Nonviolence Rhetoric Divides Us All

Hoods4Justice

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I: Introduction

You'll often see a news article that states something like: "protest turns violent after protesters throw tear gas back at police." The point being that violence started only after the tear gas was thrown back. What then was the initial act of throwing tear gas at the protesters in the first place classified as?

If your home is broken into, someone attacks you, and you defend yourself with force, was it you who should be considered "violent" or the aggressor that initiated the act? Most people would not consider the defending individual as "violent" because they were not the initiator of the violent act; they were forced into a situation where using violence was needed to survive or protect themselves. Why is it any different when said aggressor is the state or economic forces?

These are just two of many important questions concerning the ideas *of* organizing primarily utilizing nonviolence. While nonviolence has firmly cemented itself as the dominant and most acceptable tactic and theory in social movements, its dubious record is enough to raise the question of whether we should reconsider how we currently organize within social justice and activist spaces. In this zine, we will explore issues and ask questions we all too often refuse to confront.

II: The Language

Nonviolence and violence form a dichotomy both abstract and vague. Both lack an exact definition and are often defined through moralizing principles under the guidance of the state and/or economic or religious entities. We habitually attempt to characterize situations based on what we are comfortable labelling as appropriate, but our individual perspectives often rigidly misunderstand actions rooted in bias.

Violence is often viewed as evil and problematic. Generally, it is defined as acting aggressively and causing physical, systemic, *or* economic harm to an individual or group of people who have not harmed the aggressor beforehand.

Non-violence theory on the other hand distinguishes between *principled* and *pragmatic nonviolence.* Principled nonviolence is the Gandhian approach: nonviolence is a way of life, and the refusal to resort to violence is made based on ethical grounds. In contrast, pragmatic nonviolent action is deployed when it is more effective than violence. Pragmatic nonviolent action is used in the context of specific problems such as war, genocide, and oppression. Pragmatic and principled nonviolence, both in theory and practice, often raise questions regarding effectiveness and practicality.

In the following sections of this zine, we will consider the limitations of nonviolence and its outcomes as we explore the language of violence and nonviolence. We ask you to read this with an open mind. Most proponents of nonviolence assume it is inherently good, that nonviolence in theory as an alternative to violence achieves worthy goals, which is not necessarily true, and that promoting the exclusive use of nonviolent theory in action is not problematic. We have to distinguish and decolonize what we mean by and define as violence, non-violence, self-defense/community defense, and the ideology of nonviolent resistance and determine whether nonviolence is effective in reality. Activists who often lean more toward nonviolent tactics may not understand the nuances of these terms, simply operating upon a perceived moral high ground, celebrating its advantages but refusing to recognize its flaws.

Ill: Monopoly on Force

The current system is characterized by a monopoly on the use of force. The state, and its many arms and branches, is defined as the gatekeeper that allows this monopoly. States are centralized bureaucracies that protect capitalism; preserve a racial supremacist, patriarchal order; and implement imperialist expansion to survive. Those who are in power manufacture laws to define the rules of political bureaucracy and interpret existing rights, including the right to peaceably assemble under the First Amendment. This mechanism sets the precedent in society that your rights come from the state, and patriotism encourages us to maintain the system that claims itself as the protector of life.

Nonviolent civil resistance often takes its justification in America from the First Amendment, which outlines the right to "peacefully assemble and the right to free speech," but is often exclusionary of differences in the way certain races are treated and the way that gender and class affect individuals' standing in society. The state decides not only what is acceptable but also what is permissible-so creating limiting and narrow rules for dissent that ultimate still reinforce the continuation of oppression and state power. These rules are only weapons readily given to us, yet they tame us, and we remain dependent on state power. This restricts citizens' ability to autonomously carve their own unique path to liberation, replacing considerations of effectiveness with vague moralizing.

Many people think the state is just a synonym for "government''. It is more accurately described as the collection of institutions that combine forces to perpetuate hierarchical society. Government, capitalism, and organized religion are the three primary institutions, all of which benefit from the rhetoric of nonviolence. All three institutions are defended through the violence of the military, police, private security forces, and vigilante militias.

The ideology of nonviolence is heavily influenced by traditional interpretations of religion. The idea that you need to remain meek and passive in the face of an aggressor, to "turn the other cheek" so to speak, to maintain a moral high ground over your opponent comes from Western Christianity (and perhaps the nuclear disarmament movement as well). Christianity has long been used as a form of control and pacification by imperialist regimes. These arbitrary ideas are not grounded in the reality of liberatory struggle and are often counter productive. Much of religious pacifist ideology was never fully concerned with improving material conditions in the here and now because they were more concerned with taking actions that would lead to "spiritual salvation," so they were not thinking about winning. Though this is not true in all cases, as many religious activists like Martin Luther King Jr. and Daniel Berrigan truly tried to improve conditions here on earth, you can see the difference between their pragmatic actions and the idealistic stances of spiritual pacifism.

