

## **Chapter 5: Erosion, Construction and Redefinition of Intervention**

*“Empowerment is often assumed to be the by-product of the protection afforded to local activists by international accompaniment. ... The truth is, however, that the reliance on the outsider by international and even national accompaniment organizations to protect local activists may produce various forms of disempowerment.”*

PATRICK GLENN COY<sup>1</sup>

Third-party nonviolent intervention emerged as a product of privileged communities in Western states. It grew primarily out of the antinuclear and antiwar movements, directed to a large extent from positions of wealth and informed by a long history of humanitarianism. This genealogy of nonviolent intervention is understandable, in that privileged groups are most likely to be able to win concessions from powerholders. In this sense, “privilege” is defined as an ability or power arising from a person’s culture, community, spirituality or personal belief. Some privileges, such as the holding of an advanced degree, are earned. Some privileges, such as having white skin in Western societies, are inherited.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of which type of privilege an interventionist has, she or he must be aware of it in order to counteract the oppression that can flow from it.

Like early twentieth-century humanitarianism, contemporary intervention can easily devolve into paternalism and imperialism. In order to prevent this, transnational nonviolent empowerment must have a firm basis in anti-oppression ideology, articulated through experiential training.<sup>3</sup> As in other privileged progressive movements, however, some have resisted addressing the rank carried by interventionists into local situations. When Training for Change

<sup>1</sup> Coy (1997), 282.

<sup>2</sup> Mindell (1995), 42. I use “privilege” as roughly interchangeable with social rank.

<sup>3</sup> Such training helps participants identify privilege based on race, skin color, nationality, gender, class and other factors, and facilitates the development of strategies for working across these dynamics of power. See, for instance, Mindell (1995).

conducted workshops for members of Nonviolent Peaceforce, they encountered a spirit of opposition to anti-oppression training, as members dismissed it as irrelevant.<sup>4</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams offers an intensive three-week training course covering nonviolent action, techniques of third-party intervention and conflict resolution, but no work centering on privilege.<sup>5</sup> The International Solidarity Movement gives two days of training for a two- to three-week intervention, focusing on historical narratives and nonviolent theory, but not on anti-oppression.<sup>6</sup> If intervention is to fulfill its promise in upholding rather than destabilizing social movements, its practitioners must make a commitment to anti-oppression fundamentals: to counteract systems of privilege, to “do no harm”<sup>7</sup> and to empower local leadership rather than supplanting it. Doing so by structure alone — as the ISM does in giving greater organizational weight to indigenous and long-term activists — will not solve the problem. Just as those under oppression may need to go through a process of realization of their own power, so too activists must become individually aware of their own privilege. Different strategies will be called for depending on whether the conflict is sectarian or between a state and part of its population, but privilege will continue to structure intervention in all types of situations. The status of interventionists — skin color, gender, nationality, religion and other characteristics — will affect how they approach a local conflict and the methods they may choose to use. Moreover, it is often people’s understandings of privilege and questions of identity that drive conflicts forward, justifying continuing conflicts based on essentialist notions of the “other side.” Until systems of

<sup>4</sup> Hunter (2004b).

<sup>5</sup> Lyke and Bock (2000), 4.

<sup>6</sup> White (2005).

<sup>7</sup> Coy (281–282) offers these preliminary issues to consider before an accompanying intervention is activated: “1) Do the activists [who would be accompanied] already have a public reputation for the problematic work or activism? 2) Are they already being harassed, or are they already under threat? 3) If under threat, have they decided to stay above ground? 4) Have they decided to remain active in the work that is the ostensible reason for the harassment or danger?”

privilege are addressed — in the context of intervention teams as much as the societies in which they intervene — third-party nonviolent intervention will remain structured in ways that exclude members of the Global South from participating, and enact oppression on the movements they most want to help. The focus of transnational nonviolent empowerment should be countering systems of privilege in both divided societies and within their own organizations.

### **Destabilizing privilege: Training as the practice of freedom**

*“You came to protect us but we will die for you, in your place.’ How do you respond to such a statement? ... How do you explain that isn’t what you want — that the guilt of being an American is eating you up inside and that you want to die in their place?”*

MICAH WHITE, ISM VOLUNTEER<sup>8</sup>

The tool of experiential education helps interventionists destabilize privilege by preparing them to relate to indigenous movements while training for the intervention itself. Experiential education develops cohesion among an intervention team, but more importantly it presents a clear model of interaction — just as members of intervention groups are trained in an atmosphere of respect and collective knowledge, so too can they engage local activists. Moreover, intervention activists need to be trained not only in on-the-ground skills but in relational dynamics as well. Relying alone on skin color as privilege, intervention groups mimic the systems of oppression they are attempting to combat.<sup>9</sup>

Interventionists should use the rank they have to positively influence the situation, but they should not do so blindly. The question is whether third-party intervention organizations are training people to be effective at their work by discovering and utilizing the privilege they have,

<sup>8</sup> White (2002), 35.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Elder, a Quaker mediator, acknowledges that the marginalized people with whom he speaks may accept him more because they feel they “are being heard by important people ... from the rich powerful nations.” Yet he nonetheless sees it “in some sense” as “an irrelevant consideration.” See Princen (1994), 450.

rather than focusing on one particular type of privilege. If only white males from the United States are able to be interventionists — or if organizations place a higher value on them because they have more traditional privilege — then the intervention has been placed on a racist foundation. Committing to a strategy that leans on skin color or national citizenship *more* than other types of rank means that only white people (or men, or Westerners) will be able to fill the role.

