

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

OCCUPY THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: REFLECTIONS FROM
THE FRONTLINES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This project attempts to explore and depict a deeper understanding of the contemporary social justice landscape from my personal autoethnographical experiences as an activist in the ostensibly dualistic worlds of 501(c)(3) nonprofit immigrant rights organization and a radical social change movement based in Occupy Los Angeles. This paper will compare and contrast the trajectories, goals, boundaries and roles implanted within these spaces, as I attempt to forge a candid construction of the past, present and future landscape of the social justice movement in this country. The autoethnographical narratives are complemented by social movement theories and literature review of the historical writings and experiences of various activists. Through combining the methodology of autoethnography and a theoretically oriented literature review on the non-profit industrial complex, I wish to illuminate on the existing dilemmas faced by social justice activists while inculcating a sense of hope for the future prospects of social justice movements.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As I write, our world is under siege by the symptoms of social, economic and political inequality that have manifested themselves under the conditions manufactured by modern capitalism. The unequal distribution of power, wealth and resources resulting from violent history of colonialism, slavery and globalization coupled with social constructions of racism, classism and heteropatriarchy have become reified in society as “just the way things are and always will be.” Undoubtedly, technological advancements and ever-more efficient consumption of resources have created phenomenal surplus wealth for humankind since the inception of capitalism. The problem lies in its pyramid-scheme of disproportionate dissemination of this surplus capital, a set-up in which the wealth produced by the workers of the world are amassed and expended by the minority elite class that have the privileges to exercise their economic, political and juridical powers over the majority of the global population.

Since there is a finite amount of wealth and resources on this planet, colossal concentration in the hands of the few implies that there is less to go around for the rest. So, in this milieu, high unemployment and extensive poverty is unequivocally interconnected to the over-consumptive leisure lifestyles of the affluent elites. In order to sustain themselves at the existing consumptive levels, the “powers that be” requires more exploitable labor power and natural resources to appropriate from. Therefore, the global working class and the shrinking middle-class are serving as the exploited bodies for the continual advancement of the ruling class. The control that these transnational ruling class exert over our lives has become hegemonic, backed up by institutions of corporal punishment that criminalizes those who deviate from or challenge the status quo and

justified by the ideological apparatuses that manufactures consent of the populous to the dominant paradigm through the institutions of mass media and academia.

With the ascendancy of neoliberal politics in the last few decades championed by the political leaders of the West, unequal distribution of wealth and resources have become tremendously exacerbated and even more pronounced. Neoliberalism is essentially the transference of economic and political authority and power from federal governments to the hands of the private market (Centeno and Cohen 2012: 2). The grips of neoliberal policies have forcefully set in, amplifying the already-existing gap between those who have and those who do not: the “American Dream” of upward class mobility through hard work has become a mockery of itself. Across the globe, the neoliberal policies instilled by the Bretton Woods trio under the guise of supporting infrastructural and economic development for formally colonized nation-states have essentially provided a free reign for the global elites to further deepen the historical arrangements of exploitation and appropriation.

As of year 2013, over three billion people in this planet live on less than \$2.50 per day while the richest twenty percent control two-thirds of the world's wealth (Shah 2013). Through this economic neocolonialism, the elites have seized the decision-making power around crucial issues that has a consequence on the entire global population: from determining where a transnational corporation can dump their toxic wastes to allocating alienating factory-work to the peripheries of the globe in search of the most exploitable labor sources, these are just a couple examples of how the uneven circulation of wealth, power and resources under modern capitalism have established and sustained the authority of the minority elites while fostering suffering for the majority of civil society.

Given the inequitable reality we live in, a cohesive global movement that demands radical redistribution of accumulated wealth and protection of the natural environment against pollution and resource-extraction is more necessary than ever. There is now a pressing need for activists to mobilize people at the bottom of the social, political and economic pyramid to reclaim their power and fight together for better world for all. Fortunately, resistance is fertile in every impacted community across the globe, as people under oppression have and always will strive to improve the living conditions for their families, friends and communities. We were witness to formidable uprising of the people during the last decade, from unified global fronts to disrupt the transnational business meetings of the elites to insurrectionary protests in the Middle East during the Arab Spring of 2012.

Within the United States, there are pockets of resistance that struggle for radical social change. Social change is a radical concept that “challenges the root causes of the exploitation and violence” (Kivel 2007: 129). The word radical comes from the Latin word, *radicallis*, which means root. Therefore, “radical analysis goes to the root of an issue or problem. Typically that means that while challenging the specific manifestations of a problem, radicals also analyze the ideological and institutional components as well as challenge the unstated assumptions and conventional wisdom that obscure the deeper roots...” (Jensen 2005: 14). Participation in these spaces implies one must possibly dedicate their entire life to the long-term struggle that necessitates patience and sacrifice.

Yet, in the current social justice landscape, activists that fight for social change have unfortunately become the minority voice. Now, activism in this country most likely means you work for a tax-exempt 501(c) (3) non-profit organization: they have become

the primary site in which majority of the new and old activists situate themselves in order to perform their roles as agents of social change and/or service. The nonprofit sector manages tremendous amount of wealth funded by the federal and local governments, elite individuals, foundations, corporations and the communities they serve. This dominance of the social justice sector by the nonprofit organizations has created a uneven playing field in which it has become nearly impossible for grassroots community organizations or revolutionary radicals to compete against these 501(c)(3) organizations' economic and political clout to capture the attention of the marginalized communities.