Pushing nonviolence as the only acceptable tactic serves capitalism as well. Capitalism is inherently hierarchal, and a functioning hierarchy requires obedience and subservience. Ever since its inception, capitalism has been spread by genocide and left systemic inequality and poverty in its wake. Most resistance movements are born out of a reaction against the suffering that capitalism inflicts.

The 1920's labor movement, in which mostly immigrant workers took direct action against the state and capital, the state began to fear that the rebellion would eventually overwhelm the system. A series of reforms ensued and culminated in the New Deal of 1933. None of this would've ever happened without the militant anarchists and communists who physically fought the state

and private security in the streets and engaged in high risk acts of rebellion. On the other hand, these reforms gave people the impression that the best way to achieve change was by working within the system and taking the electoral route. In addition, the 8 hour work day, unionization, employer provided health care benefits, all of these are results of the labor movement. This is the double- edged sword of reformism, which is a dead end for social change because there's no longer any militancy backing up these demands and thus little to no incentive for the state to hear them. But the capitalists like it this way, and no doubt encouraged this direction. Reformism encourages people to be good little obedient workers, teaching that maybe if you behave yourself well enough and work hard enough, you too can climb the social hierarchy and gain just enough to survive, but never to thrive. A prime example is the American Dream, a lie so big it constitutes an act of violence, fooling millions into voluntarily forfeiting their right to support and punishing poverty. It suggests that hard workers don't need state "aid" (which they actually pay for through taxes) and that poor people are NOT caught up in a system inherently preventing them from success but are simply not working hard enough. The ideology of nonviolence encourages class collaboration instead of class warfare, where the goal should be to transcend and do away with the class system all together.

We often refer to the system as "broken", but it's actually functioning perfectly, justifying its "creation of life" through violence. As Gary Oldman's character from *The Fifth Element asserted,* "By creating destruction, we are creating life." Capitalism, and its necessary components, such as prisons, police, and other branches of government, uses violence and distractions to exploit the producers of capital gains. Meanwhile as patriotic consumers of this system, we participate in non-violent reformism to legitimize the platform this country built and its origins of settler colonialism and economic violence in exchange for our freedom.

IV: NGOs Have Got to Go.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) help to perpetuate nonviolent/reformist ideology and the process of pacification. They encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist and hierarchal structures rather than to challenge them. Many radical social movements, such as black, queer, and women's liberation movements, suffer from derailment by being asked to define themselves under the banner of First Amendment rights guided by NGOs. The non-profit industrial complex (or the NPIC) is a network of NGOs, nonprofits, and privately funded activist organizations. Many have ties to Warren Buffet, the Democratic Party, and the Open Society Foundation. The intent is to act as nonviolent crisis negotiators between the state and the people as supposedly sympathetic third parties to gain the trust of grassroots activists and co-opt social movements in a way that prevents them from being too much of a threat to social order. This results in the indirect management of political movements by those same forces that they're attempting to combat. Career activism tokenizes marginalized issues by taking intersectionality or individualism out of the picture. Such activists appoint themselves as spokespersons or as "representative activists" of nonviolence while actively disregarding marginalized communities' autonomy to choose their own path to revolution.

NGOs exist to re-integrate social movements and activism back into the state, and monetize revolutionary movements. By doing so they capitalize on revolutionary feelings, just making it another commodity to be sold and therefore branding it as essentially harmless to the state and

capital. Nonviolence and pacifist activism are an attempt to impose the morals of the bourgeoisie upon the proletariat, particularly the idea that nonviolence is a necessary component to revolutionary change. Such activism suggests that as long as you remain nonviolent, you can earn respectability, and the possibility of inclusion in the social hierarchy that you were once fighting against. However, it's still engaging with the state, and any gains earned are still within the scope of what the state deems acceptable; therefore, the state's legitimacy js never challenged or questioned. This mindset allows corporations to continue to mask their exploitative and colonial practices through "philanthropic" work. Promoting ideologies of nonviolence to achieve reform isolates and divides movements. If we think nonprofit movement building and jobs are the only tangible spaces where our grassroots movements can be engaged in fighting for social justice and creating alternatives beyond this oppressive system, we will never create space for or engage in radical social change.

V: Nonviolence is Biased

We *would like to acknowledge that current definitions of race and gender are defined by Eurocentric standards, very much undermine other definitions of identity applicable to those who are non-white or non-w*estern. They have also *been used as tool to define who must be permanently stuck as part of the labor class, for the purpose of sourcing labor for the means of profit, and therefore must be decolonized.*

The rhetoric of nonviolence inherently excludes certain groups historically affected by sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and patriarchal societal standards. Often the label of "violent" is only applied to certain races, classes, or genders in or out of activist spaces. Those embracing nonviolence refuse to acknowledge that it can only work for the privileged, whom the state considers first-class citizens and whose rights are protected by state violence. They are the perpetrators and beneficiaries of a violent hierarchy enforced by the state. Proponents of nonviolence theory also disregard the immense human cost of capitalism's great enterprises, assuming that the violence experienced by labor and the unemployed is the same, when, in fact, factors such as race, gender identity, class, and the presence or absence of unions create different conditions.