Especially if an organization is acting in solidarity with local activists, different types of privilege must be developed and utilized. In some cases, promoting one’s international status may be an effective tactic, such as when the release of ISM activists arrested during a nonviolent demonstration was successfully used as a precedent to release three Palestinians as well.<sup>10</sup> In other cases, the advantage is not so clear-cut. When Christian Peacemaker Teams positioned themselves in front of Israeli soldiers, they were joined by a Palestinian. “I don’t think it’s very likely that they will pull the trigger on me,” said one Western CPT member. “But he’s a Palestinian. What’s going to happen to him?”<sup>11</sup> Interventionists must be able to answer that question.

In order to try to prevent oppression from influencing interactions, for instance, intervention organizations should have clearly recognizable uniforms, in the same vein as the UN peacekeeping forces, so that every member of the team can be quickly identified without resorting to surface-level assumptions about ethnicity or nationality. Until now, David Grant says, “white skin has been a main protective device.”<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, third-party teams must

<sup>10</sup> See Mast (2003), 93.

<sup>11</sup> Lyke and Bock (2000), 13. The International Solidarity Movement also recognizes the role of privilege in its work, but narrowly defines that privilege as the holding of “international status” which, minus uniforms or other identifying features, often translates into light skin color. See Schneider (2003), 81.

<sup>12</sup> Grant (2000).

maintain a commitment to recruit members from communities of color and the Global South. Recognition by intervention organizations of the role of feminism and the global women's movements as precursors to empowering intervention has enabled the inclusion of women, in most cases, in positions of leadership. Nonetheless, interventionists must create methods of intervention that do not rely on male privilege alone — female interventionists should have the capacity to be as effective as male interventionists. Fears that interventionists of color will be harassed to a greater extent than white interventionists are not without merit, but an organization with a significant presence within a region and a commitment to building empowering relationships will be well-positioned to create effective intervention that can be performed by individuals from all parts of the world. Ultimately, this must be the primary focus of this cross-border work.

### **Destabilizing sovereignty: Democracy or the UN?**

The role of a third-party intervention organization is often a precarious one within states in conflict. Governments wishing to hide atrocities of their own doing may prevent non-governmental organizations from entering areas most in need of assistance. Intervention groups may do their job too well, and in beginning to challenge centralized power in an authoritarian régime find their visas suddenly revoked. Principles of international law leave no room for intervention on the non-governmental level unless a state specifically allows it. Some scholars argue that these laws contribute to the perpetration and exacerbation of the genocidal policies, sheltering despots from even non-military intervention. Should the UN be able to sanction third-party nonviolent intervention, giving it “legal standing” even when in direct opposition to state

power?<sup>13</sup> Should sovereignty itself be reconfigured, institutionalizing standard operating procedures for intervention under international treaties?<sup>14</sup>

It is doubtful that those involved in third-party intervention could ever compel such changes to international law and the most basic notions of statehood, but there is reason to believe that such changes are unnecessary. Notions of sovereignty, for instance, have been altered by powerholders in response to historical conditions, including the genocides of the twentieth century, and now allow for armed intervention by the United Nations in cases of egregious human rights violations.<sup>15</sup> The very creation of the United Nations shifted the idea from “sovereignty as control to sovereignty as responsibility in both internal functions and external duties.”<sup>16</sup> There is ample reason to believe that the principle of sovereignty will be further relaxed in the face of hegemonic political and economic systems, and a restructuring of the order of knowledge out of which it was born.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps “network power,” in which nation-states, supranational agencies and multinational corporations combine into an imperial power, will be more effectively resisted through cross-border organizing in any case.<sup>18</sup>

For the anti-authoritarian agitator being detained and beaten by his or her government, however, this is little consolation. Is the only solution to sit back and wait for élites’ understandings of international politics to gradually shift toward favoring nonviolent intervention?

<sup>13</sup> Hunter (2004b), for instance, says, “In order to get into a country they have to let [an intervention team] in — that’s international law — [you have] no legal standing to stay in the country if they don’t want you in.”

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Power (2002), 513–514.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 8, authorizes “the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide.”

<sup>16</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001), 13.

<sup>17</sup> See Bartelson (1995), 247–248.

<sup>18</sup> Hardt and Negri (2004), *xxi*.

Hardly.

Interventionists have the ability to leverage a significant amount of power through their connections to the West, even through nonviolent means — but not without some ideological compromises. First, they should recognize that in most regions in conflict, local governments are riven with dissent and eroding authority. Even when the conflict in question is one of hierarchical repression rather than civil strife, the very presence of violence and visible oppression shows the declining legitimacy of the central power.<sup>19</sup> “Because there are factions vying for control,” Hunter says, “the question is how to stay in balance with the parts of the government that might support us.” Even genocidal states — and especially those without global political or economic power — “have an appreciation of the international role in their life.”<sup>20</sup> While states might be able to resist particular instances of intervention, the international community will likely notice any sweeping isolation, leading to significant economic and political consequences.

