

Chapter 4: Strategies for Intervention

False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the 'rejects of life,' to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands — whether of individuals or entire peoples — need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.

PAULO FREIRE¹

Third-party action within the realm of transnational empowerment has as its basis the resistance of oppression and the hegemony that upholds it. As a result, interventionists must be willing to view hegemony in a transnational framework, one in which they themselves are a part. Education — and, in particular, “education as the practice of freedom,” envisioned by Paulo Freire — is the first critical step in this process. Intervention organizations are undoubtedly motivated by generosity, but this does not by definition translate into effective and transformative empowerment. Interventionists must be willing to see themselves as engaging with local movements on a cultural level — as this is, in fact, what they do, whether or not they choose to acknowledge it. Once this cultural engagement is articulated, intervention can become a method, arising out of the interactions between the local and international actors, for discovering the path toward liberation for each community. Interventionists should not arrive prepared to give lectures and demonstrations, but rather to learn along with local activists how a movement for social justice can be most successful.

Only when activists recognize their own roles in supporting systems of oppression can they act in solidarity to destabilize those systems. This fundamentally goes beyond a “neutral” stance that merely upholds the status quo. Embodying a commitment to grassroots action and the affinity-group or assembly model, interventionists empower individuals and communities to

¹ Freire (2000), 45.

practice their own freedom. Intervention is and must be a radical act, or it becomes nothing more than a form of nonviolent imperialism — with softer weapons, perhaps, but with no less pernicious results.

Global mechanisms for societal targets

Tactical and strategic choices are complex, learned actions, and so they have a deep cultural side. Not only are they conditioned by emotions, cognitions, and moral visions, but the choices made are cultural repertoires in action.

JAMES M. JASPER²

War is the father of creation and the mother of culture.

JAPANESE WAR MINISTRY, OCTOBER 1934³

In analyses of social movements occurring in the 1960s, “culture”⁴ is often highlighted as the framework by which to explain recruitment, protest tactics and movement outcomes, with this general theory often broadened to explain social movements of other eras. Yet the aims of social movements often continued to be seen as directed against a political élite, a state apparatus or a system of governance, rather than a reformulation of society. Culture appeared as a means but not as an end. In addition, the analysis by Clifford Geertz of ideology as a form of culture showed that existing theories of ideology ignored “the autonomous process of symbolic formulation,” preferring to focus on whether ideology was used to amass power or to counter growing anomie.⁵ In this case, ideology was causally related to the structure and beliefs of society,

² Jasper (1997), 319.

³ *Basic Theory of National Defense and Suggestions for its Strengthening*. Quoted in James B. Crowley (1962), “Japanese Army Factionalism in the Early 1930s,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 21(3): 309–326, p. 318.

⁴ Like “globalization,” the word “culture” is often expanded beyond any useful definition. For the purposes of this paper I see it as the physical and behavioral manifestations of a particular society, despite the abbreviations and elisions of such a definition. See, for instance: Adam Kuper (1999). *Culture: The Anthropologists’ Account*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵ Geertz (1973), 207. This lack of attention to the mediating process is also addressed by McAdam (1982) in his formulation of the political process model. See Chapter 2.

but no examination was provided of how this process occurred. Culture appeared as an end but not a means.

More recently, this analysis has shifted as sociologists and historians have begun, as I described in the last chapter, to examine the ways in which members of a society contribute to the construction and reconstruction of social mores, values and beliefs — and how structural and symbolic relationships integrate to form a field of possible choices for action. Labor activists, for example, can act in ways that seem to contradict their rhetoric of class solidarity, and peace activists can act in ways that belie a particular racism in organizing; rather than being merely a form of hypocrisy, such actions reflect the dialectic between underlying beliefs or ideologies and the structures of such groups. Organizing that seeks to eliminate oppressive power structures must, however, suggest alternative forms of self-determination. Resistance based alone on opposition to restrictive power will replicate structures of oppression informally.⁶

Intervention risks succumbing to the tendencies of control in most mainstream societies, both in the West and the Global South, through reinforcing prejudice or in structuring groups in such a way as to privilege a particular race, class or gender. By instead focusing on systemic change, grounded directly in the rituals and behaviors of “culture,” intervention efforts will be more likely to transcend the biases of the societies in which they originate. This is not a simple procedure, but it is one in which all of the nonviolent intervention organizations I have found are engaged, and a process by which they have met with a significant measure of success.

