

Elements of Resistance: Violence, Nonviolence, and the State

By Jeriah Bowser

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*To Mark Seis, thanks for the computer,
and for believing in me.*

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donate to me on the Hampton Institute website.

Introduction

“STOP! Please!!! Please stop!! What the fuck are you doing to my arm!?! HELP!! Somebody fucking help me! Get these mother-fuckers off of me!! You’re breaking my arm! Oh God please stop, ok ok I’m sorry I called you a mother-fucker... just fucking STOP you goddamn mother-fucking sadist! Oh God please stop, I can’t take it anymore, let go of my fucking arm!!! PLEASE!!! Somebody get them off of me!!!!”

Brandon was screaming for me, I knew it. I was his friend, and we had sworn to watch each other’s backs if shit was going down, but I backed down. I couldn’t, I was too scared that I would be beat too, and I was still healing and limping from my last brawl with the guards. There was no point in fighting back, who were we kidding? Two scrawny suburban white kids against eight coked-out, 200-pound, angry Jamaican guards didn’t stand a chance. Brandon’s screams went on for hours. They ended up dislocating his arm and breaking several ribs, not to mention the excruciating pain that they extracted from him by grinding his limbs into the concrete floor and rubbing his face against the ground until it was raw and bleeding. I didn’t get up and fight the guards that night. I didn’t even try to distract them by breaking a light or throwing a chair. No, I rolled over in my bed, stuffed toilet paper into my ears to drown out the horrible sounds, and cried all night long while his screams echoed up and down the hallway and around my head until they finally spilled out into the open air, being gradually absorbed by the slow crashing of the waves on the beautiful Caribbean beach that lay just a few feet away from our concrete enclosure that we would often look longingly at, yet never actually sink our feet into.

I cried because I didn’t understand. My 15 year-old self couldn’t possibly conceptualize the complexities of thousands of years of injustice and oppression that had culminated in Brandon being tortured thousands of miles away from home by strangers while I and dozens of other kids sat cowardly nearby. I didn’t know about the long dark history of the island of Jamaica - rife with genocide, racism, and slavery - which created an atmosphere of unrestricted brutality from the Jamaican guards who saw these snotty American white kids as perfect targets of aggression as they worked through their own issues of oppression and power. I didn’t know about the background of the American private for-profit juvenile prison system that I was currently incarcerated in. I didn’t understand that the sickness of my own family dynamics which had led me to this facility was the result of thousands of years of religious fundamentalism, Patriarchal dominance, and authoritarianism. I didn’t understand the dynamics of fear and power, resistance and hegemony, colonialism and conquest; I didn’t even know what any of those words meant. I simply knew that something was deeply, deeply wrong with the world, I was scared, and

I didn't know what to do about it. And so I cried.

Many years after that experience, I am just now beginning to understand what happened that night in a dark corner of the tiny island of Jamaica. I am beginning to understand what is wrong with the world. I have developed some language to describe my experiences. After many years of therapy I am now able to articulate my deepest, darkest memories and emotions and see that they are, unfortunately, a shared experience with many other living creatures that I share this planet with. I am beginning to understand the power of ideas that created a system that allowed Brandon to be tortured that night and numerous other nights, and that allow similar and worse atrocities to be carried out today all over the world. I am starting to realize that what Brandon and I experienced that night is what billions of other living beings experience every day, as ideas about the way the world should be create situations that allow for an incalculable level of violence and suffering to be inflicted on the world.

As I begin to understand all of this, I realize that I have a responsibility to act on what I have experienced and what I know. As I look around at the world and see terrible acts of violence and injustice happening all around me, I realize that I also have a voice. I have a voice that must speak to its experiences, or I will go insane trying to internalize the chaos that I observe around myself. This book is my voice. It is my experience with resisting destructive ideas, systems, and people, nothing more.

I therefore dedicate this book to those who resist: to Brandon, to every child who resisted Tranquility Bay or any other WWASPS program or boot camp, to every child who has resisted oppression in any form, to every human who has ever resisted human ignorance and destruction, to every non-human animal, tree, river, forest, or coral reef that struggles to survive in a world bent on killing you, and to the spirits of all those who have died in the struggle. As long as there exists those who believe in destructive and oppressive ideas and systems, there will be those few who resist those ideas in large and small ways, some known but mostly unknown. May this book serve your struggle.

A Common Language, A Common Goal (Chapter 1)

Every living being on this planet has experienced injustice and oppression at some point or another and in some form or another. As humans, our lives are shaped by blatantly violent and subtly coercive forces that compel us to act in certain ways and to not act in other ways. It is, unfortunately, an unavoidable part of the very fabric of our everyday lives, whether we realize it or not. For some, this oppression is obvious and terrible, as they regularly experience assault, rape, arrest, murder, starvation, and theft in their families and communities. Others experience it to a slightly lesser degree as they are openly mocked, discriminated against, and treated with lesser value than other members of their culture due to their gender, sexual orientation, age, health, class, or race. Still others might not see these forces in their lives at all, as their experience with oppression is on the receiving end when they receive wealth and power at the expense of those underneath them on the pyramid of social inequality.

There is a reason why it is normal and acceptable for living creatures to treat each other with hatred and disrespect. The reason is that a lot of people believe in certain ideas. There are many ideas out there, but unfortunately the most popular ideas are also the most destructive ones. For example, there is a very popular idea out there that if you take the sexual organs of a cotton plant, flatten it into a piece of paper, dye it green, and make figures and pictures of dead royalty on it, you can then use this piece of paper to have power and control over other living creatures. If someone has a lot of these pieces of paper, they can purchase whatever they want and kill billions of humans, cows, fish, forests, streams, or whatever else they can come up with. The question of whether somebody *should* do these things is never brought into question, because the fact of the matter is that they *can*. This is a very bad idea.

Another popular idea is that certain humans can own other animals and areas of our planet. When certain humans are allowed to own other animals, human or otherwise, they often do very bad things to them. When certain humans own parts of our planet, they often like to create imaginary lines called borders and kill other people who also want to live in that part of the Earth, as well as doing great damage to the Earth as they take trees, water, plants, minerals, and other parts of the Earth away in order to make lots of money. Someone who owns another animal or a part of the Earth can do almost whatever they want to them, even very horrible things, just because they *can*. This is also a very bad idea.

There is also the idea that certain people have less value because of their skin color, their gender, their sexual orientation, their age, their education, their religion, their cultural

values, how much green paper their family has acquired through the generations, or various other reasons. This is another very bad idea that has caused incalculable levels of suffering in our world, and continues to do so every day.

There are also some good ideas, though. There is an idea that all living creatures should be treated with respect and dignity. There is an idea that all humans are of equal value and that nobody should be able to hurt or oppress someone else regardless of how much money or power they have. There is an idea that everybody should have the freedom to live how they choose as long as they don't hurt or oppress anybody else. These ideas are often called 'radical', 'revolutionary', and 'dangerous', because they are a threat to those who have a lot of green paper and imaginary lines on the Earth. These radical ideas, although they seem like good ideas to most people who take the time to think about them, are unfortunately not the ideas that run the world. Therefore, those who believe these radical, dangerous ideas and believe that they are worth fighting for must resist the dominant and powerful bad ideas and those who enforce them. This is called 'resistance.'

Those who engage in resistance have acquired a very large arsenal of tactics and strategies for engaging in resistance over the past several thousand years, and resisters today have a wealth of knowledge to draw upon. On the other hand, many resisters are also struggling with the challenges of living in a new era. The old ideas don't always work in this age of expanding technology, Orwellian surveillance, and increasingly militarized police forces.

Within the world of resistance, there are many different ideas for what ideas we should be fighting for and how we should fight. This book will aim to address the latter question: how should we resist? Although I have many of my own ideas about what we should be fighting for and some of those ideas will become clear throughout the book, my focus is really on the second question, as we will explore many different ideas of resistance with the hope of coming to a more complete understanding of the history of resistance, why it is necessary, and how you can increase the effectiveness of your resistance.

When someone asks the question, "How should we resist?" there are two big ideas that immediately jump up and loudly answer, "Resist this way!" Idea one says that you should resist using violent tactics, and idea two says that you should use nonviolent tactics. Both of these ideas have their heroes, success stories, philosophies, and various arguments for their legitimacy and supremacy. Both of these ideas have a long history of successful resistance, and both ideas have produced many incredible thinkers, writers, activists, radicals, and revolutionaries who have left a legacy that is admirable and inspirational.

Here is where I think there is a problem. Amidst the shouting match between these two big ideas of violence and nonviolence there is also an idea that I think has not received much attention, yet it is very important. This idea says that both methods of resistance are

good ideas. This idea says that there are not just two main ways of resisting, but rather there is one bigger idea that includes both of the other ideas within it. This idea attempts to dissolve the rigidly polarized worlds of violent and nonviolent resistance by introducing a model that, by introducing a concept called colonization into the dialogue, encompasses the whole spectrum of resistance. This idea honors the experiences and beliefs of all people so that that any individual or group of people can effectively resist bad ideas until they no longer exist.

This book is about that idea. This book is not abstract theory or an attempt at stirring up more in-fighting and drama, but rather a guidebook for effective social change. Whether your resistance takes place on the level of your family dynamics, your community, your government, or your biosphere, this book is meant to help you resist oppressive violence wherever you find it and wish to end it. This book is also meant to be taken as whole. Please read the whole book before you make any judgments or decisions. I realize that many individuals will not agree with all of my assertions, my politics, my logic, or the narrative of history I present, and that is totally fine. I am not attempting to 'win' anybody to my ideological camp; I am simply trying to empower you to resist oppressive violence wherever and whenever you encounter it.

Lexicon

As we begin, I would like to present a simple lexicon of the definitions I am using in this book, as I realize that all words have at least two meanings- their definition and their connotation. I have chosen these definitions based on the connotations I am trying to convey with them, therefore they may not retain their original definition nor even the connotations that you associate with them. I would ask for some understanding and leniency as we struggle to find common vocabulary on this topic.

Violence: Violence is any physical, emotional, verbal, institutional, structural or spiritual behavior, attitude, policy or condition that diminishes, dominates or destroys others and ourselves. Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and/or prevent people from reaching their full human potential. Johan Galtung, one of the founders of Peace and Conflict Studies and creator of the Violence Triangle, posited that violence generally falls into three categories: direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence.

Direct Violence can take many forms, but its most obvious form involves the use of physical force, as in assault, rape, a murder, a mugging, etc. Verbal violence is also a form of direct violence, as in hateful and derogatory speech intended to do harm to another.

Structural Violence exists when some groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc. are assumed to have, and in fact do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc., and this unequal advantage is built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world. These tendencies may be overt such as Apartheid or more subtle such as traditions or tendency to award some groups privileges over another.

Cultural violence is the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that we have been taught since childhood and that surround us in daily life regarding power and the necessity of violence. We can consider, for example, dominant narratives of history which glorify genocide, rape, and theft and present them as necessary evils in the face of cultural progression. Almost all cultures recognize that killing a person is murder, but killing tens, hundreds or thousands during a declared conflict is called 'war' or 'colonizing a country,' and the casual killing of civilians by the State is declared 'collateral damage.'

It is important to realize that there is interplay between the components of the triangle. *Cultural* and *Structural Violence* cause *Direct Violence*, while *Direct Violence* reinforces *Structural* and *Cultural Violence*. *Direct Violence* is visible as behavior in the triangle, however this violence does not come out of nowhere; its roots are *Cultural* and *Structural*. For the purposes of this book, property destruction is not considered violent unless it directly jeopardizes another living creature's ability to support and sustain their existence.^{1 2}

The State: By the State, I mean any hierarchical political organization which holds a monopoly on violence within its defined territorial boundaries and serves to 'legitimize' the use of violence on other States, on its own citizens, and on the Earth with the purpose of increasing the wealth, power, and oppressive capacity of the ruling class of that State.

Pacifism: Pacifism is a broad ideology which encompasses many schools of thought and attitudes of resistance. There are two beliefs which unite all pacifists - being anti-war and against oppressive violence. Within that spectrum are many approaches to resistance, ranging from non-resistance to active resistance. For the purposes of this book, I need to create an ideological distinction between ineffective, disengaged non-resistance and active, engaged, effective resistance, and although the term *pacifism* is not completely accurate, it will serve the purposes of this book. Therefore, I will use the term *pacifism* to denote nonresistance and *active nonviolence* to denote resistance, although not all who identify as pacifists are nonresistors. I realize this may be a troubling choice of definitions

¹ "Galtung's Violence Triangle" - Johan Galtung (1969)

² "Understanding Violence Triangle and Structural Violence" - Rajkumar Bobichand (2012)

to some, but due to the poverty of language I could not find a better way to distinguish the two ideologies. Thus, when I use the term *pacifism*, I am describing an ideology of nonviolent nonresistance; a philosophy which forbids an individual to engage in direct oppressive violence, but does not allow for effective resistance to oppressive violence. The writings of Martin Buber, Leo Tolstoy, John Howard Yoder, Adin Ballou, The Buddha, and Greg Boyd are good examples of pacifist ideology.

Active Nonviolence: Also known as *Satyagraha*, *the third way*, *nonviolent resistance*, and *nonviolent direct action*, this philosophy distinguishes itself from pacifism in many important and often misunderstood ways. Active nonviolence posits that through offensive, yet loving and creative action, violence can be overthrown with a dedication to and willingness to suffer for one's cause. Adherents to this philosophy often put themselves in physical danger and engage in direct action, property destruction, and civil disobedience to the State, but their actions are carefully planned as to never harm or assault another living being. Active nonviolence as a form of resistance has gained great popularity in social change movements over the past century. The writings/actions of Mohandas Gandhi, MLK Jr., Dorothy Day, Shane Claiborne, Walter Wink, Yeshua, and many others are representative of *active nonviolence*.

Violent Resistance: Any action taken that intentionally harms another living beings life, health, or well-being for the purpose of resisting oppression will be understood to be *violent resistance* or *violent direct action*. Advocates of violent resistance believe that violence is a powerful, effective weapon that the State uses to legitimize itself everyday, and those that resist the State are therefore entitled to also use violence to defend themselves against oppression. Almost all revolutions and resistance movements throughout human history have been violent, and many nonviolent movements have been bolstered by their violent counterparts, as we'll explore later on in the book. Advocates of violent resistance include Huey Newton, Malcolm X, Ernesto Guevara, Derrick Jensen, Ward Churchill, Peter Gelderloos, Ted Kaczynski, John Brown, Johann Most, Luigi Galleani, Emma Goldman, Victor Serge, Severino Di Giovanni, and Naomi Jaffe.

Colonization: Colonization is the illegitimate economic exploitation and political domination of a people by a violent oppressor, as well as the separation of colonized peoples from their individuality and culture. Frantz Fanon, one of the greatest theorists of colonization and decolonization, has explored this concept exhaustively, and we will borrow heavily from his writings as we continue throughout this book. Fanon believed that the rich history, culture, and wisdom of oppressed peoples are physically and symbolically destroyed, and in their place the colonizer creates a people who deserve only to be ruled and exploited. The colonizer reconstructs colonized peoples as 'lazy' and 'unproductive,' thereby justifying low wages or coercive systems of labor. He also reconstructs them as 'stupid,' thereby justifying the imposition of the colonial power's institutions and practices - boarding schools, religious training centers, and plantations/factories. Finally, he

constructs them as 'savage' and 'dangerous,' thereby justifying military conquest, police repression, and coercive forms of social control.³ The result is a people "*in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality.*"⁴ Fanon believed it was important to realize that colonialism, "*hardly ever exploits the whole of a country. It contents itself with bringing to light the natural resources, which it extracts, and exports to meet the needs of the mother country's industries, thereby allowing certain sectors of the colony to become relatively rich. But the rest of the colony follows its path of underdevelopment and poverty, or at all events sinks into it more deeply.*"⁵

Decolonization: Decolonization is both the act of physically freeing a territory from the external control of settlers and the psychological act of freeing the consciousness of the native from the effects of colonization: the states of alienation and dehumanization. Fanon posits three premises in his theory of decolonization:

- a.) the act of colonization is never legitimate, as it is rooted in exploitation and oppressive violence;
- b.) due to the illegitimacy of colonization, the oppressed (the colonized) are entitled to two actions: the reclamation of physical liberation and sovereignty as well reclamation from the psychological suffering of colonization;
- c.) almost no nonviolent options are available which serve the ends of both physical and psychological liberation.

Due to this reasoning, Fanon concludes that violent resistance is not only justified, but required in order for the oppressed to fully decolonize themselves and resist oppressive violence. While there are some critiques of Fanon's theory, I believe it a helpful model to help us understand the complexities of and requirements for effective decolonization⁶.

Civil Disobedience: Henry Thoreau, a mid-18th century American philosopher, coined the term *Civil Disobedience* in his essay of the same name, written in 1849. He defined civil disobedience as willful disobedience to laws which one considers unjust or hypocritical, as he wrote, "*Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once?*"⁷ as well as, "*If the machine of government is of such a nature that it requires you*

³ "*Towards the African Revolution*" - Frantz Fanon (1969)

⁴ "*Black Skin, White Masks*" - Frantz Fanon (1952)

⁵ "*The Wretched of the Earth*" - Frantz Fanon (1965)

⁶ "*Frantz Fanon: Colonialism and Alienation: Concerning Frantz Fanon's Political Theory*" - Renate Siebert (1974)

⁷ "*Resistance to Civil Government*" - Henry David Thoreau (1849)

*to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law.*⁸ Thoreau laid the theoretical groundwork for many resistance leaders and groups who followed him, including Gandhi and MLK Jr. Civil disobedience is an essential facet of any resistance movement, and can look like occupying a public space, tax resisting, draft resisting, sabotage and property destruction, or armed insurrection.

⁸ *“Resistance to Civil Government”* - Henry David Thoreau (1849)

Business As Usual (Chapter 2)

Before we begin discussing methods of resistance, let's establish a baseline of why resistance is necessary. As humans living on the planet Earth, we have a long history of treating each other, non-human animals, and all other living beings on this planet with violence, disrespect, and hate. There are perhaps millions of ways that we have invented to harm and kill each other and an exhaustive list of every act of violence that is happening against the Earth and all of her inhabitants would take much more room than this book could hold and a much better scholar than I. There are, however, a few statistics and a general level of awareness of the daily ways that those in power (that is, those who have lots of green paper and imaginary Earth lines) perpetuate violence against us and all that we all need to face and accept as we move forward with this discussion of social change.

One very common and almost invisible way that violence happens all around us every day is through economic disparity, also known as social stratification or wealth inequality. Due to a long history of the reign of bad ideas (the commodification of all living things, the creation of interest-bearing currency, and the inherent selfishness, competition, and violence associated with capitalism) we currently are witnessing the greatest disparity of wealth and resources in the history of humanity. Most of the humans living on this planet do not have access to the basic resources to survive and live a healthy, meaningful life, while a very small number of humans hoard the vast majority of the resources of the planet in order to spend them in foolish, extravagant, and wasteful ways. In 2005, the wealthiest 20% of the world accounted for 76.6% of total private consumption and the world's middle 60% accounted for 21.9% of total consumption, leaving the poorest 20% consuming just 1.5% of the world's total resources. To further highlight the gross inequality, the wealthiest 10% accounted for 59% of all consumption, while the poorest 10% accounted for just 0.5% of all consumption of resources⁹.

Despite the rhetoric of 'trickle down' theories, the economic gap is increasing exponentially. The total wealth of the top 8.3 million people around the world rose 8.2% to \$30.8 trillion in 2004, giving them control to nearly a quarter of the world's financial assets. In other words, about 0.13% of the world's population controlled 25% of the world's financial assets in 2004. A 2010 study found that at least a third of all private financial wealth, and nearly half of all offshore wealth, is owned by world's richest 91,000

⁹ World Bank Development Indicators, 2008

people – just 0.001% of the world’s population. The next 51 percent of all wealth is owned by the next 8.4 million — just 0.14% of the world’s population¹⁰.

Another way to look at this would be to line up ten people and put ten bowls of soup in front of them. One person would eat six bowls of soup, another would eat two bowls, and another person would eat one bowl; leaving the remaining seven people to fight over the remaining one bowl of soup. This analogy may make it easier to understand why, according to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty and easily preventable causes, and they “*die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and the conscience of the world. Being meek and weak in life makes these dying multitudes even more invisible in death.*”¹¹

Seven people fighting over one bowl of soup explains why over half of the world's human population- over three and a half billion people- live on less than \$2.50 a day, why 1.1 billion people in developing countries (aka the neoliberal colonies) have inadequate access to water, 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation, and why 790 million people are chronically malnourished. Seven people fighting for one bowl of soup allows 12% of the world’s population to use 85% of the available water, and means that over a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their name¹².

The fact that this is all normal and perfectly acceptable partially explains why the amount of money the US spent on cosmetics last year (approximately 8 billion dollars) could provide water and sanitation to every human in the world, saving hundreds of thousands of lives. This disparity means that the US government to spend almost a trillion dollars a year on the military (that is, on instruments of violence and death) while that same amount of money could, in one year, send every child in the world to school and provide them with school materials¹³. The amount of money the world spends on their militaries in one year (around one and a half trillion dollars) could provide potable water, adequate nutrition, appropriate healthcare, and education to every one of the world’s inhabitants. But we’d rather invent and create expensive machines for hurting and killing each other. Business As Usual.

Speaking of killing each other, around 180 million people died in the 20th century due to

¹⁰ “*Some 600,000 join millionaire ranks in 2004*”- Eileen Alt Powell- Associated Press, June 9, 2005

¹¹ As if this statistic isn’t horrible enough already, know that those numbers are only counting children under the age of 5. If we counted children up to the age of ten, the numbers of dead every day would almost double. For more information on global inequality and child hunger, a great resource is www.globalissues.org

¹² <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats#src21>

¹³ Despite the oft-quoted number of \$350 billion dollars a year spent on the US military, the real number is closer to a trillion dollars a year when you factor in discretionary and nondiscretionary funds, as well as money paid towards the debt of past military spending.

war, genocide, massacres, and other State functions¹⁴. That is a far larger number than in any other century of human existence, partly due to the fact that there were more people alive in the 20th century than ever before, and partly due to the fact that the State is becoming more violent and destructive as it continuously evolves and assumes its true intent and purpose- to eradicate life on this planet by systematically turning all of life into a commodity, and then into dead capital. Every single one of those 180 million deaths is the direct result of State violence, and yet we are on course to break that record in the 21st century due to the continued proliferation of war, genocide, and other human atrocities. Why do we continue to kill our own species at a historically unprecedented rate? Because that is just the way it is, because that is Business As Usual.