The dominant nonprofit sector has transformed the social justice landscape into various impotent nonprofit organizations focused on social services instead of radical social change (Kivel 2007; Ahn 2007; Smith 2007). Social service is work that “addresses the needs of individuals reeling from the personal and devastating impact of institutional systems of exploitation and violence” (Kivel 2007: 129). So, even though manifestations of social problems caused by capitalism must be analyzed, challenged, and transformed through achieving for radical social change, the majority of the nonprofit organizations are instead mired in performing social services, playing the depoliticized role of the “shadow state” as they fill in the gaps for increasing amount of needs that the federal government pulled back from and the private market have failed to reach (Gilmore 2007).

These service based organizations have become the well-funded component of the nonprofit sector. Performing social service is not the problem, as many radical organizations such as the Black Panther Party for Self-defense in the US and the Zapatistas in Chiapas Mexico have utilized social service as a catalyst for empowerment

for their communities without the aid of the dominant system. It becomes problematic when the organizations devote the majority of their energy to performing social services for more funding in lieu of focusing on social change. This regressive conversion of the potential sites of democratic resistance into “little service delivery businesses” have depoliticized the once-championed and more essential vision of realizing structural changes to the status quo (Alexander, Nank and Stivers 1999: 467). Instead of being the stimulus for a global movement rooted in achieving social change, these nonprofit organizations effectually uphold and replicate the status quo, positioned as a gatekeeper for the elites to keep the social justice landscape under their control.

Therefore, the current landscape of the social justice movement is mired in what is termed the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC). The NPIC is a “set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements” (Smith 2007: 8). NPIC is represented through the dominance that private foundations comprised of capitalist elites exert over the current social justice milieu through controlling the potential sites of resistance with their strings-attached selective funding. Since the foundation is primarily constituted of those who have traditionally benefited from capitalism, it would be logical to assume that they would not fund revolutionary organizations that struggles to instill a new blueprint for social, economic and political relations.

Since the mid-1970s, the NPIC proliferated as a response from the elites towards the mounting discontentment embodied by the black power, antiwar, women's liberation, queer resistance and various other social movements that threatened to completely

rupture the status quo (Kivel 2007). The elite-ran foundations responded to this threat by selectively funding organizations within these movements that they considered to be moderate, which allowed those organizations to sustain themselves over long-term while squeezing out the more radical organizations. This funding process has eroded the social justice sector based in completing social change into a “feel-good” industry in which people are merely paid for doing “good work” (Kivel 2007: 138). Social change does not occur without committed people sacrificing their means of livelihood to struggle for what they firmly believe in their heart to be right. Therefore, the non-profit industrial complex depoliticizes the potential to mobilize for radical social change, since it “encourages people to think of social justice organizing as a career; that is, you do the work if you can get paid for it” (Smith 2007: 10).

This project will attempt to explore and depict a deeper understanding of the contemporary social justice sector from my personal autoethnographical experiences as an activist in the ostensibly dualistic worlds of 501(c)(3) nonprofit immigrant rights organization and a radical social change movement based in Occupy Los Angeles. This paper will compare and contrast the trajectories, goals, boundaries and roles embedded within these spaces, as I attempt to forge a candid construction of the past, present and future landscape of the social justice movement. The autoethnographical narratives will be complemented by social movement theories and literature review of the historical writings and experiences of various activists. Through combining the methodology of autoethnography and a theoretically oriented literature review on the NPIC, I hope to illuminate on the existing dilemmas faced by social justice activists while inculcating a sense of hope for the prospects of social justice movements.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

What does it mean to be an activist? I tend to agree with the position that the notion of activism is rooted in the acts of cultivating ethics (Dave 2011: 5). In this definition, ethics is undoing of social moralities (Dave 2011: 5). Therefore, at the heart of activism, there are three practices; “problematizing social norms, inventing alternatives to these social norms, and creatively practicing these newly invented relational and critical possibilities” (Dave 2011: 6). Organizing can be defined as “building relationships and institutions to sustain community power...” (Guilloud and Cordery 2007: 108). So activists go to the roots of the social problems, foster a prefigurative movement to invent alternative worlds, and build and sustain this community’s power to mobilize the masses to struggle for a better world for all.

In order to foster a theoretical dialogue around social movements and its boundaries, I will delineate the notion of power and how it represents and operates itself in society. From a Marxist strain of class-based perspective, power can be defined as something that exists in the hands of those who own the means of production and means of coercion (Marx and Engels 2000). As for the terrain of social movements, the state holds the majority of the social, political and juridical power to ultimately determine the boundaries of what is acceptable as protesting (Porta and Fillieule 2007: 227). Unsurprisingly, militant activists within the marginalized sectors of society that organize to seize the power back into their communities have generally confronted various powerful modalities of state repression as well as the ideological apparatus of the mainstream media that paints a deleterious picture of activists with radical visions.

Within academia, social movements are usually defined as something that “...can

be thought of as collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside extant authority, whether it institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part” (Snow, Soule, Kriesi 2007: 6). Social movements have functioned as the principal platform for activists to organize and to collectively articulate their diverse interests, grievances and claims (Snow, Soule, Kriesi 2007; 3). The movements utilize mechanisms of diffusion to communicate the innovations of their tactics, ideologies and symbols to mobilize collective actions towards some sort of a cause (Soule 2007: 295-296). In this sense, social movement organizations are mixtures of strategies, objectives and boundaries both produced and fractured by past and contemporary movements and organizations.

Some theorists argue that social movements have crested and crashed throughout time and space through what is termed as “protest waves” (Koopmans 2007: 21). Since moments of political and social contention is extremely unequally distributed across time and space, and that much of it is “concentrated in intense waves of contention with a broad scope in geographical and social space,” social movements should be analyzed as an multi-actor process instead of just focusing on individual social movements or searching for generalizations across movements at dissimilar times and places (Koopmans 2007: 40). The majority of social movements tend to surface and evolve spontaneously, especially in moments when the deteriorating conditions of society become too discernible for the masses to tolerate.