The US civil rights movement is one of the most important episodes in pacifist history. Across the world, it been seen as an example of nonviolent victory, but it was neither a victory nor nonviolent. It was successful in ending legal segregation and establishing basic liberties and extending upper-class opportunities for blacks, but these were not the only demands of the movement. Activists wanted full economic and political equality, and many also wanted black liberation in the form of black nationalism, black inter- communalism, communism, black anarchism, or some other system independent from white imperialism. None of these demands were met, not equality, and certainly not liberation. Instead, blacks are the most incarcerated people in this country and targeted by police violence, both in a racially disproportionate manner. *"Dr. King's policy was that nonviolence would achieve gains for black people in the United States. His major assumption was that if you are nonviolent, if you suffer, your opponent will see your suffering and will be moved to change his heart. That's very good. He only made one fallacious assumption: in order for nonviolence to work, your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none."* **- Stokely Carmichael.**

Nonviolence theory implies that with nonviolence the indigenous community of any nation could have fought off all the genocidal colonists who took their land and resources through excessive use of violence. The nature of such violence is reminiscent of the type of American culture that prioritizes white corporate interests over indigenous struggles for self-determination: settler-colonialism. Nonviolence theory also implies that blacks could have stopped the slave trade with hunger strikes and petitions and that those who rebelled were just as bad as their captors. It's also naive of us not to realize that many liberation movements don't have nonviolent alternatives but have to prioritize armed resistance or guerrilla warfare for simple survival. Gandhi and King understood it was necessary to support armed liberation movements when nonviolent resistance was not an option and when nonviolent resistance prioritized tactics and respectability politics over end goals. However, liberal pacifists eradicated this part of the historical struggle and re-designed nonviolence to fit their own comfort.

[Transcatscribe's note: At this point, as an Indian, I cannot in good conscience not note that Gandhi did not at all support armed resistance. Further, his "activism" was primarily as a collaborator to the British to benefit upper class Indians (who are to this day almost exclusively upper caste), and collected the equivalent of millions of dollars in corporate donations from the same. He specifically disassociated himself from, and even sabotaged more radical movements led by lower caste and/or lower class Indians, and completely ignored women other than as property of men, as is "traditional" in the Hindu religion. He was most Certainly not an anarchist, as some like to think. He was more like a one man NGO, and his political actions were practically indistinguishable from modern reformist NGOs. Read more in Arundhati Roy's fantastic book on B. R. Ambedkar. Now back to scheduled programming :)]

"*Nonviolence is an inherently privileged position in the modern context. Besides the fact that the typical pacifist is quite clearly white and middle class, pacifism as an ideology comes from a privileged context. It ignores that violence is already here; that violence is an unavoidable, structurally integral part of the current social hierarchy; and that it is people of color who are most affected by that violence. Pacifism assumes that white people who grew up in the suburbs with all their basic needs met can counsel oppressed people, many of whom are people of color, to suffer patiently under an inconceivably greater violence, u7 such time as the Great White Father is swayed by the movement's demands or pacifists achieve that legendary 'critical mass.'*" ~ **Peter Gelderloos, "Why Nonviolence Protects the State-Nonviolence is Racist"**

Like race, advocating for nonviolence in the context of gender identity is an inherently privileged position. Nonviolence theory assumes that instead of defending ourselves against indirect or direct violence, we can rely on third-party institutions that are given a monopoly on the use of force to institute justice and protect our bodies: including police, Congress, and the judiciary system. While we like to pretend that our judiciary system is just and able to rectify violence, it operates with the implicit bias of its actors, and by the time the system provides "justice", someone is either critically hurt or dead. For femme/women/queer/trans/gender non-conforming folks, the systemic violence is unimaginable. Bigotry within political and economic realms is an inherent part of the system under which we live. Bodies in the hands of the state have become a commodity for politicians to actively summon arbitrary laws regardless of these laws' violent outcomes, while corporations see bodies as a source of capital gain without our mutual consent (e.g. fashion).

The idea of gender's being defined or controlled by the state or industry, in itself, is an act of violence. After all, in wars, in social revolutions, and in daily life, women, queer, and transgender

people, particularly those who are also people of color, are the primary targets of violence in patriarchal society. From police violence to sexual assault, attacks are far often common if you re not cis, male, white, and straight.

