still every bit as controlled by powerful institutions as before, with no possibility for self-organization. What exactly did nonviolence accomplish?

Repeating a common pattern, Kurlansky leaves out another important part of the story. The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, and with it, the Warsaw Pact and eventually the Soviet Union. The protest movement in East Germany in late October and November was nonviolent, and in the end the government decided to let the Wall come down rather than ordering the military to open fire, as Kurlansky points out. But he does not look at what was going on immediately prior to the nonviolent protests. In the previous weeks, crowds in Berlin and Dresden had rioted, fighting police with their fists, sticks, rocks, and molotov cocktails. On the heels of Mikhail Gorbachev's historic visit in early October 1989, people again took to the streets and rioted. Soldiers were mobilized, and in preparation they were shown footage, not of Prague '68 but of Hungary '56 and of Tiananmen Square (which contrary to official history and pacifist mythology, included major riots, armed resistance, and the lynching of several soldiers by the crowd). It was clear what

country, leading to the collapse of state power in certain regions, the outbreak of a revolution, and a civil war that finally ended with a fascist victory in 1939. How did this come about?

The greater part of the rebellious workers were associated with the cnt anarchist labor federation, which had over a million members. They had armed themselves over the previous years and learned how to use those weapons in bank robberies, skirmishes with the police, and self-defense against hired thugs and strikebreakers. Due to this experience, in many parts of the country they were able to defeat the military in open combat. Although in places like Barcelona, the fighting was over and the revolution in full swing in a matter of days, it is important to note that anarchists there had been building up their ability to fight the State for decades, surviving failed insurrections in 1909 and 1934, passing through years of dictatorship, repression, and clandestinity. The revolution, therefore, was both abrupt and gradual.

In some parts of Spain, police and military units that remained loyal to the elected government stopped the coup, while in other parts—primarily Catalunya, Valencia, Aragón, and Asturias—it was armed proletarians. In these areas, the lower classes collectivized the land and the factories, and they organized volunteer, non-hierarchical militias to combat the fascists. They created what many saw as the beginning of a new world, a world outside of and against the exploitation of capitalism. In cities like Barcelona, workers had the city running again a few days after the fighting stopped. The workers collectivized their workplaces—everything from the trams to the factories, hotels, fishing fleets, and hospitals—kicked out the bosses and started organizing production on their own, increasing salaries and benefits, lowering prices in the case of public services like transportation, and forming delegations to procure materials and arrange distribution. Throughout Catalunya, the union of medical workers, primarily anarchists, established several new hospitals and health centers and provided

A part of the theory of rupture is the recognition that things will get worse before they get better, so even though revolution is a long-term proposition, placing our hopes on incremental change is illusory. Currently, capitalists hold every country on the planet hostage, and they always play (with our lives) where the odds are best. Any country with a strong popular struggle is a country where capitalists face higher risks and lower profits. One of the reasons why Greece did not experience such an intense development of capitalism that might have bought off its population with the hollow consumerist prosperity that reigns in Germany or Italy is because social struggles remained strong there, so large, fixed capital investments were too risky.

If we start to struggle effectively against the control that the rich have over our lives and the alienation, pollution, and exploitation they inflict on us, we will be rewarded with poverty as capital flight sends investors to places where the people are easier to dominate.

Precisely because states are not as flexible or mobile as Capital, they are so vindictive in their repression of social struggles. The territory and the people ruled over by a state are the only thing it has, and it'll be damned if it lets them go free. For that reason, stronger struggles also mean stronger repression, as the police or even the military try to intimidate us, jail us, torture us, or massacre us into compliance. This is another cause for things getting worse before they get better. In order to overthrow the existing power structure, we not only need to get strong enough to threaten it – something that has happened relatively few times in the last twenty years; we need to get strong enough to survive the starvation capitalism will inflict on us and to overcome the brutality the State will unleash on us.

The Spanish Civil War provides one invaluable history of revolution. In July 1936, General Francisco Franco launched a military coup with the intention of imposing a fascist government to annihilate the revolutionary movements that had been rocking the country. But the military was stopped cold in about half of the

sort of resistance worried Party officials more. The protest movement that crystallized out of these riots was largely peaceful, even in the face of arrests and beatings, but it had already expressed a threat and shown what it was capable of. When General Secretary Honecker prepared to use the military to put down the movement, moderate Communists in the Politburo argued that using the military could lead to a fullblown uprising (read, not peaceful), and they asked Honecker to step down. The fact that the movement remained peaceful meant that it could be controlled during the subsequent transition from one form of authoritarian government to the next.

Mark Kurlansky tells some interesting and sometimes beautiful stories about nonviolent resistance. The problem is, he frames those stories as an argument for the superiority of nonviolence and the inferiority of other methods of struggle. He never analyzes those other methods, he never makes any but the most superficial of comparisons, he attributes undesirable outcomes to violence and desirable outcomes to nonviolence without demonstrating any chain of causation or exploring contextual factors. Every time he goes beyond simple storytelling to actual argumentation, he engages in manipulation, omission, generalization, and pure fabrication.

Kurlansky tells stories that are inspiring but by no means practical. He does not enter into the details or strategic thinking useful for people who participate in actual struggles. One can assume that the major publishing company that printed off who knows how many hundreds of thousands of copies of his book was not terribly interested in encouraging more effective revolutionary movements. I would also assume that the mass audience consuming the book acquires above all peace of mind. In these times of increasing social conflict, everyone will be safer if they hold hands, sing songs, and above all, do not make war against the Adolf Hitlers and Christopher Columbuses of the day.

Why is it so important for Kurlansky to convince people of the power of nonviolence? Whatever the reason, his convictions and his arguments do not come from personal experience in social movements. Kurlansky is a highly paid journalist and author who has written for some of the biggest mainstream newspapers and whose royalties have been signed by some of the biggest publishing companies. He has not risked or even dedicated his life to the idea he is comfortably (and profitably) espousing. This does not mean he is a bad person or that his ideas are automatically invalid. However, when we debate methods of resistance like nonviolence, we are not engaged in some disinterested quest for an abstract truth. We are participating in a struggle in which many people have died, been tortured or imprisoned; a struggle in which many people's lives are on the line.

Because experience is the best teacher of lessons of life and death, it absolutely matters whether someone is talking from a place of dedicated participation, risk-taking, and sacrifice, or whether they are speaking from the comfort of an armchair and the safety of the sidelines.

The Old School

Even though they seem to have diminishing influence despite their superior dedication, having decisively lost the battle to even define what is meant by the terms pacifism or nonviolence, I would be remiss if I did not mention the old school peace activists. In the US and UK, these are primarily Christian activists such as Catholic Workers, Plowshares activists, or Christian Peacemakers, some of them—especially the former—Christian anarchists.

They are nearly the only proponents of nonviolence who have made any kind of showing in the last couple decades who can reasonably claim to have a revolutionary vision. They also tend to be more dedicated than other proponents of nonviolence, often living

held together by bonds of mutual aid, voluntary association, and harmonious conflict.

Some have argued that changing the world must occur as a gradual evolution or incremental victory. I think this view is deeply flawed. Complex systems move from one stable state to another in sudden shifts. Harmony in nature is not an unchanging state of peacefulness but a field of change and conflict that holds itself together in dynamic tension. The ideals of mutuality and selforganization or self-sustenance from the old vision of harmony remain valid, but the ideals of changelessness and peacefulness do not. Conflict, it turns out, is a good thing, and destruction, as Bakunin pointed out about 150 years ago, is a creative force.

Not even evolution is a gradual evolution but a process marked by periods of placidity that change in sudden shifts. When the complex system in question is a society in which an immense amount of power is concentrated in very few hands, and the governing structures try to suppress or harness every force that threatens their imposed equilibrium, it's a pretty safe bet that any real change will occur in a sudden, dramatic, and violent shift, whereas anything that appears to be part of an incremental victory, a step in the right direction, is simply a reform that has already been harnessed by the ruling system without upsetting its equilibrium. Of course, the forces that will cause the rupture will have been hundreds of years in the making. The visibly identifiable moment of rupture may come and go in just a few years, but we will only develop the strength to overcome the current power structures and the wisdom to create a better world through a lifetime of struggle. And after destroying those power structures it will take generations to decontaminate the planet (thanks to capitalism, some places will never be decontaminated), to unlearn authoritarian, racist, and patriarchal behaviors, to heal from millennia of accumulated trauma, and to learn to take care of ourselves from within a rich web of relationships, both with other human beings and with the Earth itself.

direct action, farming, sabotage, arson, and sometimes guns, they have succeeded in winning back a part of their territory from the landlords and international timber, mining, or energy companies that occupy them. In their reclaimed lands, they practice their culture and their traditional collective agriculture, putting liberated social relations (back) into use.

In all the reputed victories of nonviolence, its proponents never claim a fundamental change in social relations, a change at the economic level, or a clear and generalized step away from the despoliation of capitalism or the domination of government. Those of us who favor a diversity of tactics can lay claim to such a social transformation. There has not been any final victory. As long as capitalism and the State continue to exist, none of us are free. But in a number of important battles we have strengthened our struggle for freedom, temporarily liberated a space from state control, and put communal or horizontal social relations into practice. These battles constitute important lessons that we need to carry with us as part of our collective memory.

Because so many revolutions have been perverted in the past, we need to speak clearly. Freedom does not mean winning a new ruler or a new ruling class. Freedom does not mean winning a new system of government or organization, no matter how ideal. Freedom is not a final, perfected state that everyone must be convinced to accept. Freedom is a process that never ends. Freedom is the ability to shape our own lives, in concert with our peers and our surroundings. In a free world, all social organization arises from the ground up from the efforts of those who formulate it, and no organization is permanent because every successive generation must be able to change and renew its surroundings.

Many anarchists speak of revolution as a rupture with the present order. A revolution that imposes a new order erases all that it has gained. Revolution must be a step towards a society that is in permanent revolt, that accepts no masters and that constantly recreates itself, not as a homogeneous body but as a collectivity

in communal settings, risking their life doing humanitarian work, or going to prison for protesting on military bases or sabotaging military equipment.

While I have more differences than similarities with members of this tendency, I also think they deserve respect. As such I will limit my criticisms to those that explain why I believe this tendency does not have answers to the major questions faced by people in struggle.

Firstly, what this world needs is not more Christianity. The humanitarian work of anti-authoritarian Christians only helps Christianity get a better image than it historically deserves, and unintentionally goes hand in hand with the growing tide of evangelism or the renewal of the Catholic Church that has been an instrumental accessory to neocolonialism and the defeat of social struggles. Especially in Latin America, where such Christian pacifists are most active, the continuing onslaught of resource extraction companies and the extension of snitches or paid informants throughout poor and indigenous communities have been based in part on the erosion of indigenous or syncretic spirituality, the new influx of converts to increasingly fanatical churches, and the fundamental Christian view that the Earth is here for our exploitation and that our lives are only a passing phase on the way to paradise. Where I currently sit writing these lines, in an indigenous community in South America in the process of recovering its lands through direct action, the spread of evangelical Christianity—and the two new churches built here in recent years are testament to this—is directly linked by community members in resistance to the collapse of the struggle within the community (the other major factor they note is the election of an indigenous mayor for the county). The community no longer sticks together, and many are seeking individual economic advancement in European terms over food sovereignty, collective control of their own land, and the recovery of their culture. A few years ago, they had forced out the police and seized several thousand hectares of their traditional land from a timber company, but

the effort to cultivate that land to feed themselves has stalled. It also seemed likely that they were set to block a new mine that a transnational wanted to build in the region, to the absolute detriment of their water and air, but now a part of the community (including the Christians and the new mayor) favors the mine in the name of jobs and progress. Even the extension of a much more progressive vision of Christianity would mean the further erosion of the community and the completion of the genocidal, colonial project.

Christianity is inextricably tied to its history of domination. These links are even apparent among some of its more progressive proponents. A large part of radical Christian "solidarity" is no more than charity reproducing preexisting power inequalities, and some of it so paternalistic as to border on racism. This racism often plays out in the imposition of nonviolence on other people's struggles.[18]

Secondly, Christian pacifists suffer from a longstanding lack of strategy, probably due to the fact that they view struggle in predominantly moral terms, and simply by enacting struggle they achieve their primary goal. The effects of their lack of strategy are apparent in how they—perhaps the most dedicated and potentially inspiring proponents of nonviolence—have been so marginalized and excluded from the very definition of the practice of nonviolence. Nonviolence has come to mean press conferences, massive protests, media strategies, an occasional sit-in, trying to get people all around the world to withdraw the same amount of money from their bank accounts on the same day, flooding the streets while dressed in the same color, "tweeting," snitching, and punching or unmasking people who are trying to smash banks. Most current proponents of nonviolence do not really know what is meant by turning swords into plowshares (depending on their country of origin they may not even know what a plowshare is), they would consider it outlandish and even a little pathological to pour their

[18] I document specific instances of paternalism in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*.

dedicated to profit margins shows clearly that we have lost our way. The criterion of liberation is useful at all points in the struggle, whereas the criterion of nonviolence only causes confusion. It is no coincidence that those who have substituted the question of violence for that of liberation have ended up allying with the forces of coercion and order, whereas throughout history, those who have struggled for total liberation have not tried to annihilate their enemies when they had the power to do so.

In Red Cloud's War from 1866–1868, or the Mapuche struggle against Spanish colonizers from the 1500s all the way to the 1800s (and continuing nowadays against the Chilean and Argentine states that first successfully usurped their lands in the 1880s), indigenous nations took up arms against a hostile power that wanted to dominate or annihilate them. This was nothing like a war between states. The Lakota and Cheyenne in the first case, and the Mapuche in the second, were not authoritarian societies and they were not fighting to dominate the European settlers, only to defend their freedom and independence. The nonviolent hypothesis (and they never pose it as a hypothesis, because that would require testing it against the historical record) claims that violence begets more violence, but these two histories prove that hypothesis flatly wrong. By taking up arms and killing a few thousand genocidal, rapacious, greedy settlers who had invaded them, the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Mapuche did not open a Pandora's Box, create an authoritarian system, or start using violence more often against one another. On the contrary, they won peace and the ability to live in freedom, with their own culture on their own lands. In the first case, that peace lasted for less than a decade before the aggressive US government invaded again, this time successfully. In the case of the Mapuche, their victory over the Spanish led to 300 years of independence, marked by small intermittent wars or skirmishes in which they defended against new incursions. Thanks to their determination to fight back, the Mapuche struggle is still alive today, and using protests, blockades,

9. Seizing the Space for New Relations

The question of whether our tactics are violent is a waste of time. Assigning such labels is the job of moralists, journalists, or cops, and frankly we should not care how they decide to categorize us.

It is time to start asking a new question of the tactics we use in the struggle for a better world: are they liberating? Taking over a space in a world in which we are only meant to be obedient laborers or passive consumers always comes with the euphoria of a taste of freedom, that newfound sensation that lets us know, in case it wasn't already obvious, that we are not free within the false peace of democracy and capitalism. This can happen when we kick the police off our blocks and start a party in the streets, when we occupy a park or plaza to hold an assembly, or when we take over our school or workplace—a site designed to serve as a sort of prison for us—and decide how to transform it. When people who are trained to be victims fight back against those who are given the social privilege to harm them (whether those are cops, frat boys, husbands, businessmen, soldiers, or others), they often feel a similar sense of liberation.

The moment the rebel becomes victorious and decides to continue to attack their former oppressor in the form of an authoritarian persecution, they belie their anti-authoritarian pretensions. If we occupy our workplaces only to keep them running in pursuit of the same objectives of productivity, if we make the mistake of becoming our own bosses, the self-exploitation of endless meetings

blood on a jet fighter, they might consider it violent to deliberately crash a jeep into a nuclear submarine being prepared for launch, they generally do not talk about "living in community," and they probably do not know where the nearest nuclear weapons facilities are nor how they might go about sabotaging the instruments of war.

In other words, thoroughly outmaneuvered by a much more savvy kind of nonviolent activist, Christian pacifists have ended up as the reclusive, eccentric, and embarrassing uncle of the nonviolence family. They have not been terribly useful for movement politicians seeking power, and they have been something of a nuisance to government, so they have been largely abandoned.