As I indicated above, however, this is not a neutral approach. In effect, using the potential for external pressure means those waging nonviolent struggle will be depending on the threat of violent intervention to back up their work. Interventionists are, in this sense, no different from the industrial bosses of the nineteenth century: “The force they use is either the covert force of economic power or it is the police power of the state,” such action “seemingly sanctified by the supposedly impartial objectives” of, in this case, the intervention organization.<sup>21</sup> As I show in the final section of this chapter, this significantly affects the types of intervention available and the level of neutrality or solidarity undertaken by interventionists. Historically this has spawned a significant debate over the very nature of third-party intervention. “The citizens of a country

<sup>19</sup> Arendt (1969), 155. See Chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup> Hunter (2004b).

<sup>21</sup> Niebuhr (1932), 130.

which maintains an army have no right to conduct *satyagraha* in another country,” said Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of Mohandas Gandhi and a leader in India’s nonviolent struggle, in 1963.<sup>22</sup> Yet to a large extent intervention is still framed in these terms, in the context of a balance-of-power international system. The proposal of an “international peace team,” for instance, was predicated as de-escalating conflict primarily because of the threat Western interventionists could levy.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps, rather than reconceptualizing national sovereignties, intervention could be empowered by some sort of official international sanctioning, from a body such as the United Nations, an idea first appearing in a proposal for a UN Peace Guard.<sup>24</sup> In 2003, for instance, the global antiwar protests against the invasion of Iraq seemed to be justified by the actions of the United Nations. The diplomats of individual states were emboldened by the visible and vocal opposition of their populations, while at the same time the strong objections voiced at the United Nations bestowed political legitimacy on the movement itself.<sup>25</sup> When the US-sponsored resolution sanctioning the invasion of Iraq failed to garner enough support, the antiwar movement had effectively deposed the United States’ hegemony, at least for a time.<sup>26</sup> Could such a procedure work in other situations?

It is important to note that in the example given above, legitimacy was largely *given* by the international political order (in this case, the United Nations) rather than *created* through

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Weber (1993), 55.

<sup>23</sup> Passion (2000).

<sup>24</sup> The Peace Guard, proposed in 1960 by Spanish pacifist Salvador de Madariaga and Socialist Party of India head Jayaprakash Narayan, would have been “an unarmed international police force” acting as an alternative to armed UN troops. Drawing on the Shanti Sena, the Peace Guard would undertake missions of peacemaking and peacebuilding as well as peacekeeping. UN forces, the authors argued, functioned in such a way that “the objectives, prejudices or policy of those who have succeeded in putting the UN machinery in motion will be clearly discerned.” See Weber (1993), 49.

<sup>25</sup> Cortright (2004).

<sup>26</sup> Wallerstein (2003).

alternative forms of power.<sup>27</sup> An alternative source of power was located in the popular opposition, rejecting the legitimacy of a “just war” in the context of the international political order. Nonetheless, in much the same way that social movements involved in electoral politics often reinforce the electoral system rather than the power of social movements,<sup>28</sup> the United Nations’ actions reinforced their own position in the international structure. As Hardt and Negri write, “imperial power can no longer discipline the powers of the multitude; it can only impose control over their general social and productive capacities.”<sup>29</sup>

While appealing to the United Nations might allow intervention organizations to claim a kind of political legitimacy, ultimately it would cement the agents of zero-sum power as the final arbiters of what qualifies as legitimate.<sup>30</sup> Establishing independence from “any particular nation state” while agreeing to work under the United Nations or a regional multinational body would severely constrain actions available to third-party intervention.<sup>31</sup> The power of popular movements is fundamental to social change, but the legitimacy of that power wells up from below, not from existing state or multi-state structures. Relying on the UN to open a state’s borders to nonviolent intervention by legalistic fiat will most likely produce sympathy for the régime, not the interventionists, and will make accusations of carpetbagging all the more potent.

<sup>27</sup> Additionally, one prominent aspect of the international political order is that negotiations between states are largely carried out by appointed, rather than elected, officials of the state government — diplomats, trade ministers, etc. — so that even in the traditional sense of legitimate accountability, the power a population has over such negotiations is indirect at best.

<sup>28</sup> See Piven and Cloward (1979), *xxi*, and Greaves (2004).

<sup>29</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 211.

<sup>30</sup> This does not mean, of course, that there is no utility in appealing to international bodies; in times of severe civil strife or genocide, for instance, it may well be necessary to engage the mainstream political agencies as a matter of survival. The caution is simply in regards to third-party intervention organizations appealing to the United Nations as a matter of course.

<sup>31</sup> Such a proposal was made most recently in developing a plan for an “intercultural peace team.” See Passion (2000).

Authority in intervention comes from the local organization and local activists, not an international political order predicated on a balance of military threat.

Nonviolent third-party intervention, unlike state-based or UN intervention, is by its nature subversive — not only of local power but of the very notion of the dominant international political order. Official sanctioning by an international or major Western political power would draw peacebuilding organizations into a system of hegemony and make them agents of this control. Not only would there be a new implicit agenda — to uphold the political system upon which the legitimacy is based — but the intervention would become immediately political. As I described in Chapter 3, organizations ideologically aligned with states have historically done more harm than good to local movements.

Moreover, because transnational organizing has often employed multinational institutions to check individual states' sovereignty, it has sometimes served to uphold Empire's regulation of such negotiations.<sup>32</sup> Like the missionaries of old, nongovernmental organizations act as “moral intervention ... prepar[ing] the stage for military intervention” and “clean[ing] up the devastation” when the war ends.<sup>33</sup> This violent intervention, classified as a “police action,” can then be legitimated by appealing to NGOs' claims of human rights violations. Witness the arguments by the United States for invading Afghanistan and Iraq, which included liberating women under the Taliban and punishing Saddam Hussein for crimes against the Kurds, both injustices originally highlighted by NGOs. In contrast to their relationship to state institutions, moreover, peacekeeping organizations often have “more cooperative than contentious”

<sup>32</sup> Smith, Pagnucco and Romeril (1994), 127.