In patriarchal society, nonviolence only gets you what you want when what you demand isn't a meaningful threat to capital gains and the state. In the case of sexual violence, men have been given a pass to abuse and dominate because instances of sexual violence reinforce the systems of domination that legitimize state control and capital accumulation. Sexual violence and other forms of force have historically been used to perpetuate racism, sexism, and colonialism. White colonizers gazed at the bodies of people of color, defining them as inherently "dirty" and unworthy of respect and normalizing the act of rape especially in regards to indigenous and black women. Colonizers used sexual violence to kill and dehumanize indigenous populations as part of "ethnic cleansing". White slave owners raped black women, who were considered the property of their slave owners, to produce an exploitable labor force. The normalization and control of sexual violence by males requires the idea that female sexuality needs to be suppressed, and the social code of female sexual "purity" is needed to control reproductive labor. This also contributes to the formation of the nuclear family. Such exploitation of women is necessary for capitalist means of production. State discipline operates through individual instances of gendered and domestic violence. For example, police officers abuse their spouses and family members at 2-4 times the average rate. Officers like Daniel Holtzclaw abuse state-sanctioned power to put vulnerable people in more vulnerable situations in order to rape and abuse them. Incarcerated people experience similar violence at the hands of corrections officers. In these cases, the violence of rape transcends even the victim: these acts of domination serve to reinforce state actors' monopoly on violence and to remind marginalized people that they have no recourse under the law when the perpetrators are those responsible for "justice".

The continuous violence against marginalized people's bodies has always been part of socio-capitalism. Assimilation, similar to a doctrine of nonviolence, forbids radical thoughts and reactions, forcing us to submit to hetero patriarchal and capitalist means of production as opposed to liberating us. Proponents of nonviolence believe that it's better for a victim of violence to move on in silence than to fight back. Nonviolence theory implies that it's better to be a victim who tolerates abuse or rape than one who plunges a knife or shoots a handgun at assailants to disrupt domination. According to neoliberal doctrine, this type of self-defense, ironically, contributes to the cycle of violence and shifts the blame to victims who stood up for themselves and resisted. Marginalized people experiencing intimate and state violence cannot stand patiently waiting until a sufficiently large segment of society can be mobilized for nonviolent action. Patriarchy has given cis white men a monopoly on violence, with some allowance given to those who wish to assimilate to the rules and values of such structures. These people, and their institutions of police, gender roles, racial groupings, and economic class structures, place our identities into rigid, racialized, gender binaries in moral and social contexts. Queer identities and lifestyles threaten the sexual status quo, the production of the labor force, and the heteronormative structures that have been created to defend it.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said *"A riot is the language of the unheard",* and Stonewall was very much that: a spontaneous, violent demonstration by members of the queer community against a series of police raids of gay clubs located in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City. The queer community was treated as less than human, their freedom to voluntarily associate with one another, a simple and basic human freedom, being violently denied by the

state and heteronormative society, so members decided to assert their natural human instinct to fight back and defend themselves against oppressors. The ensuing days of rioting and confrontation with the police resulted in the queer community's gaining a basic, if limited, recognition of humanity. The bar raids ended, police toned down their open bigotry, and the modern gay rights movement, now pacified, began. While radical groups like Act Up and the Pink Panthers maintain the spirit of resistance through self-defense and understand that the system we have is unaccommodating and violent, many white privileged LGBTQAI liberals see the apex of their movement as being the result of negotiations with the state regardless of how exclusionary these negotiations have been for non-cis white comrades, for example, prioritizing same sex marriage or difficult-to-enforce anti-discriminatory laws. Ever since, the fight for queer liberation has been domesticated, limiting, and reduced to within the reasoning and expectation of the state while excluding those who refuse to assimilate or indoctrinate themselves into these fixed narratives of white gendernormative queerness.

Those experiencing poverty often face direct violence whether they are homeless undocumented, or lower class. They deal with both general state repression and police violence. Class structure in capitalist society is a form of control meant to be directed towards the poor, the youth and elderly criminalizing them for yielding less capital. The United States, likes every capitalist society, is composed of masters and slaves. Often lower class people are taught from birth that their poverty is their fault, for not working hard enough. Meanwhile the majority of rich people make and maintain their wealth through exploitation, inheritance, deals with the state, *or other* means that have nothing to do with work ethic. Class structure is meant to keep *certain people* permanently dependent on the higher classes, which ties directly into racism and sexism, as it's easy to maintain such a structure if certain communities *are* just permanently given the role of laborers. Contrary to capitalist propaganda, financial success has nothing to do with a strong work ethic, and everything to do with a market dependent on violence.

Non violence is inherently ciassist because it negates the ability for poor and lower class people to fight against violence perpetrated by classism. So according to the proponents of nonviolence the workers never should have been allowed to take direct action and riot against the rich on May 4th 1886, which is what inspired the celebration of May 1st as international workers day.