The lack of strategy is also evident in the battles where they have dedicated most of their energies. In the US, two of the movements that have had the greatest participation by Christian pacifists have been the movement to close the US Army School of the Americas and the immigrant solidarity movement around the US-Mexico border. I talk more extensively about the first movement in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, but suffice it to say that in its decades of existence, it has not significantly impacted the training of Latin American soldiers and paramilitaries. Several countries have stopped sending soldiers to the school, but as a pragmatic policy decision by new leftwing governments that were brought into power by domestic social movements, and not by nonviolent activists in the US. The socialist government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, for example, was not working towards peace when it stopped participating in the soa. It was simply eliminating a risk, given that the soa had in its history trained plenty of military officers who went on to launch coups against leftwing governments. Like his colleagues on the Right, Chavez used paramilitaries and the military against his critics and opponents (nor did he have any problem with military coups). The difference was he did not have them trained at the soa.

In the movement to stop the deaths of immigrants along the US-Mexico border, Christian pacifists have been major participants. But if their intervention had been based on some concept of strategy rather than one of charity or "bearing witness," they could have achieved some major gains that have so far remained out of reach. Unbeknownst to most Americans, helping someone cross the border illegally even by just giving them directions has been heavily criminalized and can result in prison sentences. By "putting their bodies on the line," they could probably win the effective decriminalization of abetting border crossers within a matter of years. Given that Christian pacifists overwhelmingly come from the most privileged and normalized demographic in the country—older white Christians—if just a few of them were to face long prison sentences every year for the simple act of giving an immigrant directions or a bottle of water, the government would be hard-pressed to justify its application of that law. Subsequently, solidarity with immigrants—and the situation of the very people crossing the border—would become substantially easier.

But in general, when Christian pacifists choose to break what they consider an immoral law and go to prison, the objective is not to delegitimize the State's repressive apparatus. The objective is the prison sentence itself, which confers moral fulfillment on the lawbreaker for "bearing witness." Within this logic, it does not make sense to risk prison and then appeal the prison sentence because the activist in question has already made a decision to go to prison. This attitude legitimizes prison as a neutral terrain where moral growth can occur—the proverbial lion's den—and it legitimizes the judicial apparatus by distinguishing between good laws and bad laws, hiding the coercive nature of law in itself (by this I mean that even a supposedly good law is morally corrupting because people follow it to receive some social reward and to avoid punishment).

Such a practice also creates a peculiar—some might say false—vision of struggle and psychologically separates the nonviolent prisoners from all other prisoners. Only nonviolent activists of

this order can choose when to go to prison. In many cases, by choosing their crime they can even choose the length of their prison sentence, a sort of tailor-made moral test. This is a completely different reality from the one faced by other prisoners, who generally don't even know when they will be released.

The Christian pacifist method also eliminates the specter of repression. By choosing discrete moments to break the law and surrendering themselves to legal punishment, they do not have to face the blows of police frame-ups, raids, and arrests. They do not have to worry too much about being spied on or having the State learn of their plans because they only attempt to sabotage the machinery of war on a symbolic level (in court cases, some of them have openly argued for lighter sentences because the damage they caused by hammering on this or that missile was "symbolic" in their own words). They really do not need to know how to survive repression, because practically the only consequences they face are the ones they choose. What they are involved in is a morality play. If they ever become more than a nuisance to the "Masters of War," they will have no practice or experience that allows them to withstand the sort of methods the police use against those who enter into implacable conflict with the existing system.

ing back, or as they might say, "we're not afraid to work like they are in France."[6]

Any of us who sells our labor to survive, or needs to but can't find any work, has a claim to the strike, and a reason for restoring this valuable tool. Likewise, queer people have a claim to Gay Pride, and a reason to knock over the tables of businesses that engage in opportunistic marketing at Pride festivals, because Pride is a commemoration of the Stonewall Riots, and the things that many of the rioters fought for in 1969 still have not been achieved.

Not every tradition is a combative one. The anticapitalist tradition of the athenaeum, in many ways a forerunner of the social center, is a place for education, debate, and meetings. The cabaret, a tradition in several countries, is a time for liberatory art and performances that stretch boundaries. The vigil is another kind of gathering that has a peaceful character. Someone who goes to a candlelight vigil with fireworks clearly has either misunderstood the historical character of this tradition, or they are intentionally trying to disrespect those who are organizing it. The funeral march, upon the death of a comrade in struggle, can be a solemn occasion or a combative one. That should probably depend on the sorts of activities the deceased engaged in while they were alive, how they died, and what their friends and family want. These different factors, though, may point in different directions. After a police murder, the media will always find a family member who says they want the response to be peaceful. But honestly, how many of us want our parents to dictate our funerals and epitaphs? Often, when the parents call for peace, the rioting is started by friends of the slain, and for most of us it is our friends who know us best. But even then, the state

[6] Actual quote from a lifelong Indiana steel worker and company stooge, after he had been completely screwed over by the bosses, upon hearing about a combative strike by French workers. As a reference for non-US readers, the "workers' comp" mentioned earlier in the paragraph is a legally mandated compensation or pay-out for workplace injuries.

> those who will never submit to the ruling class's dream of assimilation and "tolerance."[11]

Other radical queer actions have included interrupting homophobic megachurches, beating up transphobic frat boys, distributing tasers among queer and trans youth, and even burning down the house of a cop who raped and killed trans people with impunity.

Some critics have tried to suggest that such actions are an aberration, or even that those who carried them out were not really queer, or mostly white men. But violent rebellions and acts of revenge have long been an essential part of the struggle against patriarchy. The State and nonviolence find yet another common ground in the silencing of those histories. Recovering them, spreading them, and celebrating them is an important part of the struggle today. It lets people who grow up under an oppressive system know what they are capable of, know that they are not victims and that people like them have struggled heroically in the past. It is also important for those of us who grow up privileged by patriarchy to know these histories. Such stories of rebellion help us recenter our analysis to acknowledge the importance of systems of domination and struggles we are trained to overlook; they help us empathize with the oppression and struggles experienced by our sisters, mothers, daughters, friends, and comrades; and they make it clear that women, trans, and queer people do not need the protection of those of us who were raised as men.

Patriarchy mobilizes a whole array of physical, psychological, social, and structural violence against children and women, and even more against those who refuse the roles or relations it imposes. But the privileges it rewards to men or to those who accept their role are poisonous. They do not give us the possibility for de-

[11] From "Queers Fucking Queers Gets Wild in the Streets," Puget Sound Anarchists, http://pugetsoundanarchists.org/content/queers-fucking-queers-gets-wild-streets (26 June, 2011).

veloping a healthy relationship with others or with ourselves. All of us have motives for struggling against patriarchy.

I dedicated *How Nonviolence Protects the State* to a friend and comrade, Sue Daniels. Sue was a feminist, anarchist, and environmentalist who brought a great deal of energy, intelligence, and dedication to the struggles she participated in. Around the time I was finishing up the book, Sue was killed by an ex-partner. She was someone I talked with a lot about nonviolence and resistance, and she had been helping me with sources and ideas for the book. She inspired a part of the chapter on nonviolence and patriarchy, particularly with the emphasis she put on feminist self-defense, on not having to depend on men or collective structures to protect oneself from patriarchal violence. One of my hopes with both of these books is to encourage more people to learn how to defend themselves, to break the monopoly on violence shared by the police and the patriarchy.

We are not fighting for abstractions. We are fighting for our lives. For some of us, this means fighting the misery, the psychological pressure, the destruction of our environment, the poisoning of our bodies, the exploitation, and the alienation from our surroundings that make life not worth living. For others, to varying degrees it means a battle against forces that might at any moment annihilate them.

In order to protect ourselves in our struggles, to seize the spaces where we can begin to create a new world, to destroy the structures that are killing us, and to break through the enclosures that have separated us from our world, we need all the tactics that do not lead to the creation of new prisons. By fighting back, we are already beginning to subvert the social relations of domination. Nonviolence is inadequate to the struggle that lies before us.

to participate in a strike we have to be peaceful and follow the law. But a strike is not a peaceful activity. It is more than a work stoppage or a boycott. The first strikes were punished by death, and since then they have often had grave consequences. There is a reason for this. The goal of a strike is not merely to not go to work, it is to shut the business down, to form a picket to prevent anyone else from going to work, to beat up any scab who attempts to cross the picket line (because a scab is an opportunist who will walk all over your struggle in order to take your livelihood away), and to sabotage the company until they cave in. And a general strike goes even further. The purpose of a general strike is to shut the city down, or the entire country if it is nationwide. Paralyze transit, block commerce, shut down all the factories, the stores, the centers of consumption, the highways, the ports, cut the electricity, strand the tourists, set up burning barricades, and give the police a black eye if they try to restore order.

A strike is neither peaceful nor democratic. Anyone who has a problem with this can go be peaceful and democratic all they want, but they should give up their coffee breaks, cigarette breaks, and bathroom breaks, kiss their sick days and paid vacation goodbye, hand over their severance pay, overtime pay, workers' comp, retirement, and health benefits, and voluntarily work 12-hour days six or seven days a week, do nights and holidays for the same rate, and work without protective equipment. Many readers in the US will be thinking, as they flip through that list, that they don't enjoy most of those benefits already. That's because the strike as a tool of resistance has been lost, because there have been very few strikes in the US since 1950 and even fewer since the '70s, because no one looks down on scabs anymore, nor hardly remembers what that word means, and because American workers on the whole take pride in being exploited, abused, duped, and demeaned without ever fight-

Traditions of struggle

Not all decisions are made in a specific space in a single moment. Some decisions are made over generations. The few traditions of struggle that have been handed down to us are invaluable. Traditional holidays like May Day, traditions of resistance like the strike. They tell us about everything that has been stolen from us, about where we came from, how we got here, and how we won what little we have.

These traditions can also be useful guides for how to act. But recuperators of the struggle are always trying to erase their meaning. Until recently, May Day was all but forgotten in the United States, the country where the latest incarnation of that day of rebellion originated.[5] In social democracies in Europe and elsewhere, it was turned into an official, government-sponsored holiday, a Labor Day. But the First of May is not a celebration of wage labor, it is a celebration of workers and our resistance, commemorating the immense general strike in 1886 and the subsequent repression against the anarchists who participated in organizing it, which ended in the death sentence for five of them. May Day is a day of rebellion. No one has any claim to tell us to celebrate it peacefully and legally.

Recently, as strikes have come back into use in countries where they had largely disappeared, legalized, bureaucratic unions, along with the media and proponents of nonviolence, tell us that in order

[5] May Day as a day of resistance has older roots in pagan spring ceremonies partially recuperated by Catholicism, and in the early anti-feudal, anticapitalist festival of the World Turned Upside Down. As for the workers' May Day, the May 1, 1886 general strike is often described as a strike for an eight-hour workday. This is true but also misleading. Given the incipience of labor organizing and the relative power of bosses at the time, even a reformist demand like the eight-hour day, as conceived by groups like the Knights of Labor, could have seemed revolutionary. For their part, the anarchists who were key organizers of the strike, especially in Chicago, adhered to a strategy aimed at the eventual abolition of wage labor and the overthrow of capitalism, and many other workers shared this vision.

10. A Diversity of Methods

Rejecting nonviolence does not mean running to the opposite extreme of building a revolutionary practice around the concept of violence. Such a practice could prove to be interesting and valuable, especially if violence were understood as transgression, that which shocks and disturbs by breaking society's norms at a symbolic and material level. But opposites tend to reproduce the same logic; in order to function as opposites they must exist within the same paradigm.

The advantages of a diversity of tactics

The concept of a diversity of tactics includes several ideas that nonviolence, as a more simplistic, less developed concept, is incapable of recognizing. Nonviolence posits a set of limitations over an entire social movement. This presumption arises from an immature abstraction in which a struggle is defined, bounded, and controllable, a chess board on which one can move all the pieces on one side.

Authoritarian thinking, which is the most immature, both ethically and conceptually, requires the simplification of a complex reality. States create armies in part to suppress the complexities of a chaotic world, and many proponents of nonviolence use moralism and the repressive force of the media and the police to suppress the elements of a social movement that do not fit within their grand strategy.

The concept of a diversity of tactics constitutes a qualitative expansion of thinking. It is, at least potentially, the recognition that

social conflict is not a chess board in which we can control or even see all the pieces, but a limitless, often opaque space with countless actors whose desires are not always compatible, interspersed through a terrain that is in itself dynamic and shifting.

Because the concept was created for protest mobilizations that attracted people who would use very different, sometimes incompatible tactics, it has developed primarily as a practical but limited framework for planning a multiform protest space where nonviolent blockaders, peaceful marchers, and Black Bloc saboteurs can all take to the streets causing the maximum disruption without stepping on one another's toes. In sum, it has allowed people to choose their form of participation.

In pursuit of this objective, diversity of tactics has proven itself time and time again. By agreeing on zones for different tactics, protest organizers have coordinated situations where tens of thousands of people could surround a summit site where world leaders were trying to decide our future, and blockade or disrupt it with the simultaneous use of peaceful marches, sit-ins, lockdowns and tripods, barricades, riots in nearby business districts to draw off security forces, and direct street fighting with the cops. I suspect that this is why proponents of nonviolence like Rebecca Solnit have denounced it as a tool for irresponsible, violent rioters without making any reference to the historical record (Gleneagles, Heiligendamm, St. Paul, Vancouver, Toronto, and so on…): because a functioning diversity of tactics framework undermines nonviolence by disproving its claims to supremacy and allowing peaceful activists to act peacefully in harmony with other very different forms of protest. Experiences of harmony or mutuality in diverse protests prove that we do not need the protection of nonviolence because we can create a beneficial equilibrium between different methods. The success of a diversity of tactics has forced proponents of nonviolence to choose between participating in a broader struggle or exerting control over a smaller, less effective struggle. The most vocal and active have overwhemingly chosen the latter.

tics be put to a vote in an open assembly, as though this were a fair way to make the decision. But there is no parity between support for peaceful, legal tactics, and support for combative, illegal tactics. Because the police stand heavily on the side of nonviolence, it is not safe to vote on or discuss illegal tactics in an open assembly. In certain countries, including the US and Canada, even raising your hand to vote in favor of an illegal plan can get you put in prison. To talk about certain risky actions, secret meetings are completely necessary. However, superficial democratic rhetoric once again obstructs the debate. Proponents of nonviolence will often describe such meetings with words like "secretive" and "unaccountable," criticisms originally directed at the lack of transparency in government, in order to push decision-making back into the open general meetings where they know they have the advantage. This is a manipulative use of rhetoric and a despicable capitalization on police violence. Governments make decisions for all of us. The biggest problem, contrary to what progressives say, is that they steal our power of self-organization. Whether they make decisions over our lives secretively or transparently, they're still doing something that we should be doing for ourselves. On the contrary, an action group planning an action in secret meetings is not making decisions for anyone else, only for themselves. Saying that an affinity group should not be able to meet on its own is like saying that women or queer people or people of color or anyone else should not be able to have their own meeting spaces, that people in general should not be allowed free association or any organizing space outside of the central assembly, or otherwise that such spaces should be subordinated to the central assembly, with permission required from the larger body for all their initiatives.

The quest to impose supposedly legitimate decisions on an entire movement not only marginalizes diverse forms of struggle, it also opens the door for the movement to be taken over by the leadership of a specific organization. Sadly, this many years later, there are still many Trotskyist, Stalinist, and Maoist cults waiting for the appearance of a mass movement they can lead. It is an explicit part of these groups' strategies to co-opt and take over proletarian movements. Many sects even have sophisticated tricks for getting away with this, such as hiding their true politics and using populist rhetoric to win more support, setting up front groups they control and using these to create the appearance of a majority, and preparing scripted debates to manipulate a meeting, with different group members pretending to be strangers advancing opposing arguments and arriving at a predetermined compromise. The anti-war movement in the US between 2001 and 2003 was largely controlled by one Stalinist cult and its front group, answer, which went on to create another front group that organized the largest protests.