Organizations must mobilize resources in order to maintain themselves over the long-term fight for social justice. Resources are more than just money, but include political legitimacy, moral high ground and human capital in numbers of mass bodies

willing to sacrifice. Yet, due to the inherent structural inequalities, people of different classes are not afforded the same resources and tools in order to establish a formal social movement (Edwards and McCarthy 2007: 117). The middle-class based movements, who are more privileged in their access to resources, fosters an uneven situation in which “social movements that resonate with the concerns of relatively privileged social groups predominate and the mobilizations of the poor groups are quite rare in advanced industrial democracies” (Edwards and McCarthy 2007: 117). The working class has historically been able to protest “only under exceptional conditions in which they are afforded the socially determined opportunity to press for their own class interests” (Piven and Cloward 1977: 7). Hence, movements have historically taken on diverse forms depending on the scale of resources they can mobilize to sustain a movement.

Activists also attempt to frame their message in order to ensure it resonates with the masses to mobilize them into action. Framing is the “signifying work or meaning construction engaged in by social movement activists and participants and other parties relevant to the interest of social movement and the challenges they mount” (Snow 2007: 384). In this sense, framing provides the meaning and the interpretation of the social conditions of inequality for the masses so that they can understand the reasons behind it and possibly even participate. There have been moments in social movement history when a “master frame” was utilized in order to formulate, disseminate and display a united message across diverse groups to mobilize against certain issues (Snow 2007). This master frame was successful during the massive protests against transnational manifestations of modern capitalism such as the Bretton Woods Trio that brought together multiple social movements across the globe with one message of resisting

against globalization, austerity and neoliberalism.

Since many forms of protesting in the streets disturb the daily routines of society, the state's responses to these mobilizations of the people are predominantly carried out by the police (Porta and Fillieule 2007). Policing of protests can usually be distinguished into two typical responses, one of “hard” style characterized by the usage of repressive forces and the “soft” police style in which the rights of the protestors are respected and negotiations take place (Porta and Fillieule 2007: 219). Although the relationship between the two groups is “based upon an inherently unequal amount of power,” the democratic regimes risk losing credibility and support of the people if overt repression is consistently utilized against protesters (Porta and Fillieule 2007: 220). Therefore, protest policing tends to be selective, as forms of protesting are amorphous and its intentions can shift quickly without any set plans of doing so (Porta and Fillieule 2007). Also, the police have utilized more of a “hard” style of repressive tactics against groups they deem as more of a threat to the overall maintenance of the system.

The movements I focus on for this project are comprised of working class poor people's movement fighting for social, economic and political equality. Piven and Cloward's seminal work on the Poor People's Movement provides a good foundation for a theoretical perspective into how these movements have won and failed (1977). Organizers of movements of poor people have historically attempted to create a “formally structured organizations with a mass membership” (Piven and Cloward 1977: x) from the lower classes. Formal organization is appealing to the organizers because with the establishment of a formalized group, the limited resources that the lower class possesses can be strategically shared and utilized toward common goals. Both reformists and

revolutionaries presume the notion that once the masses are unified in a disciplined action, the elites would be forced to make concessions (Piven and Cloward 1977: xi).

Furthermore, since reified social norms and institutions tend to constrain opportunities for protest, marginalized groups are able to mobilize for their grievances only under exceptional times of social fractures (Buechler 2007: 56). These sporadic moments tend to happen when “breakdown processes” occur in society and the masses learn to discern their individual problems as interconnected and develop collective consciousness for defiance (Buechler 2007). So, since most of the organizing efforts within the lower class communities have been carried out during these extraordinary and spontaneous stretches of mass uprisings, the organizers come to believe that this overabundance of political energy can be concentrated and prolonged over time through a materialization of an official organization.

In the political, economic and social realm, the state holds the power to prescribe responses to these populous disruptive movements. Ordinarily, the political elites have ignored movements whose impacts are limited to specified issues and thus do not pose as considerable threats to the overall functioning of the central institutions of capitalism. Additionally, since most members of the lower class have marginal institutional roles, their ability to rupture the main institutions of the elites is very minute even through disruption and withdrawal of their concession to their prearranged roles. This is why factory workers go on strike and the unemployed tend to riot and loot. Those who are unemployed cannot strike while the workers are drawn together to realize their collective goals can be met through defying and protesting the factory rules and bosses (Piven and Cloward 1977: 21). Therefore, “people cannot defy institutions in which they have no

access, and to which they make no contribution” (Piven and Cloward 1977: 23).

The most efficacious defiant actions of the masses are ones that disrupt institutions that are most substantial to the elite class (Buechler 2007: 56). Through withdrawing their concession to the elites and defying their traditional societal roles, the poor peoples' movements have attained certain victories. And because elites have conceded to certain demands of the masses during these times of civic turmoil, these once-seemingly improbable “victories” reaffirms the beliefs of the organizers that through sustaining an organization over a long period of time, they can win more concessions. Yet, this notion has an inherent flaw, which is that it is nearly impossible to compel enough concessions from the elites that can continue to sustain oppositional organizations over a long period (Buechler 2007: 56). Even more importantly, organizations that endure over time tend to abandon their oppositional politics in order to fit into the system (Piven and Cloward 1977).

When the movements pose a larger threat to system maintenance, repressive tactics from the state have been utilized. Yet, during times of rapid social, electoral or economic transformations, discounting or repressing a populous movement becomes precarious since they either pose such a great threat to the status quo or they have earned the moral high ground of the public. So, during these intense moments of social rupturing, marginal concessions are made by the elites that do require some sort of a departure from the established status quo (Piven and Cloward 1977: 29). In order to placate the burgeoning consciousness and quell the radical aspects these social movements, elites attempt to channel the movement’s energy towards more institutionalized methods of reformism (Piven and Cloward 1977: 30). In other words,

elites seek out certain organizations that arise from the masses of protesting bodies to solicit their views and provide them with more traditional platforms to address their grievances.