<sup>33</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 37; Roy (2004).

negotiations with international governing bodies.<sup>34</sup> Thus while nonviolent strategy may appear to be the most salient difference between third-party peacebuilding and peacekeeping, a commitment to empowerment rather than control has the greatest impact. A commitment to empowerment must be held at all levels of intervention. Movements may adopt the strategy or tactics demonstrated by third-party trainers, only to find them useless or even destructive in their own political and social spaces.<sup>35</sup>

Many intervention organizations speak of opening “space” within the communities they serve, but for what is this space being opened? To Nonviolent Peaceforce, it is a question of survival: keeping nonviolent activists safe as they work within their communities — most likely the reason the Peaceforce defines its mission as “peacekeeping” despite being better described, in Galtung’s terms, as peacebuilding. Training for Change sees the potential for participatory democracy, explicitly encouraging the development of group-centered leadership as they delineate a measure of freedom for activism. For Hardt and Negri, autonomy is developed when opposition is enabled, “the essential key to every active political position in the world, every desire that is effective — perhaps of democracy itself.”<sup>36</sup> To a large extent what local activists do with the opened space is contingent on the local situation; the role of intervention is merely to make the work of the local activists more possible.

### **Intervention in the context of Empire**

Strategic nonviolence was developed as a way for marginalized groups to achieve material gains and secure political power. Third-party intervention has drawn heavily from this

<sup>34</sup> Smith, Pagnucco and Romeril (1994), 131.

<sup>35</sup> See Bob (2002), especially pp. 402-404.

<sup>36</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 211.

history, but adaptations must be made. Nonviolence as a strategy was developed primarily during the period of decolonization beginning with Gandhi's Indian independence movement; methods were constructed to delegitimize rulers and build local, autonomous power. In the past 20 years — the period in which nonviolent intervention was born — the parameters of international political authority and its relationship to local control have shifted dramatically. Former colonies are politically sovereign yet economically dependent on Western powers; most are bound by international treaties on human rights and political bodies such as the United Nations. Prior notions of First, Second or Third World status have given way to a hegemonic neoliberal ideology encompassing local political systems. In states where a functioning bureaucracy exists, authority may still be challenged by appealing to various offices, ministries and departments. Where such civil services are lacking, however, there is less concession to state authority, and an all-encompassing resistance is necessary.<sup>37</sup> As authority has been transferred to transnational bodies, countering Empire begins to look less like the Northern political opportunity model and more like Southern opposition. What in Northern protest movements might be termed “conflict escalation” might in the case of intervention be more precisely called “conflict intensification,” that which makes “hidden conflict more visible and open, for purposeful, nonviolent means.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Breaking out of the cycle**

Third-party intervention is a form of external assistance that fits into a model of nonviolent strategy, not unlike the “resource mobilization” any social movement might undertake. Usually, of course, the mobilization is occurring on the part of the intervention activists rather than the social movement; even if intervention occurs only upon invitation, the

<sup>37</sup> Boudreau (1996), 180–181.

<sup>38</sup> Fisher, Simon, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Jawed Ludin, Richard Smith, Steve Williams and Sue Williams (2000). *Working with Conflict: Skills & Strategies for Action*. Zed Books, New York, p. 5. As quoted in Lyke and Bock (2000), 17.

“organization” itself is élite and waiting to be utilized as a resource, not a movement searching for its benefactors.

More fundamentally, however, the relationship between those “inside” the conflict and those “outside” has changed. In an important sense, nonviolent intervention groups are *not* the modern equivalents of missionaries or humanitarians. All nations are now bound up in a political and economic system basing itself on the same standards of universality — variously including the principles of human rights and self-determination to which many social movements appeal. There is no longer an “external standpoint” from which intervention can operate, but rather “a new order that envelops the entire space of what it considers civilization.”<sup>39</sup> And any movements that may be considered outside “civilization” are quickly brought within its sphere by the intervention organizations hoping to support them. Different movements occupy different spaces within this transnational matrix — movements in the West will relate differently to Empire than movements in the Global South. For this reason, influence from Western organizations in the form of third-party intervention may well affect how non-Western movements structure themselves in organizing for change. In mobilizing for social justice, then, local movements and the intervention groups that support them will necessarily enter the domain of neoliberal Empire — but Western advocates will need to determine how best to accomplish this without setting up mirrors of Western liberal reform movements that will fail for want of the same sociopolitical structures in Western societies.