Much of nonviolent intervention focuses on forms of conflict management (such as interposition) and on accompanying and monitoring local activists so as to publicize any repression. Targeting the “culture” of a divided society is a task of a different kind. But if training

⁶ See Crass (2004).

and educational organizations are interested in developing a repertoire of actions, cultural resistance must be prominent among them.

The International Solidarity Movement, for instance, was first organized during the Second Intifada, a movement substantially influenced by conservative Islamic groups like Hamas. ISM's approach of nonviolent direct action can be seen as in the pattern of work begun years before by the Palestinian women's autonomous movement. This movement, inspired by Western ideas of feminism, countered traditional roles for female Palestinian activists. When religious groups began to gain more power in the Palestinian resistance movement, women had to reformulate their strategy as part of the indigenous approach being promoted by Islamic groups. They began "highlighting the intersection of communal patriarchy, Israeli state policy, gender oppression, and social change."⁷ Their approach was intimately cultural because their oppression — from the Israeli military and from conservative Muslim clerics — was itself a cultural force. The development of ISM a few years later clearly patterned itself in this mold, unafraid to enter into the cultural arena in order to effect change. In similar situations, interventionists will likewise have to formulate a cultural approach in order to help expand movements for social justice.

Critical to this, of course, is an understanding of the ways in which cultural ideology can reinforce oppression, an understanding that will buttress their work in aiding activists and help prevent their own work from upholding the colonialism and repression they are trying to dismantle. The cultural approach does carry with it the danger of disempowerment, and interventionists must have clear training about such dynamics. As the example from the Palestinian Territories shows, however, in some cases the challenge of disempowerment must be met and overcome in order to allow for the advance of justice and peace.

⁷ Abdulhadi (1998), 665.

A focus on culture

Depending on the level of involvement of a particular intervention organization in training and educating real or potential movement leaders, ideas like society, culture and ideology may be more or less present in their own analysis of their actions. Training for Change, which involves itself in the education of nonviolent trainers, keeps questions of cultural prejudice and bias at the forefront. But even organizations that act only to protect local activists should determine the ways in which they can be most empowering to local movements. Especially in the early stages of nonviolent resistance, local activists will need to be engaged in developing a “counter-state” of education, job security and mutual assistance.⁸ Interventionists aiming to assist them will necessarily engage in questions of culture.

If social movements are to cross the boundary from marginalized constituencies to broader appeal, they must reformulate the societies in which they are themselves participating. They may be working to erode the power of a dictator, to prevent civil war or ethnic slaughter, to win concessions from despotic labor bosses or to create autonomous territories, but in each case they become a cultural as well as a political force in order to create change.⁹ “If the masses try to fight a ruling class reinforced by the power of the public sphere, their struggle is hopeless,” write Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge; “they are always simultaneously fighting against themselves, for the public sphere is constituted by them.”¹⁰ As I wrote in Chapter 3, it is not enough, for example, to argue that racism divided the US labor movement’s strength when in actuality the labor movement had a hand in constructing that racism. Individuals both help to create and are

⁸ “The Global Arena” (2002).

⁹ In regions where state government is nonexistent, the definition of “political” can often be seen to be social or cultural in its entirety. But even in rhetorically representative democracies, social movements are, principally, not about acquiring political power but about shifting society and “culture” into a new system of beliefs.