Many radical groups have tried to maintain the militant anti capitalist spirit of May 1st, with varying success. Liberals and the Democratic party have relentlessly attempted to co-opt the day and make it about reformism and pacifist democracy. Thus continuing the pattern of "progressives" and their ilk constantly whitewashing historical narrative and radical movements to fit them into the reformist structure. Poor people must decide whether to play within the rules of this fictional middle class society or to simply survive. How can you blame people for choosing survival over arbitrary moral codes? Lower class survival - whether that means begging on the street, shoplifting, squatting, etc.- only exists relative to violence. No one would have to engage in these survival tactics if violence was not first being inflicted upon them. Additionally, these survival methods are criminalized, furthering capitalist justifications for police violence and mass incarceration. State violence is then the cause and the consequence of poverty, making poverty cyclical, racialized, and generational. In order to maintain their power, the ruling class must ensure that the poor stay poor. For workers to not just survive, but to be liberated from the ruling class means to directly challenge capitalist moral order - to collectively refuse to work, to militantly confront the ruling class, and to forcibly take back resources that the rich will never

willingly hand over. *"Never be deceived that the rich will permit you to vote away their wealth."* - Lucy Gonzalez Parsons

Bigotry and violence still exist because they are deeply woven into the very fabric of our corrupt system. The history of civilization is the history of violence and defusing violence. To suggest that nonviolence defuses violence not only engenders a false sense of security but also endangers cis women, queer and trans people, and people of color, who are often the direct recipients of these various forms of violence. We can't allow white ignorance to cloud any of our judgments when it comes to the process of liberation. Who benefits more from this? The reforms that came out of these movements do not diametrically oppose resistance or liberation. Saying they do indoctrinates people into settling for "just enough". Prioritizing reform as a main goal is what separates pacified resistance and breaking down walls.

VI: Nonviolence Divides Us In Action

"*Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them".*

-Assata Shakur

Nonviolent tactics do not guarantee a nonviolent situation or movement. While *nonviolent resistance* is a common tactic aimed at achieving a nonviolent situation, where the goal of social change is through symbolic protests, civil disobedience (often considered "violent" in practice, which is why it's vaguely defined by nonviolent activists), satyagraha, or other methods without using violence, the choice is often out of participants' hands when challenging the state's *official* narratives. Often those who organize under the banner of nonviolence spend more time appealing to state approval of their actions rather than organizing toward tangible change and alternatives without state consent or respectability in mind. This creates the shaming, criminalization, and tone policing marathon of anyone who collectively or autonomously takes part in any self-defense, militant, antifa, or abolitionist-centered resistance.

Many white liberals at the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia tone policed activists and tried to shame people for saying "Black Lives Matter". One protester was overheard criticizing police, after which two white Bernie Sanders supporters went between the protesters in question and the police (who were at least nine feet away from each other as it was), put their hands up and said, "Don't say that! The police are our friends!" Later in the evening, as protesters attempted to push onward toward the convention center, police became more aggressive and tried to drive their cars into the crowd to block the protesters and break them up. Some officers stepped out of their vehicles and waved their nightsticks around and began shoving protesters. Eventually, the protesters, through sheer numbers, were able to overwhelm the police and start pushing them back, at which point "peace police" activists tried to surround the police cars to defend them and push protesters away from the police. We really have to ask ourselves, whose side are these "peace police" really on? If your purpose is to protest then why are you defending the very same people who just initiated aggression toward protesters and attempted to stop them from reaching their goals?

During the 2016 anti-Trump demonstrations in the aftermath of the election, many Hillary Clinton supporters engaged in very aggressive tone policing of POC, queer, and radical activists all in the name of "peace". One man in DC was attacked and beaten by Hillary supporters for speaking about how Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. Activists in New York City were shoved and attacked

for burning a flag (an accepted form of free speech), which Hillary supporters deemed "violent". The "peace police" even went so far as to attempt to get the activists exposed to the police and arrested. Even if you don't agree with the act of burning a flag, how do you defend attempting to get someone arrested for doing so? How do you claim to be fighting fascism by so violently attacking freedom of expression? Many POC, queer, feminist, and radical activists felt marginalized and disenfranchised by the constant tone policing of these actions and stopped showing up all together.

Tactics and strategies defined only under the moral code of nonviolence end up being reduced in terms of scope and range of effectiveness. People's comprehension of resistance is limited to just nonviolence, which undermines other forms of opposition more inclined to utilize a diversity of tactics to achieve goals, including all forms of resistance. ***Resistance*** *is the act or power of opposition to any sort of wrongdoing.* Anything that involves opposing the state is subject to direct violence (punishment), and any form of opposition, even nonviolence, will be viewed as an act of terrorism, thus "precipitating state violence. So, how can we prepare for that? This is a question that we must ask ourselves and our communities. No answer will be the same. Strictly enforcing nonviolence as the only acceptable solution to our problems will never allow us do this. Resistance has no inherent limits, and nonviolence sets limitations because it ends up being clouded by arbitrary ideas of morality often narrated by those with privilege. Absolute nonviolence does not offer any recourse for the defense of innocents against injustice and brutality other than endangering them and subjecting them to the absolute authority of the state and its chosen enforcers. The use of *diversity of tactics is a form of resistance that periodically uses force to disrupt oppression and business as usual, stepping beyond the limits of nonviolence.* To truly practice a diversity of tactics is to celebrate direct action beyond nonviolent theories and mobilize beyond just strictly nonviolent actions. The social diseases of this world are complex and can't be refined by one fixed tactic or one fixed solution. This is what nonviolent resistance offers, a very limited capacity to eradicate systemic violence.