Though this new dynamic may at first hamper efforts for intervention organizations to be effective, it also offers new opportunities for mobilization and change. Social movements have often concentrated on the cyclical nature of protest; Ackerman and Kruegler, for instance,

<sup>39</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 32 and 11.

recommend “expand[ing] the repertoire of sanctions” existing in “latent traditions of activism and direct social conflict.”<sup>40</sup> Enlarging this local knowledge of types of resistance, “historical knowledge of struggles,” will continue to be necessary. A genealogy of resistance, in which “the union of erudite knowledge and local memories ... allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically,” is precisely the task interventionists should undertake.<sup>41</sup>

The analysis of social protest as cyclical, however, “is no longer adequate for recognizing the way in which contemporary struggles achieve global significance.”<sup>42</sup> Rather than leaving intervention strategists ideologically adrift, this movement away from formal alliances in the face of the neoliberal political context can be liberating in terms of long-term methods. Because of their relationship to Empire, “movements are immediately subversive in themselves and do not wait on any sort of external aid or extension to guarantee their effectiveness.”<sup>43</sup> Gamson traces the shift of pluralist politics in limiting its means against its own members as opposed to its challengers, against whom “a whole gamut of social control techniques” could be employed.<sup>44</sup> Because of Empire’s ongoing “state of exception,” in which emergency security is rendered permanent, the limits have been done away with for anything beyond rhetorical cover.<sup>45</sup> Instead of movements creating local organizers seeking local power against local opponents, each movement now necessarily “must attack at the heart of Empire.”<sup>46</sup> For nonviolent intervention,

<sup>40</sup> Ackerman and Kruegler (1994), 33–35.

<sup>41</sup> See Foucault (1980), 82–83.

<sup>42</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 57.

<sup>43</sup> Gamson (1990), 142–143.

<sup>44</sup> Gamson (1990), 142–143.

<sup>45</sup> See the introduction to Chapter 3.

<sup>46</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 58.

this means that transnational groups will have an increasingly important role to play in facilitating the connection between local struggles and cross-border movements for democracy.

### **De-emphasizing media exposure**

Many techniques of nonviolent direct action remain potent forces in the training and implementation of third-party intervention. One method that will be decreasingly effective, however, is the “paradox of repression.” In the past, social movements had utilized media coverage of violent repression of their activists to further delegitimize the moral authority of an oppressive government.<sup>47</sup> Using the “chain of nonviolence,” in which the awareness of nonviolent action suddenly moves powerholders to more just action, activists hope to change the nature of the conflict.<sup>48</sup> Many third-party intervention organizations still hold as a primary goal helping to publicize such repression, thus mobilizing the West to action.<sup>49</sup>

The communications industries, however, “integrate the imaginary and the symbolic within the biopolitical fabric, not merely putting them at the service of power but actually integrating them into its very functioning.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, because a globalized media has become so deeply invested in the political legitimacy nonviolent activists challenge, the chances for sustained, sympathetic coverage of repression are diminished.<sup>51</sup> The paradox of repression has become an intentional part of the engineered hegemony, creating a state of exception in order to legitimate the order of Empire. There are moments, of course, when elements of a

<sup>47</sup> Though not referred to using this phrase, see Ackerman and Kruegler (1994), 40-41, for a related discussion.

<sup>48</sup> See Rigby (1995), 456.

<sup>49</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams, for instance, acts to “interpret a nonviolent perspective to the media.” See Lyke and Bock (2000), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 33. For a definition of “biopolitical,” see Chapter 2.

<sup>51</sup> For example, the world media portrayal of the protests in Venezuela that returned a militarily-deposed Hugo Chávez to office downplayed repression of the activists and highlighted manufactured stories about violence instigated by the protesters. President Chávez had oriented himself against the political and economic structures of the United States, the International Monetary Fund and other related agencies.

state's oppression will place it in opposition to Empire and, like the key sectors of élites who can be persuaded to act, cultivating world media coverage will at times be advantageous. But as a strategic principle, movements may no longer be able to rely on the paradox of repression to overcome violence.<sup>52</sup>

Missing in the formulation of the “paradox” is the recognition of the massive state power that still exists, especially in the Global South. Despite Nigeria's Ogoni autonomy movement cultivating international support — including pressure from President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister John Major and President Nelson Mandela — it nonetheless suffered brutal repression. Not only was that repression a direct consequence of its change in tactics designed to gain international attention, but this attention was unable to halt the repression due to the structure of the Nigerian government.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, even the level of recognition afforded the Ogoni by the international press was only possible because of years of carefully-crafted campaigns. Less-visible movements for autonomy were crushed with no worldwide outrage.<sup>54</sup> Third-party intervention may help with problems of exposure, but it cannot avoid the risk of inviting oppression it will not be able to control.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Again, movements may be able to appeal to universal principles and treaties such as those embodied by the UN Charter (see Ackerman and Kruegler, 1994, 42) if the violence reaches the level of genocide. Strategic considerations for mobilization should not prohibit necessary considerations for survival.

<sup>53</sup> Bob (2002), 408.

<sup>54</sup> Bob (2002), 407.

<sup>55</sup> This is the primary argument levied against more “radical” intervention such as Christian Peacemaker Teams and the International Solidarity Movement — that they cause local governments to increase their repression overall, even while nonviolent resistance grows. See Chapter 6.

## **The structure and approach of intervention**

States and transnational bodies govern their populations “not on the basis of force itself but on the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace.”<sup>56</sup> Because of the nature of this biopolitical control, those struggling for social justice will be increasingly marginalized from the national and international systems in which they operate. Studies of public subaltern discourses suggest that a significant amount of protective ritualization occurs in the face of vastly disproportionate control, and the history of slave communities in the United States, as one example, indicates that growing movements for social justice cannot always afford to be visibly “organized.”<sup>57</sup> Fundamentally, therefore, transnational nonviolent empowerment should be about supporting local *movements* rather than organizations. Local groups, of course, can and should be partnered with, but only in the service of building a larger movement. Piven and Cloward have demonstrated how a focus on formal structures rather than popular movements has hampered social change in several historical contexts in the United States.<sup>58</sup> As self-proclaimed leaders of labor and civil rights movements began focusing more on the structure of their organizations and less on the popular groundswell that created the movements in the first place, the movements gradually lost momentum. “Organizers and leaders who continue strategies that ignore the social location of the people they seek to mobilize can only fail,” they write.<sup>59</sup> Because of the political control exercised by Empire, movements aided by

<sup>56</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 13.