This isn't only a habit of Marxist sects. The progressive group "Real Democracy Now" used some of the same ploys during the plaza occupation movement in Spain in 2011. What is striking is that all the crypto-authoritarian groups who pay lip service to the popular rejection of political parties and hierarchical leadership but secretly are only looking for power, all coincide in their support for central structures. After the plaza occupations ended in Spain, all the authoritarian groups dedicated their energies to building new structures to replace them, for example trying to force the neighborhood assemblies to accept the leadership of a central coordinating body that they had created. If there is no central structure that can make decisions for the entire movement, there is nothing for them to control and lead.

The imposition of one decision-making structure over an entire movement is dangerous for another reason. Sometimes, those who want to pacify the struggle will propose that the use of violent tac-

On many occasions, protests organized using a diversity of tactics framework have gone off successfully, with people respecting the different zones of protest, but after the fact, spokespersons for nonviolent groups denounce the other protesters in the media, blaming them for police brutality as though it were perfectly logical for cops in one part of the city to beat peaceful protesters just because some folks in another part of the city smashed some windows hours earlier. This behavior demonstrates another essential characteristic of nonviolence: the tendency to seek safety rather than accept danger; to justify state repression rather than oppose it; and to swallow the democratic belief that by avoiding violence they can avoid repression, that they can make a revolution without any consequences. Ironic, when the two figureheads whose images they systematically exploit and whose philosophies they heavily censor both ended up dead for their efforts. But, it has been said before: nonviolence is a delusional idea.

The limitations of a diversity of tactics

Ridiculous as they may be, these pacifist responses demonstrate the limitations of a diversity of tactics. To realize its full potential, the protest framework must develop into a concept of struggle that assumes a diversity of methods. We cannot have this debate only once a year when we come together for mass protests, because by doing so we reduce it to a mere question of tactics, and we reduce the field of struggle to formal mass protests, and the actors in struggle to those individuals and groups who dedicate themselves to such protests.

While there is room for nonviolence in a diversity of tactics framework, a deeper understanding of struggle requires nonviolence to be dismantled. A liberatory social struggle cannot possibly be organized on the basis of a single strategy or philosophy because all the different people who are subordinated to the State have dif-

ferent histories, different possibilities, different needs, and different desires. Just as a unitary solution, a one-size-fits-all utopia, is impossible (and, if history is any guide, in practice such utopias constitute the very worst of dictatorships), a unitary struggle is also impossible.

Although a diversity of tactics framework allows more room for debate than nonviolence, it still tends to limit debate in a spirit of relativistic pluralism. This is because it was created almost exclusively as a protest framework. In a mass protest, many different people come together, including pacifists, anarchists, socialists, progressives, US-style libertarians, wingnuts, and others; there often exists a heavy institutional presence in the form of ngos and political parties as well. Created specifically to mediate such a space, any diversity of tactics philosophy would be incapable of questioning the centralism or the pluralism of such a space. But a social conflict is much broader than the protests it generates, and not everyone who marches together in a protest is on the same side of a given social conflict.

The danger of centralization

The State has been a millennia-long movement towards centralization. We need to break apart that centralization to open space for a thousand different worlds to flourish. Though the antiauthoritarian ideal has long been ridiculed by the elite and their paid scientists, no one can deny any longer that the most intelligent solutions are those formulated by local actors in accordance with local conditions, and with access to a long historical record and contrasting experiences in other locales. This is similar to the anarchist vision of a federated or interconnected world in which no structure has power over the individual or the free associations and communities created by free individuals; as well as to the vision of many indigenous groups of a world inhabited by many different peoples,

many institutional pressures constantly encourage the former and punish the latter, makes it impossible to grow stronger. We need to recover the tools of resistance that have been stolen from us in order to talk about balance and employ a real diversity of methods.

In the meantime, we simply cannot trust those who always try to criminalize or prohibit other methods of struggle when they tell us, "Now is not the time."

The centralization of movements

These pointers deal with ways to develop a respectful complementarity in moments of protest. But a struggle is much more than protest. If there is no assembly that can include everyone in a protest, this is even more true for an entire movement. There is no way to make decisions that can be applied to everyone in a struggle, or even to be aware of all the people who participate in a given struggle.

Accordingly, one of the ways to prevent a respectful diversity of methods in the broader terrain of struggle, is the creation of an assembly or an organization that attempts to represent and make decisions for an entire movement. It is often necessary to create assemblies or organizations as spaces of encounter, debate, coordination, or planning. But there is no assembly that everyone can participate in, and no organizational style that is amenable or inclusive to everybody. The proponents of such structures always need to keep in mind that they are not the entire movement, only a part of it. Even more crass is the habit of some activists to try to serve as spokespersons for the entire movement. Thankfully, a widespread mistrust in leaders prevents them from doing too much harm, but it is worth repeating that speaking for others who are perfectly capable of speaking for themselves is disrespectful and unsolidaristic. It replaces a plurality of voices, perspectives, and experiences of struggle with only one.

often based their very practice on a total lack of respect for others and an attempt to dominate an entire movement. This is not a case of everyone just needing to get along. Nonviolence as it currently exists needs to be dismantled for social struggles to move forward.

People who make different choices do not ruin common spaces of protest. The criterion of importance is whether one's actions harm another participant in that space. Protesters who are constantly filming and taking pictures do harm and endanger fellow protesters. But those who dress all in black and attack a bank have clearly differentiated themselves from others. If there are protesters who wish to remain peaceful nearby, they have not endangered them. Any observer watching property destruction occur in such a setting can see who is doing it and who is not, especially when everyone involved in smashing is dressed in black and wearing a mask. The police have absolutely no reasonable excuse for attacking peaceful protesters when masked protesters are breaking windows. It is the proponents of nonviolence who invent such an excuse, denouncing fellow protesters and implicitly justifying police actions rather than denouncing the police. If they do have criticisms for other protesters, they should make those in direct conversations or written evaluations published in movement journals or websites. Feeding their denunciations to the media and delegitimizing those they supposedly want to debate is inexcusable.

There is a possibility for people with diverse methods to struggle together in a spirit of respect and solidarity, to balance different activities and moods of struggle, but not if some of them treat the police as their friend and proponents of illegal action as their enemies.

Because the police, the media, and the pacifists have taken away our ability to fight back, first we have to recover those skills. That is the priority. Only when we know how to fight can we wisely decide when to fight. Pretending that peaceful protests and combative protests are currently on even ground, especially when so

each with their own unique culture, tied intimately to their natural environment.

Nonviolence and leftism are both enemies of this vision of freedom. Nonviolence because it erases histories of struggle that are an essential part of who we are, because it does not recognize an individual's or community's need for self-defense, and because it imposes a unitary one-size-fits-all form of struggle. Leftism because it equates freedom with a new kind of state, conveniently ignoring the fact that no revolutionary state, no progressive government in history, has ascended to power without killing or jailing its opponents. Socialist governments from Russia to Nicaragua have jailed or killed dissidents and accelerated processes of genocide against indigenous peoples, while democratic governments have simply continued the war against the poor handed down to them by their monarchic predecessors. After the American Revolution, the United States government started with a bang, putting down indebted farmers in Bacon's Rebellion and subsidizing a frenzy of genocidal westward expansion. For that reason, most indigenous nations in contact with the thirteen colonies either stayed out of the war or fought with the British.

Everyone who pretends to create a better government ultimately wants power, and the power exercised by government is the same power of self-organization that has been stolen from all of us, precisely so that government can institute its unitary solutions, its brilliant ideas that we must be convinced of or forced to accept. Society will always be conflictive, and conflict can—should—be healthy, but society under government is divided by an irreconcilable antagonism, as the existence of rulers is predicated on the dispossession of everyone else.

For the foreseeable future, we will share spaces of struggle with advocates of nonviolence and supporters of supposedly better kinds of government. After all, the State directly subsidizes and rewards both of these positions. While criticizing their beliefs, we cannot envision a struggle without them, or the many other

people who are different from us (just as the people reading this book who might agree with its basic arguments will disagree on a great many other points, which is to say we are never a homogeneous "we"). We have to find ways of relating with other people in struggle.

But an acceptance of other people should not mean an acceptance of the institutions they might be working for. In an effort to be open, we must never blind ourselves to some of the clearest lessons of past defeats. Within all spaces of struggle, itis crucial to spread a rejection of political parties, ngos, trade unions,[1] and similar institutions. One of the greatest accomplishments of the antiglobalization movement, the plaza occupation movement in Spain or the Occupy movement in the US was a rejection of political parties. Such organizations deserve no trust whatsoever. But sometimes, people work in an NGO or union but also participate in the struggle as autonomous individuals. In the plaza occupation in Barcelona, the militants of many leftist parties participated, but elected officials or candidates were not welcome. In the neighborhood assemblies, many participants were members of the two major unions that had signed off on the austerity measures, but they were rank and file members often critical of union leadership.

Nonviolence as an absolute philosophy has no place in a diverse struggle, because it is incapable of respecting the pluralistic nature of liberation. But people who personally favor peaceful tactics, and even those whose concept of revolution is to work for peace, who follow a philosophy of doing no harm, should be respected as part of the struggle. The basis of respect is recognizing the autonomy of others: they will fight for freedom in their own fashion, regardless of our preferences. We criticize those we respect, because we assume they are mature enough to accept the criticism, but the goal

[1] A good argument can be made for distinguishing between trade unions, which are essentially a pyramid scheme, a mafia, or an arm of leftwing political parties (or sometimes all three), and base unions created in the workplace, without paid, non-working members, and not subsidized by the government.

Moods of struggle

The imposition of nonviolence also blocks another possible way forward in the development of a diversity of methods. Just as not every protest should be peaceful, not every protest should turn into a riot. We need a common way to recognize and express changing moods of struggle. We need to develop a collective intelligence about when is the right moment to attack, when is the right moment to hold our ground, when to shout and make noise, and when merely to be present. Sometimes we must take to the streets to celebrate, other times to mourn. Sometimes to attack and destroy, other times dance, or occupy, or break the asphalt and plant a garden.

However, proponents of nonviolence have injected an implicit hierarchy into the conversation that arises when two different moods of action conflict. We frequently encounter the formulation that combative protesters have "ruined" a protest. This enforces the idea that the protest belongs to the supposedly legitimate peaceful protesters, and that the illegal ones are an outside, alien force. This is the logic of the media, of the police, and of repression. Within a diversity of methods, very different people can work together, but not if some of those people believe they own common spaces, dictate to others how they participate in those spaces, and reinforce the government discourse about violent outsiders, which is a discourse that has always been used to justify and introduce harsher methods of control that include beating, arresting, deporting, torturing, killing, and spying—not just on the so-called bad protesters, but on everybody.

What if those who favor combative tactics started denouncing peaceful protesters for "ruining our riot"? What if we tried to make people feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or even criminal if they showed up to "our" protest and did not also pick up a rock or a can of spraypaint? The fact that this has never happened shows that we are not dealing with a symmetrical conflict between two conflicting sides. On the contrary, those who favor nonviolence have

The riot provides a model for a stronger form of action that has a place for everybody, as long as they accept the legitimacy of other kinds of participation and reject the attempts of police to dictate how we take over the streets. Those who want to can strike back against the banks, big businesses, and the police for all the ways they harm us. If they do not view the other protesters antagonistically but as comrades, they are much more likely to act respectfully, to not endanger the others, and to put themselves on the line to protect the crowd from the police. At the other end of the crowd, peaceful activists can try to blockade the police or shut down an intersection with sit-downs. Alternative media activists could also film there if the activists agreed. In the middle, people could sing, dance, cheer on the rioters and activists, paint the streets, protect the children and elderly, and tend to the wounded. And those who wanted a more confrontational role could bring rocks to the rioters, prepare molotov cocktails, or kick out the journalists trying to film the rioters.

That kind of crowd, a many-headed hydra, would be infinitely stronger than a disciplined nonviolent march or a group of rioters isolated from others. Especially if the participants cultivate a sense of mutual respect and collectivity, the crowd enjoys the unique advantage of being pancentric: every single point of the crowd is its center, every single form of participation is vital. Those who are painting the streets are not there simply as support for the rioters or nonviolent activists, but because painting the streets is their way of contributing to the struggle. The children are not there simply as appendages of their parents, dependents needing protection, but because it is important for all of us that they be part of the struggle. And those who riot or block streets are not only the protagonists of a heroic battle, they are also at the service of the crowd, ready to risk themselves to defend the greater whole.

of criticism is not to convert them or make them like us. I might criticize peaceful revolutionaries for underestimating the role of confrontation and destruction in a revolution, but the purpose of that criticism is to learn collectively at the point of conflict between our differences, not to turn them into Black Bloc anarchists.

Nonviolence violates the minimum requirements of respect, because it seeks to eliminate the other, and because its practitioners frequently collaborate with the police and the media to criminalize those of us whom they label "violent." But those who wish to be peaceful do not have to impose their methodology across an entire movement.

Many activities, many visions

In this multiform struggle that each of us understands in a different way, there is a need for a whole spectrum of activities. Recovering our connection with the land, publishing and spreading our ideas, debating, informing ourselves about the world and conflicts happening in different places, sabotaging development projects that harm our environment and ourselves, taking care of babies, the sick, and the elderly, feeding and healing ourselves, learning self-defense, educating ourselves, providing clothing and shelter, supporting prisoners, running social centers, presses, websites, and radio stations, creating a libertarian culture, learning how to share and exchange without a logic of accumulation, unlearning the roles that have been imposed on us, taking over spaces and defending them, being able to defeat the cops in the streets, shutting down the economy, attacking structures of domination, stopping evictions, organizing clinics and workshops, setting up safe houses and underground railroads, recovering our history, imagining other worlds, learning how to use weapons and the tools of sabotage, developing the capacity to subvert or

withstand the military for when the government decides that democratic repression isn't enough. The list goes on and on.

It does not matter in the least which of these activities are "violent" or "nonviolent." It does matter that every person is uniquely suited to some of them and not to others, as a function of their temperament, their abilities, their experiences, and their ideas about revolution. In my vision of revolution, all of these activities are necessary. By placing more importance on some of them than on others, those who fetishize illegal and combative tactics miss out on the richness of struggle, and the ways by which struggles regenerate. They reproduce the dynamic in which pacifists isolate themselves and seek some discourse to justify their own superiority, as opposites always recreate each other.

At this point, my argument bifurcates between my personal vision of struggle and the overarching framework in which my and many other visions of struggle can fit. The overarching framework is meant to be a replacement for absolute nonviolence, or the coercive unity of the leftist political party, or the simplistic version of a diversity of tactics.

My own vision is an anarchist one, in which we fight to destroy the State, capitalism, and patriarchy, to create a decentralized, heterogeneous world of free individuals and self-organizing communities. I do not want everyone to be an anarchist but I believe that an honest look at history and at the world today amply shows that states are intrinsically aggressive, colonizing structures and therefore the destroyer of the freedom of their subjects and a threat to the freedom of their neighbors; that freedom is a collective proposition, and as long as anyone is behind bars, none of us is free; and that contrary to Christian moralism and scientific rationalism, we are creatures of the earth, and what we do to the earth, we do to ourselves. Following these beliefs to their natural conclusion is the conviction that we will not be free as long as states exist and as long as the present, ecocidal industrial order continues to function. We do not have to be anarchists to fight for this vision of revolu-

olence on the ongoing social struggles, people were clearly fed up with nonviolence. When the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist march came down the ritzy street Pau Claris from Gracia to Plaça Catalunya, in the very center of the city, people in the crowd broke open and set fire to nearly every bank and luxury shop they passed. At Plaça Catalunya, the police attacked and dispersed the march, but it quickly melded into the massive crowd of tens of thousands, young and old, immigrants and locals, socialists, anarchists, progressives, and others, all of them people who were not done protesting but who refused to join the mass protests of the major, sell-out labor unions happening nearby. For a while, the crowd was peaceful but restive. Then youths started burning dumpsters and attacking police at one corner of the plaza, where they were protecting a major shopping mall. When police pulled back, the crowd surged forward, and the riot began again in earnest. They burned a Starbucks, a bank, and the shopping mall, and fought a pitched battle with police that lasted hours.