We harm our own species in many other ways as well. One out of every four women is raped in her life, and another 19% fend off rape attempts¹⁵. Over 64 million girls worldwide are child-brides, while another 140 million have undergone female genital mutilation. There are at least 12 million women in forced labor worldwide, and 4.5 million of those women are forced into sex-slavery. Rape as a tactic of war is a common practice, as conservative estimates suggest that 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide¹⁶. This is nothing to be alarmed at, however, it is simply Business As Usual

Religious and sectarian violence has claimed the lives of at least 10 million people since 1900, and is on the rise in almost every region of the world. At least 76% of the world's population faces some sort of formal or informal restriction on their faith¹⁷. No worries, Business As Usual.

Violence against individuals due to sexual orientation and gender identity bias claims at least 5000 human lives every year, although the real number is probably much higher, due to lack of reporting in most countries. Seventy-six countries still criminalize same-sex relationships, and five countries enforce the death penalty against homosexuals¹⁸. Again, nothing to see here, merely Business As Usual.

Racialized violence, domestic violence, honor killings, judicial violence (death penalty, assassinations, and mass incarceration), slavery, genocide of indigenous peoples, the list goes on and on. The longer one looks at the facts, the clearer it becomes that oppressive

¹⁴ “*Atrocities: The 100 Deadliest episodes in Human History*” - Matthew White (2011)

¹⁵ “*WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women*” - World Health Organization (2005)

¹⁶ These and more statistics, information, and resources on violence towards women can be found at www.unwomen.org and www.vday.org

¹⁷ <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/01/14/religious-hostilities-reach-six-year-high/>

¹⁸ “*Hate Crimes and Violence Against LGBT People*” - Michelle A. Marzullo and Alyn J. Libman (2009)

violence surrounds us and is integrated into the very fabric of our culture. Business As Usual.

Humans are not the only recipients of violence in our world, in many ways we actually have it pretty good compared to what most non-human animals experience on a daily basis, as more than 150 billion non-human animals are killed by humans every year by the meat, egg, and dairy industry. This doesn't include the additional billions of animals killed for fur, feathers, leather, hunting, medical testing, cosmetics and cosmetic testing, blood-sports, shelters, zoos, rodeos, amusement parks, or any of the various reasons that humans kill other animals for every day¹⁹. The show must go on, Business As Usual!

Our planet itself is dying due to our cultures insatiable appetite for more and more 'natural resources' to consume and turn into piles of money. Over 90% of the large fish in the oceans are gone. Between 150 to 200 species of flora and fauna become extinct every day, almost 10,000 times the acceptable 'background' rate, with predictions of 30-50% of all known species becoming extinct by 2050²⁰. Over 95% of the standing forests in the US are gone, the soils of the once-fertile breadbasket of the Midwest are extremely depleted, and over 37% of the rivers in the US are declared "unusable" due to pollution and contamination. The impacts of climate change are only beginning to be felt. Atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are at their highest in 650,000 years, oceans are becoming warmer and more acidic, and the population of zooplankton, the basis of the marine food chain, has dropped 73 percent since 1960. The largest insect infestation in the history of North America destroyed millions of miles of forest in the western United States, and is now spreading north, through Canada into the boreal forests of the subarctic²¹. This is all necessary, because it is Business As Usual.

The increase in the amount of heat in the oceans over the last thirty years amounts to 17 x 10²² Joules. That measure of heat is equal to exploding a Hiroshima bomb in the ocean every second for the same thirty years²². Averaging over all land and ocean surfaces across the Earth during the past 134 years, global temperatures have increased roughly 1.53°F (0.85°C)²³, and are still increasing at an ever-alarming rate. Rising global temperatures are speeding the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, many of which feed the world's greatest rivers. The thickness of the Arctic ice cap has decreased 40% since

¹⁹ "The state of food and agriculture- 2003" - Food and Agriculture Organization for the United Nations (2003)

²⁰ "Holocene Extinctions" - Samuel T. Turvey (2009)

²¹ For more information on the North American land enclosure, see:

<http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/implications-of-land-ownership.html>

²² <http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2013/09/what-ocean-heating-reveals-about-global-warming/>

²³ <http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/fcons/fcons4.asp>

the late 1960s²⁴. The great Himalayan glaciers which feed such mighty rivers as the Indus, the Brahmaputra, the Mekong, the Yangtze, the Yellow, and the Ganges, are rapidly melting and could cease to maintain an annual flow as early as 2035. The percentage of Earth's land area stricken by serious drought more than doubled from the 1970s to the early 2000s due to increased evaporation caused by rising temperatures²⁵. These must all be perfectly acceptable statistics, for they are Business As Usual²⁶.

To put it simply, Business As Usual, through its various incarnations as States, international banks, and corporations, is killing us, is killing the planet, and isn't about to stop anytime soon. The daily level of systemic violence which is being perpetuated by the current order of things is often presented as 'just the way things are' and 'it may not be perfect but it's the best we have.' Reformers, revolutionaries, and resisters of all types reject that argument, and demand that Business As Usual is totally unacceptable and must end immediately. The violence that is being enacted on planet Earth and all her inhabitants every day is the highest it has ever been in human history, and there are individuals and ideas that are directly responsible for this. No matter what your personal opinions, philosophies, beliefs, or convictions are, this is a truth that we must accept and realize. No matter if you spend your day watching TV, campaigning for a social change movement, or actively engaging in armed struggle against your local State entity, the maximum level of global violence possible is still happening every single day until we, collectively as a species, stop it.

It must be understood that any action taken to stop this insane cycle of violence, no matter how violent, could not possibly be more violent than the daily level of violence that is happening every single day of every single week of every single month of every single year that we don't stop it. No direct action, no bomb, no armed struggle, no method of revolution could ever possibly hope to meet or exceed the level of systemic violence that is being executed by the continued existence of these very bad ideas. Even all-out nuclear war, as catastrophic and violent as that would be, would ultimately mean the cessation of this oppressive system and thus the ending of this culture which necessitates violence at every turn to maintain its existence, and would ultimately be less violent than the continuation of Business As Usual.

For many of my readers, this summation of Business As Usual must come as a shock and gross exaggeration, as they look outside their windows and see no such violence in their world. If this describes you, then I would challenge you to look beyond the facade of

²⁴ "Himalayan Glaciers: Climate Change, Water Resources, and Water Security" - The National Academies Press (2012)

²⁵ http://www.ucar.edu/news/releases/2005/drought_research.shtml

²⁶ For more on Global Warming and some new perspectives on how we can deal with this crisis, see: <http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/age-of-fever.html>

normalcy and to try to see and understand the daily, often invisible and subtle ways that oppressive violence is happening around you. As inheritors of the fruits of thousands of years of colonization, theft, and slavery, it is often painful and difficult to see and acknowledge the violence that is hidden away in other regions of the world, other neighborhoods, other families, other people, and during different time periods but I assure you, violence has and will continue to take place.

This understanding should not be seen as an immediate 'call to arms', but as a simple reality check that *the maximum level of oppressive violence that the world has ever seen is happening everyday due to the continuation of Business As Usual*. The most violent act we can possibly do is sit there and do nothing. No-one is innocent of this violence, no-ones hands are clean, and we cannot claim pacifism as long as we continue allowing this system to perpetuate itself on the planet and all of her inhabitants. We are all complicit. Pacifism cannot truly exist in today's globalized, post-modern world. Even a simple act of purchasing a sandwich, a pair of jeans, or a tank of gas is participating in war, theft, rape, genocide, ecocide, ethnocide, and colonization. Even for those rare few who actually manage to divest themselves from industrial society, those individuals who find creative ways to avoid paying taxes, using currency, or working at jobs that facilitate destruction, the violence is still not slowing due to those positive and thoughtful actions.

We must face this horrible, uncomfortable reality if we are to see the world accurately and engage in it effectively. No matter the path we choose or our personal beliefs, this system cannot be allowed to continue destroying life on this planet. Our survival as a species depends on this. The continued ability of our planet to support and sustain life depends on it. There are no bystanders or observers in this cosmic struggle, you are either complicitly participating in our collective demise or you are actively resisting. Whether you like it or not, whether you are aware of it or not, whether you are willing to admit it or not, every action you take is either working towards oppression or liberation.

As Howard Zinn said, "*You can't be neutral on a moving train.*"

Nihilism and Resistance (Chapter 3)

Facing the terrible totality of humanity's destructive acts on each other and our environment can be a deeply depressing and disempowering experience. In the face of such horror and overwhelming violence, it can be easy to adopt a nihilist perspective, to think that one person can't possibly do anything to stop all this, so why even try?

This is an extremely important question, and one that I believe many people secretly ask themselves every day as they face news headlines declaring yet more wars, famines, terrorist attacks, environmental destruction, disease outbreaks, and mass shootings. The globalized connectedness of the internet, although having many positive qualities, also contains an increased measure of overwhelming disempowerment to those who are actively concerned with the current state of our world. No longer can one concern themselves with just their immediate community, but we must now face the enormous amount of globalized atrocities happening everyday, with live feeds and instant updates giving us a front-row seat to war, genocide, starvation, and oppression. This experience can be very disempowering to many people who feel that they cannot possibly stop the amount of violence they see in the world, and even if they tried they know that they would be quickly arrested and forced to spend the rest of their lives in the care of the State, in prisons or mental hospitals.

Facing Business As Usual is an overwhelmingly terrifying experience for those who dare to actually look at it and allow themselves to feel the horror of it all. The challenge now is to break through the nihilism of such an experience and to find ways that you can effectively resist oppressive violence in a way that empowers you and those around you.

There is a very simple activity you can do to examine your own relationship with nihilism and resistance. Picture somebody you love deeply: your mother, your father, a spouse, a sibling, your child, maybe a non-human animal friend like a cat or dog. Next, picture that person being viciously beaten to death by a gang of heavily armed policemen and soldiers, who have the full weight of the law of the State on their side and who are virtually undefeatable, due to their weapons and capacity for violence. What would you do?

The voice of nihilism, the cry of fear says, "It's hopeless, you could never stop the beating, they all have guns and weapons and you only have your fists. Besides, stopping the beating is illegal, and you don't want to break the law, do you? Just stand there, try not to look, and be grateful that it isn't you."

The voice of resistance, the cry of love says, "I don't care what the odds are or who says what is illegal, I have to do everything in my power to fight this, even if it means death or imprisonment. I have to fight to defend what I love. I must spend all my energy and effort attempting to stop this horrible thing, even if it's the last thing I do. I must fight to resist this atrocity, or I am not worthy of this persons love."

What would you do?

I would venture to guess (and hope) that the vast majority of people, when faced with that situation, would sacrifice their life and their freedom in the name of resistance, regardless of the odds or possible ramifications of their action. Why? Because we fight to defend what we love.

Some individuals, granted, are so wounded, deranged, and sick from being victims of this violent culture for so long that they would rather preserve their own pitiful existence for a few more years than listen to the voice of love. This deeply sick view of the world is exemplified in the actions of those who are in charge of running the States, corporations, and banks which are currently destroying the world around us. This sociopathic attitude does exist, but for the most part those who exhibit it will never read this book nor face the realities of Business As Usual, for their jobs are to maintain the current level of oppressive violence around the world.

Assuming that you have not been so destroyed by this culture that you would listen to the voice of love, assuming that you would resist in order defend what you love - that which is sacred to you - the next step is to discover what it is that you love and what you are willing to fight for. A very quick and easy way to turn your revolutionary zeal into an ineffective desk job is to try to jump into a struggle that isn't yours. Many "career activists" who work for nonprofits and NGO's have found themselves working for a cause that they don't love, simply because they wanted to "be an activist," and they have not yet found what it is they truly love and want to fight for. Nobody can fight it all, it's too big. We must find that which we love the most, that which we cannot live without, and fight to defend it from those who are destroying it because the odds are that whatever it is that you love is being destroyed by someone in some capacity in today's world. Find what you love, discover what makes you come alive, what makes you feel connected to other beings and to the planet, and then decide to fight to defend that.

Another way to find out what you love is to find out what makes you angry. And not just angry in the everyday sense of the word, but a deep, primal rage that rises from your

soul, an anger that comes from a profound feeling of injustice, a righteous indignation that surges from a dark, violent part of you that knows, “This is wrong, this is evil, and it needs to stop immediately.” Does child sex-slavery make you angry? Primate extinction? Women being forced to abort their children so that they can continue working in industrial factories? Ocean acidification? Indigenous peoples being evicted from their ancestral lands? Climate change? Fur-farms? Toxic waste being intentionally dumped in poor communities and countries? War? Vivisection? LGBTQ discrimination? Genocide? Starvation? Rape? Racism? Fascism? Capitalism? What makes you angry enough that you are willing to sacrifice your freedom and possibly even your life in order to resist?

Resistance doesn't always require violence, but it always requires a deep commitment to the cause, whatever that cause may be. Your resistance may look like divesting yourself from Western Culture by tax-resisting and transitioning to a gift economy²⁷, it may look like a lot of studying to try to figure out why the world is the way it is and what ideas are the ones you want to fight for, it may look like moving to another country to join a resistance movement that you feel echoes your beliefs, it may look like freeing non-human animals from captivity or disabling instruments of death such as whaling ships and traps, it may look like blowing up dams, ski resorts, and horse corrals, it may look like protesting and marching in demonstrations, it may look like educating and organizing other people in your community, it may look like quitting your job when you realize that you are contributing to oppressive violence, it may look like armed insurrection. When you are fighting for what you love, resistance will arise naturally from within you, you merely need to honor the feeling and allow the process to happen.

For some, simply the process of discovering what you love and what you are willing to fight for may be a daunting and incredible task, as our culture has so effectively disconnected us from ourselves that we can no longer feel our own deep love or anger. A good test for this is if you can read the previous chapter without feeling either a seething anger or a deep depression at the amount of violence, oppression, and injustice your world is experiencing right now. If this describes you, then I recommend an immediate and intensive detoxification from our culture, for you have been effectively colonized by the State and your capacity to engage effectively with yourself and the world around you is in serious jeopardy.²⁸

To not act in the face of such blatant violence is to further your own disconnection, to deepen your removal from the web of relationship which you are an integral part of, and ultimately to be complicit in the destruction which is taking place in front of you. Nihilism, although an incredibly pervasive facet of our culture, can be overcome by learning to feel

²⁷ For more on the gift economy, read “*Sacred Economics*” by Charles Eisenstein (2011)

²⁸ For more information on detoxifying from our culture, read, “*My Name is Chellis and i'm in Recovery from Western Civilization*” by Chellis Glendinning (2007)

your own emotions and then learning to act on what you feel. In the world of therapy, this is known as “honoring your senses.” Every day we have senses to do things and to not do other things. This is also known as our conscience or our superego. When we honor our senses, we become more connected with ourselves and the world around us. When we betray our senses, we become disconnected from ourselves and the world around us, leading us to develop mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, drug addiction, and sociopathy. Learning to honor your senses is a good first step towards healing yourself, your community, and ultimately your planet²⁹.

Once you have learned to honor your senses and you have discovered what you love, that which you are willing to fight for and defend, then you are ready to begin engaging in effective resistance.

²⁹ For more information on the concept of honoring your senses, read “*Leadership and Self-deception*” by the Arbinger Institute (2000)

Understanding the Other (Chapter 4)

Part of the motivation for me writing this book is the incredible amount of misunderstanding, narrow-minded dogmatism, and animosity that I observe within many resistance communities. No matter what the social issue at hand, I have almost always found the parties involved to be rigidly polarized on the issue of violence: is it an acceptable tool to use for resisting oppression or not? I believe both camps have much to offer the other, but we must first look at ourselves and examine our own positions critically, seeing the ways in which we might limit our own cause through hypocrisy, ignorance, privilege, personal fears and insecurities, and a misunderstanding of historical events. Then we can begin to understand the other side of the position, see the reasons that many people have chosen the alternative option, and ultimately try to find truths within their position that we can echo and sympathize with. To fail to consider and understand the other is to consciously remain ignorant.

Critiques of nonviolence

Let's start with some common critiques of nonviolence, both passive and active. There have been many excellent critiques of nonviolent ideology and culture (namely by Ward Churchill, Peter Gelderloos, and Derrick Jensen³⁰), and I will try to summarize the most common and relevant critiques: Privilege, State Complicity, and Historical Narratives.

Privilege

Many pacifists are privileged individuals, in that they are fortunate enough to have been born into the dominant culture. People in the dominant culture, by definition, have never experienced brutal and violent oppression and therefore come by pacifism quite easily, as it doesn't take much convincing for someone to see that violence is destructive and should be avoided at all costs. There is nothing wrong with being privileged or being a

³⁰ For more critiques of nonviolent ideology, read "*Pacifism as Pathology*" by Ward Churchill (2007), "*How Nonviolence Protects the State*" and "*The Failure of Nonviolence*" by Peter Gelderloos (2005 and 2013), and "*Endgame, Vol. 1: The Problem of Civilization*" by Derrick Jensen (2006)

pacifist, but when one loses sight of their privilege and lacks the context for their privileged position - expecting other, less privileged people to adopt their privileged position easily - nonviolence quickly becomes a chic fashion stance, a cool, progressive button to put on your thrift-store jean jacket instead of a radical theory of liberation which is available to all. If you realize that you fall into this category, you should seek to understand why others believe the things that they do and begin to dissect the systems of power which afforded you your privilege. Reflecting on this, you will begin to notice the daily ways in which your privilege manifests itself, as you will begin to recognize the way that our culture reinforces the aspects of your identity which allow the culture to exist and discourages those aspects of your identity on whose backs this culture is built .

Very few people are born into all the facets of privilege, as most of us will have a mixture of privileged and disadvantaged aspects of our identity. For example, I was born a homo-sapiens (privilege), white (privilege), heterosexual (privilege), able-bodied (privilege), cis-male (privilege), into a Christian (privilege), working-class family (disadvantaged) with settler ancestry (privilege), into the most oppressive, wealthy, and powerful country in the world (privilege), and I never received a high-school or college education (disadvantaged). In my daily interactions, I must seek to understand the ways that my privilege and power manifests itself as I interact with others and seek to work towards a world free of privilege, in which all forms of life will be treated with respect and dignity. Expecting others who are not as privileged as you (and are therefore subject to more violence than you) to abandon their violent resistance instincts is arrogant, ignorant, ineffective, and ultimately destructive to your cause.

State Complicity

Another critique of nonviolence is that it is complicit with State violence, in that it doesn't actually challenge the existing power structures but instead actually empowers them by 'playing the role' of dissent, without the danger of real dissent. This mistake arises from a misunderstanding of the true nature and function of the State, which is to violently control and manipulate a populace for the interests of the ruling class. Nonviolent activists who do not understand this are often grossly misled in their understanding of the effectiveness of their actions, although well-intentioned. Resisters must understand that the end result of any action towards social change must be kept in focus. If you are nonviolently working towards a goal and your movement is being ignored or co-opted, you need to have the courage to examine why and be willing to face the reality of the effectiveness of your tactics. Ineffective actions only strengthen State power and weaken your movement.

A prime example of this would be the actions taken by New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg in anticipation of the 2004 Republican National Convention (a hotspot for embarrassing public displays of accountability and disdain). Bloomberg, appealing to the cash-strapped protesters (many of whom traveled long distances to be there), the many

small business owners of the city, the delegates and politicians that disliked being held responsible for their actions, and of course to the ever watchful eye of the media, decided to give out shiny buttons that bore the phrase, "Peaceful Political Activist" to all protesters who would agree to remain calm, peaceful, and follow all orders given by police and other agents of the State throughout the week. The button entitled the 'peaceful activist' to various hotel, restaurant, and entertainment discounts during the week of the convention.

Unfortunately, the blatantly manipulative offer worked- tens of thousands of protesters swapped their right to free speech and their right to assemble for a \$5 off coupon to Applebee's, and remained in the designated 'protest areas' throughout the convention - which were far away from anywhere that might have actually attracted attention to their issues and concerns. Bloomberg got praise from the Left for being progressive and 'welcoming' protesters to the city, as well as from the Right for keeping 'business as usual' and subverting any protests that might bring unwanted attention to the various illegal, illegitimate, and immoral activities of the Republican party. The protesters who accepted the button were, unknowingly, being complicit in this grand spectacle of State theatre. As long as they have a few people peacefully protesting and waving some signs in a designated protest zone, the State is made to appear lenient, democratic, and attentive to the needs of its citizens, when in fact none of that is true.

Another way that nonviolence is complicit is that it ignores the reality of State violence that is happening every day due to the continued existence of the State. The examples of this are numerous, but for now I will give you a simple scenario. Let's say that you are walking down the street of any American city and you happen across a scene where an agent of the State (a police officer) is brutally beating a nonresistant young black man. Let's say that there are several people recording this incident on their phones, and the agent is clearly not dissuaded by their cameras. Let's say that the incident escalates to a point where the agent draws his gun and is about to execute this young man for the crime of being black. Let's say that you have access to a firearm as well, whether it is yours or a companions, and you feel comfortable using it. What would you do in this situation? Would you shoot the agent in order to save the young boy?

Obviously, a believer in active nonviolence would put themselves in harm's way and do everything possible in order to stop the atrocity, but let's say that in this scenario you don't have that option. It is either shoot the agent or be witness to judicial murder. I would venture to say that most people would not shoot the agent, due to fear for their own safety and well-being and an unconscious, implicit belief in the legitimacy of State violence. To not shoot the agent in that moment is to make a judgment call: that the life of an oppressor is worth more than that of his intended victims. But this story is purely hypothetical, ridiculous, and not applicable to your everyday life, correct?

Absolutely not. Every 26 hours, a black man is executed in the US by an agent of the

State or a private security guard, often times with a crowd of witnesses present and recording the incident on their phones and cameras, yet no-one steps in and intervenes. Dozens of people every day in the US witness judicial murder and do nothing about it. In addition to killing humans within our own political borders, the US military is also actively engaged in killing other humans in at least nine other countries (the actual number is probably much higher, but the point is the same) through drone strikes, ground forces, economic sanctions, bombings, political assassinations, and various other military tactics. I may not be on the scene of the actual murders, but they are happening nonetheless. I know they are happening. I know that all humans have an equal right to live on this planet, regardless of their skin color, religious belief, age, sex, or their birthplace in a country that happens to have a lot of oil underneath it. By not actively engaging in stopping these actions, I am complicit in them. By paying taxes, purchasing products, and using gas in my vehicle, I am funding and contributing to the murder of other humans. Of course, I am not as complicit as the one piloting the drone or pulling the trigger, but I am directly contributing and funding those who do fly drones and pull triggers. There would be no US military drone strikes without willing US taxpayers to pay for the drone and a naïve, patriotic young American man to fly the drone. There would be no executions of black men on the streets of America without willing US taxpayers to fund the training and employment of police forces and naïve, patriotic young American men to carry out the execution.