While this gives these organizations a gist of political and social power, the elites are trying to diffuse the perceived threat of insurgent power of the masses before it completely ruptures the status quo (Piven and Cloward 1977: xi). Nevertheless, these moments of insurgency are short-lasting as they are usually nebulous and extemporaneous. As people stop gathering in the streets and move into meeting rooms of formal organizations, the movement becomes placated since the organizations that endure are those that desert their oppositional politics and serve as a useful tool for the elites (Piven and Cloward 1977: xi). So, during these exceptional moments, focusing the momentum of the masses into formal organizations has constrained their potentially revolutionary forces instead of escalating the momentum into a full-on popular uprising (xii). Piven and Cloward (1977) emphasize that the organizers have failed to comprehend the structural limitations of forming formal organizations which have led to failures to exploit the ruptures that were produced during times of mass defiance.

Therefore, even though scholars have conventionally defined social movements as the collective and organized attempts to demand changes to the social order, this definition conflates the organic and shambolic energies of the people with formalized organizations that arises from the movement (Piven and Cloward 1977). The collective spirit of defiance that initially sparks mass uprisings is not effectively represented by the formalized organizations that emerge from these moments, and these organizations actually institutionalize the revolutionary potential of the movement itself (Porta and

Filleule 2007: 235). This definition also fails to recognize many unorganized forms of disruptive actions that people participate in their daily lives and instead disregards them as acts of individual deviancy (Piven and Cloward 1977: 5). These non-organizational forms of protest are more of a challenge to power since not only do they have a specific agenda but “do so in a way that challenges elite power and rule-making” (Buechler 2007: 57). Similarly, the movements that I participated in have employed disruptive tactics in order to attain their goals and address their grievances. Without a doubt, the more the activists threatened the vital institutions of the elites, the more responses they received in terms of both repression and concessions. Although both of the movements I focus on this project were comprised of in some aspects by formalized organizations, the unstructured and informal networks that existed within these formalized spaces demonstrated much more potential for achieving radical social change.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Neoliberalism and its Discontents

This literature review commences with an inquiry of the rise of neoliberalism and its impacts on mass society. Neoliberalism, with its roots based in the fundamental tenets of capitalism, is an economic, social and political philosophy that nation-states and their economies are optimally administered and sustained through the hands of the free market and free trade (Centeno and Cohen 2012). In the 1970s, an escalation in the price of commodities coupled with an upsurge in the unemployment rate resulted in an economic stagflation. This monetary downturn led several reputable economists to determine that government interference in the economic sector was the main reasons for the recession. Thus began the formulation and the passage of policies that privileged private markets over the regulations of the federal government (Centeno and Cohen 2012: 3). “These various views were ultimately crystallized as a set of liberalization policies called the Washington Consensus: fiscal austerity, market-determined interest and exchange rates, free trade, inward investment deregulation, privatization, market deregulation, and a commitment to protecting private property” (Williamson 1990, in Centeno and Cohen 2012: 3).

Neoliberalism has become a hegemonic theory, a dominant paradigm that has been espoused by certain academics, policy-makers and in popular culture (Centeno and Cohen 2012: 7). Yet, instead of promoting growth and development for all members of society, neoliberal policies have actually hastened the substantial economic and political disparity between those who have and those who do not. The deregulatory policies that inflated the profits of corporations have expanded the concentration of wealth in the

hands of the few while causing even more destitution for the majority of the global population. The widening gap between the rich and the poor has also been exacerbated by the shift of the burdens of taxes from the rich to the poor (Giroux 2005: 2). The neoliberal tax cuts favors the rich, as those who earn more than \$1 million in income were the recipients of the largest percent of tax cuts (Sherman and Stone 2010: Ahn 2007: 64).

Here are some numbers to display this staggering social inequality. Wealth held by the richest one percent in this country has exponentially increased since the 1970s while thirteen percent of the population is living in abject poverty (Arnove and Pinede 2007: 395); from 1979 to 2007, the income of the top one percent has increased by 281% while the bottom one-fifth have seen a 16% increase (Sherman and Stone 2010). “As of 2010, the top 1% of households (the upper class) owned 35.4% of all privately held wealth, and the next 19% (the managerial, professional, and small business stratum) had 53.5%, which means that just 20% of the people owned a remarkable 89%, leaving only 11% of the wealth for the bottom 80% (wage and salary workers)” (Domhoff 2013: 2). In 2011, the average poverty rate was 15% of the population, or around 46 million people (US Census Bureau, Poverty 2012).

The process of devolution is characterized by the collective efforts of political and financial elites to transfer the responsibilities of the federal programs down to state and local levels or in the hands of the free private market (Alexander, Nank and Stiver 1999: 452). One of the principal ideologies that propelled the devolution process was the notion that social programs ran by the federal government was expensive and unproductive. Therefore, these neoliberal reforms not only obstructed the regulatory

powers of the federal government in the free market, but also eroded the federal social welfare programs instituted during the Great Depression as a rudimentary guarantee of basic survival for the poor. The proponents of welfare reform blamed the public service programs and its recipients for their own economic marginality, and maintained that “the private sector should bear the burden of employing the welfare recipients” (Wolch 1999: 28). The political Left has also embraced these neoliberal reforms, passing bills that made eligibility more difficult by focusing on those who were considered as most employable and programs that offered less aid in cash (Centeno and Cohen 2012: 6).