Previously in Barcelona, riots might have involved a few hundred people and lasted until the police arrived. This time, several thousand people directly participated, and they held their ground. The cops could not push them back (it took a couple hours for them to win back the block they had lost and then take the top part of the plaza) and because of the tens of thousands of people filling the plaza, they could not flank or surround them. And this is where we discover the more significant feature of the riot. If we take the focus off of the people participating in the front line for a moment, we see that the crowd contained a wide range of niches and possibilities for participation. In the middle of the plaza, there were old folks and families with children, and closer to the top, there were people cheering the rioters and booing the cops, people helping take away those injured by rubber bullets, people helping bring up rocks and other projectiles, and people who were arguing with the pacifists who were going around trying to protect the banks or take pictures of people.

tactics framework have formulated the practice of establishing distinct protest zones. For example, a green zone for mass protest, a yellow zone for nonviolent blockades, and a red zone for confrontational tactics. This has worked well on a number of occasions. Even though it lets police know how to prepare to prevent disorders, huge crowds using a plurality of methods and plans of attack have been able to outmaneuver the slower, hierarchical police forces and shut down a city. But it also has a number of weaknesses. It severely limits spontaneity and restricts the ability of protesters to react to unforeseen situations. It also essentially segregates people with different practices, preventing them from challenging one another and changing the status quo in which the Black Bloc and nonviolent direct action protesters are small minorities next to an insulated majority of passive protesters who follow, sheeplike, whatever organization has the biggest budget or the best contacts with media and police to organize what they will bill as the main march.

Unfortunately, as long as nonviolence as an exclusive, absolute philosophy retains credibility, it will be impossible to overcome these weaknesses in order to develop a mature, effective complementarity. Those who prefer to use peaceful methods still must accept the fact that confrontation, sabotage, attacks, and illegality have always been a part of the struggle. Combative social rebels can help spread this idea by not arrogantly placing other people's methods on an inferior plane, disrespecting peaceful tactics as mere support, auxiliary to what they see as the truly important combative tactics.

Peaceful and combative tactics together

If we can support one another's forms of participation in the struggle, we can open up wholly new possibilities. During the general strike in Barcelona on March 29, 2012, less than a year after the "Real Democracy Now" movement had imposed mass nonvi-

tion, but so far, the only movements to recognize the incompatibility of these two interlocking structures with their freedom and well-being, and to put that recognition into practice, have been anarchists, certain indigenous struggles, non-institutionalized peasant and farmer movements in some countries, and various anti-industrial struggles in Africa.

However, freedom is not a destination or a perfected state. Many revolutionaries define themselves on the basis of a shared affinity. They believe that if an anarchist wants a world without a state, and a socialist wants a world with a state, then they really have nothing in common and should not work together in the present because in the future they will be enemies. This impeccable logic pictures us as bodies in motion along a straight line heading towards a distant point. At the present moment, geometric coincidence has brought us very close together, but an accurate measurement proves that our lines only diverge, and the distance will become an impossible chasm with a little time. History seems to bear out this logic; every time socialists have taken power, they have liquidated heterodox revolutionaries, so they must not have been true allies in the first place. But let's take this logic a little further. Just because two people call themselves anarchists does not mean they want the same thing. One may want workers to selforganize themselves in their workplaces, while the other may be opposed to the institution of labor and the industrial system itself. The same divergence might appear between any two progressives: what is their position on Palestine? Are they in favor of hydroelectric dams or wind farms? So the anarchists split into different tendencies, say, anarcho-syndicalists and green anarchists, and the progressives split between different organizations or political parties. But even within those smaller groupings, there are still major differences, obscured only by the remoteness of whatever abstraction they disagree on.

A different analysis of struggle does not define us according to our goals, as though we were sovereign, separate individuals mov-

ing unswervingly through space. This other analysis places importance on the fact that we inhabit the same terrain of struggle in the present. Freedom, revolution, are not future destinations or perfected states, they are a practice of constant engagement with the world.

All of us change and all of us create ourselves in large part through our relations with others. I would argue that the most effective struggle for liberation is one in which we create a complementarity—cycles of mutual support—among all the diverse activities listed above. This means finding ways that our strengths and weaknesses, as well as our differing practices, complement one another and allow for each person or current to struggle better *in their own way*. But I recognize that many other people who are in the streets alongside me do not think that reconnecting with the land, or taking care of the elderly, or smashing banks, or doing street theater, have anything to do with revolution. A progressive might believe the current government should organize clinics for us. A socialist might not have any criticism of hospitals and Western medicine, and imagine a workers' government with bigger hospitals, more machines, and cheaper drugs. A nihilist might argue that the project of creating our own self-organized healthcare while the structures of domination have not been destroyed is a recipe for recuperation. But the fact of the matter is, none of them can deny that a complementarity exists between all our different struggles, whether it is symbiotic or counterproductive.

Rejecting the institutions that manage conflict

Society is fundamentally chaotic. We cannot and should not control everything. Recognizing this means attempting to formulate our struggle in a way that is complemented by all the other

Another action that many nonviolent activists might not realize is a breach of solidarity is to plan the march route in cooperation with the police or to apply for a protest permit. After their failures in effectively controlling the social revolts of the '60s and '70s, police theorists developed the idea of community policing. The dual objective was to establish a friendly face and another way to gather intelligence inside neighborhoods, and to develop the practice of cooperating with protest organizers and spreading an illusion of a shared interest in public order between cops and protesters. But if the good protesters team up with the cops, it is to further isolate and criminalize the so-called bad protesters. Planning the march route with police, or even telling them the route in advance, is another way to impose an enforced pacifism on all the marchers, because police will do whatever they can to keep protesters corralled and to protect banks and other symbols of power, a fact that opponents of property destruction and rioting would do well to consider when they claim that "violence is what the State wants."

Applying for a protest permit is allowing the State to take a huge bite out of our possibilities for resistance. Those who apply for permits are legitimizing the idea that we need to ask for permission to take to the streets, reinforcing the idea that open space belongs to the State (an idea it has been trying to enforce for centuries, killing countless people to assert its claims), and granting the police more ways to repress those who fight back, in this case handing over the names of those who apply for the permit and exposing them to criminal charges should any rioting occur, thus creating a pressure for protesters to police themselves.

Whenever possible, we should take to the streets illegally and without permission. This is true for those who choose to be peaceful as much as it is for those who choose to be conflictive, because in the long run, granting the State the power to give us permission or plan our march routes affects everyone's ability to protest.

In order to allow folks to protest with different levels of confrontation and risk, anarchists and activists using a diversity of

It has happened in many countries before and it will happen again that democratic governments are replaced by dictatorships, and the dictatorships use the lists of enemies of the state that the democratic governments had already compiled. Another reality is that immigrants who fall under surveillance in democratic countries are deported and face even heavier consequences in their home countries. As for the democratic governments, new technologies are quickly giving them a capacity for total surveillance, and they are not holding back. It is significant, given that Facebook has become one of the primary tools of law enforcement to collect data on social movements, that most of the people taking photos are only going to upload them on their idiotic Facebook pages.

Many people believe that there is a need to use cameras as a tool against police brutality or for counterinformation and alternative media. But a camera is far more dangerous to protesters than a molotov cocktail. No one should be using one at a protest without knowing what they are doing. Until Cop Watch collectives, legal aid groups, and Indymedia or other counterinformation activists start organizing workshops on how to film without enabling police surveillance, how to edit images to erase people's identifying features, when it's okay to put protesters' faces on the internet, how to safely store, upload, and delete images, they should not take cameras to a protest. At a protest, they should identify themselves so others know they are not cops or corporate journalists. And everyone else with a camera should be asked to put it away or leave. Of course, we cannot stop onlookers from filming or taking pictures, and in the end everyone must take responsibility for protecting their own identity if that is what they want to do, but we will have created an environment much more friendly for a diversity of tactics—or just an active, non-spectacular protest—and much less friendly for police surveillance, if we can discourage camera usage within the protest itself.

diverse and changing currents that are also in the streets. This can only be aided if we reject the participation of the many institutions that function to control, manipulate, and recuperate social conflicts: political parties, the media, ngos, trade unions, and the police. Of course, we cannot prevent these institutions from being present. As long as they exist we will have contact with them, directly or indirectly. But if we are conscious and outspoken about their role, we can block their participation as institutions and encourage their members to desert. The key to this may be in the accurate differentiation between an institution and a person. Because a political party or NGO can hold the same view as an individual, it becomes a problem to deal with these institutions at the level of ideas. It is a waste of time to debate with an institution, whereas debating with individuals, even if their ideas strike us as absurd, is often necessary.

An institution is a structure capable of disciplining a person to act on behalf of institutional interests rather than personal interests. Institutions are made up of people, but they are not, by any means, the sum of their parts. As anyone with common sense knows, you can never trust a politician. This is not because politicians are genetically defective or inhuman (although the very worst kinds of people tend to be attracted to the power that inheres to the role of politician or cop, along with a few people with very naïve ideas about how to change the world), but because the representative of an institution is performing a mechanical role. They have surrendered their own discretion and judgment in order to reproduce the logic of the institution, which is fundamentally the extension of its own power. The kind of power exercised by a cop is very different from the kind exercised by an NGO, but it is no coincidence that police from one city to the next systematically brutalize people, or that ngos systematically

sell out the poor people or wildlife they are meant to protect.[2] People are used by the institutions they work for in the way that factory workers become mere adjuncts to their machines.

The problem gets more complicated when we acknowledge that all of us have been influenced by the discourses of institutions. Nearly all of us have had more conversations with the television than with real people. In the case of the television, it is obvious that the conversation is one-way, but this is always the case when we enter into dialogue with an institution. A politician might smile and nod when we express our complaints but we'd really do just as well to paint a smiley face on the radio as sit down and talk with a politician. When we talk with an institution, we're not actually talking with real people, as much as their use of human representatives provides that illusion. Only when we adopt the logic of power is there any chance of dialogue, but at that point we have abandoned the struggle and been absorbed by the institution, whether we are making deals with politicians, writing checks to ngos, breaking up our protests into sound bites, or allowing the police to help us plan our march route.

Because our thinking has been so heavily conditioned by authority, but also because freedom is an ever-present possibility and even those who work for powerful institutions can mutiny, it is impossible to draw a clear line between who is acting as a real person and who is acting on behalf of a machine with a human face. Many of us do the State's work without ever getting paid, while a cop is never really off the clock, and a politician never stops campaigning. For starters, it is much safer to trust the powerless: the rank and file members of a union, or the members of a party who have never run for office. Anyone who has ever held a job or gone to school

[2] For a clear view of the complicity of environmental non-profits with the industries destroying the environment they are supposedly trying to protect, see Franklin Lopez's 2011 documentary, *END: CIV—Resist or Die.*

solidarity. We should not even have to mention snitching, although giving information to the cops is sadly seen as acceptable by many people who talk about changing the world or challenging the system. We probably cannot change the mind of anyone who is such a bootlicker as to think snitching is okay, but among the rest of us we need to make it a common practice to ostracize snitches and anyone who justifies snitching.

The common pacifist practice of forcibly removing the masks from those who attempt to protect their identity is a form of snitching: it is giving the identity of a fellow protester to the police and exposing them to prison time, especially now that the simple act of masking up, of trying to protect yourself from government surveillance, has been made illegal in most countries where surveillance at protests is common. Because exposing someone to prison time is much more violent than a punch in the face (which is usually all better after a couple hours or days, whereas prison can scar one for life), the despicable practice of unmasking fellow demonstrators should be repaid in kind.

The next big issue is the cameras. Everyone needs to realize that they are endangering fellow protesters by filming everything. We should also spread the criticism that if everyone has a camera, they are nothing but a passive spectator, and they are turning their own protest into a sheer spectacle. A camera in the hands is one less rock, one less sign, one less flag, one less can of spraypaint, or one less stack of flyers, and really, one less protester in any active sense of the word. While the question of spectacularization is important, the question of security is basic. Filming at a protest exposes anyone who chooses confrontational methods to arrest and imprisonment. That's a major lack of mutual respect and solidarity. But filming and taking pictures endangers everyone else as well. The police aren't there just to arrest lawbreakers. They are there to help make sure our movements fail. They surveil and keep files on everyone who they think might be a threat to authority.

great places to hide. Smoothing all the wrinkles out of urban and rural space, making it more gridlike or transparent, has always been a major feature of statist urbanization. Modern cities are designed to prevent the formation of crowds. When they do form at protests, nonviolence is necessary to get those crowds to be hostile spaces for lawbreakers. If we let this happen, we will betray the history of struggle by oppressed and marginalized peoples, and take the side of their oppressors, the self-proclaimed enforcers of law and order.

It is far worse, and a far greater breach of solidarity, to deny shelter to a fellow protester, because that is collaborating with the police and helping them make an arrest, but such collaboration has become a commonplace. Protest organizers frequently set up "security cordons" and peace police whose specific function is to prevent the bad protesters from entering the crowd, even when the cops are hot on their heels. It is one thing to try to stop someone from throwing rocks from within a crowd—authoritarian in some situations, reasonable in others—but it is something else entirely to deny protection to someone who is running from the cops.

What we need are crowds that support combative protesters. If we uncritically accept people's preferences now, putting acceptable tactics to a one-time vote, the struggle will never advance, because most people who are only beginning to participate in social movements do not accept those tactics that the government and media have most heavily criminalized. And they cannot change their preferences or make up their own minds until after they have had contact with those tactics and have seen what they look like and feel like in practice. And this can only happen if others use those tactics despite majority disapproval.

Nonviolent breaches of respect and solidarity

On the other side of the line, there are a great many things that peaceful protesters do that are an absolute breach of respect and

has received as much indoctrination and as little reward as they have.

Beyond that, recognizing that there are no clear lines, we can create a much healthier atmosphere for struggle simply by expressing rejection of those institutions and regarding them with suspicion and hostility. Debates around charity, self-defense, media, spectacular protests, representation, decision-making, and what kind of world we want, all need to happen. They would be much more coherent and useful to our struggles if they could happen in a space where institutional logics do not have the upper hand, and where we could begin to identify and articulate our own desires and beliefs independently of institutional interests and discourses.

These debates will affect us, and our practices will change with experience. Some of us will move closer together, others farther apart. None of us are headed for a stable destination. What brings us together is not a shared goal or philosophy but that in one way or another, we share a connection with the social conflicts that bring us out into the streets in the first place.

Our place in a social conflict

The more we can expand the space of mutual respect and solidarity, the greater our collective strength and potential for an intelligent complementarity. In this light, there are at least three circles of struggle, each one greater than and including the next. First is the chaotic, uncontrollable circle of all those who take part in some way in a social conflict, too numerous to ever know them all, too diverse to ever participate in the same conversation. Second is the circle of those who recognize one another, and who have created a field of mutual respect, agreed on the principle of solidarity, in order to create the minimum possibility, though not the necessity, of working together (this second circle is sometimes called a "move-

ment" though the two terms do not always overlap). And third is the circle of friends and comrades who influence one another daily, who share, if not the same ideas, at least the terms of debate, and who have created the possibility of organizing projects together or collectively determining their practices of struggle.

Only in this third circle does an individual have the possibility to directly influence the methods used by others. At the level of an entire movement, or beyond that, at the immense level of an entire social conflict, we have no direct way to influence how others struggle. We have only the anti-authoritarian method, which is to articulate one's own method and hope that others are inspired, trusting them to take their own lessons and grow independently; or we have the authoritarian method, which is to rely on the institutions of power such as the media or the police to discipline those we disagree with, or to create an institution such as a political party that is capable of taking over and controlling an entire movement, and disappearing the existence of the social conflict outside of that movement. Solidarity or even simple respect are only possible if we commit ourselves to the former method. This means surrendering the ambition to control an entire movement, as though we were playing chess and had all the pieces in our hand.

But lacking control and accepting the independence of all the other players, how do we relate to the larger whole? How do we employ a diversity of methods to increase our force and effectiveness, given the great distances involved?