To refuse to consider engaging in violence with agents of the US State in order to stop the murder of other humans is ultimately to say that the life of a black man or an Iraqi child is worth less than the life of an agent of the State. That is a very uncomfortable reality and not one that many people want to talk about, but I cannot see how it is false. This is the underlying motivation behind the slogan of, "Bring the War Home" that was popular among anti-war groups in the US in the 1960's. To allow the State to continue killing others without engaging in violence against it is to unconsciously (or consciously) decide that the life of the perpetrator is worth more than the life of its intended victim. Ideally there is a way to stop the destruction of life on this planet without creating more violence, but no anti-war effort in the history of the US has been remotely successful, as war is deeply woven into the very DNA of our country. Over the past 238 years of American Imperialism, we have spent only 21 of those not at war with another country. Every war that has ended has done so due to economic reasons, not because of any anti-war movement. Clearly, whatever tactics we have been using are not working, and to refuse to consider the tool of violence in our resistance is to unconsciously manifest our privilege as the benefiter of those 238 years of war, theft, slavery, and genocide.

The issue of complicity can be more clearly illustrated by understanding the dynamics of abusive and codependent relationships, and understanding the parallels between abusive relationships with partners and abusive relationships with society. As any marriage and

family counselor knows all too well, it takes two people (or more) to make an abusive relationship. If the victim of abuse is unwilling to tolerate the abuse and is able to draw and hold clear boundaries, the abuser will not be able to continue their abusive behaviors. Once the victim of abuse no longer accepts the terms of the relationship on the abusers level and refuses to continue fulfilling the role of victim, the cycle of abuse ends. Of course, this is only true to a point, as many abusive relationships end in death when the victim attempts to resist or hold clear boundaries with their abuser. This is true on an interpersonal level as well as a social level, as many revolutionaries and activists are directly targeted by the State for assassination. In light of this unfortunate reality, the victim must eventually ask themselves, “Do I want to keep living in this abusive, oppressive relationship? Or do I want to take my chances with freedom?” Only you can answer that for yourself.

As citizens (victims) of an abusive culture, we were born in an abusive, codependent relationship with the State. The State is the perpetrator, yet it must have participants in order to continue the abuse. By refusing to draw and enforce boundaries with the State, we are allowing the State to continue abusing us and anybody else it feels like. Of course, as victims of the culture we are not entirely responsible for the actions it engages in, but we must understand the role and power we have in the relationship. By not seeing the State for what it is and by not resisting it, we are complicit in the actions it engages in.

Historical Narratives

The third and final critique of nonviolent ideology is the chosen narrative of history that many proponents of nonviolence view their ‘victories’ through. This narrative often ignores the contributions to their perceived success made by their violent counterparts and the limitations of the actual social change that have taken place as a result of their movement. We will devote a whole chapter to this concept later on, but for now let’s briefly look at one example of this: the ‘Satyagraha’ narrative of Indian independence.

The Satyagraha movement, Gandhi’s Indian independence movement, was indeed a remarkable social movement that improved the social conditions of India and no doubt contributed to the eventual liberation of India from British rule in 1947. Gandhi’s group was not the only group working towards independence, however, nor was it even the largest group. Bhagat Singh, Rani Laxmi Bai, Chandrashekhar Azad, Subhas Chandra Bose, Nana Saheb, Bal Gangadar Tilak, Ram Prasad Bismil, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Jawaharlal Nehru were all leaders of various social, revolutionary, religious, and political parties in India who were fighting for independence alongside the Satyagraha campaign. These groups and leaders all contributed to the eventual independence of India, and many of these groups were much larger and in many ways more successful than the

Satyagraha campaign. So why do we only ever hear about Gandhi?^{31 32}

The answer to this lies within the power of historical narratives and the need for the British Empire to maintain its illusion of power, control, and noble character to the rest of the world. At a certain point, the British government realized that Indian independence was inevitable, and they had several choices as to how they would make their departure. They could go fighting with the radical socialist forces of Bhagat Singh, they could go fighting with the fascist movement behind Subhas Chandra Bose, or they could go peacefully and diplomatically with Gandhi, the little old man who pledged to never fight, resist, coerce, or in any way violate the sensibilities of the British Empire. Naturally, they went with Gandhi, as in many ways he was the perfect poster child of revolution: a revolutionary who held the utmost respect for his oppressors and was willing to engage in any number of inconveniences or hardships in order to win his opponents hearts and minds. Thus, the British nobility made friends with Gandhi and his consort and claimed that it was his struggle, the Satyagraha struggle, which had done the trick and successfully secured independence for India³³. George Orwell, a young British police officer during the Indian Independence Movement, observed, "*Gandhi made it easier for the British to rule India, because his influence was always against taking any action that would make any difference.*"³⁴

Think of the repercussions if the violent resisters Bhagat Singh or Subhas Chandra Bose would have been hailed as successful revolutionaries, if the dozens of colonized nations held by European nations around the world at the time would have seen a violent revolution as the key to their freedom, as well. No, that would never do. Gandhi was the perfect role-model for national liberation, as he never truly threatened the British Empire's ability to dominate and exploit in any way and he allowed them to make a graceful departure from their colony. Not only did they make a graceful departure, but they never actually left. In many ways India simply switched from direct colonial rule to indirect neocolonial rule, as the economic disparity, poverty, public health issues, religious violence, women's rights, lack of democratic process, government corruption, and access to education that were so lacking in British India are in many ways worse today than ever before. As Gandhi himself said, "*What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy?*"³⁵

In no way am I condemning or renouncing Gandhi, his teachings, or his life's work, but I

³¹ "Gandhi and Bhagat Singh" - V.N. Datta (2008)

³² "Bhagat Singh, Liberations Blazing Star" - P.M. S. Grewal (2007)

³³ "The Indian War of Independence of 1857" - Nabu Press (2011)

³⁴ "The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Vol. 2" - George Orwell (1971)

³⁵ "Non-Violence in Peace and War" - M.K. Gandhi (1942)

think it is important to realize that there are many narratives of history, and when we only see and believe one narrative, we severely limit our ability to understand and implement effective social change. Trading one oppressor for another is not progress, it is being duped.

Gandhi's and Bhagat's methods of revolution were both effective, valid, and successful. Neither one was 'better' than the other; they each played their role in the struggle. The point is that we only know about Gandhi because that is the only story that was deemed suitable for history lessons by the British Empire. We are presented with a very narrow and sanitized version of history because that is the version that is least threatening to Business As Usual. As resisters, we must be willing to see history accurately and in doing so, to see that there are many different approaches and tools for social change that have been effectively used, and must continue to be used. To limit ourselves to only one tool of resistance – nonviolence - is to ignore history, to be ignorant of social progress, and to blindly accept the State narrative of safe, nonthreatening resistance that has been presented to us.

Critiques of Violence

Those who advocate for violence as an effective tool of resistance need to understand and acknowledge a few common critiques of violence as we move forward into this discussion. These critiques are: the important difference between *Pacifism* and *Active Nonviolence*, the never-ending struggle between the *Ends vs. Means*, and the Pandora's Box of violence that, once opened, is nearly impossible to control or stop.

Pacifism and Active Nonviolence

I have found that there are few individuals who truly understand the difference between *Pacifism* and *Active Nonviolence*. These two philosophies, although seemingly similar, are very different, and their differences are important to understand. *Pacifism* is built on a platform of idealism, disengagement, and subservience that, although noble, is not an effective tool of resistance. *Active Nonviolence* is built on a platform of empowerment, courage, civil disobedience, historical success, and love. If an action effectively resists the dominant culture and thus the systems of power which are responsible for oppressive violence through offensive, loving, and creative acts of nonviolence, then it is *active nonviolence*. If an action engages the dominant culture in a manner which does not threaten the oppressor's ability to oppress and does so in an attitude of disempowerment and meekness, then it is *pacifism*.

A practitioner of *active nonviolence* is willing to sacrifice their safety, dignity, and even their life in order to resist oppressive violence. A practitioner of *pacifism* prefers to not get involved in violent situations, and will not interfere or engage with State activities of oppression.

Active Nonviolent actions will almost always include civil disobedience of some sort, and will require the resisters to be wholly dedicated to the success of their action, a dedication that arises from a deep feeling of anger and love, the urge to fight for what you love.

Pacifist actions will most likely act within the bounds of the law (except for draft resisting, which pacifists have a long history of), will be ineffective in actually challenging existing power structures, and comes from a mentality of fear and colonization, as the participants do not truly believe that oppression can be challenged or overthrown.

Examples of *Active Nonviolent* actions include: industrial sabotage, roadblocks, tree sits, black bloc marches, body shields (in front of tanks, bulldozers, civilians, etc.), sit-ins, labor strikes, general strikes, occupations of public and private spaces, etc. Examples of *Pacifist* actions include: legislative reform, petitions, sanctions, divestments, marches and demonstrations that comply with State restrictions, filming atrocities committed by agents of the State without actually intervening on behalf of the victim, or any action that complies with the requests and existing power structures of the State

It is also important to note that Pacifist actions can be somewhat effective, as many pacifist actions have played important contributing roles to resistance movements, but by themselves they rarely actually challenge oppression dynamics. Legislative reform, petitions, marches, boycotts, etc. are absolutely positive actions and I am in no means arguing against them, but it is critical to realize that without actions that actually challenge power structures, these actions are ultimately ineffective.

In addition to the well-known teachings of Gandhi and Tolstoy, the Christian Anabaptist tradition has produced a host of incredible theologians and social theorists who have explored this distinction through closely examining and studying the life and teachings of Yeshua (the Rabbi whom the religion of Christianity is loosely based off of). Walter Wink, Stanley Hauerwas, John Howard Yoder, Greg Boyd, and Shane Claiborne have explored this thoroughly and exhaustively, but perhaps one of the greatest illustrations of this concept comes from Martin Luther King, Jr.,

“To our most bitter enemies we say: We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in good conscience obey your unjust laws, because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we shall still love you. Send in your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process, and our victory will be a

*double victory.*³⁶

From that quote, it is clear that MLK is not advocating for 'lay down and submit' style tactics. He is arguing for an aggressive, militant, relentless attack against the State policy of racism using the vehicle of active nonviolence. For a clear and simple example illustrating the difference between pacifism and active nonviolence, let us explore a situation in which MLK's followers eloquently demonstrated this principle.

One method of resistance used by nonviolent resisters during the civil rights era was the use of 'sit-ins' at certain segregated businesses and public places, where black men and women would intentionally occupy a designated area for whites, thus breaking the law and causing a public nuisance. Many sit-ins took place throughout the civil rights struggle at libraries, restaurants, swimming pools, and other locations, but perhaps the most well-known example of this is the Woolworth's, Walgreens, and McClellan store sit-ins on February 27, 1960 in Nashville, Tennessee. This well-publicized event was the culmination of several weeks of sit-ins and protests which culminated in several violent confrontations of white teenagers from local high schools attacking the nonviolent black protesters. With police approval (they left the scene to not interfere with or witness the beatings), white teenage boys viciously beat several of the black protesters for almost an hour before the police showed up to arrest the victims of the violence- the black demonstrators- while ignoring the actions of the perpetrators- the white teenagers.

During the whole event, not one violent action was taken towards the white attackers. To the contrary, the young black boys and girls who were being punched, kicked, spat upon, insulted, and thrown down flights of stairs were consistent in their message of love and forgiveness to their attackers, even as they were hauled off to jail for their criminal behavior. Those brave young men and women willingly and consciously put their emotional, physical, and mental health in jeopardy for the sake of subverting the State's policy of violence towards the black community, and in so doing demonstrated to the world that they were willing to endure great hardship in order to fight injustice³⁷.

The mayor of Nashville at the time of the protests, Ben West, credited the sit-ins as instrumental in his decision to finally desegregate the city. Far from disengaged pacifism, these students of active nonviolence spent months in prison and suffered much violence upon themselves in order to expose a corrupt and evil system.

Now, what if those students who sat in the lunch counters and faced violence had not

³⁶ Martin Luther King Jr., sermon delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama on Christmas Day, 1957. Written in Montgomery County Jail during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Reprinted in the A.J. Muste Essay Series, number 1 (A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012)

³⁷ "From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality" - Michael J. Klarman (2004)

been highly trained and dedicated nonviolent resisters? What if they had not been driven by courage and love, but by fear? What if they were still colonized pacifists and not decolonized practitioners of active nonviolence? What would have been different?

We can only speculate, but I guess that one of three things would have happened: they would have a.) left the counters when ordered to by the police officers, thus rendering their protest ineffective; b.) attempted to remain passive in the face of violence- ultimately culminating in either a further crushing of their spirit and a reinforcement of fear, colonization, and oppression or c.) they would have snapped in the face of fear and physical harm, acting out in reactionary violence to the violence which was being perpetrated on them and creating justification for further racial brutality on the black community and on black resisters.

When violence is used as a method of resistance, it is much more effective when used intentionally and with preparation. Reactive violence that arises out of fear is rarely as effective as intentional violence that arises out of a dedication to ending oppression, a violence that comes from a place of love.

The young resisters who sat at the tables at Woolworths were not disengaged pacifists but were engaged, determined, and were fighting for what they loved, and thus were able to create a successful nonviolent act of civil disobedience.

Understanding this difference is enormously important. At the risk of repeating myself, the *pacifist* position says that, although they wish for peace in all situations, they are not willing or able to actively engage or put themselves at risk in order to create peace. The *active nonviolent* position says that they are willing to do whatever necessary to defuse a violent situation, even taking violence upon themselves in order to do so. *Active nonviolence* comes from a position of power, love, and decolonization, while *pacifism* comes from a position of disempowerment, fear, and colonization. Lumping these two ideologies into one and not understanding the differences is an important mistake that many have made, and hopefully this distinction can become more understood and recognized.

It should also be noted that just because many groups, individuals, and actions are self-labeled as active nonviolence does not mean that they actually are. Due to the confusion of terms and the lack of understanding of this important ideological difference, many pacifist actions and groups, such as much of the current environmental movement in the US, mistakenly labels many of their campaigns as nonviolent direct action, when in fact this is not true. This creates much confusion amongst resistance communities working towards effective social change, and ultimately has led to the rejection of nonviolent tactics by some leaders and organizations who have lumped both philosophies into one category. I believe that a resurgence of effective nonviolent action is needed within

resistance groups, as well as an understanding of what actually constitutes nonviolent direct action vs. ineffective pacifism.

Ends vs. Means

Another critique of violent tactics that has been hotly debated for centuries, and will probably continue to be debated for many more, is that the end never *justifies* the means, the end *is* the means. The tactics used to acquire any social gains will become the tactics used to maintain the new dominant culture. To put it simply, if one uses violence to overcome oppression, the new ruling power will have to use the same level of violence to maintain the level of rule. Conversely, if a battle is won using nonviolent tactics, the end result will likely be one of nonviolence for all parties involved. This argument appeals to a very basic level of logic, as it argues that the means used to acquire a goal will eventually become the goal itself. This can be seen quite plainly in the scope of history, as so many violent revolutions have simply replaced one oppressive State for another, and the cycle of violence continues. Although this may also be seen as an argument against the existence of a State, it serves as an argument that the means used to work towards a result will likely determine the end result. According to this logic, it is easy to see why nonviolent resistance is always preferable to violent resistance, and why many resisters are hesitant to use violent tactics.³⁸

Pandora's Box

A final critique of violent resistance, and one that I must constantly wrestle with while writing this book, is that nonviolence is always the most democratic and egalitarian route towards social change. By egalitarian, I mean that everyone has the option to engage in nonviolent protest, while not everyone has the ability to effectively engage in violence. By opening the door to violent resistance, there is no telling who will decide what to engage in violence for and for what reasons.

I might deem violence necessary in stopping an assault, rape, or murder, but what if someone else deems violence necessary in defending their right to engage in assault, rape or murder? What if someone who does not share my political and social values of egalitarianism for all species and types of humans deems it necessary to engage in violence to further their agendas of racism, sexism, or speciesism? To put it plainly, to argue that violence is an acceptable means of social change is to say that any social,

³⁸ For more on exploring the dynamics between *ends* and *means*, check out "*Black Flame*" by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, "*Propaganda of the Deed*" by Errico Malatesta, and "*From Riot to Insurrection*" by Aldredo Bonanno

religious, or political group can use violence to further their own ends. That is a very scary statement, and one that ultimately says that the group or ideology which is the most violent is the most correct, which is how the world is run right now. Fanon understood this problem well when he wrote, "*Violence used in specific ways at the moment of struggle does not magically disappear after the ceremony of trooping the national colors... When will violence stop? The atmosphere of violence, after having coloured all the colonial phase, continues to dominate national life.*"³⁹

To create an atmosphere of nonviolent dissent is to create a safe, democratic, egalitarian atmosphere where crippled old women have just as much to say as young, strong men. When you open Pandora's Box of violence, there is no way to determine who will use violence for what ends, except to use more violence to control who has the right to use violence, and then more violence on top of that to punish those who use violence in the wrong way, and then more violence to legitimize the use of violence on those who use violence wrong, until you realize that you just created your own monopoly of violence, also known as a State. It quickly becomes messy and unmanageable, which is why nonviolent protest has evolved as a preferable form of protest. Violence begets violence, and nonviolence begets nonviolence.

Summarizing the critiques of violent and nonviolent ideologies, there is much that each camp has to learn from the other, and much that each ideology has to ask themselves and look critically at. Once we have looked honestly and critically at ourselves and humbly and openly at the other, we can then move forward to a common understanding, language, and model of resistance.

³⁹ "*The Wretched of the Earth*" - Frantz Fanon (1963)

A Peoples History of Violence (Chapter 5)

Oppressive violence is often presented as an unavoidable facet of living on this planet, a reality that we just have to accept, an unavoidable facet of human nature. This narrative of normalized oppressive violence can be very hard to see past, as our entire civilization is built on this belief. It is extremely important to understand that this is simply not true, that oppressive violence is a relatively recent phenomena in the history of our planet and our species, and that a world free of oppressive violence is possible, and within reach. To begin to understand this alternative narrative, we need to take a quick journey back through time, back to the beginnings of civilization itself, around 12,000 years ago, to an event known to anthropologists and archeologists as the Neolithic revolution.

The Neolithic revolution, also known as the agricultural revolution, was perhaps the most significant event that has happened to our planet in the past two million years. This event marked the end of a several hundred thousand year period in which the genus *homo* was organized in small bands of nomadic gatherer-hunters. Up to this point, human development had been limited to simple tool-making, fire-making, and a very basic form of language. Simply put, the Neolithic revolution consisted of a tribe of people in the Near East experimenting with a new form of agriculture called totalitarian agriculture. This type of agriculture was a complete departure from anything the Earth had ever seen, as it was the first time that any species on the planet had ever broken the most important law of Ecology: the law of limited competition.

The law of limited competition states that you may compete for food and other resources to the full extent of your capabilities, but you may not hunt down your competitors or destroy their food or deny them access to food. In other words, you may compete but you may not wage war on your competitors. You may gather as much food as you like, but you cannot kill others which are also gathering food. You may work your hardest at propagating your species, but you may not destroy others efforts to propagate their species.⁴⁰

Although this may seem like a relatively simple and obvious law, it is the observation of this law which has allowed the surface of this planet to support life for millions of years, and the breaking of this law which has allowed our species to dominate and exploit all

⁴⁰ "*Ishmael*" - Daniel Quinn (1992)

other forms of life on this planet to the benefit of a select few members of our species and to the great detriment of all other forms of life and the vast majority of our own species. The breaking of this fundamental law of Ecology, this law of life, gave rise to the first instances of oppressive violence in the history of our planet, as it allowed humans to begin subduing the planet for the purposes of exponentially increasing its own species.⁴¹

Ignoring the law of limited competition unlocked vast reserves of bounty for the tribe that began this experiment, and the immediate success of it allowed them to gradually begin conquering and assimilating other tribes in the area. Thus this event was not only important to the history of our planet, but it was also the most decisive turning point in human history. As the tribe (we don't know what they called themselves) which had first broken the law by engaging in totalitarian agriculture began expanding and influencing the surrounding areas, it signified a shift in the species as a whole. Homo-sapiens moved away from their nomadic, hunter-gatherer lifestyles and began engaging in sedentary agricultural practices.

This may not seem like much of a revolutionary shift until you understand the implications associated with this. Totalitarian agriculture required people to abandon their nomadic lifestyles and settle down in one location, forming towns, cities, and nations. The vast amount of organization and labor required to feed a large, sedentary population necessitated the division of labor, which means that certain people now had specific "roles" or "jobs." No longer could you spend a leisurely day doing whatever you wanted, you now had to take part in a certain aspect of the agricultural process. This ultimately led to class divisions and the concepts of hierarchy, social stratification, and wealth inequality, as the more powerful members of the community were given roles of overseeing labor and maintaining the agricultural process whilst the weaker members were relegated to more labor-intensive roles. Gender specializations and the concept of Patriarchy emerged during this era as well, as women now were assigned certain tasks such as child-rearing, textile manufacturing, and food preparation, as opposed to their earlier status as equal members and contributors to the community⁴².

Not surprisingly, early humans didn't like to be bossed around and told what to do by the ruling class, so in order to maintain the agricultural process a level of enforcement had to be introduced - and thus militaries, laws and law enforcement, and a religious class had to be invented in order to maintain the organization of humans into this new social order based on hierarchy, inequality, laws, and violence. Very early on in the process, it was clear to the individuals involved in this experiment that this was not a sustainable way to

⁴¹ For more on the Neolithic revolution and its implications, read anything by John Zerzan, especially, *Future Primitive and Other Essays* and *Against Civilization*, and Fredy Perlman's *Against Leviathon!*

⁴² For more on the Neolithic revolution, visit www.hamptoninstitution.org/implications-of-land-ownership.html

live, as the land which was first subjugated to intensive totalitarian agriculture rapidly became salinized and desertified (first picture a tropical rainforest, then picture modern-day Kalahari desert.)

Unfortunately, these early humans had unknowingly started a process that was nearly impossible to stop, as a sedentary lifestyle and the increased fruits of agriculture allowed for more children to be born, which required more food to feed the increased population, which required more humans to work the expanding land-base, which required more food to feed the ever-increasing workforce, until the business of totalitarian agriculture and civilization was no longer a simple experiment but a full-on cultural revolution.

A people with no land-base to protect, no private property, and no foodstuffs to guard has no need for an army or law enforcement to defend it with, and thus has no need for structural violence. A sedentary people with a designated land-base, foodstuffs and private property to guard, and resources to stockpile has a great need to build an army, government, religious order, economic disparity, and various other forms of structural violence in order to maintain the strict hierarchical stratification that is integral to the function of the State.

From the birth of the first State (probably the Sumerians 4000-3500 BCE), structural violence has been integral to the function of the State. Private property necessitates structural violence. As long as private property is held as more sacred than life, oppressive violence will be a continued reality for all creatures living on this planet.

This concept has been explored and illustrated quite elegantly by many scholars, historians, and anthropologists, and I will attempt to briefly summarize their findings. The State exists to organize, control, and consolidate power over a certain set of individuals in a set geographic area. In almost every circumstance, the interests of the State are directly opposed to the interests of its citizens, in that the State requires labor, money, obedience to arbitrary laws, young men to fight and die for the State, young women to birth more warriors, and submission to an entity that cares nothing of you as an individual.