<sup>57</sup> Scott (1990).

<sup>58</sup> Piven and Cloward (1979). See, for instance, *xxi-xxii*. In addition, international non-governmental organizations may well have a vested interest in the maintenance of the conflict, even if they do provide aid; nonviolent intervention should never, “like many other organizations in the field, fall into the trap of acting to ensure its own perpetuity.” See Howard and Levine (2001), 252–253.

<sup>59</sup> Piven and Cloward (1979), 36.

third-party intervention are most likely to be “resource-poor” in access to those in power, resembling the “poor people’s movements” that Piven and Cloward discuss.

Nonviolent conflict theorists often seem to see a need for a single entity, a “recognized name” to represent the nonviolent movement before complete success is possible.<sup>60</sup> But there will be a limit to the amount of preexisting power that can be harnessed by a developing nonviolent movement,<sup>61</sup> because Empire has the ability to bind civil society into a system of political control.<sup>62</sup> A focus on “social movement organizations,” moreover, invests in the role of “leaders” rather than communities.<sup>63</sup> Instead of social change, the goal becomes merely an agglomeration of traditional political power. Increasingly these “social movement organizations” will “undertake *acomodative strategies* that seek to assure the mainstream that the SMO is acceptable despite its also suspicious aspects.”<sup>64</sup> Because institutionalized systems of participation will often reinforce the dominant social order, professionalized social change organizations can act as sites for the exercise of state power. By colonizing these organizations, the state can delimit methods of participatory democracy, “streamlining” and thus managing popular dissent.<sup>65</sup> In order to truly develop “power-with,”<sup>66</sup> social movements must undertake “dual-power strategies” in which they both challenge existing institutions and “simultaneously embody the alternatives, thereby giving people the opportunity to practice self-governance and envision new political realities.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Beyerle (2004).

<sup>61</sup> See Ackerman and Kruegler (1994), 29.

<sup>62</sup> Hardt and Negri (2000), 25.

<sup>63</sup> See Kokopeli and Lakey (1985) for an insightful critique of focusing on “leaders” over “leadership.”

<sup>64</sup> Lofland (1996), 277. Emphasis is the author’s. Also see Boudreau (1996), 176.

<sup>65</sup> Greaves (2004), 227. This effect can be significantly reduced when the atmosphere is one in which “popular understandings of democracy [can] be more fully explored, articulated, and acted upon” rather than defined by the structure of participation. See p. 218.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>67</sup> See Reinsborough (2004), 194 and 198.

Movements may need “organization” in the broad sense, but they would not be served well by institutionalization. Intervention that focuses on SMOs alone prevents actual social change under the guise of establishing a negative peace, in which powerholders eventually bestow a small amount of power on movement leaders without relinquishing any structural control.<sup>68</sup> These perceived gains by the movement can allow oppressive governments to continue injustices — in particular, if they cause the West to no longer focus on the conflict, or if they increase the legitimacy of the government to the West.<sup>69</sup> Interventionists should act to counter this tendency rather than buying into the false legitimacy afforded by these despotic régimes.

### **Local and transnational networks**

More recent analyses of social movements have shown how preexisting networks of social bonds were used as a foundation for political action, nurturing movement organizers until independent communities could be formed.<sup>70</sup> While such an approach may be applicable to local movements, it is not a course of action that has served third-party intervention well.

Peace Brigades International, for instance, was founded in 1981 primarily by Quaker activists from the Global North. Participation has often been skewed toward privileged white activists, and while attempts to diversify the participants have been somewhat successful (in 2001, PBI counted team members from 17 states across the globe) the leadership has remained significantly disproportionate by national origin.<sup>71</sup> Following recommendations to try to prevent “structuring the context of political action” in racist and classist dynamics,<sup>72</sup> the more recently

<sup>68</sup> This is similar in a manner of degree to the way traditional humanitarian intervention by the United Nations relies on centralized governments, which in many cases are perpetrating the violence themselves.

<sup>69</sup> Power (2002) and Brahim (2000) have criticized the deference Western political leaders give to “official” state powerholders, even when it is those powerholders who perpetrate oppression.

<sup>70</sup> See, for instance, Morris (1984) and McAdam (1982).

<sup>71</sup> Coy (1997), 238–239; Howard and Levine (2001), 218.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, Coy (1997), 269.

formed Nonviolent Peaceforce specifically focused on creating a governing body with “global representation” by electing regional delegates from each part of the world.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, much of the recruitment of participants continues to be done through existing networks of nonviolence and peace groups, networks that are predominantly Western, white and upper-class.<sup>74</sup> Given that nonviolent social change is being undertaken to a much larger extent by communities of color, this Western ignorance — both of the Global South and activists of color in their own societies — is all the more troublesome. Fundraising is done largely in wealthy networks of peace activists and religious communities, and techniques for recruitment are formulated to appeal to these same groups.<sup>75</sup>

On a practical level, of course, it makes sense to utilize existing groups of peace activists, as they are the most likely to be willing to participate. But the focus needs to shift from using *transnational* organizations to using *locally-based* organizations. Rather than finding participants in the network of intervention organizations, which have almost exclusively drawn from privileged communities, transnational empowerment will truly arise when participants are drawn from networks of local social change organizations.