¹⁰ Negt and Kluge (1993), *xlvii*.

affected by social ideologies, and it is a focus on these ideologies and their roles within them that can ultimately effect change.¹¹

I began this study with an analysis of power, its relational nature and the ways it is manifested through discourses of knowledge, precisely because interventionists may be wary of engaging in “cultural” discussions. The history of humanitarianism, however, suggests that intervention nonetheless creates new discourses. If transnational empowerment is to be based upon relational power, as I believe it must be, interventionists should realize that their very presence carries with it an enactment of power. If no reflection is taken and intervention attempts to remain “neutral,” it will mimic the imperialist discourse of nineteenth-century cross-border philanthropy. Only through a grounded praxis of empowerment — a praxis that requires cultural engagement, the construction of new discourses and thus new knowledge — will intervention truly aid movements for social change. In order to give local activists a sense of their power, interventionists must understand their own power — a fundamentally cultural process.

Because of this necessity to focus on a society’s belief system, intervention organizations themselves must carefully investigate what activities they can perform without crossing into the realm of régime change from abroad. Rulers will often use the apparent influences of outside groups on local movements to delegitimize them,¹² and interventionists must not give them additional cause. Ideally, intervention organizations would offer models of community-building,

¹¹ And, to take the poststructuralist view of Jean Baudrillard and Guy Debord, society may itself have become spectacle — and, therefore, will respond only to spectacular events. “[F]aith in and attachment to rationality is baggage we carry from a bygone era, a faith that serves us poorly in a political culture in which spectacle is the lingua franca,” write Boyd and Duncombe (2004), 36.

¹² Milošević used this argument, without much success, in countering the student movement Otpor with accusations of being led by trainees of the United States; see York (2002). In an incisive analysis, one British reporter characterized a similar nonviolent campaign in the Ukraine as “an American creation, a sophisticated and brilliantly conceived exercise in western branding and mass marketing that, in four countries in four years, has been used to try to salvage rigged elections and topple unsavoury régimes.” See Ian Traynor, “US campaign behind the turmoil in Kiev,” *The Guardian*, 26 Nov. 2004.

and support such communities when they arise — often, if recent history is a guide, as a result of direct action.

A word here about interposition. Largely, as practiced by organizations like Christian Peacemaker Teams and the International Solidarity Movement, interposition occurs at the “point of destruction.” As articulated by Patrick Reinsborough, this involves placing one’s body in a position to prevent harm from occurring.¹³ While this is sometimes necessary to prevent impending death from taking place, it is less likely to attract sympathy from the broader society, a primary difference between nonviolent invasion, concerned with the point of conflict, and nonviolent intervention, concerned with the source of conflict.¹⁴ More effective, in Reinsborough’s analysis, are “point-of-assumption” actions which target “the framework of myths, lies, and flawed rationale” that normalize oppression.¹⁵ Rather than fighting particular acts of oppression, intervention is systemic, targeting the assumptions that help to socially justify injustice. Individuals “practice intervention at the points of their own special competence” — radical workers occupy factories, radical academics occupy government agencies, etc.¹⁶ Agencies of oppression are dismantled while sources of empowerment are created. It is to this approach I now turn.

¹³ Reinsborough (2004), 183. The author gives a full analysis of the different points of intervention, including the point of production (used especially by the labor movement), point of destruction, point of consumption, point of decision, point of assumption and point of potential.

¹⁴ See Weber (1993), 56.

¹⁵ Reinsborough (2004), 185. As one way to mobilize this point, the author gives the example of the day the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 as a “mass psychic break” in San Francisco, in which many people were suddenly open to new actions because of a realization that the existing system no longer reflects their values; in this case, Direct Action to Stop the War was able to mobilize events through a pre-existing network of affinity groups.

¹⁶ Lakey (1987), 148.