A profound neoliberal policy that eviscerated welfare under the guise of reform was the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The proponents behind this policy asserted that the welfare system should no longer be under the directive of the federal government but be based on the capitalist tenets of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency (Alfred and Chlup 2009). Through emphasizing neoliberal constructions such as “choice” and “responsibility”, these policy makers argued that poverty cannot be fixed by government “handouts.” Instead, they asserted that poverty can only be eradicated through the participation of those on welfare in the private market as “productive” workers (Garland 2001). This ideological shift signified the notion that people who were on welfare should no longer be reliant on the government, but instead seek out jobs when there were practically none to be had.

The most substantial adjustment that the PRWOR Act had on the welfare state was the establishment of a five-year lifetime limit on receiving federal welfare, which forced the recipients to partake in the job market as quickly as possible even if they did not have the ability to do so (Alfred and Chlup 2009). The main flaw of this new

arrangement was that the private sector did not take on the burden by employing the welfare recipients as promised, and those who were “lucky enough” to receive jobs toiled in the bottom rung of the stratified economic ladder working for minimum wages that barely kept them above poverty level. Even though there was no overabundance of jobs in the market for the recipient of welfare, the ideological pushing that it was the personal responsibility of the recipient negatively transformed the way the public viewed those on welfare as “lazy” that were living off the contributions of others. This regressive policy also had an immense racial impact, since people of color recipients of welfare were less likely to be employed in the capitalist market and thus more quickly used up their five years of welfare services than their white counterparts (Alfred and Chlup 2009).

Furthermore, the proponents of neoliberalism pompously assert that everyone in society participates in the private job market with “equal opportunity for success.” Under this philosophy, those who fail to get ahead are not inhibited by institutionalized systematic inequities, but due to their individual laziness and ignorance. This takes away from deconstructing the structural problems of society that hinders people from moving up and instead validates the system for helping very few succeed. The system is skewed to favor those at the top of the pyramid that only very few people at the bottom actually experience any form of upward mobility in their lifetime. In fact, many people either stay in their current position or actually fall behind to the bottom of the pyramid (Kivel 2007: 140). Also, within capitalism, equal opportunity for some inevitably implies the exploitation of others (Kivel 2007: 141). Therefore, it is not merely enough to fight for equal playing field for all, but in order to foster social change, social justice movement must focus on a simultaneous struggle for redistribution of wealth and power while

pushing to end specific kinds of discrimination, marginalization and violence.

Even with the devolution policies resolutely locked in place, the federal government's budget have not shrunk, especially over the institutions of mass punishment such as prisons, police, courts and the military. These punitive institutions have unremittingly expanded while remaining under the control of the federal government (Gilmore 2007: 43). The modalities of punishment have become a billion dollar industry in which criminalizing those who dissent or deviate from the capitalist market has become its primary goal. If people do not work or are houseless, they are criminalized virtually just for existing. The persistent expansion of these modalities of mass punishment have become naturalized in our society, as there is almost an unopposed acceptance that these institutions are not social constructions but extensions of “human nature” that has always existed in society (Gilmore 2007: 43). It is indeed difficult to imagine a world without police, jails or the military.

Currently, the dominant paradigm of neoliberalism and its austerity programs continue to generate disaster in the lives of those who have been criminalized, marginalized and disenfranchised in capitalist society. The policy reforms pushed by proponents of neoliberalism have accelerated the imbalanced dissemination of wealth. This process of devolution has disproportionately impacted the working class, as the erosion of federal welfare programs, lack of jobs, and rising costs for commodities and housing has constructed an economic and social arrangement in which a majority of the people cannot experience or even imagine upward mobility (Giroux 2005: 8).

Foundations: Philanthropy or Elite Manipulation?

This section explores the role that foundations have played in the realm of the

social justice sector. The establishment of foundations proliferated during the early 1900s, as newly-wealthy robber baron capitalists sought ways to safeguard their millions of dollars of earnings from taxation (Smith 2007: 4). Essentially, the foremost reason that the elite business sector formed foundations was to shelter their wealth under the guise of benevolent philanthropy (Ahn 2007: 64). The influence of these foundations waned during the Great Depression, as the New Deal programs of the federal government took control over the practice of providing social services for the widespread suffering of the public through welfare programs and various safety-nets for the poor.

Yet, after World War II, the foundations recaptured their eminence, this time not only concentrating on altruistic charity, but also “to engineer social change and shape the development of social justice movements” (Smith 2007: 5). With the formation of the Donee Group in 1974, the progressive philanthropy established itself as a substantial source of funding for social justice organizations (King and Osayande 2007: 79). The backing of progressive social movements through philanthropy should be looked at as a respectable and indispensable endeavor since movements do need money to sustain themselves and their organizations. But through selectively funding the moderate aspects of the social justice movement while sheltering their wealth from taxes, these foundations serve as just another channel for the elite to preserve their social, political and economic power (Ahn 2007: 73).

One of the conspicuous problems with the foundation structures is that they predominantly exist as a tax shelter for the wealthy since charitable donations provide a substitute from paying high estate taxes (Ahn 2007: 65). This is taking money away from the public, since the dollars that would have been public funds are instead allocated and

held by the foundations (Ahn 2007: 65). For example, even though the current tax laws mandate that a person who passes away with over two million dollars in assets must pay fifty percent of that to taxes, the financial elites can avoid it by creating their own foundation. So instead of the public receiving half of the assets to be redistributed towards public good, the money stays within the hands of the elite foundation. Since the tax law requires the foundations to give only five percent of their taxable assets in charitable donations, the foundations save a lot of money for the rich while taking away what potentially could have been augmenting the public sector (Ahn 2007: 66). The foundation money is actually public money that has been appropriated through this loophole to allow the elites to keep their wealth.