The history of transformational social movements can be traced from one locality to another: Gandhi began his work in nonviolence in the midst of early South African resistance to apartheid; Martin Luther King, Jr. studied Gandhi’s techniques extensively; Catholic students in Northern Ireland took to the streets in the model of the US civil rights movement. Ideally

<sup>73</sup> “Nonviolent Peaceforce,” 6.

<sup>74</sup> Nonviolent intervention organizations, like Peace Brigades, are often “embedded in a network of like organizations, and it is a collection of like individuals who largely network with other like individuals.” See Coy (1997), 240. The recommended “outreach strategy” for Nonviolent Peaceforce includes, as its first point, that “recruitment for a pilot project should be in co-operation with already existing pools.” See Junge and Wallis (2001), 277.

<sup>75</sup> Nonviolent Peaceforce notes that financial supporters will “influence the shape and focus of projects” (Howard, Schweitzer and Stieren, 178), but recommends that projects “should be advertised widely (websites, listserves, newspapers, newsletters, own website, etc.)” (Junge and Wallis, 277).

nonviolent intervention should be helping to facilitate this transference, not to supplant the transference itself.

While I argue that the nature of Empire has de-emphasized the effectiveness of local movements, state power has by no means melted away, as the discussion on the paradox of repression shows. Networks reach across these boundaries, “seem[ing] to embody elements of agent and structure simultaneously.”<sup>76</sup> But they are also shaped by those boundaries, and the interactions within them are not always balanced or mutually beneficial. The tendency, given this imbalance of traditional power, is for Western activists to see themselves as beneficiaries of unique, important knowledge. In fact, however, local movements have the most knowledge of their own situations and, indeed, their own paths toward liberation; they may simply need external actors to support them along the way. In describing their approach to nonviolent action in the Palestinian Territories, for instance, Huwaida Arraf and Adam Shapiro write:

The truth of the matter is, we’re not showing Palestinian society a new way to resist. Sit downs, marches, teach-ins, strikes are all part of the history of Palestinian resistance. It’s not the tactics that inspire people but rather either the victory or the strategy. [The strategy is] the building of a powerful nonviolent resistance movement.<sup>77</sup>

Activists in Guatemalan peace societies, truth and reconciliation commissions in South Africa and labor movements in South Korea are more likely to have practical knowledge of peacebuilding than religious idealists from Europe and North America. Interventionists’ role may in some cases be to demonstrate the power of nonviolence through a small victory or the collective development of nonviolent strategy, but ultimately the direction and method of that nonviolence comes from local activists, not interventionists. Recruitment must therefore utilize

<sup>76</sup> Keck and Sikkink (1998), 5.

<sup>77</sup> Arraf and Shapiro (2003), 74.

existing stores of experience from around the globe, creating a network of “popular knowledges,” to use Foucault’s term, that is greater than the sum of its parts — rather than pulling solely from isolated communities in the Global North.<sup>78</sup>

### **Organic structure and greenhouses**

The question, then, of how to structure intervention teams suggests two models. The first is the decentralized model of “affinity groups” or community assemblies. As outlined in Chapter 4, these are small collections of people who share core values and embody decentralized models of power. Though this organizational tactic has been in existence for some time, in the latter part of the twentieth century it was revitalized by pairing it with consensus decision-making, drawing from the feminist and anti-nuclear movements. Through the consensus model, individuals are empowered to make their own decisions and “centralized structures [are] for co-ordination, not control.”<sup>79</sup> Some authors have criticized the consensus model as an invention of the Global North, inherently benefiting the privileged and silencing those who are already oppressed.<sup>80</sup> This is an accurate assessment of how the consensus model has worked in some situations, in particular in the United States and Europe. I believe, however, that with the inclusion of anti-oppression training, the consensus model holds the most promise for true democracy among local groups. Far from a fetishization of the process itself, I read the history of movements for social justice as justifying this particular method. Interventionists should constantly be aware of the liberatory knowledge present in each local community, as they will have the best understanding of what type of “direct democracy” is most appropriate for them.

<sup>78</sup> To a large extent, Nonviolent Peaceforce is attempting to fulfill this vision, in that it serves as a coalition of sorts between a global range of peace and nonviolence organizations, many from the Global South. Thus the utilization of local movements to build a larger community of transnational empowerment already has a working model.

<sup>79</sup> Starhawk (1999).

<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, Cornell (2005).

Beyond the decision-making process, there must be a commitment to shared power; that is, a focus on leadership rather than leaders.<sup>81</sup> This is a significant break with Gandhian tradition, which highlighted the role of the charismatic leader, and also challenges traditional ideas of what might constitute a “peace army.” Such an approach is heavily emphasized in Training for Change’s third-party intervention manual, which focuses on a “core training” of skills necessary to empower all members of an intervention team to be able to contribute to a decision-making process in times of crisis. More directly, the shared-power model is necessary for effective anti-oppression functioning within each intervention team, particularly if — as is recommended<sup>82</sup> — each team is composed of individuals from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

A useful strategic model for organizing intervention also gives a reason to refrain from explicit mediation: Third-party groups work to shelter fragile nonviolent social movements, but not to prevent or dictate their development. Mediation will necessarily “impose certain standards of interaction.” In short, mediation sets conditions and acts to “constrain disputants’ behavior.”<sup>83</sup> Western mediation often imposes standards beneficial to NGOs, further mediation and Western involvement — but not necessarily to peace.