Symbolic resistance and ‘bootless marches’

Historically social movements have employed symbolic demonstrations or actions in order to build their constituency and convey their message in a visceral sense. E.J. Hobsbawm argues that whereas “primitive” organizations, such as secret societies and labor-religious sects, united form and content in their use of symbols, such use in modern movements “is a pale and degenerate version of the real thing.”¹⁷ Methods of resistance lost their “direct action” approaches and became modular, shifting from one location to another.¹⁸ Yet there are indications that in the past twenty-five years there has been a resurgence of symbolic actions structured in such a way as to reflect the internal organization and beliefs of a particular social movement. Much of this symbolic reaction has to do with artistic, or at least creative, forms of direct action.¹⁹

This is applicable to nonviolent intervention in three ways. First, because much of strategic intervention is concerned with effecting particular social or psychological changes in a population or in rulers, symbolic action is of particular importance in that it has been shown to be an effective means to this end. Second, many of the most effective nonviolent movements in the past quarter-century have featured symbolic resistance, and thus serve as a model for what indigenous groups are trying to accomplish.²⁰ Third, symbolic action serves to unite movements across borders and language barriers, and therefore offers one method of communication

¹⁷ Hobsbawm (1959), 152.

¹⁸ See Tarrow (1994).

¹⁹ Jordan (2004, p. 179) argues that in the twentieth century, “art” was divorced from life and became enamored of its own power to change, but falsely so. “We have to stop pretending that art is a free space, autonomous from webs of capital and power,” he writes.

²⁰ A quick survey might include South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement, the Argentine *cacerolazo* events, Mexico’s Zapatistas, Poland’s Solidarność, the Chilean movement that deposed Augusto Pinochet, and Yugoslavia’s Otpor. See York (2000), Notes from Nowhere (2003), Rowley and Soohen (2003). Even in violent or semi-violent conflicts, symbolic resistance can play a significant role, such as parading in Northern Ireland or funeral marches in Palestine.

between cross-border activists and local movements.²¹ While those intervention groups involved in protective accompaniment or monitoring and observing might not find symbolic techniques immediately useful, organizations focusing on establishing presence or training movement leaders will be able to mobilize important aspects of symbolic action toward their goals.²² Sharp discusses, for example, “establishing new social patterns” as an effective method to build positive new models for developing grassroots power.²³

Creating the space for grassroots democracy to occur requires encouraging or nurturing autonomous structures to grow. Whether this involves landless peasants in Brazil occupying unused land or creating an “assembly of the poor” to confront oppressive development policies in Thailand, rather than “resisting the monuments of dead capital,” local organizers can organize their own sources of power.²⁴ Many traditional, community-building arenas such as theatre can be adapted toward building new vocabularies of resistance and new sites of cultural production.²⁵ Particularly in the Global South, however, purely symbolic demonstrations will wear thin over time — “impoverished participants grow weary of bootless marches.”²⁶ Nonviolent intervention organizations are fundamentally about nurturing and helping to shelter democratic spaces — be

²¹ Though there is certainly some disagreement about how much these various movements can be unified under one theme, Solnit (2004), among others, argues that the movements share enough organizing principles and tactics to be considered related — perhaps a collection of repertoires spread across the globe. Shepard and Hayduk (2002, p. 2), in the manner of Tarrow (1994), see the four unifying elements to be “globalization, shifting boundaries between public and private space, demographic change, and income inequality.”

²² For instance, Shepard (2002, p. 393), in an essay concluding a book almost entirely about creative direct action, argues that while many movements organize for the long term, “our movements are additionally about building a new series of civil societies.”

²³ Sharp (1973b), 390–393.

²⁴ See Critical Art Ensemble (1994), 16; Notes from Nowhere (2003), Section 3.

²⁵ For an explanation of the Theatre of the Oppressed and the radicalism of puppet theatre, see Joel Schechter, ed. (2003). *Popular Theatre: A Sourcebook*. Routledge, London. Sharp (1973b, p. 397) touches on it in his description of “guerrilla theater.” “I am certain these techniques could be useful, could be effective, in third-party nonviolent intervention,” Grant (2000) says.

²⁶ Boudreau (1996), 183.

they psychological, sociological or geographical — and fulfilling the promise of a new kind of power.²⁷

Expanding the space for communal resistance

“The real reason the United States did not do what it could and should have done to stop genocide was not a lack of knowledge or influence but a lack of will. Simply put, American leaders ... believed that genocide was wrong, but they were not prepared to invest the military, financial, diplomatic, or domestic political capital to stop it.”