During Occupy Wall Street 2011, one of the major conclusions emerging from those spaces was that many people considered destruction of property an act of violence, even though destruction of property systematically has been part of the settler-colonialist experience and the founding pillars of capitalism: the privatization of indigenous land and marginalized communities through the gentrification and commercialization of this land through development, nevermind how much damage and death inflicted on the affected communities. Yet when marginalized people and those who are willing to put themselves on the line decide to take drastic measures to do something about it, those same "allies" frown upon those who've chosen to do something about it through strategic property destruction which both in principle and in practice is an acceptable and effective tactic used to win in the struggle against state and capital.

Property destruction is simply a tactic used to wage war on an institution, to hit them where it hurts by costing them money and resources. Many people don't realize that the Boston Tea Party, idolized by liberals and conservatives alike as one *of the* defining moments of the American Revolution, was an act of property destruction. Yet when people of color, queer individuals, and anyone else who's just simply tired of the status quo decides to do the same it's now somehow "violent" and "unacceptable". Ask yourself this, how do you wage war against an institution, like a bank, corporation, or state agency? If anything, the proponents of "nonviolence", who often claim that their goal is to reduce human casualties, should be happy that the war is being waged on the property of the institution rather than its employees. But they still insist on casting destruction of property as "violent" because once again the goal of nonviolence is not to reduce violence

or suffering, it's to manage and neutralize resistance to the point where it poses no threat of radical change to the system. Many liberals and right wingers like to cast property destruction during protests as counterproductive. They'll often try to frame it as "how does destroying your own neighborhood achieve anything?" ignoring the fact that people often resort to such tactics when they feel fully disenfranchised and hopeless and because there's nothing else they can do. Property destruction is simply an act, and targeted destruction of oppressive institutions offers something tangible.

The demonization of anyone who challenges the system is often a role taken on by corporate media, usually referring to property damage rather than the injuries inflicted upon protesters by the police as "violence" and to often cast protesters as violent criminals or "thugs" (usually directed toward black uprisings). Corporate media like FOX, CNN, MSNBC, and phony liberal outlets like Buzzfeed are interested in frightening the public by creating biased narratives about radial circles like they have successfully done with various political prisoners.

Nonviolent civil resistance is often socially invested in state sanctioned "reformative justice activism" here in the United States, which often conflicts with the ideals of the many groups who choose to lean away from reformative justice and invest their effort more into abolitionist and antifa dynamics. Reformative justice only ends up preserving the objectives of the ruling class, white working class, and capitalist system. Often, those with privilege refuse to acknowledge that enforcing the exclusive use of nonviolent rhetoric to manage activist spaces into being non-threatening makes it easier for the state to manage issues in a way that serves them. The state undermines marginalized communities and what they autonomously consider their own path to liberation and self-preservation. Those with a senseless need for entitlement and masochists thrive in such spaces.

A nonviolent movement can only exist when it does not face forceful opposition that would require self-defense, and we don't live in that kind *of* world. Nonviolence can only be useful in the framework of a diversity of tactics, not when it's the only approved tactic available. Nonviolent resistance also makes extensive use of a martyr mentality and the creation of propaganda. The idea is that if the oppressed fight back with force, the larger society, which believes in the narrative of the state, will see those people as hostile violent criminals, and side with the state, while if you take the beatings and the violence without defending yourself, the larger society will see your suffering and hopefully side with you against the oppressor. Then the ensuing pictures, videos, news stories, etc create propaganda that can be used against the oppressor and injured martyrs to rally around. The problem is that for all the years that this ideology has been around, very little if any progress has been made, and no progress has been made toward overthrowing capitalism and moving toward an equal classless society without states. This also puts people's bodies and safety on the line and creates unnecessary casualties.

VII: The Failed Perception

Insisting on remaining "nonviolent" in a system that's inherently violent is in essence insisting that people endanger themselves. The fact is that non violence" rhetoric isn't actually non violence at all; it's simply a reinforcement of the idea that the state is the only institution allowed to use force. It is not violent to arm and defend yourself, to wear shields and body armor, etc. When you're up against an institution that's inherently and openly violent and murderous, it's called

being prepared. As stated above, The ideology of nonviolent protest is essentially perpetuated to create propaganda. This is a cold-hearted way to think because you're putting other people's bodies and lives on the line. This also appeals mostly to privileged individuals, especially middle-class whites, as they can afford to operate under such a mentality since they're less likely to have the same type of violence perpetrated against them that people of color, poor people, and queer individuals face simply based on their identity. In a way, protest organizers operating under this ideology are committing indirect violence against the people they are supposed to be protecting. We can see how well this supposedly works by the fact that we've been marching and fighting for the same issues for decades now with little to no change. This doesn't mean that in order to win the battle you need a full out armed insurrection. Just protect your body and hold the space. Defend yourself with shields, barricades, armor, and helmets and learn hand-to-hand combat and disarming tactics, whatever you may need. This way, when the enemy is committing violence against you, you're able to defend yourself against and roll with the punches. A bunch of beaten, arrested, and dead people can't hold a space for very long, can they?