Also, the main ideology that the foundations operate under is based on the inherently flawed idea that poverty is caused by scarcity rather than inequality. Embracing of this faulty logic has created situation in which top-to-bottom charity is seen as a noble deed that the rich should fulfill without examining how this very wealth was created, appropriated, accumulated and distributed (Ahn 2007: 63-64). These foundations, whether they have vast endowments or not, are nevertheless based on the paternalistic notion that as donors, they should be the controllers of social justice struggles and the potential sites of resistance (Smith 2007: 9). Yet, their inherent structures stand opposed to the horizontal concepts of many social movements: the foundations are undemocratic, hierarchical and lack transparency, since they are “governed by a handful of very wealthy people who are affiliated with the foundation by family or business ties” (Ahn 2007: 64).

Foundation board members and staff are also unequivocal representations of

capitalist domination (Ahn 2007: 66). The majority of them are elite white males who have historically reaped benefits from the current social and economic order (Ahn 2007: 66). Predictably, the foundation structure is hardly an exemplification of the American population, as the positions at the top are occupied by bankers, lawyers and administrators and executives of universities and businesses instead of members of the middle-class or working-class. Although those who attain leadership positions within foundations have become more diverse in terms of race and gender, but the people-of-color or women who have achieved high-ranking positions are not the organizers with radical politics that threaten the maintenance of the current global structure (Arnové and Pinede 2007: 417).

Many of the projects that these foundations have championed for has had a tremendously negative impact on receiving societies and the environment. A significant example their failed programs occurred during the 1940s and 50s, as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundation championed programs on eradicating global starvation through transferring Western agricultural techniques to the “underdeveloped” parts of the world. While this was supposed to increase food production, the methods of monocropping and heavy usage of pesticides and nutrients have instead led to permanent transformation of the way local agriculture was done in those parts of the world through erosion of the natural soil and loss of socialist policies of land distribution (Ahn 2007: 71). Furthermore, this project was also enshrouded the motivation of the elites to curb population growth and to crush the growing radical insurgency in the Global South (Ahn 2007: 71).

Under these foundations' guidance, various governments of the Global South

adopted food programs based in capitalist ideas of private land ownership, which in many instances replaced the socialist policies of agrarian land reforms that had been put in place. Since these changes created instability and thus possible scenarios of popular uprising due to shortage of food, their investment in combating food shortage also worked as a “tool to suppress a revolt” (Ahn 2007: 71). Although it was masked under the guise of humanitarian effort, the elites were just as concerned with the geopolitics to control the populace from rising up and embracing communist ideologies (Ahn 2007: 71). These foundations stabilized the political system of these countries under the guise of ending famine and hunger (Ahn 2007: 72).

The chief critique of the foundation culture is that since the donors behind these foundations have derived their profit and power through capitalism, they are content with reproducing the existing social structure rather than alter it (Smith 2007; 4; Fisher 1980: 233). Although the success of the progressive philanthropy should be welcomed by social justice organizations, the benefits have not trickled down to organizations seeking radical social change. Functioning as its own self-filtering mechanism (Fisher 1980: 254), the foundations are able to decide on what elements of activism they want to fund. Arnove points out that these foundations, with their profits generated from the dominant social system, “determine what issues merit attention, who will study these issues, which results are disseminated, and what recommendations will be formed into social policy. These decisions are relegated to those who do not conceive of changing the overall structure of the neoliberal capitalist state since they derive their profit and power from the existence and reproduction of the status quo” (Arnove and Pinede 2007: 422).

Non-Profit Organizations: Brief History

The United States has a long history of public-serving voluntary organizations (Arnsberger, et al 2008: 105). These institutions were intended to serve the needs of the public, comprised of institutions such as schools, hospitals, fire departments and churches (Arnsberger, et al 2008: 105). Around the end of the 19th century, private philanthropy arose as a significant source of funding to this public service sector (Arnsberger, et al 2008: 105). These philanthropists utilized charitable trusts in order to direct their wealth into curing social ills that they deemed as potential threats to the maintenance of capitalism: in other words, these organizations existed to “.... control unruly urban environments and to define social boundaries” (Dimaggio and Anheier 1990: 141).

The first tax-exempt status given to charitable organization was through the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act of 1894. The Revenue Act of 1904 strengthened and expanded the status, but declaring that these charitable organizations also must be nonprofit (Arnsberger, et al. 2008: 107). The Revenue Act of 1917 was significant because it set the precedent which allowed individual tax deduction for any donations given to tax-exempt charitable organizations (Arnsberger, et al 2008: 107). In 1936, corporations were also allowed to enjoy the same tax deduction for their charitable donations (Arnsberger, et al 2008: 107). The Tax Reform Act of 1969 expanded the rules regarding private foundations and tax-exempt entities. The act defined private foundations for tax purposes and put forth mandates that required them to pay a minimum amount per year in charitable donations (Arnsberger, et al 2008: 108).

A majority of nonprofit organizations fall under the section 501(c) 3 or the smaller 501(c) 4 of the Internal Revenue Code; the 501(c) 3 include most “nonprofit hospitals, cultural organizations, traditional charities, schools, daycare centers among other things”

while the 501(c) 4 are civic leagues and social welfare groups who are barred from tax-deductible donations but have more freedom to participate in the political spectrum (Dimaggio & Anheier 1990). In 2005, there were over 800,000 nonprofit organizations operating in the United States (Smith 2007: 7). These nonprofit organizations are legally barred from distributing any of their net income for personal gain or dividends and must serve one of the broad purposes defined by the state (Dimaggio & Anheier 1990: 138). 501c3 organizations are also prohibited from endorsing any political candidates for public office or participate or donate to a political campaign for a specific candidate.