Who would voluntarily give up a third (or more) of their labor, their safety and security, and their very life to an impersonal organization with a long history of oppressive violence and exploitation? No one. This is why the State must use coercion and violence at every level in order to maintain its function. If the State is smart, they will make the use of violence normal, hidden, and part of Business As Usual, as we all experience every day when our labor is taken from us via taxes and capitalist exploitation, our privacy is seen as an obstruction to National Security, our land-base is destroyed without our consultation or permission, and we are subject to incarceration or death at any time an agent of the State (Police, Military, Judge, etc.) deems it expedient.

At this point in the book, we must make it explicitly clear that *the State and oppressive*

violence are synonymous and inextricable. If the State ceased to employ violence, it would cease to exist, as it would then become a voluntary organization of interested individuals, which is where we started at the beginning of this chapter. The State must continue to use coercion and violence to maintain its function at every level, which is why we say that the State is structurally, or inherently, violent.

Back to the history lesson. As States rose and fell and as Civilizations were created and then destroyed, each incarnation became necessarily more violent than the last. The level of coercion/violence needed to control 1000 humans is obviously more than it takes to control 100 humans. Each new State became larger, more hierarchical, more stratified, and more violent. The masks have changed, but the same monster was/is running the whole show. As States grew and encountered indigenous peoples (aka those who had not broken the law of limited competition), they conquered and assimilated every one of them. There is not a single recorded instance of a more violent culture encountering a less violent one and the less-violent one conquering/assimilating the former. Gradually, the peaceful peoples of the world became consumed by their violent neighbors, and the reach of violent civilization grew and grew. There are many accounts of small groups of humans striving to remain nonviolent in the face of this growing cultural shift, such as the tragic story of the Moriori peoples of the Chatham Islands, near New Zealand.

The Moriori people were a rigidly pacifist culture due to the ancient teachings of the great chief Nunuka-whenua who, after seeing the tragic effects of inter-tribal conflict and killing, declared that there was to be no more killing, fighting, or cannibalism in his tribe. His law, which came to be known as Nunuka's law, was accompanied with a somber curse, "may your bowels rot on the day you disobey!" The Moriori thrived under the wisdom of Nunuka's law, growing large in population and innovating incredible methods of living with the sea and islands where they lived. The Moriori would probably still be living peaceably and happily on their islands had they not encountered European culture. In 1791 a British ship, the *Chatham*, was blown off course to Rēkohu, a small island inhabited by a Moriori family. Lieutenant William Broughton planted the British flag and, claiming Rēkohu in the name of King George III, named it Chatham Island. During an interaction with the sailors, a Moriori man named Tamakoro was shot while collecting his fishing nets. He was the first Moriori to be killed by the Europeans. The Moriori elders believed that Tamakoro must have been partly responsible for the tragic misunderstanding and devised an appropriate ritual for greeting visitors in future.

The next interaction with outsiders was in 1835, when a group of 900 Maori warriors, equipped with British guns and trained in the ways of British conquest, arrived on Moriori shores. The Moriori, trusting and generous, gave food, medicine, and shelter to the new arrivals. Very quickly, the Maori visitors revealed their true intentions, as they began slaughtering, raping, torturing, and cannibalizing the Moriori. The Moriori held a meeting to discuss the situation. The Moriori had much greater numbers, and could easily kill and

defeat the invaders, but they did not want to break Nunuka's law and hoped to reconcile the differences with their neighbors peacefully. Sadly, the Maori had no intentions of peace, and either killed or enslaved every last member of the Moriori people. The last living Moriori, Tommy Solomon, died in 1933⁴³.

The story of the Moriori is the story of tens of thousands of indigenous peoples all over the world who were killed, enslaved, and assimilated into the larger, more violent cultures whenever the two met. Cultures that were built on nonviolence, egalitarianism, and mutual aid were simply no match for the powerful war machines that swept through their cultures, and the few dissenting voices for nonviolence were drowned in a sea of State violence.

With the European conquest of North and South America around 500 years ago, the last few remaining peaceful peoples of the world were annihilated in the face of British guns, French diseases, and Spanish steel. It would seem at this point in the narrative that a peaceful existence had become a relic of the past, buried in the ground alongside the Moriori and the passenger pigeon. Yet it is important to note that there have always been dissenters, those who have rejected the State narrative of violence and conquest, and who have instead sought for a life free of oppressive violence. The great teachings of the Buddha, the sage Lao-Tzu, the rabbi Yeshua, the ancient teachers Rishabha and Guru Nanak, the authors of the Vedas, and the prophet Muhammad have all given birth to pacifist traditions: the Gnostics, the Mohists, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, the Mennonites, the Cathars, the Jains, the Taoists, the Ahmadiyyas, the Sikhs, the Sufis, the Essenes, and the Buddhists.

Despite these brave few dissenters, a quick survey of the scope of history will reveal that oppressive violence is the path that the vast majority of our species has taken over the past several thousand years, and will continue to take until we either stop the dominant culture by destroying bad ideas or we drive ourselves into extinction by fulfilling the ultimate destiny of Capitalism- to turn every living thing into piles of money. Only then will we realize, as Chief Seattle warned us, that we can't eat, breathe, or drink money.

⁴³ "*Moriori - The impact of new arrivals*" - Denise Davis and Māui Solomon, from Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand

Warriors of Peace (chapter 6)

There have always been individuals who have sought to understand the root cause of oppressive violence and injustice, and who have tried, some successfully and some not, to counteract the violence of their culture with a nonviolent alternative. Three such individuals stand out in the past few centuries as great leaders of resistance movements, Mohandas Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Each of these men and the struggles they led are commonly held up as examples of nonviolent resistance at work. They are often brought up in conversations about nonviolent vs. violent tactics as proof that “Nonviolence works, right! I mean, India is independent, South Africa is no longer under Apartheid rule, and Black people in the US no longer have their own water fountains! How can you argue with that logic?”

As we mentioned earlier, there are two major ways that we are duped into seeing ‘the changing of the masks’ as social progress; a.) by not understanding that every successful nonviolent movement had a violent counterpart that was crucial to the success of the overall struggle; and b.) by not understanding the way that oppression simply changes forms, methods, and definitions while maintaining or increasing the actual level of oppressive violence. We will closely examine the lives of these three men and the movements they represented and try to more accurately understand the ways that nonviolent and violent resistance has shaped the course of history in an attempt to learn from their mistakes and successes, so that we may hopefully make our resistance more effective.

Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in 1869 in British India. Great Britain, one of the largest and most violent States in the history of humanity, had ‘acquired’ through violent means the country of India during the mid-1800s. India, as a colony of Great Britain, was subjected to an increased level of State structural violence, as England was quite adept at exploiting the people and land of India and converting them into capital, turning the natural world into money, transforming life into death. The people of India had been pawns on the world stage for hundreds of years at this point, and were hungry for independence around the time of Gandhi’s entry into the picture.

Gandhi had a fairly quiet and inconsequential childhood, in which the importance of truth and asceticism were impressed deeply upon him. He was educated in London to be a lawyer, and shortly thereafter moved to South Africa to work for a trading company. He was fairly unfamiliar with racism and oppression, as his father was an influential politician and Mohandas had experienced a somewhat privileged upbringing, so when he was thrown off of a train for refusing to sit third class when he had a first class ticket, he was shocked and horrified at this treatment. He quickly became involved with resistance work in South Africa after he heard about a bill that was being passed that would eliminate the voting rights of Indians, Native South Africans, and other non-European people groups. Although incredibly inexperienced and unfamiliar with either social reform or public leadership, he managed to join South Africa's marginalized and oppressed people groups together to resist the oppressive government to secure minor political and social improvements. Returning home to India, Gandhi realized that the racism and oppression he had experienced in South Africa were very much present in his beloved homeland, and he spent the rest of his life attempting to fight this injustice through his philosophy which he developed, known as Satyagraha.

Satyagraha can be translated as "Soul force" or "Truth force." Satyagraha states that an unjust opponent or situation can be overcome by a dedication to the truth, a willingness to suffer, and a commitment to nonviolence, or *ahimsa*. Through loving nonviolent action, Gandhi believed that every oppressive person, system, and policy in the world could be overcome. There are many ways that Satyagraha can be used to resolve issues, ranging from small family disputes to massive geopolitical struggles, and a full exploration of it is not necessary here, however, I highly recommend those who are not familiar to research it more fully on their own⁴⁴. Although Satyagraha is widely hailed as one of the most important theories to come out of the past century and has been used successfully in perhaps thousands of successful resistance movements since Gandhi first practiced it in India, it would be a disservice to not examine it fully and try to understand its shortcomings.

One of the fatal flaws of Satyagraha is its perhaps utopian idealism, in that it does not account for the realities of senseless oppressive violence that oftentimes take place in our self-destructive world. With Satyagraha, you can be as actively nonviolent as possible, committing your entire self to your cause, and at the end of the day if your opponent is not moved to compassion, your best option is to simply die with dignity rather than resist with violence. This flaw is made apparent in an open letter from Gandhi to the Jewish people who were being oppressed at the hands of Nazi Germany where he urged them to nonviolently resist their oppressors and persuade them with the force of their souls, even in the face of blatant genocide, declaring that "*if the Jewish mind could be prepared for*

⁴⁴ "*Gandhi's Way: A Handbook of Conflict Resolution*" - Mark Juergensmeyer (2007)

*voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant*⁴⁵” and in his letter to Hitler where he politely asked the Fuhrer to, “*prevent a war which may reduce the world to a savage state.*”⁴⁶ This line of reasoning was completely unrealistic in the face of such naked oppressive violence, and he received much criticism for his rigidly pacifist stance on the Jewish genocide. Stokely Carmichael summed it up well, “*In order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience.*”⁴⁷”

As we discussed Gandhi in a previous chapter, we will be brief here. The two points which need to be emphasized and understood in regards to Gandhi and his movement are again a.) the role that violence played in the Indian independence movement and b.) the lack of real social change post-independence.

As stated earlier, there were dozens of political, social, and religious groups and movements that were also working towards independence at the time of Gandhi, and many of them were very just as effective as the Satyagraha campaign. It is only because of the narrative of history which has been presented to us that we think of Gandhi as the principle liberator and actor on the stage. No group, leader, or ideology was necessarily more effective or important than another; they each played their part in the struggle. As resisters, we need to understand this if we are to effectively implement change in our current societies and cultures.

The second major misunderstanding arises from a lack of understanding the functions of globalized capitalism and the ways that a country under neocolonial rule is just as much if not more oppressed as when under direct colonial rule. We also touched on this earlier, so I will be brief. To put it simply, Gandhi’s Satyagraha movement called for much more than just the annexation of India, he had many goals and hopes for the future of India- none of which were actualized. Gandhi’s liberation program called for a.) India’s complete economic, political, and social independence from Great Britain; b.) a country of religious tolerance, with Muslims and Hindus peacefully occupying the same communities; c.) an end to the concepts of class division and caste, especially in regards to the ‘untouchables’; and d.) the creation of local economies and the building of self-reliant communities, ultimately leading to a self-sufficient country with minimal imports.

India is still deeply dependent on European and American banks, corporations, universities, and ideas. The creation of the “Muslim-state” of Pakistan (now Pakistan and

⁴⁵ “*Mohandas Gandhi’s Letter to Adolf Hitler*” - M.K. Gandhi, written on July 23, 1939

⁴⁶ “*Gandhi on Jews and the Middle East: A Non-Violent Look on Conflict and Violence*” - M.K. Gandhi, written on Nov. 20, 1938

⁴⁷ “*Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)*” - Stokely Carmichael, Ekwueme Michael Thelwell (2003)

Bangladesh) was a terrible event, as tens of thousands of people lost their lives during the violent separation and hundreds of thousands more lost their homes, possessions, and cultural heritage due to the sudden and violent manner in which the plan was carried out, creating tensions and wounds which are still festering today.

The social stratification which Gandhi deplored has only deepened since the British “Quit India,” as economic disparity is currently the worst in recorded history; the country’s one hundred richest people own assets equivalent to one fourth of the GDP⁴⁸.

The caste system was never abolished, instead it has been greatly bolstered with the addition of new classes of untouchables - those millions who have been pushed to the bottom of the vicious food chain which capitalism must have in order to function. In many ways those at the bottom of Indian society have it worse than they did a century ago, as the untouchables of Gandhi’s age weren’t forced into exploitative global trade agreements, poisoned in mass numbers by leaking nuclear and chemical plants, having their lands stolen from them for the sake of building mega-dams, or committing suicide in mass numbers due to their crops being stolen from them thanks to Monsanto’s violently exploitative activities⁴⁹.

As far as self-reliance goes, India is far from Gandhi’s ideal, as the country is the world’s 10th largest importer, and many of those imports are unnecessary and even harmful to the country- fertilizers, edible oils, food grains, and industrial machinery.

To put it simply, the British Empire never really left India. Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first prime minister after independence, was educated in London and deeply inculcated in the logic of empire. The Indian National Congress was founded by A.O. Hume, an Englishman, and all of its founding members were educated in Britain. In so many ways, India never received her independence; she merely traded one oppressor for another with a darker skin tone, she traded masks, and continues today to live under the yoke of Western capitalism and imperialism.

One last, yet extremely important point to understand is that Gandhi himself was not a strict pacifist, as some would present him, as he stated, *“I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence....I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour⁵⁰”* as well as, *“it is better to be violent if there is violence in our hearts than to put on the cloak of nonviolence to cover impotence.⁵¹”* These quotes show that Gandhi understood, at least

⁴⁸ “Capitalism: A Ghost Story” - Arundhati Roy (2014)

⁴⁹ “Power Politics” - Arundhati Roy (2002)

⁵⁰ “Nonviolence in Peace and War, Volume 1” - M.K. Gandhi (1942)

⁵¹ “Nonviolence in Peace and War, Volume 1” - M.K. Gandhi (1942)

in moments, the important difference between pacifism and active nonviolence, and he recognized that pacifism driven by fear is ineffective and worse than doing nothing. Unfortunately, his Satyagraha campaign did not echo these sentiments, as Gandhi repeatedly called off potentially successful strikes and marches whenever the Indian people would respond with violence in response to State oppression. He refused to understand that the Indian people needed to decolonize themselves from their oppressors by baptizing themselves in the decolonizing waters of violence in order to emerge as true believers and dedicated participants in Satyagraha. He would not allow the followers of his independence movement the opportunity to remove fear from their hearts by engaging in violent resistance. This led to many of his followers abandoning the cause and taking up arms with the openly violent independence movements, ultimately weakening his movement and the overall struggle⁵².

None of this should be seen as an attempt to discredit or dismiss the teachings and actions of Gandhi and the Satyagraha movement, but an effort to more fully understand the mechanics of resistance, and the many ways that the State fools us into thinking that we are making progress and change, when we are merely switching masks, trading partners, and continuing the same old 12,000 year-old waltz with oppression, violence, and exploitation

Mandela

Nelson Mandela was born in 1918 in South Africa, also to a wealthy political family, and also receiving a prestigious education. Unlike Gandhi, however, Mandela started on his path to political activism much earlier on - getting suspended from high school for starting a boycott to protest the quality of food served there and shortly thereafter joining the radical African National Congress (ANC). By the time he was 32, Mandela had risen to the rank of National Executive of the ANC and was credited with bringing a radical and revolutionary atmosphere to the organization. Despite his revolutionary zeal, Mandela remained decidedly nonviolent in his beliefs and actions, as he was heavily influenced by the legacy and supposed successes of Gandhi's campaign (remember, this was exactly the effect the British government wanted Gandhi's legacy to have on aspiring revolutionaries.) One event early on in his political career quickly changed his mind on the effectiveness of nonviolence: the destruction of the beloved city of Sophiatown in 1955.

Sophiatown was a lively cultural center in South Africa in the mid-19th century, and it boasted a population of nearly 60,000 mostly black residents and was growing rapidly. Too rapidly, in fact, for the booming town of color made the white residents of nearby suburbs of Westdene and Newlands nervous and uncomfortable. The growing

⁵² "The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942" - Subhas Chandra Bose (1942)

Sophiatown made white families nervous because it was hard to maintain their fantasies of justice, equality, and civilized society with such blatant oppression right down the street from them. The dominant class, in a strategy that laid the groundwork for our current urban gentrification movements, decided to forcibly evacuate the city. The South African government sent letters to the enraged residents of Sophiatown, informing them of their mandatory evacuation to a shantytown of matchbox houses set up by the government, many miles away. Mandela and several other prominent leaders in the ANC saw this as an excellent opportunity to practice the principles of Satyagraha in a mass demonstration and mobilize the people to action.

Mandela set about organizing thousands of people to resist the evacuation, and was committed to remaining nonviolent no matter what happened. On February 9, 1955, two thousand heavily armed policemen began the evacuation, while bulldozers demolished houses, businesses, and churches. Those who resisted were viciously beaten, despite their cries for mercy and dedication to Satyagraha. The State brutally and methodically evacuated and destroyed the entire city until it was as if it had never existed. An entire city, a home for thousands of people, was completely wiped off of the map, simply because it was too close to white people. The nonviolent protest was a complete failure.

In the aftermath of Sophiatown, Mandela saw that the Apartheid government would give no ear to the cries for justice and equality with simple appeals to conscience. Mandela realized that without violent resistance, without significant pressure, the State had no incentive to listen to the wishes of the people and therefore no motivation to be influenced by nonviolent actions. He realized that his cause didn't have a Bhagat Singh or Subhas Chandra Bose that was providing the violent counterpart to the nonviolent movement, and so he decided to create it.

Umkhonto We Sizwe, or Spear of the Nation, was formed as the radical, direct-action counterpart to the ANC. They conducted many violent actions, mostly bombings, directed at the Apartheid government over the approximately 30 years of their existence. Mandela's role in Umkhonto was actually quite limited, as he was arrested in 1964 and therefore left his leadership role in the organization. During Mandela's incredible 27-year prison stint, he never wavered from his firm commitment towards the liberation of his country(wo)men from racism and oppression, and emerged from his incarceration an even stronger and more dedicated leader. He was greeted by a very different South Africa than the one he left. The Apartheid government was weakened by decades of violent and nonviolent resistance and, spurred on by international pressure, was ready to begin diplomatic negotiations. Mandela, realizing that the time for violence had passed, effectively switched tactics and used the tool of nonviolence to eventually topple the Apartheid State in 1994, being elected the first Prime Minister of the nation the following year.

Mandela's story and legacy of resistance can be a confusing one for many students of social change because of his change of tactics throughout his political career. Unlike many other resisters at the time, Mandela realized that nonviolence was not the only tool for social change; it was a useful tactic that could be very effective when the time was right. It is for this reason that many who put him in the same category of Gandhi and MLK Jr. are slightly off in their ideological assessment of him. Mandela was never a strict practitioner of nonviolence, but saw it as a tactic to be used when appropriate, as he stated several times throughout his career. In response to a CNN reporter comparing him to Gandhi and MLK Jr., he said, "*I was not like them. For them, nonviolence was a principle. For me, it was a tactic. And when the tactic wasn't working, I reversed it and started over.*"⁵³

Mandela was also fully willing to re-engage in violent resistance after his release from prison in 1990 if nonviolent methods were not yet working, as he said in one of his first speeches upon his release from prison, "*The factors which necessitated the armed struggle still exist today. We have no option but to continue. We express the hope that a climate conducive to a negotiated settlement will be created soon so that there may no longer be the need for the armed struggle.*"⁵⁴ Mandela, unlike Gandhi, understood the limits of nonviolence and made adjustments when appropriate. It was because of his dedication to his cause and his willingness to adapt to the changing situations at hand that made him a successful revolutionary and a role-model for resistance groups all over the world.

Despite Mandela's many successes and advancements, we see again the two factors that create misunderstanding about Gandhi's campaign, although on a slightly different level: a.) a lack of understanding the role that other, more violent political organizations played in the success of the nonviolent movement; and b.) the lack of real social change post-Apartheid.

As we just discussed, Mandela realized that nonviolence was not working due to a lack of any real pressure on the government to dismantle Apartheid. If any State could be pleaded with on a rational level to end their oppression and exploitation, then that's exactly what I would be doing right now, as opposed to writing this book.

As Mandela realized with the tragic destruction of Sophiatown, the State speaks only one language - power (aka money aka violence). When a State's ability to oppress is threatened, when its power is taken from it, then it will talk. When its ability to exploit, dominate, and convert life into piles of money is in jeopardy, then negotiations will commence. Up until that point, nonviolent tactics are largely futile. Mandela realized this,

⁵³ <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1312/05/acl.01.html>

⁵⁴ Nelson Mandela's Address To Rally In Cape Town On His Release From Prison - February 11, 1990

and therefore he created Umkhonto We Sizwe to provide the pressure that his group needed to carry out their goal of liberation.

The lack of social progress post-revolution in South Africa is not as stark as it was in India, but there are still some gross disparities that we need to look at and understood if we are to learn important lessons for our own resistance efforts. Many of the inequalities that existed under Apartheid are still apparent, and some are even worse. Black South Africans today make up 90% of the country's poor, although they make up 79.5% of the population⁵⁵. The number of people living on less than \$1 a day has doubled from 2 million in 1994 to 4 million in 2006⁵⁶. Over 70% of the land in South Africa is owned by whites, despite promises from the ANC to redistribute 30% of that land. This gross land inequality leaves over a third of the population living on just 13% of the land. Political repression, although no longer being used to enforce strictly defined racial segregation, is still being used in incredibly unjust and oppressive ways, as many activists who oppose the economic and political decisions of the ANC face beatings, torture, and execution at the hands of rogue police-officers and militias.

What is the reason for this sad state of affairs? Quite simply, the existing South African government was built on a several-thousand year old system of oppression, injustice, racism, and capitalism that cannot be overhauled simply by electing a black prime minister, regardless of his intentions or motives.

The same fallacy can be currently seen in the United States by those who claim that we live in a "post-racial society" due to the election of Barack Obama. Anyone who has taken a peek at the ever-growing Prison Industrial Complex, experienced the terrible living conditions of our ghettos and projects, or witnessed the continued casual executions of black teenagers in the streets of the US can attest to this fallacy. The ANC's radical communist agenda became greatly watered down towards the end of the anti-Apartheid struggle, as capitalism's temptations of wealth and power were too great for many of the radical leaders and they compromised their struggle, with disastrous results.