A full answer would depend on why any particular person is struggling. But we can explore a few difficult areas and find the materials that might allow the current diversity of tactics framework to expand into a true, complementary diversity of methods.

smashed. By opening your mouth and criticizing the existing order, you risk arrest. And what's more, we don't determine how the police act by being good protesters or bad protesters. The police do what they choose to do, and sometimes that means arresting people. Before a protest starts, the police have already decided their strategy of repression. At the protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Miami in 2003, the police strategy was to terrorize protesters starting weeks in advance, and this included arbitrary arrests and torture. At several protests in Washington, DC and New York City, police have chosen a strategy of mass preemptive arrests. In San Francisco, the police have sometimes opted for a heavy use of less lethal weaponry and projectiles, and other times they have opted for deescalation. In the UK for several years, the most common police strategy was aggressive surveillance and community policing to dissuade law-breaking.

Police may change their strategy mid-game if the first strategy does not work to maintain order, but we can never control whether police decide to arrest and beat people or not, and claims to the contrary are dishonest. Blaming repression on those who take action is nothing more than another way to justify repression and to naturalize the police's dirty work.

As for the complaint of rioters who take shelter in the crowd, we should put things in perspective. Ideally, those who riot and those who want to do a peaceful march or sit-down should have enough distance between one another so they don't clash, and I don't know of any case where the proponents of nonviolence agreed to a diversity of tactics framework and then the confrontational protesters brought the riot into what was supposed to be the peaceful zone. But when things get complicated and you're running from the cops, sometimes you have to take shelter in a crowd. Really, that's what crowds are for. People who have been on the other side of the law for centuries have recognized that. That's why until very recently, working-class neighborhoods and rural areas were such

throwing hard objects when police and protesters are intermixed. Of course, in a close confrontation with police, it makes the most sense for people farther back to do the throwing while the people in front hold the line or try to push the cops back. But before those who want to throw things pick up a rock, a bottle, or a paint bomb, they should be sure that they can make their mark without hitting anyone in the first row.

Other complaints arise when combative protesters use a crowd as a form of shelter for starting a riot, or create a conflictive situation in a place where people cannot easily get away, or around small children and others who are more vulnerable to police brutality. However, this concern is a complicated one. There have been occasions where confrontational protesters have opportunistically utilized others with no concern for their wants or well-being, simply because they needed a passive crowd for the realization of their tactic, and this is a breach of solidarity. But just as often, if not more so, there have been cases where protesters have stuck around when rioting started, delighted by the sound of smashing glass and basking in the glow of the fires, but later, after they were arrested, blamed the rioters for endangering them. Although it does happen, it is relatively rare that a riot comes out of nowhere, with no indication that it is about to start and no gradual build-up (especially when so many who riot come prepared, masked up and chanting angrily).

Some pacifiers of struggle go beyond the problem of physically endangering other protesters and denounce those who expose other protesters to the danger of arrest. While it is possible for one person to do something that directly and immediately causes another to be arrested, in general this accusation is absurd. People who "can't risk arrest," as the rhetoric goes, should not go to protests. Police sometimes arrest an entire block of protesters, a thousand at a time, or they arrest people based on their appearance, or because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes there are arrests at protests where nothing was even

The decentralization of struggle

A first step is the recognition that there is no central space in any struggle, no assembly at which everyone in struggle can be present, and no meeting that can decide on the appropriate responses to an infinite range of situations. This point casts into doubt the very idea of democratically making decisions for social movements, so long as democracy implies centralization, as it historically has, and as it does in the usage of its main proponents.

For example, in the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, there was a set of nonviolence guidelines. But who agreed on these guidelines? In this case, it was the unions and dan, the Direct Action Network, a group of activists that carried out a large part of the advance preparation for the protests. Why can their decision be legitimately imposed on protesters who never participated in the discussion? Many people who were not a part of dan also prepared for the Seattle protests. Are they only allowed to make decisions if they are a formal organization? Are the only valid decisions the ones made in open meetings? What about the people who did not have the time to travel to Seattle or start participating in meetings a month in advance? Do they surrender decision-making authority because they have full-time jobs?

And if the decisions had been made by a majority of protesters (which wasn't the case), does that mean minorities are not allowed to take action independently? And if we are dealing with majorities, who is taking the census? What is the total population? If a small group starts organizing a protest—and actions are only ever started by minorities, majorities only ever appear after the fact—doesn't it matter that they will attract more like-minded people than people they disagree with? If most people don't come to the assembly because they have to be at work or they disagree with the call-out, which is the majority, the one that wins the vote, or the majority that never shows up to the assembly? Is it just a coincidence that the majority is nearly always decided by the small

group that shows up on the scene first? And as for the union, what does it mean that "the union decided" on nonviolence? Is a labor union a person? What does it mean that a large part of the union march defied orders, came downtown, and joined the Black Bloc in rioting? Are they no longer a part of the union, since "the union decided to be nonviolent"? If a person in a meeting agrees to nonviolence, and then in a moment when the police attack them decides to fight back, are they being anti-democratic? Which decision is the more valid one—that which they make in a formal meeting or that which they make in a real-life situation? If union representatives are elected, if the union president has executive powers, and an activist group uses consensus, what kind of decision is the agreement between a union and an activist group—representative, autocratic, or directly democratic?

All of these questions reveal that the democratic pretensions around decision-making are nothing but a farce. Democracy is a mechanism for making decisions that appear to be more legitimate, not for making better decisions nor for making decisions more fairly.

All forms of unitary decision-making, whether democratic or autocratic, are designed to force people to abide by decisions they disagree with. A monarchy does this by teaching people to respect the ruler more than they respect themselves. A democracy does this by teaching people to think of group decisions as their own decisions (after all, we're all The People, and The People have decided). Both democratic and autocratic governments have police forces and militaries for those who do not abide by the decisions they are supposed to accept. Directly democratic social movements do not have these repressive apparatuses, but they do have the moral power of exclusion. Those who do not abide by the decisions (including the decisions they were never a part of) are portrayed as violent outsiders who are disrespecting, endangering, or even oppressing the legitimate protesters. As noted earlier, this is exactly what nonviolent activists with dan, such as the Solnits, did to

To preempt any absurd misinterpretations of the above argument, I want to make it clear that just because the Iraqis used roadside bombs does not mean that anyone who wanted to support them should do the same. Firstly, people who do not have the capacity to use highly illegal and dangerous tactics without all getting immediately arrested or killed should probably not use them. Secondly, we should never use tactics we ethically disagree with, such as those that might kill innocent bystanders. I have to interject, though, that a military invasion creates a new situation in which the death of non-combatants is inevitable. It might seem like a double standard, but I think there is a real and important difference between the mindset of someone who could decide to accept collateral damage in a moment of social peace—something that can be justified by a cold moral calculus but not by the emotional reality of the situation—and someone who accepts the risk of killing bystanders in a situation of open warfare. And within the difficult situation of open warfare, there is a world of difference between those who put bombs in a market place to create instability, and someone who targets the occupying soldiers with explosives, occasionally killing passersby as well.

Thirdly, the psychological and social terrain we act in, which is to say, what our actions communicate to others and how they will resonate or influence events, should always be given the utmost importance in formulating the most intelligent actions.

Not harming fellow protesters

Another way we might break the minimum of mutual respect and solidarity is by endangering others with our actions. The most obvious example is throwing things and hitting fellow protesters. It is embarrassing that this has even happened, and that it should be necessary to point out how easy it is to practice the fine art of throwing before going to a protest, or how one should avoid

putting the State's values of lawfulness and democracy above the values of direct action and anticapitalism at the very heart of the uprising.

Anti-war protests often attempt to build solidarity with far away people in the total absence of personal relationships. The type of actions that can be taken depend on local conditions and the type of actions that are being used in the struggle one is standing in solidarity with. For example, it would be a little bit odd, disrespectful even, to set a bank on fire in solidarity with the movement for a free Tibet, since that movement has been overwhelmingly pacifist. At the other extreme, it was entirely inappropriate for peace activists to denounce the sabotage of recruiting stations or attempt to enforce nonviolence guidelines during the anti-war movement in solidarity with Iraq, given that Iraqis themselves were not resisting nonviolently.

Of course, we choose to solidarize with elements of a struggle, and never with a whole struggle, so there is no reason why a group of pacifists in the US should not solidarize with a relatively tiny group of pacifists in Iraq, instead of with larger armed resistance groups, just as some anarchists tried to build solidarity with the few anti-authoritarian or anticapitalist militias that were active in the Iraqi resistance. And if we can find no element in a distant struggle we feel any affinity with, we can and should take action to stop the war (or the despoliation of their lands, or whatever the case may be). This ceases to be a matter of building a relationship of solidarity and becomes a simple question of attacking that which makes the war possible—public support, according to many proponents of nonviolence (incorrectly, as the record will show), or military recruiting and the infrastructure of arms production and delivery, according to others (a little less incorrectly, although it seems that in the last century a major power has only ever been convinced to end a war of occupation before its favorable conclusion due to effective armed resistance and troop rebellion, two closely related factors).

those who rioted in Seattle. They portrayed the Black Bloc as authoritarian outsiders overriding democratic process, just because the latter had made their own decisions, often by consensus, but in separate spaces; and they ignored the huge number of union workers who disobeyed their leaders and joined the riot or at least adopted a more confrontational stance, because their presence totally discredits the nonviolent narrative.

Organizing a protest vs. preparing it

Centralization, whether democratic or otherwise, is inimical to a free, horizontal, diverse struggle. A framework that recognizes a diversity of methods is meant to overcome both the authoritarianism of nonviolence and the tyranny of the political party or central decision-making structure. It is also meant to avoid confusing a discrete movement with an entire social conflict, and to move past the limited space of formal protests. In all of these aspects it surpasses the diversity of tactics framework. However, because large protests are the space in which we most often come together with those who use different methods, it is necessary to discuss certain ideas that are crucial for creating truly horizontal protests in which participants complement one another in a spirit of solidarity.

Nobody owns a protest. It often happens that one specific group makes the call-out and puts a lot of work into organizing the protest. But if we accept their narrative as the organizers of the protest, then it logically follows that everyone else is just so many sheep, numbers that are expected to come out and fulfill the organizers' preconceived notion of what the protest should look like. If they are not among the organizers, they have no agency in the protest.

The narrative we should be using is that of preparing the protest. The group that makes the call-out is taking on the tasks of inviting more people to participate and making their participation easier,

but not dictating what form that participation should take. Preparation involves spreading the word about the protest through posters, announcements on the internet and radio, word of mouth, graffiti, or whatever medium they feel is appropriate; publishing a call-out that explains why the protest is needed (which is not the reason for everyone else who comes to participate, only the reason why this group has decided to put their energies into preparing the protest); possibly arranging food and housing for protesters coming from out of town; arranging medical care and legal aid for injured and arrested protesters; spreading maps and local knowledge among those who are unfamiliar with the area, identifying possible targets of protest, identifying significant neighborhoods such as those that are undergoing gentrification, that are often targeted by police violence, that have a long history of struggle, those where the local elites live, the financial district, and so on. They can also prepare a march route, which other protesters are not forced to follow, but they might as well if they have not come up with a better plan.

By looking at these activities as simply the preparation for the protest, we deny any one clique the right to assert ownership over a protest as its "organizers." This is because everybody who goes to a protest has prepared in some way, perhaps minimally and perhaps thoroughly. Those who started preparing first are engaged in the same activity as everyone else; their plans and their decisions are not more important than those of other people. Some affinity groups pour a great deal of effort into preparing an action plan for a protest. Plans for illegal actions usually cannot be shared with large groups of people or in open meetings, but this does not make them less legitimate than other plans. Plans made by those who weren't present in authoring the initial call-out are not less legitimate just because they came late to the process.

Solidarity to a struggle in Turkey does not mean constructing an essential and homogenous Turkish position to support. It means correctly identifying yourself in relation to that struggle and taking on some commitment to the ideas that people there are fighting for. And ideas must be taken seriously. If some people, whether in the US or in Turkey, claim that folks in Istanbul are fighting for democracy and human rights, we should call their bluff rather than supporting a harmful romanticism. The people who started the uprising by occupying Taksim Square were lawbreakers and criminals who disrespected the due process that is the cornerstone of democracy. They did not attempt to elect new representatives or even to hold a popular referendum on the park. A small minority of radicals took direct action in contempt of the law and occupied it. Other people were inspired by this and joined in, but there is no human right on the books that guarantees the existence of a park in a specific location, that denies the prerogative of the State to build shopping malls atop parks, or that allows people to disobey police orders to disperse. No ratified articulation of human rights anywhere in the world prohibits the police from clearing out a shantytown or preventing people from sleeping in a park, and no democratic government in the world denies its police forces the right to use less lethal weaponry like tear gas against crowds that are building barricades in the streets.

Like it or not, radical minorities in Istanbul inspired people across the city, then across the country, and then across the world, specifically because they put their own beliefs above the law and above the due process of democratic government. Those who try to translate this into a struggle for human rights would probably be among the first to denounce us if we also masked up, built barricades, and fought to defend green spaces in our own neighborhoods. When such people take up the slogan, "Taksim Square is everywhere!," intentionally or not, they are speaking a lie. The fact that they have to hide the criminality of the Taksim occupiers with pretty words shows that they are already betraying the struggle by

of the Turkish flag as a symbol for the struggle, and chanted slogans critical of capitalism, the police, and all forms of government. It was shocking, though sadly unsurprising, how easily national identity was used to create insiders and outsiders with essentially legitimate or illegitimate ideas. Simply by being born Turkish, one protester could claim to represent a movement he had never participated in, whereas a person of another ethnic identity who has friends who helped make the occupation and resulting struggle a reality can be branded an illegitimate outsider when they are trying to promote the same discourse as their comrades in Istanbul.

Equally sad and unsurprising was how a white leftist present was able to claim the role of ally to the Turkish protesters in order to impose his own reformist politics. At one point he said that "all the Turkish people" at the protest agreed that the flag was a fitting symbol, that the movement was only about human rights and democracy, and therefore anarchists had no place there; in other words, discourses and ideas that are highly present and influential in the uprising in Turkey must be silenced at a solidarity protest in the US, out of respect for Turkish people. But in this case, as in many other cases, further conversation revealed a different reality: numerous Turkish people present did not agree with the use of the flag, and many of them took up the anticapitalist slogans that were shouted. Even if one did accept the unquestionable validity of the supposed consensus of Turkish people at a given protest, the logic is a dubious one. It puts Turkish people on the spot as the spokespersons for all the affairs of their nation, regardless of their actual knowledge, experience, class background, or a hundred other factors. The inevitable disagreements between one Turkish person and another must be silenced in order to project the image of an essentially Turkish position or belief. This operation can be performed by someone from that identity group or by an outsider claiming to be an ally, but the unified position they claim to neutrally support will always be a projection of their preconceived ideas.

Respecting those we protest with

If we accept that a protest does not belong to its organizers, we also need to be more thoughtful in how we interact with other protesters. The idea of organizing a protest, as it is usually carried out, uses an infantilizing logic: the other protesters need to be told how and where to protest, what they can do, and what they can't. As Bayard Rustin, one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s chief organizers, put it, "You start to organize a mass march by making an ugly assumption. You assume that everyone who is coming has the mentality of a three-year-old."[3]

Rejecting this logic requires a greater maturity on everyone's part, and that means not only making our own decisions on how to protest, but thinking about how those decisions affect others. There are a number of errors that people who use combative or dangerous tactics can commit that damage mutual respect or solidarity.

One of them is causing ruckus in a place you are unfa*miliar with. In a*ny protest situation that involves people coming from out of town, the locals should do their best to let the out-oftowners know the character of different neighborhoods, and the out-of-towners should look to the locals for cues on how to act and what the legitimate targets are. A financial district, however, is not a neighborhood, and it is filled with institutions and businesses that are causing problems in everyone's neighborhood. It is always fair game, because anyone and everyone has plenty of reason to attack it.