Hunter uses an analogy of nonviolent intervention as greenhouses. “It’s a very modest role — it’s the passive role of being glass: letting sunlight in, keeping strong wind out ... they become really important when the wind blows; otherwise movements might not even notice them.”<sup>84</sup> Using this model, the answer to constraints imposed by the international order is not

<sup>81</sup> Kokopeli and Lakey (1985), 13. Also see Mindell (1995).

<sup>82</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer, as quoted in Howard and Levine (2001, p. 219), who recommend that “both genders and people of various ethnicities should be placed together so all will be afforded equal safety by virtue of their proximity to one another” (p. 250).

<sup>83</sup> Princen (1994), 455.

<sup>84</sup> Hunter (2004b).

deconstructing sovereignty but constructing autonomy. Third-party intervention need not necessarily strategize about confronting Empire in order to allow for its operation; in nurturing community-based social movements, traditional power will be confronted as alternative sources of power are developed.

### **Back to culture**

One of the strengths of outside intervention is the ability of activists to model different modes of interaction in order to influence the dynamics of the conflict itself. This aspect, presence, is the most potent way for third-party intervention to spread information and techniques in a non-oppressive way. Rather than holding trainings for local activists — even experiential ones — behavior is physically articulated and demonstratively carried out. Because the struggles of nonviolent social movements are often seen as political as much as social acts, much of the work in this area is performed on the borders of the political/martial sphere: walking among and between balkanized neighborhoods, retrieving for burial the bodies of those killed in fighting, or defiantly participating in the aspects of everyday life in areas normally wracked by violence. After the Israeli military force closed the University of Hebron, for instance, Christian Peacemaker Teams hosted “English classes” for ousted students and faculty in front of the gates of the school.<sup>85</sup> After two and a half years of nonviolent intervention, the International Solidarity Movement can point to a marked increase in Palestinian nonviolent action.<sup>86</sup>

Thus most of the training for nonviolent intervention concerns itself with nonviolent political action and the techniques for carrying it out. Training for Change’s “core proficiencies” include the four direct modes of intervention as well as theoretical knowledge of nonviolence and

<sup>85</sup> Lyke and Bock (2000), 15.

<sup>86</sup> Andoni (2003), 182.

intervention strategy.<sup>87</sup> But beyond an examination of the history of the conflict in which intervention is taking place, little attention is focused on sociological restructuring.<sup>88</sup> If a goal is to model alternative *physical* dynamics, however, intervention teams must also be capable of modeling alternative *social* dynamics.<sup>89</sup>

“Military questions can never be addressed in isolation,” Hardt and Negri write, “and in the age of biopower and biopolitics they are woven together increasingly tightly with social, cultural, economic, and political issues.”<sup>90</sup> Intervention organizations may not wish to engage local activists or populations on the social or historiographical level because of concerns about the dynamics of privilege, but increasingly the merging of political and social control will require it. I am skeptical that effective presence can take place *without* a focus on the reconceptualization of histories and the reforming of narratives. Nonviolent activists as far back as Gandhi suggested a “constructive programme” that was “targeted at the immediate needs of people, whilst at the same time attempting to lay the foundations for a new kind of India.”<sup>91</sup>

Interventionists must offer both practical and cultural explanations for restructuring divided societies; physical action alone will not suffice. Intervention itself is a type of cultural discourse; activists create new knowledge of power through their presence. Only by systematically interrogating their own power and by being willing to connect to local activists through cultural discourse can interventionists actually practice empowerment. Issues of

<sup>87</sup> See Hunter and Lakey (2003), 25–39.

<sup>88</sup> There is, I should note, significant attention paid to the role of rank and privilege (in particular, in regards to “culture” and gender) throughout the training. It focuses first on the relationships between the intervention team and the local population, and second on relations within the teams themselves.

<sup>89</sup> In his discussion on “powerless mediators,” for instance, Elder argues that nonviolent intervention cannot change opponents’ cost-benefit calculations through threats or promises of aid, but “they can change the nature of the disputants’ interaction.” Princen (1994), 455.

<sup>90</sup> Hardt and Negri (2004), 65.

<sup>91</sup> Rigby (1995), 465.

neocolonialism are vitally important, but just as outside activists can demonstrate alternative social structures through their actions without oppression, so too can they offer new intellectual understandings of social structures. A method that changes the “dynamics of the conflict itself” through “directly influencing the field of conflict” simply cannot do so without effectively engaging models of sociological reinscription.<sup>92</sup> Even if specific techniques cannot be developed in the same way physical presence actions can, training must at least familiarize interventionists with the dynamics of changing historical interpretations over time. Through “cultural synthesis,” interventionists and local activists can *co-intentionally create* the knowledge necessary for their liberation. Such a process denies “the *invasion* of one *by* the other, but affirms the undeniable *support* each gives *to* the other.”<sup>93</sup> In the same way that intervention from the West may unintentionally restructure local movements, interventionists’ interaction with local movements has the potential to change their own organizing — and, perhaps, the West itself. Nonviolent activists recognize that if transnational empowerment works, again and again — as it has, increasingly, over the past two decades — the very foundations of the international political order could be altered.

<sup>92</sup> See Hunter and Lakey (2003), 22

<sup>93</sup> Freire (2000), 181. Emphasis is the author’s. Also see p. 69.