Mandela is a fascinating figure because unlike many other revolutionary leaders, he 'played both sides of the field.' He never restricted himself to violent or nonviolent tactics; he used each when they were appropriate. Mandela took Gandhi's philosophy and evaluated it for what it was- an excellent tactic to use for social change, under the correct circumstances. In many ways, Mandela and his movement was more successful than Gandhi's due to Mandela's understanding of the nature of the State and his realization that ineffective nonviolent actions are not progress, but are actually unacceptable losses in a fight for justice. This stance made him unpopular with many, and has led to attempts

⁵⁵ <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2004/05/safr-m21.html>

⁵⁶ "Race Trouble: Identity and Inequality in Post-Apartheid South Africa" - Durrheim, K (2011)

to 'whitewash' him posthumously as an advocate for pacifism and nonviolence, when in fact he was unapologetically committed to violent resistance, and remained so until the day he died.

King

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born in the state of Georgia in the United States in 1929 to a middle class, deeply religious family, and had a quiet, sheltered childhood, save for his deep wrestling with questions of faith, philosophy, and religion at a precocious age. He was an outstanding student; he entered college at age 15, earned his Doctorate in Philosophy when he was only 23, and accepted the role of pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama by the time he was 25. King's early life and rise through the educational system, although not entirely free from prejudice and discrimination, was very removed from the extreme racism and oppression that his fellow African-Americans faced everyday in the Jim Crow atmosphere of Alabama in the mid-19th century. Although initially shocked and horrified by the daily instances of oppressive violence that he saw around him, King turned his outrage into action and quickly became involved in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as his father was head of the Atlanta NAACP branch for many years and young King had chaired the NAACP youth membership committee in Atlanta, under his father.

King was thrust very quickly and very deeply into the civil rights struggle. Less than a year after he had arrived in Montgomery, Rosa Parks and several other activists made their courageous stand against the system of segregated busing in the city with the Montgomery Bus Boycott. King was instrumental in planning and organizing the year-long boycott, and due to his prominent role he was threatened, assaulted, had his home bombed, and was arrested several times. Throughout the long and incredibly difficult year, King showed himself to be a wise, bold, and competent leader, and by the end of the successful nonviolent boycott King was a national figure and a spokesman for civil rights.

In 1957 King, along with several other civil rights activists, formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization that aimed to unite Christian churches in the South with the purpose of conducting nonviolent acts of civil disobedience to end racial segregation. Under the leadership of King, the SCLC successfully carried out many nonviolent acts of civil disobedience such as boycotts, strikes, and marches, as well as pushing for legislative and legal reform alongside the NAACP and other civil rights groups.

Over the next ten years King continued to expound his theory of nonviolence, drawing heavily from the teachings of Yeshua (Jesus) in the Christian Bible, Gandhi's Satyagraha

campaign in India, and the anti-authoritarian musings of American transcendentalist philosopher Henry David Thoreau. King actually visited India in 1959, wanting to learn more about Satyagraha and the incredible teachings of the Mahatma. He also tried to travel to South Africa to visit Mandela, but was denied a visa.

After more than a decade of intense struggle, King came to realize that true justice was about more than just racial segregation. He saw the deep roots of capitalism, imperialism, and racism running throughout the country's history, and realized that it would take more than changing a few laws to undo such a pervasive system. He realized that poor whites were just as oppressed under capitalism as blacks were; he realized that unless the machinery itself was completely replaced, the vast majority of people living in the US would always be subjected to injustice and oppression, regardless of the color of their skin.

He attempted to address these issues in the best way he could, criticizing capitalism, openly speaking against the Vietnam war, advocating for social welfare programs, and organizing a "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom" in 1963, which turned out to be much less effective and revolutionary than King intended it to be due to an incredible amount of co-optation and betrayal in the ranks of the SCLC. Regardless of the toned-down message of the march, it was a remarkable success, and marked the tipping point of the civil rights struggle for many.

King, determined that the systemic injustice of the American government needed to be directly addressed, tried again to organize a mass-action in 1968, which he called the "Poor People's Campaign." It was to be a mass occupation of Washington, D.C., a multi-racial army of the poor that would descend upon the country's capital and demand an end to capitalist exploitation and oppression of all people, regardless of color, gender, or socioeconomic status. His plan was widely criticized and denounced as too radical, revolutionary, and reactionary. Many of his friends and coworkers within the SCLC threatened to leave if the occupation was carried out, and some did. Readers Digest denounced the march as an "insurrection" and many corporate media outlets began criticizing it the moment they heard about it.

Clearly, King had struck a chord deep within the heart of the beast, and the beast lashed out in fear. King was assassinated before he could see the plan to completion, and many believe that it was his insistence on carrying through with the occupation which led to his assassination. The Poor Peoples Campaign did eventually happen, but as it happened in the wake of King's death it had none of the spirit of defiance and intensity which King would have brought to it. The already crippled campaign was then subjected to FBI infiltration, disruption, and antagonization and disbanded within six weeks, threatening no-one and changing nothing.

King died at the young age of 39, after only 14 years of resistance. He might have successfully challenged the powerful systemic oppression of the US government while using nonviolent methods, had he had the chance. We will never know. What we do know is that he is widely hailed as a leader in the Civil Rights struggle and a champion of nonviolent principles and activism. Proponents of nonviolence and pacifism proudly claim King's legacy as proof of the effectiveness of nonviolence, and any high school history book in the US bears at least one picture of him, usually with the honorific title, "Leader of Civil Rights movement in the 1960's." But is that the whole story?

We will repeat the process which we used to critique Gandhi's and Mandela's movements with the two very important questions: a.) what was the role that violent organizations played in helping the nonviolent movement? and b.) what real social change has taken place as a result of the supposed success of the Civil Rights era?

I believe the role of violence during the Civil Rights era is more well-known than that of the Indian independence movement or the anti-apartheid struggle, but I don't think many are aware of the true extent of the violent resistance groups in the US during that time. There were perhaps hundreds of resistance groups that were active during the 1960's and 70's, with issues as diverse as women's rights, LGBTQ rights, indigenous rights, environmental protection, migrant workers' rights, anti-war campaigns, and of course, the Civil Rights campaign. The sheer number of organizations that were actively working towards ending segregation and the Jim Crow laws in the South is staggering; an exhaustive list would be, well, exhausting, so we will only mention the groups that openly advocated for violent resistance. The Black Panthers, the Students for a Democratic Society, the Weathermen, the Deacons for Defense and Justice, the Nation of Islam, and the Student National Coordinating Committee were all organizations that participated in or advocated for violent direct-action in the name of ending racial discrimination in the US, not to mention to incredible amount of reactionary, unorganized violence that often erupted in the form of riots in the ghettos of the nation's urban centers (*Rochester, NY July 1964; New York City, NY July 1964; Philadelphia, PA August 1964; Jersey city, NJ August 1964; Paterson, NJ August 1964; Elizabeth, NJ August 1964; Chicago, IL August 1964; Los Angeles, CA August 1965; Cleveland, OH July 1966; San Francisco, CA 1966; Chicago, IL June 1966; Newark, NJ July 1967; Detroit, MI July 1967; Plainfield, NJ July 1967; Milwaukee, WI July 1967; Minneapolis, MN August 1967; Orangeburg, SC February 1968; Baltimore, MD April 1968; Washington, DC April 1968; New York City, NY April 1968; Chicago, IL May 1968; Louisville, KY May 1968; Pittsburgh, PA May 1968; Summit, IL May 1968; Augusta, GA May 1970; Jackson, MS May 1970; Asbury Park, NJ July 1970; Los Angeles, CA August 1970; Camden, NJ 1971; Pensacola, FL February 1972*).

The thousands of bombings, riots, kidnappings, and arsons acted out on the US State during the Civil Rights movement was no incidental matter. Every violent action was

instrumental in creating the eventual signing of the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Bill, and the eventual desegregation of public spaces in the Southern states. As we saw in India and South Africa, the State has no motivation to end oppressive practices unless significant pressure is put on it to do so. Clearly, there was more than significant pressure for the US State to end racial segregation due to violent resistance. To claim that the social progress made during the Civil Rights era was due to nonviolence only is to ignore an incredible amount of historical evidence to the contrary and to buy into the inaccurate narrative of resistance that the State is presenting to us.

And what of effective social change? Can't black people ride buses and vote now? Don't we have a black president? Aren't we a post-racial society? The answer to this is very deep and complex, and I won't even try to completely illustrate the inaccuracy of this belief here, however I will provide you with a short story and a few statistics to illustrate that America has barely moved on from its deeply racist history, if at all.

From the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 to 2013, the American prison system has grown over 1000 percent, with African-Americans making up over one-third of that number. There are currently over 2,500,000 inmates incarcerated in the US, more than any other nation in the world, per capita. One in every thirty-one adults in the US is either behind bars, on parole, or on probation, and one in every three black men will spend time in Federal Prison in their lifetime⁵⁷. Lest one think that these individuals are violent offenders who are in prison for the good of the community, know that over 67% of those currently serving time in Federal Prisons are doing so for nonviolent drug charges, and over half of those are serving time for their first offense⁵⁸. And lest one think that our prisons are free of racial bias or discrimination, know that although the majority of illegal drug users and dealers nationwide are white, three fourths of all people imprisoned for drug offenses are Latino or black, and black men and women are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of their white neighbors.

Not only are grossly disproportionate amounts of young black and brown men in prison, but they are being exploited for their labor while in prison, effectively creating massive for-profit slave-labor plantations. Corporations such as Starbucks, Nintendo, Microsoft, Wal-Mart, Costco, Victoria's Secret, JCPenney, JanSport, Boeing, and Dell pay inmates 12 cents an hour to build desks, license plates, body armor, coffee cups, clothes, benches, and shrink-wrapped software, while the same jobs outside the prison would earn a laborer \$10-100 an hour⁵⁹. Still not convinced? Let's take a step further into this and examine the ways that the PIC (Prison Industrial Complex) intentionally exploits young black men for profit.

⁵⁷ *"The New Jim Crow"* - Michelle Alexander (2010)

⁵⁸ <http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/incarcerationofconsciousness.html>

⁵⁹ <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2008/07/what-do-prisoners-make-victorias-secret>

There is no other reason in the world except blatant racism and exploitation that can explain the terrible case of Edward Clary, whom we will use to illustrate the subtle and not-so-subtle ways that the PIC preys on young black men. In 1995, just two months after his eighteenth birthday, Clary was stopped and searched in the St. Louis airport upon returning home from a trip to visit some friends, one of whom persuaded Clary to carry back some crack cocaine for him. The police officers who stopped him reported that he “looked like” a drug dealer, despite his clean-cut and professional appearance. This illustrates the first level of this racially discriminatory system- the fact that police officers are freely given license to racially profile and discriminate against whomever they please without reason or probable cause. Clary, who had given no reason for a search (other than his black skin), was arrested upon discovery of the crack and convicted in a federal court under federal laws which punish crack offenses one hundred times more severely than powder cocaine offenses. This means that because Clary was caught with more than two ounces of crack, he was sentenced to a minimum of ten years in federal prison, despite the fact that Clary was a first-time offender and this was a nonviolent crime⁶⁰.

This illustrates the second level of the “New Jim Crow” system- the incredible disparity in sentencing protocols for stereotypically “black” drugs like crack vs. stereotypically “white” drugs such as cocaine. By instituting a law that punishes crack 100 times more severely than cocaine, the Federal government can appear to be color-blind, although they know full well that approximately 93% of crack offenders are black and 5% are white. By creating, enforcing, and refusing to change laws such as these, the State ensures that our prisons will be full of healthy black males, ready to build our great and noble society for only twelve cents an hour⁶¹.

If Clary survives his prison term with a healthy mind and body, he will get to experience the third way that this system perpetuates injustice- the labyrinth of legal maze that offenders must somehow crawl through upon the release of their sentence, making life after prison nearly impossible for those without strong families and communities to support them. The system is undoubtedly set up to keep people in, not to empower them to stay out. Even for the few that do manage to stay out, their lives are forever marred by the title of ‘felon’, unable to vote, receive public housing, get federal funds for schooling, get loans to start businesses, or receive employment in many careers and fields. ‘Felon’ is a brand of shame and second-class citizenship that is carried the rest of one’s life, all for carrying a plant extract around in his pocket.

The simple fact that an eighteen year-old black man can be put in a prison slave-labor camp for at least ten years for possessing drugs, destroying any chance of his

⁶⁰ *"The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America"* - Katherine Beckett and Theodore Sasson (2004)

⁶¹ *"Race to Incarcerate"* - Marc Mauer (2006)

contributing to society and benefitting his community, should be a clear enough sign that something is horribly wrong. The PIC is just one facet of our not-so-post-racial society. Poverty and food insecurity are rampant among black communities, racist “stand your ground” and “stop and frisk” laws along with trigger-happy police officers and neighborhood watchmen claim the lives of hundreds of black teenagers every year, and our Latino/a neighbors to the south are beginning to feel the effects of our deeply racist culture that must direct its hateful energy somewhere⁶².

To come back to the question at hand: yes, there are many important changes that have taken place in the US in regards to civil rights, and in no way am I diminishing the Civil Rights movement and its various legal and social successes. To be quite blunt, however, is it considered progress that one out of every three black men in America will spend time in prison during his life? Is it considered an advancement for civil rights that although gangs of armed KKK members don't parade around our streets at night, equally racist and dangerous police officers do? Is it a step forward that to be a black person in America means that a police officer can stop you for any reason, at any time, and charge you with any crime they deem fit, whether or not you are guilty of it? I do not think so, nor do I think Dr. King would think so. Again, regrettably, it seems as if the supposed progress we are making is really just another mask, another form of the same old, strangely familiar form of racism and oppression that we have been fighting for thousands of years, and shows no sign of dying anytime soon.

King was absolutely a brave and dedicated man, a resistance leader who left many words to study and actions to imitate. His speeches and letters remain hallmarks of resistance literature, and his commitment to his ideals of nonviolence and equality are to be respected. We must ask, however, why we only ever hear about King when we hear about the Civil Rights struggle in school or in the media? There were hundreds if not thousands of authors, activists, musicians, pastors, revolutionaries, and public leaders calling for the dismantling of racist and oppressive systems of government at the time, so why is King given the title of “Champion of the Civil Rights struggle”?

The answer again lies in the image that the State needs to portray. King, like Gandhi, was the perfect poster-child for revolution, at least for a while. He was a quiet, respectful, educated, privileged man of God who refused to use violence against the State. He was what the State wanted all civil rights activists to be: passionate, yet restrained; determined, yet conservative; reformatory, not revolutionary. When King broke this mold in the last few years of his life and began to point out the true cause of the plight of the black person in the US, he was immediately ignored, ostracized, censored, and eventually killed. Nowhere in popular history books, TV programs, or memorial services will you hear mention of his radical anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, or anti-war stances.

⁶² <http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/incarcerationofconsciousness.html>

The last few years of his life have simply been erased. He must be presented as a moderate social reformer, a pastor who only wanted to end racism, a father who simply had a dream that his children should be able to play peaceably with white children.

Contrary to popular depictions of him, King understood the necessity of violence in the case of self-defense. He, along with many of his followers, stockpiled many firearms in his home and carried them with him when he traveled. When his home was firebombed in 1956 he applied for a concealed carry permit, but was denied due to the fact that he was black. Whenever he traveled he was surrounded with armed guards who would not hesitate to use them in case of an attack on the preacher⁶³. King also refuted accusations of pacifism, saying, *“I am no doctrinaire pacifist. I have tried to embrace a realistic pacifism...violence exercised in self-defense, which all societies, from the most primitive to the most cultured and civilized, accept as moral and legal...the principle of self-defense, even involving weapons and bloodshed, has never been condemned, even by Gandhi, who sanctioned it for those unable to master pure nonviolence”* and stating his understanding of, *“violence as a tool of advancement, organized as in warfare, deliberately and consciously”⁶⁴.*

Looking at King's life, his teachings, and his contributions to the Civil Rights movement, it becomes immediately clear that he is not quite what the media or history books would have us believe him to be. He contributed a great deal to the ending of overtly discriminatory laws and practices, yet the contributions of thousands of others are strangely absent. Quotes from his speeches on ending racism are flaunted on t-shirts, bumper stickers, and postage stamps, but his sermons on the absurdity and immorality of the Vietnam War and US foreign policy are curiously censored. I believe if we were to revive the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., we would find someone who is an outspoken critic of capitalism, imperialism, war, racism, exploitation, and oppression, someone who understands the important difference between disengaged pacifism and effective nonviolent action, and someone who is willing to live and die according to his convictions and beliefs.

The Narrative

Gandhi, Mandela, and King were all important, brilliant, courageous, and effective leaders of resistance movements in the past century. They were all relatively successful in their missions of social justice, and are all held up as beacons of social change and nonviolence. Two of them were killed for their beliefs, and the third paid the heavy price of 27 years in prison and narrowly escaped several assassination attempts. Upon close examination of their stories, however, two important facts became glaringly obvious: a.)

⁶³ *“This Nonviolent Stuff’ll Get You Killed: How Guns Made The Civil Rights Movement Possible”* - Charles E. Cobb Jr. (2014)

⁶⁴ *“The Social Organization of Violence”* - Martin Luther King, Jr. (1959)

they were all helped out in their struggles by violent counterparts to the nonviolent movements, in that violent resistance played a major role in helping create the atmosphere that allowed the movement to be carried through with nonviolent resistance; and b.) many of the desired and fought-for social changes were never actually instituted, and in some cases are even worse today than before.

This is indeed an unfortunate and uncomfortable reality, and not one that I take pleasure in presenting to you, as it casts a shadow over the few bright spots of hope and truth which illuminate the long, dark corridor of history. This shadow should not be seen as an attempt to minimize or dismiss these three great men and their heroic actions, but rather to draw our attention to what that shadow might be. As we look closely at the shadow, which seems to run through the course of human history, it begins to take shape and look familiar to us. I'm hoping that you recognize it by now. It is the incredibly powerful, pervasive, adaptable, and oppressive presence of the State.

The State doesn't care if India is run by Indians or British, as long as it is allowed to continue building massive dams that displace millions of farmers and importing genetically modified grains that are destroying food security and wiping out biological diversity. The State doesn't care if South Africa is run by leaders with brown or white skin, as long as it is allowed to continue working tens of thousands of South Africans to death in diamond, coal, and gold mines. The State doesn't care if Black Americans can vote or ride on buses, as long as it is allowed to continue operating plantations of young black men who will work for almost nothing. The State doesn't care if you protest the war, oil pipelines, environmental regulations, international trade agreements, or the rights of people to marry people of their own gender, as long as you allow it to continue killing, raping, stealing, and destroying life on this planet at whatever level it determines necessary to continue its existence.

As long as the State, aka Western culture, aka Business As Usual, aka globalized capitalism, aka imperialism, aka civilization remains unchallenged, it will continue to adapt and grow until it has eliminated us as a species and our planet as a functioning ecosystem. Protest away, vote for your preferred flavor of congressman, wave your signs, call your senators, tie yourself to walls and sit in roads, engage in direct-action, do whatever you feel you must, but do not allow this system to continue its trajectory another day without feeling the full weight of your resistance. Do not buy the lie that nonviolence is the only historically successful way of defeating injustice, nor the lie that violence is the only way. They each have their role and their function as elements of resistance. Sometimes it is better and more effective to be nonviolent; sometimes it is better and more effective to be violent.

Before we close this chapter, I want to acknowledge that we have entirely ignored hundreds of revolutions and resistance movements which have taken place in the past

century, many of which were almost entirely nonviolent and are widely hailed as examples of successful nonviolent resistance, such as the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1989, the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in 1986, and the Peaceful Revolution in Germany in 1989. I wanted to use this chapter to illustrate how three highly esteemed figures of nonviolence represented the two important principles of a.) violence enabling nonviolence to work and b.) understanding the difference between progress and mask-changing. I encourage you to do your own research and see how these two principles apply to the many other situations that I was not able to effectively cover in this chapter. I feel confident that although there might not exist such blatant examples as I have illustrated here, you will find these two principles at work in some form or another in every successful social movement and revolution throughout history. Don't take my word for it, though; go do your own research!

The Path (Chapter 7)

At this point in the book we have explored some common critiques of violent and nonviolent ideology, we have gone over the myriad number of ways that humanity is destroying itself and every other living thing on this planet through the continued existence of Business as Usual, we have learned how to defeat nihilism by discovering what it is we love and are willing to fight for, we have explored the origins of oppressive violence, and we have examined the lives, teachings, and movements of three leaders of nonviolence, ultimately coming to the conclusion that a successful resistance movement needs to a.) have a violent counterpart to the resistance in order for it to be successful and b.) not be duped into thinking that it is making progress, when really it's just a new mask on an old enemy.

We arrive here with a fairly comprehensive understanding of the history and ideologies of violent and nonviolent resistance, and have seen the flaws and benefits of both. At this point I would like to introduce to you a new model for social change, a framework for resistance that encompasses both violent and nonviolent tactics, a theory that allows for the natural progression of individuals and groups from a disengaged pacifist stance to an engaged, empowered, and dedicated attitude of resistance towards oppression.

I present to you a path. This path looks like any other path, with a starting point, a destination, and many steps along the way. Some more privileged and able-bodied individuals may be able to walk the path quickly, while others may take their time. Some may decide to stop along the way for a while, and others may not be able to continue along the path due to extreme circumstances. No spot on the path is better than any other, they just are. We all start at the beginning, and we don't stop until we reach the end or we die trying.

Stage One: Colonization

The first step of this path is what we will call the Colonization stage. Every person and every social group has experienced this at some point in their life. This is a stage marked with an inability to actualize one's own dreams, goals, and desires. A person/group in this

stage often sees themselves as meek, small, inferior, and subservient. This stage is dominated by Fear, fear that is often reinforced with oppressive violence. One who is colonized does not see themselves as equals to their oppressors, but as an inferior, as they have internalized the oppression and believed the lie that they are weak and unable to defend themselves. A colonized person will often adopt a pacifist approach, believing that it is better to just go along with the system than try to oppose it - as opposing it will most certainly require a great deal of effort, danger, and violence.

This is personified in the victim of bullying, in the victim of an abusive relationship, and in the social minority who accepts structural violence as a daily reality. Being materially privileged does not excuse one from this stage, as I have personally worked with many wealthy young men who were unable to stand up to their overbearing and emotionally abusive fathers, who were unable to reject their fathers narratives and expectations for their life and were thus effectively colonized by their fear of his wrath or disappointment. Many people and groups never move past this stage, as they have fully accepted the lie that they are weak and disempowered. Their oppression is internalized and accepted as reality, as the oppressor has effectively colonized the hearts and minds of their victims into believing that they are too weak, stupid, and vulnerable to actually change their circumstances and they are better off just getting the best they can in this terrible world, better off fighting for scraps from the master's table than trying to kill the master and burn his table.

Some signs that you are effectively colonized and are in this first stage are: if you recognized the traits of nihilism in yourself as you read chapter three, if your mind told you, "It's too much, I can't ever do anything to stop all this, why even try?", if you tend to view agents of the State (police(wo)men, soldiers, judges, etc.) and authority figures with awe and fear instead of seeing them as regular people in silly outfits who do bad things, if you would rather run away from a fight than stick up to defend yourself or others (bear in mind that sticking up to defend yourself does not necessarily mean engaging in violence), if you tend to view yourself as a victim to your circumstances, or if you believe that you are weak, powerless, ineffective, stupid, or insignificant. As Fanon said, "*the oppressed will always believe the worst about themselves*"⁶⁵.