However, the accusation about outside troublemakers has more often been a lie spread by the media, police, and nonviolent activists than a real problem. Most major protests that have included riots in recent years, at least in North America, have been organized in part by local residents and have had a large amount of local participation. In the UK, the major student protests that re-

[3] E. Tani and Kae Sera, *False Nationalism, False Internationalism* Chicago: A Seeds Beneath the Snow Publication, 1985, p.106.

sulted in rioting in London may have involved mostly people from out of town, but they came and trashed the ruling party headquarters, among other buildings, specifically because the government that has extended its authority over the entire country and is making decisions that hurt students as far away as York is located in London. If someone does not want rowdy protests "in their town," they should not accept government institutions that are screwing people over in distant corners of the world "in their town." Traveling to another place to attack an institution that is harming you on your home turf is perfectly legit.

We should also examine the construct of the neighborhood, and who owns it. If a neighborhood association denounces a riot as the work of outside agitators or as a disgrace for the neighborhood, do we automatically believe them? Plenty of neighborhood associations are run by business owners or other members of the local elite. If only ten people participate in the neighborhood association, and twenty local youth along with a hundred outsiders participate in the riot, was it legitimate? I know of several cases of "local chapters" of massive national organizations like the naacp, that consist of only one or two people. If the police kill a black man in Oakland, and later several dozen of his friends and neighbors riot along with a hundred people from Berkeley and San Francisco, while his family, the naacp, and a hundred activists also from outside of Oakland denounce the riots, whose side do we take?[4] The naacp presents itself as the organization that represents all black people in the US. Are white people allowed to disagree with its politics without being racist? Where our actions intersect with dynamics of race and the differences between those most affected and those less affected, we have to be sensitive, humble, and open to criticism. But if our framework encourages us to play it safe, and makes it safer to avoid

[4] This was not exactly the case in the Oscar Grant riots, although the hypothetical situation obviously draws on that situation as well as a similar situation after the police murder of John T. Williams in Seattle.

being called racist by doing nothing than by taking action, then we have a serious problem.

A related problem is when an issue is closer to some people than to others. At a protest against austerity measures, everyone affected by austerity (which is practically the entire society) can be a protagonist. Because austerity does not affect everyone in the same way, no one should decide how others can participate. At a student protest, students as well as those who are excluded from being students by economic or other factors should be able to take the lead. But, for example, at an indigenous solidarity protest, people who are not indigenous should probably take their cues from those who are rather than imposing their own rhythm or methods. Any time people from a distinct struggle call on others for support, it is a matter of basic courtesy to listen to them about what kind of support they want and what it should look like. They in turn should treat those who support them with respect and solidarity rather than sheep or resources to exploit, otherwise the support is unlikely to last for long. And those who only ever take action as supporters or allies in other people's struggles should ask themselves what exactly they are doing in the streets, if the system treats them so well that they have no personal reasons to struggle. Sometimes, solidarity protests or actions are organized for those who are far away. During the uprising in Turkey in the spring of 2013, I participated in a solidarity demo that had been called for in a small town in the US. A number of Turkish immigrants were among those who convened the protest. A couple of them tried to enforce a unifying discourse, saying that the uprising in Turkey was about democracy and human rights. They also used the Turkish national flag as a symbol for that struggle. They attempted to guide the protest along a much more peaceful path than is the norm in that town, walking on the sidewalk rather than taking the street, for example. A number of anarchists participated. Some of them had friends and comrades from Istanbul who were involved in the Taksim Square occupation from early on. These anarchists gently criticized the use

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2013

Provided by the author, based on the first Left Bank Books edition, 2013.

murder of a social rebel affects all the rest of us, so all of us have a stake in the response.

This latter case shows that tradition in a libertarian sense is not a definite guide, since we do not accept coercive or inflexible traditions in our struggle for freedom. The desires of a heterogeneous group will often conflict when it is time to decide how to respond. But the conflict is much more likely to be enriching rather than exhausting for people who are trying to adapt traditions of struggle rather than trample them, whether by pacifying May Day or by smashing a bank during a candlelight vigil.

From affinity to complementarity

Once we accept that a struggle has different moods, we can create spaces for distinct forms of struggle by restoring and further elaborating these traditions of resistance. This won't work if confrontational people never go to vigils and peaceful people never go to noise demos or May Day celebrations. Some of the divisions that separate us make plenty of sense. There will always be others in a struggle whose politics we find despicable, and often with good reason. But it speaks volumes about our own weaknesses if the only people we respect are those we share perfect affinity with. We can create new possibilities for struggle if we can find friends on the other side of the typical lines (like violent/nonviolent) whose vision we at least partially respect. Such connections allow us to build a more robust whole, a collective animal with its moments of contemplation, of creation, and of destruction. As I wrote earlier, the destructive tactics in our repertoire give all the other activities vital to the struggle added meaning. They make it clear that we are not trying to build a simple alternative, to live a peaceful life with our organic garden and co-op while the world goes to hell in a handbasket. They show we understand that capitalism is capable of recuperating all alternatives and we need to destroy it before it de-

stroys us. They show that we will not make any compromises with the existing system because it is antithetical to our happiness and our survival and we mean to do away with it for good. A childcare collective, a graffiti mural, a concert, a community garden, a carpentry workshop—all of these projects take on a whole new meaning if they do not distance themselves from the conflictive parts of the struggle, as the media and police will constantly pressure them to do, but rather embrace those other activities. They can do this aesthetically—artists can paint murals of prisoners and people who have died in the struggle, the workshop and social center can hang up posters of riots—and also materially—all of these projects can constitute a self-sustaining community, an infrastructure of mutual support that allows people to survive and support themselves while they also fight against the system.

Standing together against repression

Because the State does the most to criminalize combative tactics, because democracy has successfully stolen from us the history of our rebellions and a knowledge of the methods used, a priority of our struggle must be regaining the skills of attack. Once upon a time, the oppressed and exploited knew how to monkeywrench the infrastructure of power. They could take any machine required by the State or by the bosses, and make it stop working. Sabotage is a fine art, and an essential element of our history and culture that we have lost. We need to get it back.

But in the US in particular, the government has successfully criminalized most forms of sabotage to an extreme degree. Even classic actions like arson or aggressive boycotts are now punished as terrorism. One anarchist, Marie Mason, is serving 22 years for arson against a genetic engineering laboratory and logging equipment. Several animal rights activists were sent to prison for up to six years for "Animal Enterprise Terrorism," running a website that

encouraged an aggressive boycott against a particularly egregious animal testing company.

This use of anti-terrorism policy is especially absurd given that bigger companies regularly drive smaller companies out of business, with the full protection of the law, as a regular part of their expansion, and property owners and slumlords regularly set their own buildings on fire for the insurance money. In fact, one of the few reasons many cities still need fire departments is to subsidize and protect the public from this form of elite insurance fraud, since so few modern buildings catch fire by accident.

Terrorism is what states do to those who oppose them, and terrorism is a discursive strategy used by states to vilify and repress certain forms of resistance. In both senses, terrorism is a tool of states. In a few cases, terrorism has been a strategy of the underdog to terrify the bourgeoisie and raise the cost of repression (in the case of anarchist terrorism a hundred years ago) or to punish ruling states and raise the cost of neocolonial occupation (in modern day cases). But this latter sense has little connection to anticapitalist movements today. In our experience, terrorism is a bogeyman that has been conjured up to repress us.

If we dare to challenge authority, we need to resist anti-terrorism politics and any other attempt to create new laws or police powers that make repression easier. They are political maneuvers that governments use to change the terrain to their favor. On numerous occasions, when people have gotten angry about the expansion of police powers, governments have withdrawn the proposed measures to avoid sparking a more fierce resistance.

It is to be expected that those whose method of struggle does not include a substantial risk of arrest and imprisonment will not focus as much energy on the support of prisoners. But all of us must react to the expansion of police powers and the introduction of new measures of repression. Even though they are always presented as responses to the lawbreakers and the violent ones, every repressive measure is an attack on the struggle as a whole.

The use of anti-terrorism laws is a perfect illustration. First the government won a broad social consensus for creating and using such laws against al-Qaeda. Then they began using those laws against radical environmentalists and anarchists for simple—albeit potent—acts of property destruction. Arson had become a terrorist offense. Then the government started using anti-terrorism laws in a number of highly visible cases of entrapment against anarchists involved in large social movements like Occupy. And it will not stop there. On May 15, 2013, as the last touches were being put on this book, police in Spain, a pioneer in the political use of antiterrorism, arrested five anarchists for incendiary comments made on Facebook. Around the same time in the US, an 18-year-old aspiring rapper was arrested for a Facebook comment mentioning the recent Boston marathon bombing.

The problem with the anti-terrorism laws is not when they start being used against supposedly legitimate political activists. The problem starts the very moment the government attempts to increase its powers. We may abhor the actions of those who set off bombs in crowds, but it makes no sense that this abhorrence lead us to seek protection from government. The State is not our friend and it does not exist to protect us. It is the fox guarding the henhouse, and we are the hens. If al-Qaeda deserves condemnation for purposefully killing innocent people, the State deserves it a million times over. During interrogation the FBI executed Ibragim Todashev, a friend of one of the Boston marathon bombers, and they hardly have to give explanations. Any day of the week the police and the military kill people in this country and in other countries, but unlike the combatants of al-Qaeda, they do it from a position of strength and cowardice rather than from a position of weakness and absolute risk.

Governments always justify new repressive powers by telling us they will be used against terrorists, rapists, child molesters, or drug dealers. And they always go on to use those powers against all of us. We need to find our own forms of self-defense against

religious fundamentalists and against those who might do harm in our communities. Taking a consistent stand against repression is a part of this self-defense.

Repression has another effect on those who may not believe they are directly targeted. The more constricted our range of possibilities for resistance, the weaker our struggle and the less meaningful our choices. Some peaceful activists believe that it is more courageous to turn the other cheek, or to take to the streets without wearing a mask. But if masking up is criminalized and any kind of fighting back is heavily punished—if turning the cheek is the only thing anyone is allowed to do—then everyone is affected, not only the combative ones, because not wearing a mask or turning the other cheek is no longer a conscientious choice. All the cowards, in the end, will go unmasked and turn the other cheek because Big Brother gives them no other option.

How the peaceful can benefit from violence

We are not dealing with two equal options. Although there is a role for peaceful people and methods, they also need to undergo a transformation to overcome their pacification. Many of those who have embraced nonviolence up until now may find that they did so through weakness and not through a deep seated commitment to peacefulness.

Combining and juxtaposing different methods of struggle is necessary for that learning process. Pacified people can overcome their fear of fighting back. And if those who are truly committed to peacefulness are correct that some of us fetishize violence, then they will inspire us with their example. If they fail to inspire, perhaps they will check their assumptions. In any case, such an outcome is only possible if they are not collaborating with the cops and media or using other underhanded methods to silence, exclude, or repress us.

Even those who believe they do not like violence benefit from the more dynamic space that is created when a diversity of tactics is at play. Leaving aside the cynical ngos that flock to protests where there will obviously be riots so they can subsequently monopolize the media attention that follows—since they are incapable of doing anything interesting enough to generate attention on their own—there is the feeling of triumph, the disruption of the stifling status quo that occurs when people fight back.

The two minoritarian general strikes that have occurred in Barcelona in the last few years illustrate this benefit. On January 27, 2011, and then on October 31, 2012, the small, anticapitalist and anarchist labor unions held general strikes without the backing of the major unions. This created an environment in which fewer people walked off the job and took to the streets, but those who did had more radical aims. In the first strike, the anarchosyndicalist and other unions did not try to dissuade combative activities, and in addition to work stoppages and major marches, there were also blockades of burning tires, acts of sabotage, and attacks on banks. And the mood in the streets was one of strength and celebration that carried over into other actions as part of an accelerating rhythm of revolt over the next months. On October 31, however, the unions attempted to pacify the strike. As a result, the more combative anticapitalists generally did not participate, and the day was entirely peaceful. It was also a total flop, even from the perspective of the unions and the peaceful protesters. It had less participation, went almost unnoticed, and had a demoralizing effect for upcoming days of action.

The clear truth is, a diversity of methods worked better for everyone involved.

Separate spaces

Although resisting repression, along with organizing strikes, taking over the streets, holding protests, and sustaining ourselves in struggle one day after the next, all work better when we do them collectively with multiple forms of participation, that ideal is a long way off. Many people still do not accept combative methods of struggle, or they only value their own contributions, while superficial, candy-coated visions of revolution currently predominate.

In the meantime, it can be best to take space and work separately. After all, letting in the pacifists often leads to the pacification of a struggle. In the '90s, the Chilean state wanted to build a hydroelectric dam in Alto Bio Bio, a river region in Wallmapu, the Mapuche territories. The indigenous inhabitants began resisting the dam in their traditional way, building connections between communities and using direct action and sabotage, "hitting capitalism where it hurts."[7] In the interests of working together with other groups, the Mapuche invited Chilean environmentalists to resist the dam with them. But the environmentalists brought their NGO tendencies, their nonviolence, and a colonialist Chilean attitude that they knew better than the indigenous people who had lived there for millennia. They also brought their superior resources, their money, and their media savvy, allowing them to take over the movement and discourage traditional practices of resistance. They generated huge amounts of media attention, got support from rock stars, and turned two local women into celebrities and symbols of the struggle, taking them on speaking events throughout South America and Europe. They accomplished nearly everything, except stopping the dam. A part of their method also involved discouraging any illegal direct action, and taking the focus off of the prisoners of the struggle. Though the Mapuche had

[7] These are the words of a participant in that struggle.

defeated major development projects before, this time they had their hands tied thanks to their nonviolent allies. The dam was built, a major river valley was flooded, and land and communities were lost forever.

Working separately might be necessary, but keeping the lines of communication open makes it possible to work together in the future, should we ever overcome the limitations that make it impractical in the present. But not working together is not necessarily a bad thing. Our practices should not be constantly subjected to consensus and compromise. The development of peaceful action cannot be dependent on the participation of those who want to attack and destroy structures of domination. Likewise, combative and illegal anarchists can't wait for others to catch up before they develop certain practices of sabotage. Unity is a trojan horse for centralization and domination. The advantages of working together in broader coalitions only become real if each of us has an autonomous niche, a method of struggle that answers to our unique needs. The only free form of organization is the coordination between free individuals and groups. If we cannot develop our own practice with those closest to us, we will never develop a suitable practice among all of us.

Sometimes, there are irreconcilable differences between different people in struggle. For example, it is hard to find common ground between people who believe in revolution as an antagonistic, conflictive process in which certain structures or social classes must be overthrown, and others who believe revolution must occur as a gradual, progressive evolution, and others who believe it must be a millennial act of peacemaking and reconciliation. In the face of such unbridgeable gaps, if it is not possible for the different sides to simply ignore each other, it is necessary to establish some basic minimums. The peaceful ones should never aid the police in arresting or surveilling the combative ones, the combative ones should make sure never to do anything that physically harms the peaceful ones, and none of them should prevent the actions of the others.

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We have a long way to go, but revolution is not a short-term proposal. It is something we dedicate our lives to, both because we commit to living differently, and because we commit ourselves to a struggle that will unfold over generations.

Nonviolence as an exclusive methodology that imposes itself across the entire social terrain is an obstacle to revolution and a tool in the hands of the State. But there are innumerable activities that make up the struggle, and countless strategies for formulating and coordinating these activities. There really is a place for everyone. But not every practice is valid. Any practice that attempts to impose homogeneity in the name of unity violates the sense of solidarity and mutual respect necessary for diverse currents of struggle to coexist. There are many other pitfalls that can inhibit the growth of the connections between us. But we will learn through experience. In many places our struggles have grown stronger and

wiser in the last few years. If we continue our debates, learn from our mistakes and our differences, and dare to take action, we may well weather the difficulties of the years to come.

Appendix A: Comments on *How Nonviolence Protects the State*

This book is in some ways a continuation of *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, written in 2004, published in 2005, then expanded in 2006 and republished the following year. As the debate around nonviolence flared up again in the English-speaking world due to the anti-police riots and Occupy movement in the US and the student movement and Tottenham riots in the UK, I thought about updating and republishing it for the occasion.