VIII: Armed Resistance and Self-Defense

How you gonna allow your ENEMY to tell you, you don't have the right to RESIST??!!"
- Ramona Africa, MOVE Organization

Protests, resistance movements, and social struggles are almost always a reaction against systemic violence. Was the civil rights and black liberation movement a reaction against systemic violence perpetrated against black people or a "violent" movement? Most people would agree with the former. If violence and oppression does not exist in the first place, why the need for a resistance movement? People would be happy and see no reason to engage in struggle if violence did not exist. Most abolitionist, anti-colonialist, antifa, and radical circles, especially non-western, understand that the state framework is beyond repair and national liberation is a violent process, especially under authoritative regimes. Violence is a virtue of fascists, who believe in force to implement absolute rulership and hierarchy, and imposing nonviolent rhetoric and tactics endangers the community. Oppressive institutions are trigger happy and have no reservation against using force to impose their idea *of* an ideal society, to which resistance against said rigid hierarchy mandates *armed* resistance. The Philippine revolution against 316 years of both Spanish and American occupations is built on armed resistance. During 16 years of American occupation, which led to over 1.5 million Filipinos killed, millions of dollars of resources stolen, and ethnic cleansing, armed resistance via gorilla warfare was the only viable response. Like during the Philippines-American War (1899-1902), nonviolent resistance was not the only option when settler colonialism came into direct contact with the native people of the Philippines in brutal subjugation. Guerilla warfare was and is necessary to defuse the already occurring violence and genocide. Now the Philippines embraces neoliberalism, creating substantial amounts of structural violence by implementing policies adversely impacting and marginalizing the poor. In Bicol, direct violence is used extensively to eliminate those standing in contradiction to neoliberalism. The mindful force of the New People's Army represents violence from below challenging violence from above.

Armed resistance is a form of self-defense. Community defense already implies the defense of self. In most cases, it is in your own interest to defend your community. Many people hold these

to be different things, but they *are* not. Malcolm X once said, *"I believe it's a crime for anyone who is being brutalized to continue to accept that brutality without doing something to defend himself."* **- MALCOLM X (Believe, I Believe, Crime, Accepting, Brutality)**

If you're aware that systematic and direct violence marginalizes black, brown, indigenous, trans, and queer individuals on a daily basis, why would you recommend nonviolence or pacifism over actually achieving goals? While many marginalized communities are reprimanded for self-defense, it is universally understood that it is necessary for survival. Robert F. Williams, a black civil rights leader, advocates armed resistance to racial oppression and violence. J Williams quickly learned to navigate regular brutalization at the hands of whites for being black in the Deep South. *"I have asserted the right of Negroes to meet the violence of the Ku Klux Klan by armed self-defense - and have acted on it. It has always been an accepted right of Americans, as the history of our Western states proves, that where the laws in unable, or unwilling, to enforce order, the citizens can, and must act in self-defense against lawless violences."* ~ **ROBERT T. WILLIAMS.**

Take the case of Korryn Gaines, a black mother and copwatcher who was shot and killed during a police raid in Baltimore County. Korryn defended her five- year-old son from police violence with a shotgun, even shooting one of the officers as they invaded her home. Korryn's decision to take up arms against the police demonstrates the necessity of self-defense by black women when faced with an imminent threat of violence. In this case, self-defense was classified as "violent" while the state's own violence is never classified as such.

Furthermore, black women have historically faced disproportionate violence from white supremacist society as well as violent patriarchal behaviors from men. Often, black women are silenced by white feminists in discussions of patriarchal violence, and thus Korryn's actions are viewed as irrational or "crazy" by white society when in fact they are the natural response of survival in direct opposition to a white society that regularly harms black women's bodies. Nonviolent tactics and theories can encourage violence by subjecting marginalized people to unnecessary direct violence. Self-defense is a legal justification for the use of force in times of danger. Self-defense and armed resistance to many are a way to sustain their community and protect their loved ones, especially those fighting direct violence from imperialist and authoritative regimes. Palestine is no exception to that. Palestinians face a constant barrage *of violence* daily and have only managed to survive as a people through direct armed struggle against the Zionist regime and the settler colonial occupation. The Israeli colonial state is an offshoot of U.S./European colonialism and imperialism, directly inspired by the treatment of indigenous people in the Americas and the treatment of blacks as property.