SAMANTHA POWER²⁸

Nonviolent intervention organizations often see themselves bringing together two seemingly disparate worlds: peacekeeping, usually undertaken by armed forces, and humanitarian aid, often but not exclusively performed at a neutral stance toward the conflict. They are skeptical about the potential for armed peacekeeping to build a lasting democratic society, and also question the morality of complete impartiality.²⁹ As discussed in Chapter 2, they see their role as one of solidarity and support rather than enforcement. They perceive a lack of expertise in the building of civil society among state-based organizations such as the United Nations Peacekeeping Force, and a lack of personnel to develop conflict transformation among humanitarian aid organizations.³⁰

Like independent aid organizations, third-party intervention seeks to bypass the political will necessary for state-based or multilateral intervention. This requires a precise argument not only for moral action but for a practical response. Because their numbers are small, nonviolent

²⁷ Thus, a willingness to engage in power-altering direct action may be necessary. See Bobo et al. (2001), 12.

²⁸ Power (2002), 508.

²⁹ Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren (2001), 171 and 177.

³⁰ Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren (2001), 172. Also see Brahimi (2000), 21.

intervention organizations identify situations in which they would be most successful.³¹ In the same way that Samantha Power finds methods by which the United States could intervene in a measured way and still effectively prevent genocide, third-party intervention searches for the most effective and efficient use of their influence.³² Yet even the rules of engagement for traditional means of peacekeeping are not well-defined, and so it is not surprising that nonviolent intervention theory is not yet unified around a particular intervention strategy.³³

Tactical methods for intervention

Once an organization does intervene, it has several choices in how it can go about helping to end the conflict. One choice, drawing heavily on traditional diplomacy and interpersonal conflict resolution, is mediation. To a certain extent groups involved in interposition and protective accompaniment may need to engage in mediation, and the skill is certainly important enough to be included in Training for Change's curriculum manual. But for the most part interventionists are not organizing at the highest levels of political power, often because it is those institutions of power which are perpetrating oppression.

John Paul Lederach argues that peacebuilding often focuses too narrowly on either crisis relief or long-term visioning, whereas what is needed is attention to a "transformative" stage in which a society moves from recovery toward social change.³⁴ He therefore argues for conceptualizing conflicts comprehensively and systemically. As I see it, this requires confronting social and cultural elements of both hegemony and resistance in order to structure Lederach's sustained transformation in terms comprehensible to both movement participants and the larger

³¹ Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren (2001), 176-177.

³² Power (2002), 382-385, 512. Generally nonviolent intervention has not occurred in cases of full-scale genocide. For a discussion on nonviolent intervention in relation to genocide, see the Epilogue.

³³ On "rules" for peacekeeping, see Hoffman (2000) and Brahimi (2000).

³⁴ Lederach (1997), Chapter 6.

society. This will further highlight the nature of peacebuilding as a “process-structure” — not simply a reactive event or a theoretical vision but an ongoing conceptualization of alternative forms of society based on current needs.

This also gives a component to nonviolent intervention that is qualitatively different from classical mediation. Third parties are sometimes used to resolve conflict because of their position, frequently emphasized, as “nonofficials” without political affiliation in the conflict.³⁵ Third-party interventionists, however, should leave such mediation to others. Beyond questions of “neutrality” in the face of a history of imperialism and racism, intervention organizations performing mediation would risk reifying rather than redefining the conflict. Without redefining the structural bases for society, agreements reached in conflict mediation are often not self-sustaining.³⁶ Even if they merely facilitated meetings between local activists and government officials, Edward F. Greaves argues that the status quo could be strengthened rather than challenged. Based on municipally-defined rather than autonomous spaces, political participation of this sort gets channeled into supporting the state system and disrupts new civic space constructed by the movement.³⁷ As I wrote in Chapter 3, physical space is used by capital, often aligned with state power, to disempower grassroots movements; cultural space is also vital in order to change ideologies within a society. If mediation is relied on too heavily, the state may be able to utilize participation in it to “colonize public space” by defining what is “political” and thus under control of the state itself.³⁸ This is most relevant when presence is being used. Unlike other intervention techniques, presence focuses on the field of conflict itself rather than on

³⁵ See, for instance, Fisher (1994), 134.