How *Nonviolence Protects the State* is fairly straightforward. It begins by disputing nonviolent histories and claims of victory in the Civil Rights movement, the independence movement in India, the anti-war movement during the US occupation of Vietnam, and the anti-nuclear movement. In all these cases, the pattern is clear: proponents of nonviolence whitewash a heterogeneous, often combative movement to portray it as nonviolent; and they portray a partial victory or an important but limited accomplishment as an ultimate victory, speaking in unison with the State to declare a happy ending to a movement that was in fact still in struggle (and of course hiding the important role of the non-pacifist elements in achieving whatever gains were won).

The next chapter looks at the utility of nonviolence for colonialism and for suppressing and co-opting liberation movements, as well as at the paternalism and racism of white progressives in using nonviolence to control the movements of people of color. The

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chapter "Nonviolence is Statist" looks at the authoritarianism of nonviolent practice as well as how nonviolence has played into state needs for pacifying and recuperating social struggles, and how, accordingly, government and media encourage nonviolence. "Nonviolence is Patriarchal" explores the imperative for a patriarchal society to pacify the oppressed, and shares stories of rebellion by trans people, queers, and women, in an attempt to counteract the silencing of that history.

The fifth chapter explores the major strategy types that nonviolence proposes for changing the world, and attempts to show how all of them lead to dead ends, as multiple historical examples demonstrate. The penultimate chapter unravels the contradictions, manipulations, and inaccuracies of the most common arguments in favor of nonviolence, clichés like "violence only begets more violence," which contradict the historical record. And the final chapter makes some suggestions for forms of struggle that use a diversity of tactics.

In the end, I decided it would be better to write a new book rather than try to revise the earlier one. *How Nonviolence Protects the State* was written in the context of a foundering antiglobalization movement with a growing anarchist presence, and substantial participation by a more classical sort of pacifist. This was before the appearance of the *Twitter* pacifists, before Gene Sharp had so many victories to his name, and before the current shape of nonviolence had resolved, losing any semblance to what it was in the days of plowshares and civil disobedience. I also used an analytical framework and a terminology that I no longer agree with. Ultimately the book is an artifact of its times.

I want to take advantage of the occasion of this new book to address some criticisms to the old book.

First, the external criticisms. A few reviewers were only interested in smearing the book. There were those who employed the old caricature of bomb-throwing anarchists. One reviewer claimed the book advocates terrorism, citing a passage where I

argue that an al-Qaeda bombing in Madrid did more to end Spain's involvement in the invasion of Iraq than a million people peacefully protesting, and leaving out the part where I explicitly state that such bombings do not constitute a model for revolutionary action because the calloused condemnation of innocent people is fundamentally authoritarian.

One reviewer, writing in *Left Turn*, objected that I did not define "revolution" the way Che would have, and then went on to make a number of false claims about what I said in the book.[1]

Moving on to the more serious criticisms, some objected to the tone of the book, which is often harsh in its treatment of nonviolent activists. The question of tone is an important one. On the one hand, I find it essential to avoid an academic politeness in these debates, as though we were talking about abstract concepts and not matters of life and death. I think that in the face of hypocrisy, manipulation, lies, collaboration with the authorities, and cowardice dressed up as sophistication, outrage is not only permissible, it is necessary. It is noteworthy that those who objected to the tone generally did not try to show that I was wrong in my claims of hypocrisy and collaboration by pacifists, as though they should be allowed to pull any kind of stunt but the rest of us can't get angry about it. Some of them, I think, wanted to piss in the stream and drink from it too.

[1] The reviewer, Dan Horowitz de Garcia, a member of the "cadre organization" Bring the Ruckus, falsely claims that I do not explain why I lump together pacifism and nonviolence, that I do not distinguish between a way of life and a method, that I wrote that the Civil Rights movement did not win anything, that I portrayed that movement as homogeneous, that I only made one reference to the Black Panther Party, in addition to other choice bits of misinformation. He completely skews the entire chapter on patriarchy on the basis of a single willfully misinterpreted sentence while failing to mention the contents of the rest of the chapter, makes the curious distinction that a social phenomenon should not be called a movement if it does not win, and twists other arguments I make. My response (May 2008) and the original review (November 2007) are both available here: http://www.leftturn.org/ author-response-review-how-nonviolence-protects-state

effective means of protest. Eventually whites began to understand the tactic, and nonviolence became less powerful. Whites began to realize SNCC's peaceful responses to violent oppression were key to gaining support for their cause.

If there was no more public violence for SNCC to rise above, SNCC's message would be weakened. Thus, protesters were no longer beaten publicly. Instead they were attacked and beaten behind closed doors where newspaper reporters and television cameras could not reach. As Southern whites intended, discrete violent oppression began to destroy the image of martyr that SNCC had carefully constructed through nonviolent protest. During this time, SNCC stopped sponsoring regular seminars on nonviolence and continued them only infrequently until 1964.

Soon after, the Harlem Riots took place. It was the first urban race riot, and brought the topic of black-initiated violence into public debate. Such actions were no longer assumed to be counter productive. This event, and eventually the rise of black power, led to the fall of nonviolence in SNCC.[1]

[1] Taken from http://www.ibiblio.org/SNCC/nonviolence.html.

who claim it as a successful example. The SNCC gradually gave up on nonviolence; their nonviolent strategy relied on the ruling class media and on obtaining support from members of the power structure; and the white power structure quickly learned how to avoid using the visible acts of repression and moral contest that the nonviolent strategy relied on. This historical lesson was produced over 50 years ago. Advocates of nonviolence avoid the lesson by erasing the history. What follows is an excerpt from a movement history of the experiences of the SNCC:

SNCC's original statement of purpose established nonviolence as the driving philosophy behind the organization. However, things were never that simple. In the early days, during the period of the sit-in movement, nonviolent action was strictly enforced, particularly for public demonstrations, as it was key to the movement's success.

To rally support from whites and blacks outside the movement, the sit-ins needed to create a distinct impression of moral superiority. One of the best ways to do this was to meet the harsh violence of the white man with pacifism. Some members expanded this philosophy to their daily lives, believing that just carrying a gun for self-defense was hostile.

The philosophy of nonviolence hit shakier ground when SNCC began its period of community organization in the South, having to face continual threats of perhaps deadly violence from whites. On many occasions SNCC offices were sprayed with bullets or torched by local white men. In 1963 Bob Moses and Jimmy Travis, SNCC workers trying to encourage black voters to register, were shot at while driving near Greenwood, Mississippi. Travis was hit and nearly died.

A majority of SNCC workers were beaten and thrown in prison at least once during their work with the organization. As a result, once strict guidelines of nonviolence were relaxed and members were unofficially permitted to carry guns for self defense. However, the principle was still adhered to publicly, as it remained an

On the other hand, solidarity requires a certain amount of respect. Wherever the harshness of my criticism was unfair, and constituted a lack of respect for people who are genuinely dedicated to a struggle for a better world, I was in the wrong. Hopefully, those who felt disrespected can sympathize with the reasons why many of us are angry about this topic, and we can develop a more solidaristic communication on both sides.

A review on *The New Compass* faults my book for an "anarchist bias [that] is so overwhelming throughout the entire work that the critique becomes limited in its ability to restart an important debate by seeming to be at times little more than an anarchist intercommunal polemic."[2] This is another flaw I have tried to improve in the current book. The term "bias" deserves none of its negative connotations, as all writing reflects the perspective of the one who writes. I am an anarchist and I write about struggle not as someone who pretends to be an objective observer but as a participant. My experiences and reflections come from an anarchist viewpoint, which might be shocking or jarring for those who usually only read works with a progressive or capitalist bias. While I do not want to hide where I am coming from, I also want to communicate with people who do not share my beliefs, and I know how annoying it can be to read a tract that is steeped in navel-gazing and in-group references. Hopefully, I have struck a better balance with the current book.

Milan Rai, editor of *Peace News*, published a critique of the book and a book presentation I gave.[3] His review is thoughtful but less than straightforward. Mentioning a comment he made in the debate after my presentation, he says:

[2] Michael Speitel, "Review: How Nonviolence Protects the State," http://new-compass. net/news/review-how-nonviolence-protects-state (February 4, 2011).

[3] Milan Rai, "Strategy for Bombers—a talk by Peter Gelderloos," http://www.zcommunications.org/strategy-for-bombers-a-talk-by-peter-gelderloos-by-milan-rai (February 2, 2008).

> When I spoke up, I started by saying that as editor of *Peace News* [dedicated to nonviolent revolution] I was obviously 'deluded', 'implicitly statist in my thinking', and a little too privileged as a person of colour to have a valid opinion on the questions of violence and nonviolence.

I find it a little underhanded that he does not mention my response: that in my book I explicitly state that I am directing these criticisms at nonviolence as a whole and not to every proponent and practitioner (in fact I go out of my way to mention some practitioners for whom I have only respect and to whom the criticisms I make do not apply); and that the criticisms I make of racism are explicitly directed at specific white people who use nonviolence in a paternalistic way.

Rai asserts that "If you're going to compare strategies, then you've got to make sure they've got the same aims (otherwise you can't compare them)." If this were true, any strategic comparison between nonviolent and other revolutionaries would be impossible, as they clearly see the world in different ways and as a function of this, want different things. Rai talks about strategy as a path to a set destination, a view I increasingly disagree with. The point of comparison I use is the idea of revolution itself. In the antiglobalization movement at the time, and in other social conflicts today, one can find a great many people who believe in revolution, although they understand that in many different ways. As I have clarified in this book, everyone actually wants different things, even if they sometimes use the same terminology. I was not able to make this distinction clear enough in the first book to avoid misunderstanding, but I did point out that many people on opposite sides of the debate had the similar aim of revolution. This allows for a comparison precisely because they have different ideas of what revolution means. Those ideas reflect in their strategy and vice versa. When they fail or encounter difficulties using one strategy, the experience

2. We will not carry weapons of any kind.
3. We will not vandalize or destroy property.
4. We will not use or carry alcohol or illegal drugs.
5. We will not run or make threatening motions.
6. We will not insult, swear or attack others.
7. We will protect those who oppose or disagree with us from insult or attack.
8. We will not assault, verbally or physically, those who oppose or disagree with us, even if they assault us.
9. Our attitude, as conveyed through our words, symbols and actions, will be one of openness, friendliness, and respect toward all people we encounter including police officers, military personnel, members of the community at large, and all marchers.
10. As members of a nonviolent action, we will follow the directions of the designated coordinators.
11. If an individual has a serious disagreement with the organizers of the action, the individual will withdraw from the action.

Notes from a History on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

Starting in 1960, the SNCC was one of the most important organizations in the US Civil Rights Movement, responsible for some of the most emblematic lunch counter sit-ins and other actions. Reinforcing some of the major criticisms that have been repeatedly made of nonviolence, the actual history of this organization is rarely cited by those

and political disagreements. For the purposes of political clarity, and mutual respect, we will speak to our own political motivations and tactical choices and allow other groups and individuals to speak on their own behalf. We reject all forms of violence-baiting, red-baiting and fear-mongering; and efforts to foster unnecessary divisions among our movements;

3. As we plan our actions and tactics, we will take care to maintain appropriate separations of time and space between divergent tactics. We will commit to respecting each other's organizing space and the tone and tactics they wish to utilize in that space. We will commit to clearly communicating our choices of tactics wherever possible;

4. We oppose any state repression of dissent, including surveillance, infiltration, disruption and violence. We agree not to assist law enforcement actions against activists and others. We oppose proposals designed to cage protests into high-restricted "free speech" zones, and we will support all those arrested; and

4. We will work to promote a sense of respect for our shared community, our neighbours and particularly poor, working people, immigrants and others marginalized in our society and their personal property. We also will work to promote a sense of respect for Indigenous peoples and the land we are organizing on.

An injury to one is an injury to all!

Nonviolence Guidelines from Veterans for Peace

1. We will use our anger at injustice as a positive, nonviolent force for change.

can change their aims and their understanding of what revolution is. We are not dealing with fixed, separate destinations but floating practices that change in relation to one another. For this reason it is better to use a flexible, floating concept of similarity of desires rather than the fixed, analytically simpler concept of same aims.

Even though the bulk of the book was a comparison of the effectiveness of different strategies with similar aims (for example, within antiglobalization protests, within the Civil Rights movement, within the movement to end the war in Vietnam, within the contemporary anti-war movement, and many other examples), Rai claims that the only comparison I made was one between the iww and Italian immigrant anarchists in the 1910s and 1920s. The claim is unfounded, but it is convenient from Rai's point of view because he ignores direct comparisons that serve as severe indictments of nonviolent claims, like the failure of MLK's Albany campaign contrasted with the success of the Birmingham campaign after riots broke out. Rai can not answer for this failure of nonviolence, so he ignores it.

He makes another problematic argument when discussing the single comparison he deigns to recognize.

> What Gelderloos' discussion does not capture, is whether the use of lethal force by the Italian groups increased the repression of the 'Red Scare' era **beyond what it might otherwise have been**. My guess (without a historical investigation) is that the common sense of Western social movements is that the violence **did** increase the repression, and bombings would be likely to escalate repression today.

As I point out in *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, repression always increases when a movement becomes larger, stronger, or more effective, a lesson that is also present in the historical episodes of nonviolence. And as the cited example shows, the

IWW's decision to renounce sabotage and violent confrontation did not decrease government repression. On the contrary the government took advantage of the iww's weakened state to *increase* repression.

Recent history provides us with a clearer example. Taking the countries in the European Common Market—an entity with broad socioeconomic similarities between the units, but separate governments for each—most people would agree that in the last two decades, the countries with the strongest radical movements using combative tactics might include Greece, Spain, and France. Nobody could seriously propose Netherlands and the United Kingdom, countries that have experienced something of a lull in antagonistic struggles, and that have a high proportion of pacifists.

If we make our second variable the increase in repressive measures and the implementation of more sophisticated and effective techniques of social control, the results run in the other direction. Greece and Spain, though both have seen a disturbing advancement of the techniques of social control, as has most any country, do not make the list. Effective anarchist and anticapitalist struggles in Greece, using a great deal of violence, have hampered and sometimes even reversed the government's ability to implement new strategies of repression or techniques of surveillance. France might be included on the list, but not near the top. Those spots are inarguably reserved for exactly those countries that have been most peaceful: Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and perhaps Germany (another country that has experienced a partial disappearance of its conflictive social movements—outside of Berlin—and one with a high proportion of peace activists). Netherlands and the United Kingdom can both be considered societies of absolute surveillance, in which all inhabitants are tracked through an integrated intelligence system that includes cameras, bank cards, public transportation, garbage collection, and other systems.

Although armed or dangerous struggles can without a doubt spur a government to redouble its efforts of repression, a fact that

We understand that people have different needs regarding safety. That while one person may need to be on the streets in a situation where someone else's actions do not put them in danger, another person may need to know that if they are arrested, they will be supported, regardless of what the state may allege they have done. We know that the way to work through these needs is to hear each other with respect, to strive to understand each other and support each other even if we do not agree.

MEDIA RELATIONS

We will not do the State's work. We will not assist them in dividing our movement, in scape-goating our people, or in attacking our organizations and people.

We believe that in our movement, journalists (especially alternative media and movement media journalists) have a role in this discussion. When they write respectfully, honestly, thoughtfully, with an eye to the consequences of their work, they only assist us in speaking to each other and to the debates we must have if we are to win a better world.

It is with this in mind that we espouse the following principles (taken from the St. Paul principles). These principles are an attempt to outline a working process for us together as organizers:

1. Our solidarity is based on respect for a political diversity within the struggle for social-justice. As individuals and groups we may choose to engage in a diversity of tactics and plans of action but are committed to treating each other with respect;

2. We realize that debates and honest criticisms are necessary for political clarification and growth in our movements. But we also realize that our detractors will work to divide us by inflaming and magnifying our tactical, strategic, personal

Appendix B: Materials on Nonviolence and a Diversity of Tactics

Solidarity and Respect
[Developed for the Toronto G20 Protests, 2010]

PREAMBLE

We have come together in solidarity and respect, with the belief that together we can create a movement whose sum is greater than its parts.

We are all striving for similar goals. We are working for a world free of capitalism, sexism, of classism, of racism, of colonialism, of homo/lesbo/bi/trans-phobia, of environmental destruction, of abledism and of ageism.