If you recognize that you are colonized by your oppressors, that you have internalized their logic of exploitation, then you are not alone. The mass of (wo)men lead lives of quiet colonization, and very few ever understand that they are colonized. You will need to fight to get your body, mind, heart, and soul back from your oppressors, to rid yourself of the many ways that Western culture has impressed itself upon you. It is not a simple process, and one that might last the rest of your life as you will continually find ways that you are colonized and see yourself as weak, inferior, and a victim.

⁶⁵ "*The Wretched Of The Earth*" – Frantz Fanon (1961)

The incredible deception of colonialism, the sheer absurdity of people believing that we are slaves and too weak to effectively cast off one's oppressors, is revealed in a letter from Leo Tolstoy to Tarak Nath Das, "*A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not athletes, but rather weak and ordinary people, have enslaved two hundred millions of vigorous, clever, capable, freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that not the English, but the Indians, have enslaved themselves?*"⁶⁶

Stage Two: Decolonization

The next stage along the path is the Decolonization stage. Individuals or organizations who arrive here (and not all do) have engaged in some activity - whether it is explicitly violent or not- that has broken their former view of themselves as weak and subservient, and has empowered them to 'stand up for themselves,' regardless of the consequences. This shift may or may not necessitate physical violence, as many individuals may be able to transition to a state of empowerment by simply realizing and accepting the truth that they are not victims, but for the vast majority of people it will require some sort of physical violence.

The transition to this stage requires a full and complete decolonization of fear from the oppressed psyche, a rooting out of the mentality of subordination and domination and replacing it with a clarity of truth- a truth that destroys the former illusions of fear and understands that no human has the right to oppress/kill/rape/extort/intimidate another form of life.

Most of the time this stage will be accompanied with violence, as Fanon stated, "*At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.*"⁶⁷ This stage may be seen as a 'reaction' to the oppression and disempowerment felt during the previous stage, and thus many individuals and groups may remain in this stage for a very long time, enjoying their newfound freedoms and savoring their liberation of their bodies, hearts, and minds.

It will follow as a general rule that the amount of oppressive violence that an individual or culture has been subjected to is directly proportionate to the amount of violence they will need to exert on their oppressors in order to effectively decolonize themselves. Fanon repeated this assertion many times, and Gandhi understood this as well, when he

⁶⁶ "Letter To A Hindu" - Leo Tolstoy (1908)

⁶⁷ "The Wretched of the Earth" - Frantz Fanon (1961)

famously said, “*Nonviolence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die and has no power of resistance*⁶⁸.”

For some, this stage may turn into a reversal of the roles of oppression, as the newly empowered individual/group uses their empowerment to intimidate and exploit others, unknowingly turning into oppressors themselves. This phenomenon may be seen in the history of the Jewish people, as their current treatment of the Palestinian people is a startling and grievous reminder of what their culture went through under the Third Reich.

For others, it may be a reality of basic survival to stay in this stage, as their circumstances may not allow for a progression forward due to the immense violence surrounding them and the frailty of their resistance. An example of this would be the resistance of the Jewish people during the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1944, where a group of approximately 30,000 Polish Jews and sympathizers violently resisted the genocide with armed struggle and successfully resisted the German army for just over two months. Needless to say, they never had the option of a nonviolent alternative, and violence was as far as they ever got in this stage. Another example for this would be the few remaining indigenous people groups around the world such as the Nahua, Guarani, Awa, and Dongria Kondh, who are facing extinction in the next few decades⁶⁹. For these people, violent resistance to the encroaching culture is their only option for survival.

If you find that you are in the second stage of resistance, if you feel that you are largely decolonized, then you have three responsibilities: a.) to help the progression of your comrades who are in the first stage into the second stage by facilitating their decolonization, b.) to avoid using your empowerment to exploit others, and c.) to look forward into the third stage and see what you need to do in order to progress forward along the path.

Stage Three: Active Nonviolence

After the decolonization is complete and an individual no longer sees themselves as a victim to their circumstances nor do they feel the need to continue reacting violently to their oppressors, some individuals and organizations are able to move forward into the final stage of resistance- Active Nonviolence. Individuals who have reached this stage have traveled through the disempowerment and passivity of the first stage, have faced the trials and struggles of the second stage, and now seek to find active, engaging, and *effective* methods of nonviolent resistance.

⁶⁸ “*Nonviolence in Peace and War, Volume 1*” - M.K. Gandhi (1942)

⁶⁹ For more information on threatened indigenous peoples, visit www.survivalinternational.org

This stage is arrived at only after one has thoroughly engaged in the previous two stages, as there is no room for a passive, disempowered mentality here, nor is there any sign of fearful, reactionary violence. Active nonviolence is marked by an empowered, informed, creative, and *effective* alternative to either passivity or violence. If you are at the third stage, you are able to look an oppressor in the eye and say, "I see that you are a human just like me, subject to the same fears, hopes, insecurities, and dreams as me. You simply believe some very bad ideas that I intend to destroy. I am not intimidated by you or afraid of you, indeed I could engage with you violently, if I so choose. However, because I respect all life-forms, I will try my hardest to stop your oppressive acts without harming you and I will try to engage your heart in the struggle as well, so hopefully you will see the futility and destructiveness of your actions and realize that you are defending bad ideas."

However, you must also be willing to look your oppressor in the eye and engage with them violently, if all nonviolent options are exhausted and your only chance of ending oppressive violence is to use force to stop it. Many times a willingness to engage in a small measure of violence may be the most nonviolent alternative possible in a situation. For example, if I witness an agent of the State (a policeman) oppressing another human (beating and harassing a black teenager, for instance), I must be willing to engage in the situation to stop the beating. This could look like using my body as a shield to protect the teenager, filming the incident in the hopes of dissuading the officer from continuing the assault, or it could look like me throwing the policeman off of the teenager in order to free the victim from the situation. If all else fails to stop the violence, I must be willing to engage on whatever level necessary to stop the violence of the oppressor, all the while seeking an option that uses the least amount of total violence possible.

Individuals who have reached this stage must realize at all times that their position is inherently privileged, and with that privilege comes the responsibility to empower and defend others who do not have the privilege of nonviolence, and that responsibility may look like engaging in violence when necessary.

It is very important to understand that this is a mentality that is driven by *love*, not fear. Fear and love are antithetical. You cannot look at an oppressor in the eye and love them if you fear them, and you cannot fear someone if you love them. Granted, you may fear for your health or well-being, but you do not fear *them*. This may sound like a contradiction of terms or pseudo-therapeutic nonsense to some, but I encourage you to experiment and try it out for yourself. Think of someone you love, and then picture them trying to hurt you, due to their own sickness and delusion. You cannot hate this person for trying to hurt you, and at the same time you cannot let them hurt you, therefore you engage with them forcefully in an attempt to stop their violence and protect yourself and those around you at the same time. You are not trying to kill or destroy them, but merely trying to stop their harmful actions as quickly as possible. Now repeat the same scenario in your head, only replace the person you love with someone you hate. I would assume

that your actions would be quite different. You would probably use excessive force in an attempt to hurt them, or you would allow them to hurt you out of fear and relational patterns of abuse and disempowerment. Even if the person that you love is much larger and more physically capable of harming you, you may fear for your safety, but you cannot fear them while you love them.

If you find yourself at this stage, knowing how to engage in active nonviolent resistance in a manner that works towards ending oppressive violence, then you have many responsibilities: a.) you must empower and encourage your comrades who are in the first stage to transition to the second, and those in the second to the third b.) you must not use your privilege to exploit those who are not at the stage you are c.) you must always look for an actively nonviolent solution in a violent situation, and if there is none, you must d.) be willing to engage violently in order to diffuse and de-escalate an oppressor.

You may find yourself back in the first or second stage at certain times and in certain situations, as another person or situation may trigger your old colonized stage or your reactive violence, but you must always come back to active nonviolence, as nonviolence is always the most egalitarian, effective, and least-oppressive tactic of resistance. The last responsibility of an active nonviolent resister is to constantly look forward to the fourth and final stage, as there will always be oppression to resist.

The Fourth Stage: Total Liberation

The fourth and final stage is Total Liberation: a world built on the principles of love, community, connection, respect, mutual aid, egalitarianism, voluntary participation, and freedom where all living beings on the earth are free from oppressive violence. Is this entirely practical? Probably not in my lifetime, but that's not the point. The point is that we are never done with the path until this stage is reached. There is no stopping, resting, or tarrying along the path because no matter what your personal beliefs about violence or nonviolence, this is the ultimate goal. The goal is not what tools you use; the goal is the building of the house. Some with more privilege may use shiny new power tools, some with less privilege will be building with just their hands, but we are all looking forward to this goal and we are all working towards it together.

The moment we forget that this is the goal and become fixated on the tools we are using, we become ineffective and ultimately destructive to our cause. Do not waste your time criticizing what tools others are using, but use yours well. Until Total Liberation is reached, any action taken to dismantle oppressive systems is ultimately helpful to the cause. Therefore, spend your time and energy wisely, being careful to avoid petty infighting, pointless philosophical bickering, and abstract theorizing. Find what you love. Find what you are willing to fight for and protect, and keep that on your horizon, never

letting go, turning aside, or trading that image for a cheap knockoff of your dream which changes nothing. When the beast hands you a new mask, kill the beast and burn his masks, accept nothing short of Total Liberation until you realize it or die trying.

The Traps

There are several traps, or problems, that can arise whenever one does not understand which stage they are in or is not willing to move forward on the path. I call these traps a.) The Fearful Warrior; b.) The Lackey; c.) and The Privileged Pacifist.

The Fearful Warrior

The Fearful Warrior, also known as the militant pacifist, is an individual or group who thinks they are in the third stage when really they are still in the first stage. This phenomenon is very apparent in many resistance movements today who are trying to emulate the actions and ideas of active nonviolence without ever going through the process of decolonization. They have completely skipped the decolonization stage of the process, seeing it as too messy difficult, and violent, and have tried to go right to the third stage- as their privilege affords them the opportunity to do so. The Fearful Warrior is just what it sounds like- someone or some organization trying to wage war, when they still have fear in their hearts. They do not realize that active nonviolence only works in an atmosphere of courage, love, and empowerment, and trying to engage in active nonviolence with a heart of fear leads only to ineffective pacifism

I see this typified in the past forty years of the environmental movement in the US. To a large extent, the role of the environmental movement has been to promote 'greener yet still totally unsustainable living' and impose petty legislative measures, carbon taxes, and cap and trade policies in hopes of slowing the progress towards environmental destruction. There was a reaction to this mentality in the late 90s and early 2000s with the advent of more radical, direct-action oriented groups such as the Earth Liberation Front, the Animal Liberation Front, Earth First!, and the Sea Shepherds, but the resistance - due to our old friends at the FBI - was swiftly crushed and swung back into the lap of the State where it sits today⁷⁰. Many aspiring young activists simply have no idea what effective nonviolent action looks like, as they have been told that pacifism is absolute law and can never be questioned for any reason. This atmosphere of militant pacifism has served to disempower and de-legitimize the environmental movement and many other movements, and has caused many activists to totally reject nonviolence as an ideology, instead of just

⁷⁰ "Green is the New Red" - Will Potter (2001)

rejecting ineffective pacifism.

If you find yourself in this position, as a Fearful Warrior, you may need to consider what decolonizing yourself may look like and what you need to do in order to remove fear from your heart and an unquestioning acceptance of State power from your mind. Ask yourself: is my nonviolence coming from a position of power or fear? Am I valuing the lives of those in power over those whom power is killing? What/ who am I afraid of? What actions can I take in order to face oppressive violence without fear? Is my commitment to nonviolence a moral or practical one? Is my commitment to nonviolence realistic in a world of normalized oppressive violence?

The Lackey

The second trap, the Lackey, also known as the lapdog, flunky, or capo, is also very common. This trap happens when an individual/group in the second stage uses their empowerment and confidence to turn around on the path and oppress others who are still in the first stage. The word 'Lackey' and accompanying connotation comes from the world of prisons, concentration camps and behavioral-modification programs. The lackey is someone who is picked out from amongst an oppressed population, such as a prison, as someone who has a penchant for violence, selfishness, and treachery and whom is given responsibility for running a certain area or aspect of the prison. The lackey is then rewarded with special favors and privileges, as long as they maintain order. The lackey is the ultimate traitor, because they are using violence to hurt their own people and they have misidentified their oppressors. Modern-day police officers, government agents, judges, and military forces are excellent examples of lackeys, as they routinely enforce the laws and regulations which oppress their own people, mistakenly thinking that the State is on their side. To a much-lesser degree, some activists participate in Lackey behavior when they mock, disrupt, or put-down other individuals or groups who are also working towards liberation instead of focusing on disrupting State violence and moving towards Total Liberation.

As stated earlier, this is very clearly typified in the world today by the treatment of the Israeli State to the Palestinian people. The Jewish people, as everyone is familiar with, endured horrific treatment at the hands of the Third Reich in Germany during the Second World War. After the war was over and the Jewish people began to try to reassemble their culture and sense of identity, the British government "gave" them large sections of land in the occupied Palestinian territories, where the British State had been oppressing the Palestinian people for the previous forty years. The Jewish people, still healing from their own wounds, have spent the past sixty years oppressing and exploiting the Palestinians at an extreme level, instead of seeking to find ways to heal together. Of course, this issue

is extremely complex and I do not think that this is the total answer to the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories; however I do think that this greatly illustrates this principle.

If you find yourself as the Lackey, it might be helpful to ask yourself some questions such as these: Who am I using my empowerment for? Am I working to end oppressive violence in the world, or am I reinforcing systems which perpetuate it? How can I use my power to empower others, instead of just helping myself? Am I using my energy to criticize/disempower others who are also working towards liberation or trying to help them be more effective, regardless of our differences?

The Privileged Pacifist

The final trap is the Privileged Pacifist. We have already talked a good deal about this, yet it is so important to understand and so common that we will revisit it. The Privileged Pacifist is someone from the third stage who looks down on others who use violence to obtain their ends. They have forgotten to look forward to the final stage of the path, and they believe that those who use violence are ignorant, backwards, and “just as bad as those you are trying to change.” They do not see the privilege of their position, and instead of using their privilege to empower and advocate for others, they instead criticize, ridicule, and generally become a nuisance to those who are trying to empower and decolonize themselves.

It is also important to note that there is a marked level of privilege associated with each stage of the path. Someone engaged in an incredibly oppressive situation who is in the first stage (such as victims of sex-slavery, mass incarceration, and others) will rarely have an opportunity to effectively and violently resist their oppressors. Yes, maybe they can punch or stab somebody, but as for collectively organizing and resisting, there is very little chance of it being productive. Likewise, those who have successfully resisted their oppressors violently and who have successfully reached the second stage may not have the opportunity to engage in the third stage, as their resistance may barely be alive and able to sustain itself in the face of brutal oppression. And finally, those with pacifist or active nonviolent views have the ultimate privilege, as they are afforded the opportunity to have such noble ideals. Every pacifist individual must realize that their ideology is a privilege, and with that contains a measure of responsibility to leverage our privilege for those who do not have such a choice put before them.

If you find yourself as the Privileged Pacifist, here are some helpful questions to help you along your path: In what ways am I privileged? How am I using my privilege to help others who are less-privileged than me? In what ways have I been using my privilege to help myself, at others expense? Am I willing to let go of my privilege in order to create a more

just, safe, and egalitarian atmosphere for all living beings? If not, than what is stopping me? If so, then what are some ways that I can begin doing so?

To summarize the path of resistance, we now have four stages: Colonized, Decolonized, Active Nonviolence, and Total Liberation. I want to be very clear that there is no hierarchy here, no stage is better than another, nor is any stage morally superior or more effective than another. They just *are*. Trying to quantify these stages and judge others who are not at the stage you are at is ignorant, selfish, and foolish. Just as you did not choose the country, family, or socioeconomic status you were born into, not all of us can choose how we will best respond to a given situation of violence. All we can do is try to understand where we are and try to look forward to the final stage of ending oppressive violence for all living creatures.

One final point to make about this model is that it is incredibly nuanced, and by no means is anyone's path limited to these stages in this order. There are several interacting and interrelated aspects of individual and group dynamics that can affect how one goes about resisting many different types of oppression, and only you can determine where you are at and what you need to do in order to move forward.

For example, many individuals and groups are approaching resistance from within the heart of the beast, and the path I have laid out might look very different to them than it does to those who are fighting the beast from outside the cave. Increasing numbers of these beneficiaries of colonization are awakening to the realities of imperial exploitation around them, and desire to do their part in resisting as well. I experience many 'liberals' in the West to be in this position, as they acknowledge the realities of racism, sexism, colonialism, and conquest around them, yet they still aren't sure how to resist or even who exactly they are supposed to be resisting. These dissidents often occupy an interesting grey area on the path that exists between the first and second stage, as they are not necessarily colonized by fear of the oppressor, yet they are also not really decolonized and engaged in effective resistance. Effective resistance for these people will often look like divesting themselves from the culture of conquest and renouncing the privileges of colonization, allying themselves with existing resistance movements and structures, and seeking ways in which to use their privilege in selfless, subversive ways⁷¹.

Another way that this path is nuanced is that there are many different types of oppression, and thus many different types of colonization. Someone might have decolonized themselves in one area of oppression, but still be colonized in another, such as a woman

⁷¹ <http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/audacity.html>

of color who no longer fears agents of the State but still feels inferior or weak based on her gender or skin color, or a working-class gay man who no longer believes that he is inferior based on his sexuality, but still feels insignificant and weak because of his poverty.

To completely decolonize ourselves from all aspects of oppression is a daunting task, and one that we will probably be working on for the rest of our lives. The point is not to achieve some standard or arrive somewhere, but to continually work towards decolonizing ourselves, our families, our communities, and our biosphere from oppression, wherever and whenever we find it.

Case Studies (Chapter 8)

We have just laid out four stages of development that work towards an ultimate goal of ending oppressive violence on our planet. In order to more fully grasp how these stages play out in the real world, let's look at some present-day and historical examples of resistance groups that greater illustrate each step of the path

Stage One Case Study: The Puerto Rican Independence Movement

The Colonized stage is one that most oppressed people groups around the world are very familiar with. Most oppressed individuals do not realize that they are being oppressed, as they are effectively colonized, in that they have internalized the oppression and have accepted the bleak reality that they are second (or third, or fourth, etc.) class citizens, and that's just the way it is. There are perhaps thousands of examples of colonized peoples in the world today, and if we are to examine the scope of history we will find tens of thousands, if not millions more examples of this. For this case study we will examine the long and frustrating history of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement.

When Juan Ponce de Leon first arrived in 1508 on the island of Borikén, now known as Puerto Rico, he immediately established a settlement, claimed the land in the name of Spain, and named himself as governor; despite the fact that there were already 30,000 inhabitants who were living there quite peacefully and happily without European help. The process of colonization began immediately, and within a year most of the indigenous Taino had been killed, enslaved, or crippled by various infectious diseases. Only five years later, in 1513, the Spanish had to begin shipping African slaves to the island to work the sugar-cane plantations, as they had almost completely eliminated the indigenous population. The next 500 years were tragically predictable- slavery, genocide, murder, theft, rape, extortion, etc. The tiny island transferred colonial hands during the Spanish-American war in 1898, but the lives of the oppressed peoples on the island remained largely unchanged, their opinions were never consulted on the transfer; their lives were merely chips on an imperial bargaining table⁷².

⁷² "Puerto Rico Past and Present: an encyclopedia" - Gail Cueto, Ronald Fernandez, Serafin Mendez (1998)

The history of resistance in Puerto Rico is just as long as the colonization. Starting with the first organized resistance of the Taino in 1511 until today, the people of Puerto Rico have been constantly struggling and fighting for independence. They pleaded with Spain for independence, and when Spain transferred colonial powers to the US they pleaded with the US government for independence. Their independence movement reached a pinnacle during the revolutionary fervor of the 1950s and 60s. In 1950, following the designation of the island as a commonwealth, several nationalist uprisings took place, leading to street fighting, riots, occupations, and an attempted assassination of president Harry S. Truman⁷³. Four nationalists shot five US representatives during a debate in the US Congress in 1954, and by 1960 the movement was in full swing. Several revolutionary organizations formed- the El Movimiento Independentista Revolucionario en Armas (MIRA), Los Comandos Armado de Liberación (CAL), Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN), La Organización de Voluntarios por la Revolución Puertorriqueña (OVRP), and The Ejército Popular Boricua (EPB) were all engaged in violent resistance with the aim of overthrowing US occupation of the island. Several organizations in the US took also took up the cause of Puerto Rican Independence, such as the Young Lords, the Brown Berets, and the Students for a Democratic Society. Almost all these groups were engaged in nonviolent and violent resistance for their cause, and many had international support and sympathy. So why then did it not happen? Why is Puerto Rico *still* a colony of the US? What happened to the revolution and why couldn't they effectively decolonize themselves?

Many scholars, historians, and professors have contributed an enormous amount of research and theory in regards to this topic, and I do not pretend to have the answer where others do not. However I do think that there are two factors which contribute to this history of unsuccessful resistance: a.) the incredible amount of oppressive State violence enacted on the independence groups and their leaders, and b.) the long legacy of fear and colonialism which Puerto Ricans must collectively overcome in order to rid their oppressors from their hearts and minds, as well as their soil.

The US response to the Puerto Rican Independence movement was stunning in its brutality and severity. The FBI's COINTELPRO (COunter INTELLigence PROgram) methodically targeted leaders of the movement and either assassinated, defamed, or falsely imprisoned them. Hundreds of young activists were beaten and jailed, and some of the more promising ones were executed- Manuel Ramos, Jose Lind, Julio Roldan, and the terrible death of Rev. Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia. The FBI compiled over 1.8 million documents on the independence movement, spending an enormous amount of time and resources on de-stabilizing and disrupting the cause. The movement, unprepared to deal with such a violent and oppressive force, crumbled by the late 1970s.

⁷³ "Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History" - Arturo Morales Carrión (1984)

They simply had no idea that the US would respond in such a brutal way, as they naively believed in the facade of democracy and felt they could appeal to the American conscience. Maybe if the US hadn't responded so severely, they would have had more success, and we would be telling a different story right now. We will never know^{74 75}.