³⁶ Galtung (1976), 296–297.

³⁷ Greaves (2004), 226–227.

³⁸ Greaves (2004), 203.

particular individuals.³⁹ Nonetheless, it has the power to transform relationships between those individuals — accomplishing many of the goals of mediation from a different approach.

Education and training

In order to facilitate the type of “process-structure” Lederach proposes, Training for Change bases its manual for training nonviolent intervention activists on the theories of liberatory education. Drawing on Paulo Freire, the training develops knowledge through role-playing and other dialogical activities. This is not only a way to build skills, but a process for working with local groups in developing sustainable alternative social institutions.⁴⁰ The task of nonviolent social movements, in Freire’s words, is “to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.”⁴¹ Initially, he argues, the oppressed may fall back on traditional conceptions of power, and themselves become mechanisms for oppression.

Daniel Hunter relates how in a training workshop in Sierra Leone, participants “were placing full responsibility on the success of ‘the leader.’” Not only might this encourage a hierarchical movement structure, but “disempowerment keeps people blaming leadership and stuck in a cycle of dependency.”⁴² It is for this reason that intervention training is based on experiential learning: to develop the core proficiencies of intervention within each individual, rather than relying on a team leader. Facilitators elicit stories from participants and offer theoretical models, but the key is in turning those conceptions into action, which then leads to a

³⁹ Lakey (2002).

⁴⁰ As I wrote earlier in this chapter, social practices become central to a transformatory type of peacebuilding. Sharp (1973b, p. 398) writes that the development of alternative social, economic and political alternative institutions “is often necessary in order to make noncooperation with institutions controlled by the opponent effective and in order to develop or maintain an alternative social order.” Education is the bedrock of this alternative development.

⁴¹ Freire (2000), 44.

⁴² Hunter (2004a), 2.

new cycle of reflection.⁴³ Another way to look at the approach is developing “civil society to defend civil society,” in the words of the Training for Change manual.⁴⁴ The final stage in Lakey’s “strategy for a living revolution,” these alternative institutions act in “stabilizing the new structures for basic functions.”⁴⁵ Rather than relying on outside aid or state intervention, empowerment creates networks of “grassroots-to-grassroots assistance” that will prevent violent conflict from redeveloping after the third-party activists leave.

An empowering intervention

“Establishing one’s credentials of competency is only part of the organizer’s first job. He [sic] needs other credentials to begin — credentials that ... meet the question, ‘Who asked you to come in here?’ with the answer, ‘You did.’”

SAUL ALINSKY⁴⁶

My own conception of nonviolent intervention, transnational empowerment, premises its involvement on solidarity. It is impossible, using such a principle, to remain completely “impartial” while operating within a conflict; indeed the Nonviolent Peaceforce feasibility study presents non-partisanship and solidarity as an either/or choice.⁴⁷ One element of this dynamic is the standard, which Nonviolent Peaceforce chose to adopt, of only intervening in places in which it has been invited to do so.⁴⁸ Building on the theory of liberatory education, Freire writes that activists “do not go to the people in order to bring them a message of ‘salvation,’” but rather “to

⁴³ Hunter and Lakey (2003, p. 15), write in their training manual, “Freire kept saying that we never learn simply through action, or through reflection, but through the relationship of action and reflection.” See Freire (2000), 63–65.

⁴⁴ Hunter and Lakey (2003), 135.

⁴⁵ Lakey (1987), *xxiv*.

⁴⁶ Alinsky (1971), 101.

⁴⁷ Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren (2001), 177.