We believe that we must embrace honest discussion and debate. We trust that our movement is strong enough, resilient and mature enough to embrace open differences of opinion. We believe that if we are to truly build a socially just world, it will take many different tactics, much creativity and many different approaches. It is this that allows us to work together even when we disagree.

We work together in solidarity and respect. This does not mean we endorse everything each of us does, or that we agree on all things. But we will listen to each other, we will discuss our differences openly and honestly, where necessary, we will agree to disagree and we will support each other when attacked.

all revolutionaries will have to confront,[4] in general we can assert the following: when it comes to repression, governments are proactive, not reactive, and in times of social peace or in the face of mostly peaceful social resistance they intensify their techniques of social control more extensively than when they face a combative resistance. In other words, nonviolence accelerates repression at a systemic level. When people start carrying out attacks and committing outrages, the government is often forced to make arrests or strike back in some way, but at the deeper level of reengineering society for the purpose of social control, nonviolence creates a much more favorable climate for the qualitative advancement of repression. This assertion, born up by history, also flows from a realistic assessment of the proactive nature of the State. But proponents of nonviolence like Rai do the State a service by portraying it as a neutral institution that represses only as a response to our activity. The "common sense" he references is the obedient citizen's vision of the State.

Rai sums up my book with a gross misrepresentation:

> So education, alternative institutions and so on are pointless if you are committed to nonviolence, highly effective if you are bombing and shooting, and vitally necessary even if you are not bombing and shooting at the moment, so long as you are committed in theory to using such tactics whenever the need arises.

Demagogically, he falls back on the caricature of the violent terrorist, harping on "bombing and shooting" even though I mention a long list of other tactics throughout the book. The dramatic title of his review, "A Strategy for Bombers," is ridiculously manipulative, and comes close to criminalizing those he disagrees with. In

[4] In this regards, a deeper analysis of how armed anticapitalist groups in Germany and Italy in the '60s and '70s failed to withstand repression would be extremely useful, although such an analysis could probably not arise from a nonviolent framework.

the UK in 2008, calling someone a "bomber" is basically flagging them for the police and encouraging the public to react fearfully.

Rai claims I argue that education or building alternatives are "pointless." This is false, but he repeats it several times, which is always a good tactic for getting a lie to stick. Then, as though he is revealing a hypocritical double standard, he says, "But, wait, education isn't totally pointless" and claims that I believe everything is pointless unless it is accompanied by bombings. The argument that he is misrepresenting here is that activities of creation and education are all extremely important to a revolutionary struggle, but if they are not accompanied by an ability to defend against government repression, destroy ruling structures, and sabotage the existing system, education and the building of alternatives only lead to a dead end, incapable of revolution. I make this point in great detail, with multiple historical references to show how that dead end comes about, and to show that nonviolence is incapable of mustering the level of self-defense and sabotage needed. But Rai ignores all of this.

If there is a good faith explanation for all of his misrepresentations, it may be the inopportune tone of the book that shocked him and made him imagine an aggressive, terroristic proposal for struggle instead of the one I was actually making. He was evidently shocked that I dared to mention bombings, even though my purpose was to freely discuss all possible tactics without the atmosphere of shock and moral panic proponents of nonviolence have helped to generate. Rai failed to notice, along with many other arguments in the book, that I never advocate bombings, and when talking about bombings that kill bystanders, I specifically criticize them.

Rai ends in better form. Talking about the debate that followed my presentation, he notes that many people in the audience had practical doubts about the effective use of a diversity of tactics, and then states that it will be up to advocates of nonviolence to show the way by proposing and demonstrating effective nonviolent ac-

ticipate in a struggle that will always include myriad perspectives, desires, and methods, in a mix that defies any attempt at homogenization

How Nonviolence Protects the State was an attempt to debate a position that, in my surroundings at the time, held a stranglehold on the discussion of methods of struggle. The present book, though the topic is the same, has a different objective. The debate between nonviolence and a diversity of tactics is no longer ongoing. The advocates of nonviolence have abandoned it. Their practice has failed them in the streets. They have not responded to the serious criticisms levied against them, nor even changed the clichés they use in place of factually supported arguments. But they have sunk to even lower depths, routinely attacking, snitching on, or spreading false accusations against their ideological opponents. And they have allied more closely with the police, media, ngos, and governments in a desperate attempt to win over a greater part of the crowds that are beginning to protest and sometimes, even, to take action against that which oppresses them. The better of them have turned their back on the debate without engaging in any of those despicable ploys, enacting a nonviolent struggle out of a straightforward personal need, but neither have they been very vocal in denouncing the violence and collaboration of their fellow pacifists.

On the other side of the line, those who favor a diversity of tactics have moved on in their debate, steeped in several intense years of new revolts, movements, and theories, such that the term "diversity of tactics" now seems embarrassingly antiquated. But there is a gap between those who have been involved in this debate and the experiences that nourish it, and those who have only recently taken up the fight, trained by society to think that the only legitimate rebel is an obedient one, and shown by their experiences in the street that not only is nonviolence undignified and uninspiring, it is entirely inadequate to accomplish what they dream of.

The intent of this book is to introduce those who have started to question nonviolence to the collective experiences and histories that nonviolence, together with the State, would hide from them; to articulate the systematic role that nonviolence plays in defense of power; and to contribute to the ongoing debate about how to partition. He is right on both points: combative practices and anticapitalist struggles in the UK were indeed at an impasse due to effective repression; and if nonviolence were to win back any of the support it had lost over the years, it would actually have to advance an effective or at least an inspiring practice. In the years since that debate, events have made it clear that combative struggles have again found a way forward, while practitioners of nonviolence are still mired in the same weaknesses.

Aside from published reviews, there were also many comments I received on the text. One of the most common, coming from proponents of nonviolence, was how I lumped together pacifism and nonviolence and beat them both with the same stick, as it were. I would specify that I was in fact beating them with many different sticks.

How Nonviolence Protects the State is not a concerted reaction to one coherent practice of nonviolence, but to any attempt to impose nonviolence on a social struggle. It deals with many varying discourses and practices at once. The coherence of this approach lies in the streets, where those of us fighting to remove the limitations placed on our struggles are confronted with a veritable swarm of arguments and reactions—from powerful institutions and from the people around us—that all center on the value of nonviolence.

From the point of view of any specific pacifist or nonviolent activist, the book may very well feel unfair, because one is bombarded by a great many criticisms directed at a concept of nonviolence they do not share, and by a great many responses to postures they might not ever have taken. I can only reassert that every single argument, cliché, rationale, discourse, tactic, strategy, and posture that I attempt to discredit are ones I have personally encountered within a social movement. While any one nonviolent activist may not identify with many of the criticisms I make, I guarantee that there is something in the book for everyone who objects to the use of "violence."

It is true that different currents of nonviolence and pacifism have very distinct ways of understanding revolution and I could have taken on each of these views as a distinct whole rather than criticizing all of them together. However, I get the feeling that the more vocal proponents of these currents do not realize how mixed up their discourses are in the streets, how terms change their meaning from one activist to the next, and how the typical nonviolent activist often mixes theories and strategies from multiple currents. It may be true that pacifism and nonviolence are very separate things, but even their theoreticians are unclear on the difference. Gene Sharp and Mark Kurlansky, for example, both advocate nonviolence instead of pacifism, but they have vastly different conceptions of what nonviolence means.

As I stated in the book itself, the target of my criticisms was self-selecting, a diverse host of groups and individuals who united around a shared commitment to nonviolence, despite differing interpretations of that concept. It is traditional for writers and theorists to privilege discourse in its pure form, as it flows from the pens of other writers and theorists. But the arguments they write about are created in the streets, not in their books. If our motivation for debating is as participants in a struggle and not as taxonomists of ideas, our conversation must take place in that chaotic field where discourses collide, break, and realign. Though it might have made for disappointing reading for certain dedicated partisans of one or another current of nonviolence or pacifism, my goal in writing the book was not to critique a specific oeuvre but to break the stranglehold that a hodgepodge of forms of nonviolence were exercising on movements for social change.

And as a brief riposte to this point, it seems more than a bit ironic that they should criticize my failure to use the labels of nonviolence and pacifism on their terms, when they regularly refer to us as violent, which is even farther from our own chosen terminology, and often done in a criminalizing tone.

to intimidate bosses, revenge killings of cops and hit men who had killed workers, and sabotage. Not only did the cnt withstand the attempts to crush it, it grew into the strongest workers' organization in the country, soon provoking a revolutionary situation. The cnt succeeded where the iww had failed. Their views of confrontation were central to this difference.[5]

There are more things I would change about *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, but therein lies the fundamental contradiction of writing. Thinking never ends, whereas a book at some point must go to print.

The thinking on this topic has changed a great deal in the last eight years, reflecting great changes in our struggles. The antiglobalization movement, which once served as the arena for many debates on nonviolence and a diversity of tactics, has either disappeared or become unrecognizable. Anarchists have broken onto the stage in numerous countries, leading to an increase in government repression and forcing the media to change gears from ignoring us to trying to tame us. Anticapitalism and its more sugarcoated alternatives like anti-neoliberalism or "the 99%" have again become popular phenomena. Politicians from Obama to Morales have again captured and betrayed people's hopes, showing that amnesia is ever on the side of those who rule, and memory on the side of those who rebel. Many new people are starting to participate in social struggles for the first time. And nonviolence has been decisively redefined as a pragmatic regime change or reformism that prioritizes safety rather than sacrifice and seeks accommodation and collaboration with elite institutions like the police and media, characteristics that marked nonviolence throughout the 20th century but that never predominated so clearly.

[5] We could also mention the FORA in Argentina, similar to the CNT, but much less combative. The FORA was generally unable to withstand government and paramilitary repression, which disproportionately weakened the anarchist wing of the organization, aiding its eventual takeover by reformist and authoritarian groups.

I have a number of my own criticisms of *How Nonviolence Protects the State*. First is a rather superficial matter of terminology. Around the time I was writing the book, a number of anarchists were publishing criticisms of a certain practice that they termed "activism." Some of these criticisms threw the baby out with the bathwater, but all of them were making a much needed point. The practice they were excoriating was moribund. Activism, to them, meant doing for the sake of doing, formulaic activity by self-selecting specialists that divides social conflict into separate but connected single-issues, each with its own ready-made group or protest form intended to simultaneously apply a bandage to the issue in question while also attracting new members to allow for an organizational growth that would somehow bring us closer to revolution. It was a practice with a lack of orientation towards social conflict, a tendency to reduce strategy to a tactical or campaign level and to reduce analysis to a list of "isms" that were bad, and with a much greater compatibility with the world of universities and NGOs (many of this kind of activist went on to work for the latter after graduating from the former) than with a world of antagonism, confrontation, repression, and insurrection.

I wrote the book in the language of activism primarily because many of us shared those same criticisms but did not equate them with the term "activism." It was a little unfair of the critics to redefine activism as one specific set of practices that they disliked, when the term had never previously been clearly defined, and a great many people identified it with a great many practices. It is an unfortunate tendency to reduce a nuanced criticism to a persecution of terms. But the fact of the matter is, activism was an ugly term, and it is a fitting label for a defunct practice. Hopefully, it will gradually disappear not because it has gone out of style but because people have ingested the criticism.

At the time I wrote the book, I did not have access to more thorough sources that examined those historical conflicts within a lens of the conflict itself. Many anarchists of the time reproduced the leftist hagiographies, confusing the struggle with the organization that attempted to master it. Fortunately, we seem to be correcting that tendency, although the romanticized, vanguardist accounts still seem to be bestsellers.

There is one last detail I want to amend. One reviewer objected that the iww, in the 1910s and '20s, was comprised largely of immigrants. I had pointed out that the autonomous anarchists (the members of the *Gruppo Autonomo*: whom I had inaccurately referred to as "Galleanist" anarchists even though their activity predated the presence of Luigi Galleani, their best known theorist) survived government repression better than their contemporaries in the iww, not despite but due to the fact that the former employed an illegal and clandestine practice whereas the latter moved towards increasingly peaceful means in the face of repression. In the context of that argument, I affirmed that the autonomous anarchists were nearly all Italian immigrants, and therefore more vulnerable to repression. On the face of it, this point is inaccurate for the very reason mentioned by the reviewer: the immigrant base of the iww. However, I think the spirit of the argument is still accurate. For starters, many iww members were German and Scandinavian, much higher in the racial hierarchy at the time than Italians, and not vulnerable to the "wasp xenophobia" I specifically mentioned. Secondly, and more importantly, it is evident that by adopting more peaceful means and renouncing the use of sabotage, the iww did not save itself from repression and only succeeded in pacifying itself. It gave up its confrontational stance and thus, the very spirit of its critique of capitalism. In a matter of years, it had all but disappeared.

In a similar vein, we can see how around the same time the cnt in Spain was only able to survive as a functioning anticapitalist labor organization through recourse to clandestine practices that included bank robberies to supply the strike fund, armed actions

As for the term to denote the people and practices contrary to nonviolence, I chose "militant." Another ugly term, and until the book was translated into Spanish I was unaware that the word was originally applied to the active members of labor unions and political organizations, regardless of their position on violence. In the present book, I have settled on "combative," "illegal," and "conflictive" in an attempt to denote a practice that is fundamentally antagonistic and ready to assume confrontation without reducing it to what a moralistic observer might identify as its violent elements.

Parallel to my use of activist language in the earlier book, I used an anti-oppression framework that divided power into patriarchy, white supremacy, the State, and capitalism as distinct systems of oppression. On the one hand, I think that framework helped to avoid the traditional error of subordinating every social hierarchy to the class hierarchy and reducing every form of oppression to its economic aspect. It also helped to analyze the complex relation between violence and social power dynamics and the multifaceted treaty between nonviolence and authority. But such a framework can also prop up the game of tallying up who is more oppressed and who is more privileged, labeling opponents as racist or sexist and discrediting an idea by classifying it as privileged much the same way vulgar Marxists will denominate anything they disagree with as "petit-bourgeois." I think many proponents of nonviolence have a serious problem with colonial, paternalistic attitudes or the victimization of historically oppressed groups, and most of the specific criticisms I was relaying originated with comrades from those groups; however I think it is a long-term problem that needs to be approached with patience, and by applying labels like "racist," to white people who sincerely, however ineffectively, want to do away with racism, I may have added to a dynamic that discourages critical thinking and encourages one's own side to ostracize or disqualify and the other side to look for their own insults and disqualifiers to throw back. Someone who is directly targeted by a system of oppression like colonialism or patriarchy should apply terms like "racist" or "sexist" wherever they see fit, but those of us who have been privileged by these systems should probably be more patient, persistent, and humble when criticizing our peers. Another error in the book I want to point out is a shortcoming in the range of historical references. Reflecting a weakness in a large part of the anarchist movement at the time—both in which books anarchist publishers chose to print and which stories the rest of us chose to get excited about—in talking about certain struggles I centered the focus on romanticized armed groups that saw themselves as the vanguard. Other groups took part in these same struggles, along with people who did not act in the name of any organization. For example, fierce social conflicts in the '60s and '70s are reduced to the Weather Underground and Black Panther Party in the US, or to the Red Brigades in Italy. A complex situation is reduced to the symbol of a single organization. That organization's mistakes and even irrelevance, if such is the case, are erased, and the opportunity to learn strategic lessons is lost.

One such strategic lesson would be a criticism of the practices of armed struggle developed after World War ii, predominantly by Marxist groups although with an important early influence by exiled Spanish anarchists fighting against the Franco regime. In an attempt to undo all the demonization of violent resistance that nonviolence has accomplished, and because I did not want to impose a new ethical framework that did not directly arise from the experiences of a concrete struggle, I often talked about combative activities and armed actions in a cold, contextless way, undermining my own argument by approaching the caricature of the violent revolutionary that nonviolence and the media disseminate. In an attempt to avoid limiting the concept of a diversity of tactics with a specific proposal about how people should struggle, I ended up with a vague portrayal of armed struggle as the counterpoint to nonviolence, when the possibilities for resistance are and should be limitless.