The steps to incorporate an organization into a 501c3 status are bureaucratically exhaustive, as overwhelming amounts of administrative steps and documents are required by the state and the funders throughout the entire process. For example, Perez laments that the steps to incorporate the organization Sisters in Portland Impacting Real Issues Together (SPIRIT) into a 501c3 and securing foundation money “was more taxing and exhausting than confronting any institution to fight for a policy change” (Perez 2007: 93). Similar to the contradictions that I felt as a “organizer” who spent more time in the office filling out grant proposals, activists in the nonprofit sector must locate a balance between foundation fundraising and community organizing that demand very different sets of skills (Perez 2007: 94).

Before the 1960s, most activists struggling for social change were not employed by 501c3 nonprofits. In fact, many of them performed unpaid work in “neighborhood associations, unions, church groups, and cultural and other civic organizations” (Kivel 2007: 138; Thunder Hawk 2007). For the next couple decades, these diverse organizations mobilized mass social movements that ruptured the social core and

threatened the status quo; the elites needed to formulate a response to suppress their mounting discontentment. In other words, when the Black, Native Americans and other people of color liberation movements mobilized and challenged the dominance of the white elite class, “a new coalition of owning-class white philanthropists, lawmakers, state bureaucrats, local and federal police, and ordinary white civilians scrambled to restore the coherence and stability of white civil society...” (Rodriguez 2007: 24).

The policy makers concluded that in order to assuage and diminish the fervor of dissent that endangered their positions of power, the foundations should fund the moderate elements of these movements in order to gain their cooperation and to provide services to these communities to forestall more protests, sit-ins, marches and demonstrations (Kivel 2007: 138; King and Osayande 2007). Therefore, the foundations concentrated their funding efforts towards sustaining moderate service based organizations in order to coopt and diffuse the radical ideologies and trajectories of these escalating movements (Kivel 2007: 138). The selective funding concentrated towards social service organization has depoliticized the social justice sector from focusing on radical social change. Even though it is necessary for social service nonprofit organizations to proliferate during this time of great need, its dominance of the social justice field has inadvertently augmented the nonprofit industrial complex and its manifestations (Kivel 2007: 130).

CHAPTER 4: NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, THE GRAVEYARD OF SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

The nonprofit industrial complex is the symbiotic relationship between the nonprofit organizations with state-given 501(c) (3) status and the ruling elite based foundations that fund these organizations in order to manage, control and even derail the social justice sector. The NPIC has successfully diverted the attention of the working class and activists away from focusing on those in power as the source of inequality while actively managing and controlling their means to survive and sustain (Kivel 2007: 133). The NPIC allows the elites to monitor and shape the potential sites of resistance to keep them safe for capitalism, divert public money into the private hands of foundations, encourage organizations to model themselves after the capitalist structures instead of challenging them, mask the exploitative conditions that the elites derive their profit through philanthropy, and redirect the energy and focus of activists into career-based organizing and away from mass mobilization.

With shrinking federal funding and expanding needs for social services due to neoliberal policies that devolved federal programs and augmented the wealth gap, 501(c)(3) organizations have become ever-more dependent on private foundation grants to sustain their increasing amount of work. The foundations have assets over \$500 billion and donate around \$30 billion annually to various nonprofits (Smith 2007: 6). The majority of their funding are allocated to think-tanks, museums, operas, theater, art galleries, elite universities and private hospitals while less than two percent of the total specifically goes to funding civil rights and social action (Ahn 2007: 68). Even with the gutting of the federal welfare state, federal and state government contracts are still

channeled into these organizations to carry out social and public services in healthcare, education, housing, and jobs (Kivel 2007: 138). In order receive grants and essentially do business with the government and foundations, social justice organizations must formally incorporate to nonprofit status through the IRS (Gilmore 2007: 45, Edwards and McCarthy 2007: 121).

The growing dependence on foundation money has led to even larger proliferation of organizations incorporating to 501(c) (3) status. This IRS-given status benefits the foundations since the organizations are able to declare their receipts as tax-exempt and the contributions from the donors as tax-deductible (Smith 2007: 6). Furthermore, it gives the foundations full control over the organizations, as they are able to dictate the terms under which the money would be charitably “invested.” Within the current “partnership model,” the nonprofit sector is at the center of the “corporatist relations between state and capital” (Wolch 1990: 26). Not all partners in this relationship have equal power, as the nonprofit organizations fully depend on the funders to sustain themselves (Wolch 1990: 26). So, while the 501c3 status provides organizations with resources to sustain themselves and their work, it also mandates them to be accountable to the conditions of the funding. So, the critical issue with the NPIC is that activists have become more accountable to the funders and their moderate visions instead of working horizontally with the members of the impacted communities to create programs and build movements that truly meets their needs through transformative actions towards radical social change.

Ideological Marriage of Neoliberalism and the NPIC

Within the last couple decades, the political Right has been efficaciously utilizing

conservative foundations to move the nations' political ideology and policy towards the entrenchment of neoliberalism (Ahn 2007: 68; Kivel 2007: 138). The Right-wing has emerged as the victors in the contested landscape of framing ideologies, as the conservative foundations have focused on funding organizations and think-tanks that manufactured plans for seizing political and economic power. The leading conservative think-tank Heritage Foundation have used their monies to fund research for generating conservative ideologies as well as getting more of their members on television to push their agenda and shape the debate in both the public and private sphere (Ahn 2007: 70). Their liberal counterparts have lacked the strategic vision of the conservative foundations, choosing to fund project-specific and service-based organizations instead of advocating for policy change or generating counter-ideologies against the conservative lash.

The conservative foundations provide endowments for local advocates, researchers and institutions to generate conservative ideologies and provide operational support for these groups to ensure their long-term sustainability (Ahn 2007: 69). The Right-wing foundations have poured in hundreds of millions of dollars through granting conservative projects in order to shape the public debates to revolve around neoliberal ideologies such as downsizing federal government, laissez-faire economics, and individual property rights (Ahn 2007: 68-69). Through this investment, they have successfully instilled policies to lower taxes for the wealthy, dismantled the social welfare state, augmented the prison-industrial complex and aggressively pushed for the privatization of remaining social safety nets such as Medicare and Social Security.