⁴⁸ “Nonviolent Peaceforce,” 10. Quaker mediators “give each party a veto over its continuation.” See Princen (1994), 453.

come to know through dialogue with them both their *objective situation* and their *awareness* of that situation.”⁴⁹ It is in this model that nonviolent intervention most effectively acts.

In many cases, if nonviolent intervention requires partnership with a local group it would be impossible to maintain impartiality, since the oppression that intervention seeks to deconstruct is often being carried out by the state itself. This was a primary indictment of the 2000 United Nations report on its armed peacekeeping operations following the Rwandan genocide, in which a panel recommended understanding impartiality as “adherence to the principles” of the UN Charter.⁵⁰ For nonviolent intervention organizations, adherence to the principles of nonviolence or a “do no harm” theory might be most appropriate.⁵¹

Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan and Thomas Weber propose reclassifying nonviolent intervention, apart from humanitarian intervention but in the same league as Red Cross relief work and missionary aid.⁵² In addition to the ideological approach, they suggest that unlike the hierarchical structure of most humanitarian organizations, nonviolent intervention groups are consensus-based, a “difference in ideology” between the two camps. This development “reflects the roots of development of the peace team ideal as a foreign policy instrument of the western peace movement.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Freire (2000), 95. Emphasis is the author’s. Didactic intervention, he writes, would amount to “cultural invasion.”

⁵⁰ Brahimi (2000, p. 9): “Such impartiality is not the same as neutrality or equal treatment of all parties in all cases for all time, which can amount to a policy of appeasement. In some cases, local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so.”

⁵¹ As roughly proposed in the Nonviolent Peaceforce feasibility study. See Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren (2001), 178.

⁵² A questionable classification, in my view, since some forms of aid, particularly in the missionary tradition, served to actually uphold the status quo and preserve oppressors’ power.

⁵³ Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber (2000), 325.

Relief work and aid, however, has a history of imperialism behind it, as I outlined in Chapter 3. In many cases such work reinforces structural oppression and upholds the rulers' power. Nonviolent intervention has, in the past, relied heavily on the privilege of white skin to achieve gains, and some analysts suggest these attempts should continue.⁵⁴ In my view, however, a new ideological schematic can be developed for nonviolent intervention, which I propose in Chapter 6. The purpose of intervention should be, ultimately, to remove the necessity for the intervention in the first place, and this cannot be done if local activists come to depend on the presence of interventionists, "the whiter the better."⁵⁵ Analyses of military intervention have noted that "devolving responsibility back to the local community is essential to maintaining the legitimacy of intervention itself" and to setting the stage for a peaceful society when peacekeepers leave.⁵⁶ Nonviolent interventionists should recognize the same principle. In Sri Lanka, for instance, Nonviolent Peaceforce is working with a local coalition of peace groups, Sarvodaya, to develop a large-scale rapid-deployment peace force of indigenous activists. It is this kind of empowerment that makes third-party intervention so potent.

Rain clouds and seedlings

The basic structure of third-party intervention and cross-border advocacy in general is that of the network. Arising principally out of the feminist tradition — the US women's movement was the first to articulate a "network" as being made up of people⁵⁷ — networks are most effective when they are decentralized. "Affinity groups" or community-based assemblies are created in which members reach consensus on important decisions and are then empowered to

⁵⁴ See Moser-Puangsuwan and Weber (2000).

⁵⁵ See Grant (2000).

⁵⁶ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001), 45.