My second theory for the failure of the movement is the inability of the people of Puerto Rico to collectively decolonize their minds and refuse to live in fear of oppression. Although there have been many independence parties and movements throughout Puerto Rico's history, there has never been a united front of the people willing to face violence for the sake of independence. As a country, they have an incredibly long and dark history full of oppressive State violence, and it might take an equally incredible amount of violence to decolonize themselves from that history. This lack of solidarity and unification can be seen in a recent (2012) referendum vote on the proposed status of the country: 61.1% voted for admission as a state of the United States; 5.5% voted for independence, and the remainder for keeping the current status. The people of Puerto Rico have yet to collectively join hands and face their colonizers, rooting out centuries of fear and oppression, accepting the reality of violence which must then come, and finally being baptized in violent resistance - emerging as an independent people who are no longer willing to submit themselves to imperialistic games and exploitation. I believe they have the capacity to do so, and I eagerly await their moment of liberation.

For other examples of Colonized peoples in today's world, you need look no farther than the so-called 'Third-world' countries of the global South, also known as the 'developing world.' As we revealed earlier, these countries are merely modern forms of the same old colonies, as each 'third-world' country's relationship with the West fits the exact definition of colonization, in that their resources and lives are violently extracted and sold back to them at a premium, reaping huge amounts of power/money for their oppressors.

Stage Two Case Study: The Paris Commune

The Decolonization stage is one that not every group or individual has the opportunity of arriving at, as the circumstances have to be right and the oppressed have to be willing to challenge the systems of oppression which dominate them, most often in a violent manner. One example of a group that arrived at the Decolonization stage is the Paris Commune, a radical resistance movement that briefly created a non-oppressive, egalitarian, and communal society in the city of Paris in 1871.

The background leading up to the Commune is long and complex and I encourage you to

⁷⁴ *"We Took The Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords"* - Miguel Melendez (2005)

⁷⁵ *"The Young Lords: A Reader"* - Darrel Enck-Wanzer, Denise Oliver-Velez, Iris Morales (2010)

research it for yourself, as it a fascinating story which has been largely erased from history due to the dangerous narrative and messages that it contains. The backdrop is the brief but bloody Franco-Prussian war. France, unprepared for the intensity and speed of the Prussian forces, was overrun by advancing armies; the great Napoleon himself hid in the city of Sedan and surrendered his army very early on in the engagement. The Prussian armies, led by general Otto Von Bismarck, advanced on the city of Paris. The Parisians showed themselves surprisingly capable of defending the city from the invaders, and held the Prussians off for over a month in guerilla-style resistance tactics. Regardless of the success of the militia army of Paris and the wishes of the Parisians, the new French Government, wanting to retain their wealth, land-titles, and nobility, decided in a treacherous bargain to surrender Paris to the Prussians.

The rebellious Parisians were in no mood to hand over their city, however, and were openly hostile and disrespectful to the occupying soldiers. The French general Adolphe Thiers was worried that the city might try to violently expunge the occupiers from the city, and he knew that the National Guard stationed in the city had cannons, rifles, and other weapons that could be used against the Prussians. On March 18, 1897, The French Government sent a dispatch of troops to seize the arms which were stashed in the city. In a sudden and dramatic turn of events, the French soldiers sent into the city to confiscate the arms refused to fire upon their comrades and instead joined the rebellious National Guard, culminating in the entire city declaring war on the traitorous French Government and the invading Prussian force⁷⁶

This radical declaration was apparently latent in the hearts of French men and women everywhere, for as soon as word got out that the French people were ruling themselves in the city of Paris, thousands of soldiers, farmers, students, political radicals, and skilled workers traveled to the city to join the resistance, with the population peaking around 60,000. The mass arrival of so many enthusiastic supporters of radical self-rule also sparked a mass exodus of government officials and supporters, leaving the city almost entirely in the hands of the people themselves. The new city of promise and resistance quickly gave birth to a social atmosphere unlike any Frenchman or woman had ever seen. Gender equality, effective separation of Church and State, the abolition of debt, radical participatory democracy, free housing, the establishment of effective workers unions, and equalized wages all became integral to the formation of the Paris Commune. The atmosphere was one of celebration, participation, and commitment to the cause. Nobody was forced into the Commune, and nobody was forced to participate in any part of it. It was a voluntary organization of individuals who wanted to decide for themselves what their lives should look like, and who were willing to fight and ultimately die for that end.

⁷⁶ *“Communards: The Story of the Paris Commune of 1871, as Told by Those who Fought for It”* - Mitchell Abidor (2010)

Fight and die they did, as the French general Adolphe Thiers, fearing the spirit of freedom and insurrection would sweep the country, reacted in an extraordinarily brutal manner⁷⁷. On May 21st, just seventy-one days after the Commune was declared, a traitorous National Guardsmen sent word to General Thiers that a section of the wall was undefended. By four o'clock in the morning, 60,000 troops were inside the barricades. The fighting was vicious and unforgiving. Thiers would accept no quarter, be it from men, women, or children. All those who had tasted the forbidden fruit of freedom must pay for it with their lives. Less than a week later almost every single occupant, some 60,000 people, had either been killed or taken captive. Some estimate that 20,000 Parisians lost their lives in fighting during that "Bloody Week," and the remaining captives were subsequently executed or worked to death in harsh prison camps. The candle of freedom had yet again been extinguished⁷⁸.

The tragic story of the Paris Commune greatly illustrates the trials and difficulties many people must go through in order to effectively decolonize themselves. The Paris Commune would have undoubtedly turned to nonviolent methods of resistance, had they had the chance, but they never got the opportunity. The people of Paris violently rejected the State's narrative of oppression and exploitation, and barely had time to understand the enormity of what they had accomplished before they were wiped off the map by a force that was terrified of what had happened. The Paris Commune had not simply traded one oppressor for another; they had not swapped masks and allowed the same patterns of injustice to continue wreaking havoc on them. In order for the Parisians to completely eliminate the root cause of their suffering- the French State- they had to respond with violence, and they had to maintain that level of violence throughout their brief taste of liberty as they were constantly being attacked by Prussian and French forces. The story of the Paris Commune serves as a promise and a warning: a promise that liberation is possible, and a warning that it might cost you your life.

Similar to the Paris Commune, there are currently many resistance groups who are engaged in the second stage, who are violently fighting against their oppressors and for their own hearts and minds. "Diana, Hunter of Bus Drivers" is an unidentified women in Juarez, Mexico who enacts fatal vengeance on bus drivers who regularly rape and murder women on the city buses late at night. Women who work late and take the bus lines home are perfect targets to these exploitative men, and after years of enduring oppression, rape, murder, and shame, Diana decided to strike back, shooting two bus drivers in August 2013 and leaving only this email to let the world know why she had done so,

"You think that because we are women we are weak, and that may be true but only up to

⁷⁷ "The French Revolution: Third Edition" - Owen Connelly (2000)

⁷⁸ "The History of the Paris Commune of 1871" - Thomas March (1896)

a point, because even though we have nobody to defend us and we have to work long hours until late into the night to earn a living for our families we can no longer be silent in the face of these acts that enrage us. We were victims of sexual violence from bus drivers working the maquila night shifts here in Juárez, and although a lot of people know about the things we've suffered, nobody defends us nor does anything to protect us. That's why I am an instrument that will take revenge for many women. For we are seen as weak, but in reality we are not. We are brave. And if we don't get respect, we will earn that respect with our own hands. We the women of Juárez are strong.⁷⁹

Clearly, Diana understands the role that violence plays in removing fear from her own heart and placing it in her oppressor's hearts. Hopefully the oppressors in the city will understand and receive her message and stop their exploitation, but until that happens Diana and women like her must continue their violent resistance until they have successfully decolonized themselves from violently Patriarchal power structures of Juarez, Mexico.

Another example of a violent resistance group that is currently unable to transition to the third stage is the Palestinian National Movement (PNM), and especially the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Over the past century, the PLO has had to fight tooth and nail to barely maintain its existence, let alone have any extra time, resources, or energy to bring attention to the Palestinian cause. The Israeli government, along with the US as its ally, has refused to listen to the cries for justice from the mouths of the Palestinian people and has continued oppressing and colonizing them ruthlessly over the past century. Despite Western media depictions of Palestinian resisters as violent terrorists, there is actually a long legacy of nonviolent resistance throughout the struggle. Throughout the 1930s the PNM staged a series of nonviolent protests, marches, and strikes, culminating in the Great General Strike in 1938 which lasted an astonishing six months yet gained almost no lasting improvements in the lives of the Palestinians. Nonviolent resistance was almost exclusively used during the early years of the first Intifada in the late 1980s and early 90s, using tactics such as strikes, boycotts, graffiti, barricading roads, and tax-resisting, with acts of violence being limited to throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli tanks⁸⁰.

The Israeli response to the Palestinian nonviolent resistance was unbelievably brutal. Israel mobilized 80,000 heavily armed soldiers and began shooting and beating nonviolent resisters wherever they found them. In the first year of the Intifada, Israeli security forces had killed 311 Palestinians, of which fifty-three were under the age of seventeen. Over the next six years the Israeli Defense Forces killed an estimated 1,162-1,204 Palestinians while Palestinians killed 100 Israeli civilians and 60 Israeli security

⁷⁹ <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/04/world/americas/mexico-bus-driver-slayings/>

⁸⁰ "Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement" - Wendy Pearlman (2011)

forces personnel. Clearly, the balance of power was not in the Palestinian's favor. The Palestinian struggle, frustrated by the ineffectiveness of nonviolent resistance and grieved over the growing piles of dead nonviolent activists, adopted a much more violent strategy of resistance, which continues to this day. The current violence of the Palestinian struggle makes a lot of sense when you realize that the young leaders of the resistance today were 5-10 year old boys during the first Intifada. Having seen nothing positive come out of nonviolent resistance and having grown up with brutally violent Israeli oppression, it is no surprise that the current leaders of Hamas and the Intifada are angry, frustrated and have no patience for ineffective acts of nonviolence. There will hopefully be a day in the near future where the Palestinian people will be able to effectively resist their oppressors and transition to methods of active nonviolence, but for now they must remain in the second stage until they have effectively decolonized their land and their minds from Zionist oppression⁸¹.

Stage Three Case Study: The Zapatistas

The third and final stage of resistance is the hardest one to find good examples of for many reasons. Many groups that I at first thought would be good examples of this stage turned out to be, upon further research, merely ineffective fronts for aspiring activists, safe outlets for expending revolutionary energy without the risk of actual change. Very few resistance groups have actually taken the time and are afforded the privilege of transitioning all the way to the third stage. Many resistance groups have never actually decolonized themselves and, although from the outside it may seem as though they are at the third stage, they are actually still stuck in the first stage, still colonized by fear and still believing that they don't have the strength to actually stand up to their oppressors with unflinching boldness. There is one story that stands out from the crowd as an incredible example of this process, as they have followed this path diligently and have been effective in each stage of the process, and that is the story of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), in Chiapas, Mexico, more commonly known as the Zapatistas.

The full background to the Zapatista uprising is also long and complicated, and I encourage you to also explore it on your own. We will begin our inquiry with the arrival of Francisco Pizarro in modern-day Peru in 1524. The next 500 years of European conquest read like a list of the acts of a serial killer: rape, murder, genocide, ecocide, theft, torture, slavery, capitalist exploitation, etc. The indigenous peoples of South and Central America were crushed underfoot in the name of god, gold, and glory, and, save for a few pockets of attempted decolonization by violent resistance (such as the Tupac Amaru uprisings)

⁸¹ *"Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement"* - Wendy Pearlman (2011)

remained totally colonized and oppressed in the aftermath of European conquest. The entire culture of South and Central America was completely disemboweled; native languages were replaced with bastardized forms of Spanish and Portuguese, native spiritual traditions were replaced with bastardized forms of Catholicism and Christianity, and native cultures were replaced with bastardized forms of European culture. Anything that remotely smelled of indigeneity was killed, burned, tortured, assimilated, mocked, reappropriated, and shoved into the darkest and most forlorn pockets of the continent, hoping to be soon forgotten.

It is out of this dark and torrid past that a group of indigenous farmers and peasants from southern Mexico, most armed with little more than a piece of wood shaped like a gun, declared war on and autonomy from the Mexican government on January 1, 1994. That same day, the Mexican government had signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), an agreement that pledged to steal the tiny remaining bits of land and freedom that the indigenous farmers had held onto for the past 500 years and that would destroy local corn and coffee markets, the only sources of income for the peasant farmers. To the farmers, the signing of NAFTA was a death warrant. They had tried for years to use nonviolent methods- sit-ins, strikes, petitions, demonstrations- to plead their case to those in power, with no success. The decision to use violence to resist their oppressors came from a consensus of over 100,000 farmers, although there were only 3,000 who actually partook in the insurrection and only about 300 of those were actually armed⁸².

Despite incredible historical and military odds, the farmers, in a concentrated and highly organized effort, took over cities, ranches, and population centers on that January morning and issued their "First Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle", as well as their revolutionary aims and objectives. The Mexican government reacted swiftly and mercilessly, sending in the Mexican army equipped with tanks, helicopters, and automatic weapons to quickly squash the peasant rebellion armed with pitchforks and gun-shaped sticks. The Mexican government greatly underestimated the spirit of the campesinos. Twelve days of intense fighting later, the Zapatistas stood strong, proving their fearlessness and determination, even as they amassed over 300 casualties, with many more wounded. The Mexican armies suffered no such losses, but were unable to remove the Zapatistas from their outposts. Embarrassed, the Mexican government accepted a ceasefire from the rebels, which has continued for the past twenty years⁸³.

The Zapatistas, emboldened and empowered by their ability to resist their oppressors, yet realizing the frailness of their actual military strength, decided to utilize the world media to gain international sympathy and support. Hundreds of journalists, academics, authors,

⁸² "The Zapatista Reader" - Tom Hayden (2002)

⁸³ "Ya Basta! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising" - Subcomandante Marcos (2004)

playwrights, and students were invited to the jungle to see for themselves what the revolution was all about and make up their own minds about its legitimacy and reasons for resisting, rather than believing the government propaganda about them. Incredibly lucid and poignant articles and commentaries were issued from deep in the jungle from a mysterious man known only as Subcomandante Marcos, which were then published in several sympathetic Mexican journals and magazines (much to the government's frustration) and helped gain popular support for the movement throughout Mexico⁸⁴.

By ensuring a steady stream of interested individuals from all over the world, not excluding a few celebrities, the Zapatistas were able to create a general atmosphere of transparency and dialogue which (mostly) held the government accountable for honoring the ceasefire and allowed the Zapatistas to work on effective nonviolent methods of resistance, such as growing and selling Zapatista coffee, writing children's books, issuing articles to international journals, organizing marches and demonstrations, inviting the president of Mexico to engage in dialogue and negotiations, creating an international democratic convention space called Aguascalientes, and creating their own infrastructure of schools, roads, hospitals, libraries, and a radical participatory democracy in which everyone had a say in how their lives were to be managed.

Save for a few tragic instances of the Mexican State breaking the ceasefire such as the Acteal Massacre in 1997 and the assassination of schoolteacher Jose Luis Solís López in 2014, the Zapatistas have managed to create an effective nonviolent resistance movement which has not compromised its revolutionary aims and has actually thrived over the past twenty years of its existence. How did a bunch of poor, unorganized, uneducated farmers spread out over nearly 28,000 square miles of desolate jungle manage to unite, resist, and accomplish what so many others have failed to do?

I believe it is because they understood the role and importance of violence in a.) empowering and emboldening the peasant resisters and b.) showing the State, and subsequently the entire world, that they were serious and were not interested in petty legislative reform or empty promises. They carried Fanon's theory out perfectly, in that they used violent resistance to effectively remove their oppressors from their land and their minds at the same time.

The Zapatistas needed those twelve days of violence to shrug off 500 years of domination and oppression, to effectively say, "Ya Basta!" (No More!). Despite the gross disparity in casualties and violence, the Zapatistas really won the fight during those twelve days because they saw through the fear and deception of the State and realized that freedom was within their grasp- if they were willing to fight for it. When the State saw that the Zapatistas were serious about their liberation and were not victims to fear anymore, it was

⁸⁴ "*Zapatistas: Rebellion from the Grassroots to the Global*" - Alex Khasnabish (2010)

the State's turn to feel fear.

Once the Zapatistas had successfully proven to themselves and to the world that they were willing to and capable of fighting for what they loved, they were then able to move to the third stage of resistance- active nonviolence. They realized, like Mandela, that nonviolence was a tool to be used at the right time, and they realized when the right time to use it was. For the Zapatistas to continue using violence after the ceasefire would have been foolish, as the Mexican army would have no problem completely annihilating their movement and international sympathy would have little effect in the face of blatant agitation. Transitioning to nonviolent resistance after the twelve days of fighting was both necessary and strategic.

If the Zapatistas would have tried to skip the second stage, choosing to continue using nonviolent methods of resistance, the results would have been ineffective, and the almost 3 million campesinos of Chiapas would currently be either starving to death, slaving away on ranches and plantations, or being killed by rogue hit-squads of racist Mexicans.

The Zapatistas had to decolonize themselves and go through each stage of the path of resistance in order to arrive at where they are today- an autonomous, self-organized, voluntary group of individuals who are collectively working for a better life for themselves, for their children, and for the land which sustains them.

The Zapatista uprising has been a model for countless other acts of resistance over the past twenty years, such as the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999, the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring, and many other indigenous resistance groups all over the world. It is a model to be emulated simply because it works.

Another example of a group that successfully transitioned through all three stages would be the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), known more commonly as the Black Panthers. The BPP, a black revolutionary socialist organization which operated in the US throughout the 1960s and 70s was perhaps the largest and most successful revolutionary organization that has ever successfully challenged the dominant power structures from within the US, and I believe it is because they successfully transitioned through all three stages and understood the dynamics of decolonization

The BPP arose from the incredibly dark history of the American slave trade, in which the dominant white culture kidnapped and enslaved over twelve and a half million African people from 1525 to 1866. After the American Civil War was won by the Union (and the Federal government), the Emancipation Proclamation officially declared that all men, women, and children, regardless of the color of their skin, were "free men" by law. Unfortunately, this long awaited freedom did little to alter the daily lives of many blacks living in the South, and in many ways it actually made conditions much worse - as roving bands of racist southerners could now kill with impunity any black person they came

across, without the worry of damaging someone else's property. Slave patrols formed the earliest form of policing in the US, as southern plantation owners quickly discovered plenty of loopholes in the law to continue enslaving blacks under the guise of the law with criminal charges of "vagabonding" and "indecent", with the added benefit that they did not need to purchase or maintain the health or wellbeing of this new sort of slave.⁸⁵

The industrialization of the country in the early to mid-1900's during the World Wars created a mass exodus of blacks from the South to new centers of production all over the country, especially in major cities and along the coasts of California where massive shipyards, manufacturing, and warehousing jobs were being created by the War's demand for bigger and better machines to kill people with. Tens of thousands of black families moved North and West to seek a new life and decent jobs, and found them... for a while. After the industrialists, bankers, politicians, and War Hawks had had their fill of killing and making money and the Wars came to an end, the jobs dried up as well. And, predictably, the first to lose their jobs were the black communities. Entire neighborhoods were laid off at a time, hundreds of thousands of jobs disappeared almost overnight, and the promise of the American dream that once seemed within grasp of the black (wo)man was again out of reach.

The US now had a dilemma to face - what to do with hundreds of thousands of second-class citizens that now have no jobs and no chance of receiving them? Taking a cue from their recently defeated foes in Germany, they decided to create Ghettoes, or projects, to effectively warehouse and maintain the "black problem." In order to keep black people from organizing and resisting, they created large police forces around these areas and stocked them with heavy military gear and racist police-officers to 'keep the peace'. These police units behaved and functioned more like organized street gangs than a police force, as they regularly beat, arrested, shot, and raped young black men and women with almost total legal impunity. It was this intense, militaristic atmosphere that gave birth to the first members of the Black Panthers - Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Elbert Howard, Sherwin Forte, Reggie Forte, and Bobby Hutton in Oakland, California in 1966.

The very first 'action' taken by the BPP was to form police-patrols that would serve to hold police officers accountable for their actions and make the streets safer for young blacks. Huey Newton, the Chairman of the Party, began to openly carry weapons as he would do his police patrols - an action that was perfectly legal and commonplace for white residents of Oakland. This simple action of discreetly following police patrols around the ghettos of Oakland while carrying a gun drastically reduced the amount of violence that was commonplace to the residents of the ghettos, and quickly gained popularity and support for the Panthers within the black communities of Oakland.

⁸⁵ "Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia" - Sally E. Hadden (2003)

Huey Newton was an avid reader of Fanon, and he understood the role of violence in decolonizing the black consciousness from 500 years of European and American oppression. The simple act of carrying a firearm in public was enough to create a shift in the way that the black community viewed themselves; it effectively decolonized thousands of young black men and women who were drawn to the BPP and its radical approach. The meteoric rise of the Panthers is largely due to the fact that they were willing to use violence against their oppressors - a stance that was very radical to the black communities who had resigned themselves to regular State oppression.

The first few years of the BPP were marked with violence, marches, and public demonstrations of force and weapons as they effectively transitioned to the second stage and began to decolonize their minds as well as their streets. These years were also marked with learning and growth, as the Panthers gradually came to understand that in order to effectively resist the racist structures of the US, they would need to build an alternative infrastructure that would not be co-opted or compromised by the State and they would need to expand their focus to more than just poor black communities.

By 1968, less than two years after the creation of the Party, the BPP had already begun to expand its programs to providing free breakfasts for children, building alternative schools, creating community advocacy programs, and hosting free daycares for the children of working parents. They began to pursue relationships across race lines as they built relationships with other radical communities of white, Latino(a), and Native American communities. They became the most progressive and promising party for women in the country, as women began to have more and more important and prominent positions, with Elaine Brown eventually taking over as Chairwoman of the Party in 1974.

The Rainbow Coalition, formed by BPP member Fred Hampton, was an organization in Chicago, Illinois that united various street gangs, radical political groups, the Young Lords, and the American Indian Movement, effectively ending gang-violence and drug trafficking in the affected areas and seeking to empower and educate young men and women to enact real and effective change in their communities. Very early on in their movement, the Black Panthers learned that their struggle was not simply against white people, but against racism of any kind, against Patriarchy, against Capitalism, and against oppression in whatever form it takes.

Of course, this image of the Black Panthers does not fit the image of the “violent, angry, whitey-killers” that the media needs to portray in order to dismiss the movement, therefore it is never discussed. Neither is it discussed that that last several years of the BPP were relatively free of Panther aggression, as they were focusing more on nonviolent modes of resistance such as the free breakfast program. There were several violent altercations between Panthers and police, but they were almost completely instigated by the State, as dozens of young leaders in the movement were assassinated, beaten, or jailed on false

charges. The revolutionary potential, maturity, and wisdom of the Black Panthers can be measured with the unparalleled level of aggression that the State responded to them with.