Why don't the proponents of nonviolence try to tell the Palestinian people that they have to be "peaceful"? Choosing to be nonviolent does not remove the fact that the rest of the year you've managed to contribute to violence imposed upon another. You pay taxes right? The money you pay goes toward the killing and bombing of innocent people in Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, etc. The fact that you're involuntarily forced to subsidize murder should fell you something about violence.

Self defense is applicable not only in personal situations but also against systemically violent institutions. Imagine you're living in Nazi Germany, and you hear the resistance movement trashed and destroyed Nazi Party headquarters. What would your reaction be? Would you be thinking "Damn those freedom fighters are so violent! What did the Nazis ever do to them?" Or would you understand that these freedom fighters were combating a violent institution, one that perpetuates systemic violence against people every day, and therefore it's completely justified

to resist them wherever and whenever possible. The reason for demonizing self-defense tactics as "violence" is to ensure that the state, the ruling class, and the forces of capital maintain the monopoly on the use of force, thus cementing their hold over society. If we maintain the notion that certain groups are allowed to use aggression and violence against others simply because the social code says so, and defending yourself against these institutions is "violent" and not allowed, we are allowing their violent and oppressive structure to maintain its legitimacy and hold over society.

The territory of Rojava in northern Syria is a good example of building an alternative system and using armed resistance to defend it. They've managed to establish a libertarian socialist society inspired by the ideas of Murray Bookchin, who developed his own ideology called "libertarian municipalism" based on a synthesis of anarchist and Marxist theory coupled with his own life experiences and a heavy emphasis on environmental issues and feminism. Abdullah Ochalan discovered Bookchin's writings while in prison and decided to direct the remnants of his Marxist-Leninist PKK to take inspiration from them. Rojava has set about building a non-hierarchal society, where every citizen is trained in arms and taught self-defense, with the aim of eventually abolishing police in favor of local self-defense committees. This society is based on a system of small self-governing communes that come together to resolve larger issues. The fact that their libertarian ideals may succeed and eventually spread further is a threat to the Turkish state, as well as ISIS, so armed resistance and self-defense is essential to their struggle. Without resistance, they would be wiped out. They don't have the option to be "nonviolent".

IX: Conclusion

"Colonization is violence in its natural state... and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence... [Decolonization] is always a violent phenomenon... Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a programme of complete disorder."- **Frantz Fanon**

We often give the state a pass to incite violence whether it's excusing police brutality, the invasion of foreign lands, violent occupation, or the continuous endorsement of the aggressive displacement of indigenous peoples from their land. Society, for the lack of a better word, has always tended toward mediocre excuses, and this kind of masochistic behavior needs to stop. We have actively encouraged people to stop making excuses and start holding the state accountable for its violent actions. We need to start prioritizing the well-being of our community and be aware that this system has no conscience and is very much inclined to resort to institutionalized violence to achieve its goals as happened at Standing Rock and with the ongoing situation in Palestine. Colonialism, patriarchy, white supremacy, corporatism, and the state are actively *waging* war against humanity and Mother Earth. The capitalist system is designed to create poverty and maintain inequality. Your choice to be a bystander is silence against continuous systemic abuses against indigenous people and other marginalized communities. The system is a plague, a curse built to prey on anything in its path, and political reform can only withstand so many social blows. You have the power to change this. You must prioritize goals over tactics and organize within reality to serve justice. We must normalize resistance against all capitalistic enterprises and build a sustainable frontline beyond the political merry-go-round and assimilation. We must recognize that violence can't be fought using biased morality when the very collective fundamental structure of life is in jeopardy. We must decolonize how we organize in movement spaces

truly inclusive of others and celebrate a diversity of tactics beyond just nonviolence rhetoric and hierarchical structures.

If we let the state define the limits of our struggle through a biased perspective on nonviolence, our resistance becomes co-opted and ineffective. We become pacified, and so our resistance then has no actual propensity to create lasting effective change. So the only option left in the struggle for liberation is to go beyond the rights ”awarded’’ to us by state, to not just work outside the system but to utilize a ”violence” greater than the system itself against the system. Violence is inherently a neutral action, but in civilization it takes sides. Those with power redefine violence to demonize those who oppose them. There is and never will be any peace in social justice, nor civility in civil rights in a system that prides itself on violence to achieve its economic and political growth. The only way there will be peace is to create a system that values life above arbitrary concepts like money, power, and property. Until we as activists and visionaries realize that, our goals will never be achieved and we’ll be endlessly marching around in circles, never creating anything greater.

Hoods4Justice
h4invc@gmail.com
https:// www.facebook.com/Nyhoods4Justice/

[Transcatscribe’s note: I have provided you with my best attempt to do justice to a zine I digitized a while ago, but haven’t found anywhere online. Please share this with your anyone who you trust, as I do believe this would help radicalize a number of people who consider themselves liberals or otherwise buy into nonviolent activism. Take care as you foment revolution.]

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