⁵⁷ Specifically in their neologism "old boys' network." See Keck and Sikkink (1998), 167.

act, adhering only to a set of values or principles agreed upon by all the groups. Leadership is “invested in the group as a whole” rather than in particular individuals.⁵⁸ An internationalization of “women-centered organizing,” this method “emphasizes small group development and has more of an internal problem-solving focus,” Randy Stoecker writes. “The goal is as much the development of individuals as it is the development of communities.”⁵⁹

Many of the most powerful successes of transnational activism in the past decade have been made possible by cross-border networks: physically converging in some cases; advocating before their home governments, representatives or embassies in others; and coordinating global support and solidarity in nearly all. For instance, after a decade of killings aimed at women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, in which the state and federal governments refused to investigate, Women in Black and Amnesty International organized repeated, worldwide protests at Mexican consulates. This raised the pressure on the Mexican government, which appointed a special prosecutor in the case, under the scrutiny of the international press.⁶⁰ “Networked forms of social organization distinguish the new protest movement,” Paul de Armond writes.⁶¹ Such an approach helps to prevent suppression by individual powerholders and allows the movement to integrate itself into a variety of “social niches.”⁶²

In moments of crisis, this decentralization is crucial. For Peace Brigades International, “in order to maintain flexibility for teams and groups to respond quickly to emergency situations, key

⁵⁸ Starhawk (1999).

⁵⁹ Stoecker (2002), 384.

⁶⁰ Alfredo Corchado, “Killings of women in Mexico show ‘pattern of violence,’ activists say,” *The Dallas Morning News*, 29 Oct. 2003; Chris Kraul, “Frustration Grows Over Killings,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 1 Feb. 2005.

⁶¹ de Armond (2001), 202.

⁶² Gerlach (2001), 302–303.

decision-making authority is sustained at lower levels.”⁶³ Christian Peacemaker Teams operates with a similarly “decentralized power model.”⁶⁴ This privileges the voices of those in the field, rather than mandating operational procedures from afar. “Individual affinity groups are able to cater their actions to the local situation,” and for ISM, this means a variety of tactics within the Palestinian nonviolent movement.⁶⁵ Interventionists hoping to act in “the practice of freedom,” in Freire’s terms, will need to have this local independence in order to fully engage with other activists. Transnational empowerment will certainly not be accomplished by mimicking hierarchical structures of military intervention, allowing for “some degree of democratic decision-making” and a patronizing “diminishment of the polarization” between “designated” leaders and “regular” volunteers.⁶⁶ Interventionists are not offering an alternative hierarchy but a completely different model of power, and will not be well served by centralization of their own organizations.

This does not mean that social movements and the intervention organizations that support them have no structure, rather, they have a purposely decentralized structure. They are not, in this sense, like many Western social justice organizations. “Just as service-oriented NGOs have been tapped to fill the voids left by the state or the market,” Reinsborough writes, “so have social-change NGOs arisen to streamline the chaotic business of dissent.”⁶⁷ Piven and Cloward’s study of social justice movements in the United States and Greaves’ study of South American movements indicate that this professionalization of dissent does not create a stronger movement, but rather static organizations that are prone to co-optation by powerholders. Intervention

⁶³ Smith, Pagnucco and Romeril (1994), 135.

⁶⁴ Lyke and Bock (2000), 3.

⁶⁵ White (2005).

⁶⁶ Passion (2000). The author also suggests third-party intervention organizations should develop as NGOs, complete with boards of directors (see my critique, below), and does not suggest that privilege plays any role in structuring the organizations’ interactions with local movements.

⁶⁷ Reinsborough (2004), 194.

organizations, then, are most effectively organized in the model of the “peace team”: relatively autonomous groups with significant decision-making power and the ability to construct on-the-ground alliances with local movements. Coordination, recruitment and training can be done from a larger vantage point, as in Nonviolent Peaceforce’s congress of global delegates from local movements for social justice. Even so, the focus is on building this coordination from the ground up — not an imposed knowledge of a board of directors, but the collective knowledge of local activists and local intervention teams.

In order to give up control and allow the system to govern itself, we need to develop structures that will enable us to lose control with dignity and thus be able to overwhelm the dry and brittle forces of state repression with our invincible fluidity.⁶⁸

Transnational empowerment, like the swarming networks of decentralized nonviolent action, coalesces into rain clouds, nurturing movements in their early stages and then dissipating as the seeds of change begin to grow.

⁶⁸ Notes from Nowhere (2003), 69.