The FBI's COINTELPRO (remember them?) spent years targeting the movement, directly or indirectly participated in the assassinations of over twenty members, spread animosity and false information among different BPP cells and other black revolutionary groups, and arrested dozens more members, often on blatantly falsified or trumped-up charges.⁸⁶ The party, despite having grown to over 10,000 members in late 1968, gradually declined until it was officially dissolved in 1982.⁸⁷

The Black Panthers provide an interesting analysis of the process of decolonization because they never fully transitioned to the third stage, despite their best efforts. They succeeded in decolonizing themselves, in building a large alternative infrastructure to the dominant racist, Patriarchal, Capitalist culture, and in engaging in many forms of nonviolent resistance, yet they were never able to completely transition out of the second stage and begin the work towards Total Liberation. It is clear to any student of the history of the BPP that they spent many years working towards nonviolent methods of resistance, only to be crushed every time by State aggression. The main reason they did not succeed in their resistance was the sheer brutality and hatred of the State towards the BPP, despite the incredible number of other resistance groups that were also engaged in violent resistance, which should be a clear enough indication of the success of their movement.

In reviewing the case studies of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, the Paris Commune, the Zapatistas, and the Black Panthers, I hope it is more clear to you how various sociological and historical processes affect social change and how the different stages of resistance can play out in many different circumstances. Try to pay attention to how resistance groups presently and in the future make use of these principles and the varying degrees of effectiveness of their actions in an effort to more fully understand how you can resist effectively.

⁸⁶ *Cointelpro: the FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom* - Nelson Blackstock (2000)

⁸⁷ For more information on the Black Panthers, read <http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/black-panther-party-model.html>

My Journey (Chapter 9)

In the spirit of transparency and vulnerability, I would like to share my personal journey and experiences with violence, nonviolence, and resistance with you. I believe this will provide context for my theory of social change and serve to illustrate how it works on an individual as well as a group level. I encourage you, as you read my story, to try to understand how this path has played out in your life and what experiences you have had with oppression and resistance.

In my fifteenth year of being human, I was sent to a private juvenile detention center for 18 months. It was part of a very oppressive and violent organization that functioned outside of US jurisdiction known as WWASPS (Worldwide Association for Specialty Programs and Schools), and I was sent to the most punitive, violent, and abusive program they ran, Tranquility Bay, located on the island of Jamaica. Part of the reason I got sent to that program was because of my violent tendencies. I had engaged in many fights at schools and with neighborhood kids, and was no stranger to domestic violence at home. I considered myself, before entering the facility, to be a pretty tough kid. I was sorely mistaken. My first two months of incarceration were marked by daily physical and sexual assaults by older, much bigger and stronger inmates than myself. I quickly realized that I had never faced violence like this and adopted the colonized, victim mentality, as that seemed to me the best way to survive that situation. I dropped all my airs of street-toughness and pride, and meekly submitted myself to the oppression of the guards and other inmates.

This continued for several months until I had become a pawn of another inmate who would take my food from me in exchange for 'protection' and used me as a lookout while he assaulted other inmates, many of whom were my friends. I didn't mind giving him my food, because I was pretty good at stealing my own food, but after several times of being lookout for him, I couldn't handle it anymore. I couldn't live with myself, knowing that I had allowed fear to control me so easily. So one day, I sharpened my toothbrush to a sharp point and walked up to him in his room. I told him that I wasn't going to be his bitch anymore, and that he could go ahead and attack me right there. He agreed with my proposal. I thought I was bluffing, but I guess I wasn't. I didn't get a chance to really use the toothbrush, as I had no idea how to use it and he was much stronger and bigger than me, and I took a very severe beating.

Several hours later, however, when I picked myself up off the floor and walked out of the room, I somehow knew that I was the victor. Like the Zapatistas who had whittled sticks instead of toothbrushes, I had stood up to violence with my weakness, I had faced fear

and oppression with little more than the strength of my spirit, and I knew in my heart that I was no longer a victim. I had proved to myself and to my oppressor that I could absorb violence into my body and it didn't affect my spirit, that I could take a physical beating but remain spiritually strong. He never approached me again, and I ceased to become a target for predators for the rest of my stay in that facility.

Standing up to my oppressor represented a shift from the first stage to the second stage, as up till that point I had seen myself as a victim, unable to change anything in my circumstances. When I challenged my oppressor, although I did not 'win' the fight, I won the fight for my spirit, as I shifted my consciousness from a colonized perspective to decolonized, and I now saw myself as willing to and capable of engaging in violence when necessary, despite fear of bodily harm.

With great shame and regret, I must admit that I did not use this moment of growth to liberate other victims and attempt to create a slightly less oppressive system there, but instead saw this as an opportunity to further my own ends, as I became an oppressor to other inmates and used my newfound power to enjoy the fruits of being an oppressor. Granted, I did not have the physical means to really play much of a predator role (as I was still a scrawny suburban white kid), but I did engage in it, as I had fallen victim to the Lackey trap and become yet another oppressor in that terrible facility.

After I transitioned into the second stage, I stayed there for quite some time. I spent the rest of my incarceration in that stage, and my experiences with living for so long in such an intense, fight-or-flight mentality had left me deeply mentally scarred. I never fully transitioned back to 'civilian' life upon my release back to the US, as I lived in a state of constant paranoia and had developed a hair-trigger reflex to any real or perceived danger, as many an unfortunate friend who has accidentally startled me or woken me up from a traumatic dream can attest to. I spent the next several years of my life training in various martial arts and weight-lifting, obsessed with the notion of being strong and capable of defending myself and others. The day I turned 21 I bought myself an assault weapon and a concealed carry permit, and couldn't wait for a moment to use it on some unlucky assailant. As I progressed into my martial arts and strength training, I became involved with UFC fighting, and was planning on becoming a competitor, as I couldn't imagine anything more fulfilling than being tough, strong, and hurting people for a living.

My propensity for violence had grown until it fully encompassed who I was, it had become my identity. I would never again be physically or sexually assaulted, never again would I be a scared, weak little boy locked in a cell in Jamaica. Never again would I allow myself to be a victim to oppression and violence.

Many years later I became involved with a radical Christian group in Cleveland, Ohio that drastically shifted my perspective on the world around me and my role in it. The pastor

introduced me to the writings and teachings of a young activist named Shane Claiborne. Reading Shane's books at first offended me, then intrigued me, and finally destroyed me. Shane had presented the life of Yeshua (Jesus) in a perspective that I had never heard before. Here was a poor, homeless, dissident rabbi who preached civil disobedience, communal living, and active nonviolence to an oppressed people. Yeshua taught love for enemies in a way that made violence unnecessary, he exposed the ignorance and hypocrisy of my beliefs and attitudes, and he introduced me to a weapon that was more powerful than anything I could ever possibly concealed carry - fearless love.

Shane's books came into my life at just the time when most of it was completely falling apart. My new wife and I had just emerged from a traumatic set of circumstances and I was forced to take a hard look at everything I had known to be true at that point. Unfortunately, most of it turned out to not be true. I slowly began to understand that my experiences in my childhood and my beliefs about myself due to that were greatly affecting my current life, as I had many emotional wounds that had never healed. I came to realize, with the help of my friends and my faith community, that my fascination with violence and toughness was a facade; until I allowed myself to heal and trust people, I would never move on from that scared little boy locked in a prison cell that was deeply ingrained in my psyche.

Through Shane's writings I discovered a whole world of philosophy and activism that was based on the precepts of active nonviolence. I discovered Gandhi, MLK Jr., Nelson Mandela, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Leo Tolstoy, Dorothy Day, Walter Wink, and a whole host of Anabaptist theology. I read everything I could get my hands on, and became absorbed by these ideas. I was mostly drawn towards Gandhi, and became a devoted student and follower of his teachings. I identified myself as a *Satyagrahi* and took on as many of the *Satyagraha* vows as I could feasibly do: *Swadeshi*- participating in local economies; *Brahmacharya* - practicing vegetarianism and sensual restraint; *Non-possession*- an awareness that all humans are part of one family and all our possessions should be shared equally; *Fearlessness*- eliminating fear from all external and internal sources in order to pursue truth more fully; *Yajna* - living a life of service to others; and of course *Ahimsa*- nonviolence in word, deed, and thought.

As I slowly entered this new world of radicals, dissidents, and free-thinkers, I clung steadfastly to my views of nonviolence, and firmly believed that all the evil in the world could be overcome with strict adherence to *Satyagraha*. I judged and looked down upon any who used violence to overcome oppression, as I saw it counterproductive to a true revolution. For several years I filtered everything through the lens of nonviolence, and had again developed an identity around it.

I had now entered the third stage of the path of resistance, as I had moved beyond my previous state of reactionary violence due to emotional and spiritual healing and the

privilege I had of not facing oppressive violence everyday. Unknowingly, I was now victim to the Privileged Pacifist trap. I saw my life's mission as bringing peace to the world through the vehicle of active nonviolence, yet I refused to see the ways that my privilege manifested itself in my daily interactions with others, and I did not understand the terribly violent realities of life that most humans on this planet experience every day. I had one more transition to go through before I could see my privilege and start working towards Total Liberation.

I have served in the mental health field for most of my life, having worked for an equine therapy program, a therapeutic boarding school, a halfway-house, a summer camp for foster children, several wilderness therapy and adventure therapy companies, and finally a juvenile detention center (JDC). My time serving at the JDC was life-altering in many ways, as I took the job with grand notions of being a subversive beacon of hope, encouragement, and radical education to the young adults incarcerated there, unaware at how ignorant of a thought that was. I had spent my entire adult life working with troubled and disadvantaged young adults, as it was an opportunity for me to heal myself while helping others. And, most of the time, I was very successful in facilitating emotional and spiritual healing for others and helping other people through difficult times in their life. This was a different story.

The first and most important difference between the JDC and every other program I had worked for is that violence at the JDC was structural, in that the violence that happened there was normal, regular, and even mundane. The other guards, rather than seeking to de-escalate and talk through potentially violent situations, much preferred to escalate situations and restrain the inmates at every chance possible. Not only that, but the 'restraints' were often grossly and unnecessarily violent. Needless to say, I was horrified.

I very quickly had to face the reality that nonviolence simply was not a reality in that environment of structural violence. The easy option would be for me to get another job, but something kept me there. If I quit, I would most likely be replaced by someone who had no aspirations of peace, someone who would care very little about the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of the inmates, someone who would have no motivation to engage in nonviolence and who would simply perpetuate the structural violence that was the standard for the facility. So I decided to stay. To stay, I would need to adapt. To adapt, I would need to drop my rigid vow of nonviolence and militant pacifism and seek to find the *least* possible violent solutions in an *already* violent situation. I would need to use all of my life experiences: my personal encounter with incarceration and remembering what it was like to be a victim of injustice, my transition to empowerment and not being afraid of entering a violent situation, my training in martial arts and my knowledge of engaging an assailant without getting hurt, my experiences working with troubled young adults and my knowledge of de-escalation skills and techniques, and my belief in *Satyagraha* and my deep desire to do no harm to any creature. I would need to

learn how to use my privilege to liberate others who have less privilege than me. I would need to take all of my beliefs and life lessons I had learned up until that point and use them together in order to have any amount of positive influence in the JDC where I was working.

Slowly and awkwardly, but persistently, I was able to make the transition. Whenever a potentially violent situation was happening (an inmate posturing a guard, or vice versa), I would be the first to intervene and attempt to settle disputes by de-escalating and diverting energy away from the scene. When this either failed or I wasn't there to attempt to de-escalate the situation and it became violent, I was always the first person to initiate the restraint, because I knew that I was not emotionally charged and thus would not intentionally hurt the inmate and that I had therapeutic as well as physical training that would enable me to diffuse the situation as quickly and nonviolently as possible. There were several instances where an inmate would stop whatever chaotic thing he was doing when he saw me about to initiate a restraint, because he didn't want to hurt me and he knew that I didn't want to hurt him. The few times where violence was absolutely inevitable or where I was not able to intervene quickly enough to prevent a situation, I was able to very quickly, safely, and non-aggressively secure an inmate, whereas another guard in the same situation would have probably hurt the inmate and gotten hurt themselves.

These interactions were very strange and painful for me at first, as I hated having to physically restrain an inmate and cause them pain. I began to understand, however, that the violence I was causing when I restrained was much less than that of any other guard who would engage in the same situation. With time, the shift I worked became much more relaxed, as the inmates and guards knew that if a situation became violent I would be the first one there, thus ruining all the fun. Other guards were intrigued by my behaviors, beliefs, and ideas, and began adopting my de-escalation techniques for their own use. At one point our shift went two months without a single restraint, which is almost unheard of for that facility.

If I had gone into that job with the mentality of the first stage, I would have been ineffective as I would have been scared to enter a violent situation and I would have allowed myself to be coerced and intimidated by violence.

If I had gone into that job with the mentality of the second stage, I would have been ineffective as I would have been just like all the other guards- empowered, but still reacting with violence and needing to prove something to myself and to the world. I would have responded to the inmate's violence with reactive violence, and become another oppressor.

If I had gone into that job with the mentality of the privileged pacifist of the third stage,

refusing to engage in any activity that hurt another living being, I would have been ineffective as I would have had to stand by and let the other guards engage in responding to the inmates violence, which was unnecessary and extreme (not to mention that I wouldn't have lasted long there if I refused to intervene in a violent situation- as that is one of the primary roles of a prison guard.)

Instead, I had to go through all the stages and honor where I was at in my process before I could respond effectively and create the least amount of violence possible in an already violent situation. This experience of working at the JDC greatly affected my view on social movements and organizations as well, as I realized that not all situations can be solved nonviolently, and to refuse to engage violently in such a situation is to actually invite more unnecessary violence. Once I stepped out of the privileged pacifist trap, the ignorance and arrogance of my previously held beliefs staggered me, as I began to understand what oppressed peoples across the planet face every day.

My awareness of this deepened as I began training in Aikido, abandoning my earlier quest for taking the most violent and confrontational martial arts classes I could find. Aikido is all about connection with your opponent in an attempt to de-escalate a violent situation as nonviolently as possible. There are no strikes or blows in Aikido, only redirection of energy. One major principle of Aikido that is very relevant to this topic is that, *"You must respond to an opponent with the same level of force they are using before you can re-direct them."* This is saying that you must meet an oppressor at their level before you can remove the violence of a situation. If you respond with less force than your oppressor, you will get hurt and you will be ineffective in stopping their violence. If you respond with more force than your oppressor, you will hurt them, thus reversing the roles of oppression and perpetuating the same dynamics of violence. Only by meeting them at the same level can you then attempt to diffuse or disarm a situation. This is not saying that you must react with equal violence to a violent situation. Remember: there are no strikes in Aikido. Force does not equal violence. If someone you love is attacking you, you forcefully disarm them and try to protect yourself, but you do not try to harm them.

Taken into the arena of social change, this means that you must be willing to meet the violence of an oppressor at their level before you can attempt to de-escalate or disarm them. Any attempts to confront State violence that are weaker than that of the State will wound you and your movement and will be ineffective in stopping violence. Any attempts that are stronger will lead to unnecessary violence and a reversal of the roles of oppression. Only by meeting oppressive violence with an equal amount of force, welcoming the struggle, can we then attempt to redirect energy and avoid violence. Meeting an opponent's violence with an equal amount of force may look like simply using Yeshua's analogy of "turning the other cheek", it may look like civil disobedience, it may look like nonviolent acts of resistance, it may look like sharpening a toothbrush and confronting a bully, it may look like industrial sabotage, it may look like it may look like

trying to assassinate Hitler, it may look like restraining an inmate who is trying to slit his wrists with a piece of glass, it may look like shoving a police(wo)man off of a black teenager, it may look like a bunch of peasants taking back their land with pitchforks and sticks shaped like guns, it may look like a violent revolution.

Due to my various life experiences and deeply felt convictions, I now honor and fully support any individual or organization that is fighting against the State or any form of oppression, whether violently or not. It is not my place to judge another's journey or to try to understand what another person is thinking or experiencing. I hold all forms of life to be sacred and worthy of protection, whether that life take the form of a tomato, a cow, a president, an indigenous subsistence farmer, or a police officer. I engage in as much nonviolent resistance as possible, yet I will not pretend that the life of an agent of the State is worth more than the life of an eight-year old child who is enslaved by that State. My ultimate goal is Total Liberation, dignity and freedom for all life on this planet, and I welcome all who will help me fight for that.

Elements of Resistance (Chapter 10)

Throughout this book, I have attempted to craft a narrative for you, a narrative of bad ideas and good ideas, oppression and resistance, love and fear, violence and nonviolence, life and death. I have presented a theory for the origination of oppression in our world, and traced that oppression through human history to our present day. I explained why I think various resistance movements have been successful, and others haven't. I've tried to reveal the true nature and origin of the State, as well as various methods for resisting it. I've explored several philosophies and theories of liberation, decolonization, and resistance from people like Galtung, Fanon, Thoreau, Jensen, Gelderloos, Churchill, Claiborne, Gandhi, Mandela, and MLK Jr. I told many stories of various peoples experiences with oppression and resistance, and I have also shared with you my own story of how I came to view the world in the way that I do.

Throughout this book, I have also posited several elements of resistance which I believe must be understood if one is to resist in an effective and sustainable manner. These elements are not in any order of importance nor do they build on one another to create some grand thesis, they are merely complementary truths that relate to each other and to the overall narrative of resistance. If one or more of the points is disagreeable to you for some reason, by all means critique it, revise it, or do away with it. They are meant to challenge and serve you in your understanding and practice of resistance, not to box you into a cage of theory and dogma.

1.) *Oppressive violence is not human nature nor unavoidable, but is the direct result of recent pathological human thought patterns and behaviors.* No other species exploits, oppresses, and destroys life in the way that humans do, and many human societies do not participate in exploitation, oppression, or destruction of life in the way that our culture does. It is possible to create a world free of oppressive violence, for 98% of our existence has been just that. It is not too late to go back.

2.) *The State and oppressive violence are synonymous and inextricable.* Tracing the origins of oppressive violence back through human history, we see that two concepts require the existence of oppressive violence: hierarchy and private property. The State exists to legitimize, enforce, and perpetuate hierarchy and private property. Therefore the

State is the primary vehicle of oppressive violence in the world and Total Liberation can never be achieved with the continued existence of the State.

3.) *The maximum level of oppressive violence that the world has ever seen is happening everyday due to the continuation of Business as Usual.* The most violent act you can possibly do is sit there and do nothing. No-one is innocent of this violence, no-ones hands are clean, nobody can be said to truly be pacifist or nonviolent as long as they continue allowing this system to perpetuate itself on the planet and all of her inhabitants. We are all complicit. Any action taken to stop the State could not possibly be more violent than the daily level of violence that is happening every single day of every single week of every single month of every single year that we don't stop it.

4.) *Colonialism is never legitimate, as it is rooted in oppressive violence. Therefore the colonized are entitled to reclaim their physical and psychological sovereignty from their oppressors.* Those who realize that they are victims of colonialism, no matter the form or degree, must seek to decolonize themselves physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

5.) *Violent resistance to colonialism is not only justified, but required in order for the oppressed to fully decolonize themselves.* Violent resistance to an oppressor does not have to mean hurting or killing another person, it simply means that the colonized must eradicate the oppressive thought patterns and beliefs of the colonizer from their mind in order to obtain liberation. However, many times it will require bloodshed and direct violence. Every person and every group of people needs to decolonize themselves in their own way and no-one has the right to determine appropriate boundaries or methods of decolonization for another.

6.) *Nonviolent resistance is always preferable to violent resistance.* Once the Pandora's box of violence is opened, it is near impossible to control or stop. Violent resistance should be used only when absolutely necessary, should be done in a spirit of love, should be done with the intention of finding the most nonviolent alternative to an already violent situation, and should stop being used when it is no longer necessary.

7.) *A failure to decolonize oneself leads to ineffective pacifism and reactive violence, while a successful decolonization of oneself leads to effective violent and nonviolent resistance.* There is a huge difference between disengaged pacifism and engaged nonviolent resistance, and the primary difference lies in the heart of the resistor. If there is fear in the heart of the resistor, the subsequent action will be either ineffective pacifism or reactive violence. If there is love in the heart of the resistor, the subsequent action will be either effective nonviolence or violent resistance. One cannot engage in active nonviolence without going through the decolonization process.

8.) *Almost all successful resistance movements utilize both nonviolent and violent tactics.* The State only relinquishes power when significant pressure is put on it to do so. This pressure can very rarely come from nonviolent means, and will most likely need to come from violent resistance. Neither strategy is more preferable than the other; they each have their role and need to be used at the right times and in the right places to be effective.

9.) *Many supposed successes in the history of resistance are merely an evolved form of oppression.* Vocabularies change, uniforms change, weapons change, methods change, but the oppression rarely changes. Accept no compromise in your resistance. Do not be fooled into believing that the State is relinquishing pressure when it is merely changing masks and sharpening its claws.

10.) *Those who manage to successfully decolonize themselves and transition to a state of active nonviolence must be willing to engage in violence when necessary in order to create the least violence in an already violent situation.* Those who have the privilege of being able to resist nonviolently must always be willing to relinquish their privilege in the service of those who do not have the same privilege. Refusing to engage in violent resistance in order to stop or mitigate oppressive violence makes you complicit in oppression.

11.) *You must respond to an opponent with the same level of force they are using before you can re-direct them.* You must meet an oppressor with an equal amount of force before you can redirect their energy in a way that will hopefully create the least amount of violence possible in an already violent situation. As illustrated by Business As Usual, our world is already in a terribly violent situation; to respond with less force is ineffective and will allow oppression to continue, to respond with more force is to try to unnecessarily hurt your opponent (ultimately making you the new oppressor and allowing oppression to continue), and responding with equal force places you in a position to where you can successfully de-escalate and redirect violence away from a situation.

12.) *Nihilism can be defeated by discovering what you love and what you are willing to fight for.* Nihilism is one of the oppressor's greatest tools, as it blinds people to the realities of the frailty of their oppressor and ensures continued subservience. To remain nihilistic is to remain ineffective and complicit in oppression, destruction, and exploitation. Take the time to discover what you love and what you are willing to fight for and don't jump into a struggle that isn't yours is simply because you want to resist something or because you want to be an activist. If you take time to discover what you love, then it will eventually become clear to you what you must do to resist. When it does, you will be prepared to resist with the full strength of your spirit, as your resistance will come from love, not fear.

13.) *The path to effective resistance comes in four stages: The Colonized stage, the Decolonization stage, the Active Nonviolence stage, and Total Liberation.* If you go through these stages with the goal of eradicating oppressive violence from this planet, your resistance will ultimately be more effective and sustainable than if you try to resist without having an awareness of the invisible but ever-present forces of colonization, oppression, fear, and love. Beware the traps: the Fearful Warrior, the Lackey, and the Privileged Pacifist. Do not get caught up in what others are doing along the path, but realize that they must carry out their own journey. Always remember the privilege of your position, and always be ready to use your privilege to help out others who are having a hard time. Be careful to not settle with where you are at on the path, and above all else, never forget to constantly look forward to the ultimate goal of Total Liberation.

Good luck, and happy resisting.