Furthermore, philanthropic foundations have played a substantial role of

legitimizing the neoliberal claim of “individual differences”, the idea that certain individuals are innately superior or inferior compared to others (Marks 1980: 88). This has become the main justification given for the lack of upward mobility for the majority of the workers. This concept arose as the ever-widening gap between the workers and owners became too paradoxical, and thus the widely-accepted notion of the “American Dream” based on protestant work ethic no longer appeased them. In order to justify the notion of individual differences, the foundations funded academic research and think-tanks to generate and display the validity of its claims (Marks 1980: 89). This notion of individual differences echoed the ideologies that benefitted the dominant elites, as it functioned as a powerful “rationale and legitimization of industrial capitalism” (Marks 1980: 89).

The construction of “individual differences” has influenced the way structural and social issues are now understood as individual cases. A powerful illustration of this process is how the political elites, academics, foundations and nonprofits have effectively transformed the scope of the women's antiviolence movement from popular education and organizing into mere therapeutic social services (Durazo 2007: 117). State ideological apparatuses have successfully re-presented what should be considered a social ill of violence on women into a “behavioral, criminal, and medical phenomenon, rather than a social justice issue” (Durazo 2007: 117). By framing violence on women as a criminal activity, the state was able to criminalize individual perpetrators as the sole responsible party of violence while feigning to be ally to victims of violence by punishing these perpetrators (Durazo 2007: 118).

Under the NPIC, most of the intervention or prevention projects have become

much more reliant on therapy and the criminal justice system, which are individualized forms of solutions that “fails to address and combat the social organization of violence against women” (Durazo 2007: 117). Furthermore, focusing on individual retribution for committing violence has augmented the intensification of the neoliberal manifestation of the prison-industrial-complex, as anyone who was deemed a perpetrator of violence against women was criminalized and jailed even though studies have shown that incarceration is not a good deterrent and actually has a negative effect on people-of-color communities (Durazo 2007: 118). The criminalization policy to combat violence against women have led to a passive strategy of “call the cops” instead of formulating sustainable solutions to domestic violence (Durazo 2007: 119).

Women seeking help are now merely seen as clients to the social services sector, nothing more than individuals needing protection from the violent perpetrators so that they can once again re-assimilate back into the system. Yet, Pence (2001) found that the category of “battered women” becomes institutionalized into “abstracted and generalized forms of case management which are not required to accurately reflect a women’s experience or account for her safety” (p. 226: quoted in Naples 2013: 137). Nevertheless, the organizations measure their levels of success on the numbers of women they served in assisting them to get out of the violent relationship and move forward with their lives (Kivel 2007: 143). The reports of success to the funders are inundated with stories of how “various communities of women were provided better services and how batterers were either locked up or transformed” (Kivel 2007: 143).

As activists, instead of merely providing services and calling the cops on batterers, they must empower women to organize on their own behalf to create a network

for information and to mobilize resources for one another. They must go to the roots of the problem, that battered women are caught in the cycle of violence that is perpetuated through “systematic exploitation, disempowerment and isolation” (Kivel 2007: 143). In other words, organizers must expose and deconstruct these inherent violent tendencies of the system and how it is reproduced and perpetuated in the lives of these women through the systems of economic inequality, colonization and heteropatriarchy. Lack of community response to violence, dearth of well-paying jobs, daycare and housing and isolation from other women are the systematic reasons that force many women to stay in violent relationships. Therefore, measure of success of our organizing effort should focus on the efficacy of leadership development programs and the level of community response and mutual aid towards domestic violence (Kivel 2007: 144). The true victory against violence against women will be about how the women became leaders in these organizations to end the perpetuation of both individual and state-sanctioned violence.

Cooptation of Potentially Radical Movements to Protect Elite Control

Through the NPIC, the ruling class has manufactured a buffer zone between themselves and the majority of the population (Kivel 2007: 134). The “buffer zone” consists of legal, educational and professional institutions that the elites employ to “carry out the agenda of the ruling class without requiring ruling-class presence or visibility” (Kivel 2007: 134). The buffer zone's fundamental purpose is to “take care” of the people at the bottom of stratified society through managing the distribution of their limited resources and providing basic survival services (Kivel 2007: 134). Many potentially radical movements pursuing structural social change were coopted through the manipulative strategy of permitting the few leaders or organizations within these

movements into the buffer zone and providing them with jobs and positions that did not pose a direct threat to overall functions of capitalism.

A historical example of how the NPIC and its buffer zone depoliticized the radical elements of a movement to protect capitalism and their control of society was displayed through the cooptation process of the black power movement of the 1960s by corporate elites and their foundations (Allen 1990). Cooptation is a process in which the members of the dominant system “assimilate militant leaders and militant rhetoric while subtly transforming the militants’ program for social change into a program which in essence buttresses the status quo” (Allen 1990: 17). In order to take control of the black power movement that threatened the status quo with their rising tide of revolutionary rhetoric founded on the principles of redistribution of wealth, elite corporate conglomerates such as the Ford Foundation began to pander to the aspirations of the more moderate black leaders as a way to counter, coopt and ultimately squash the radical ideologies pushed by the more militant organizations within the movement (Allen 1990: 49).

Beginning in 1966, the capitalist elites began to focus on instilling these co-optive elements in the black power movement, as the Harlem school strikes in New York City poignantly displayed the power of the black community to activate a mass movement while the Black Panther Party for Self-defense was forming a revolutionary party out of Oakland California. It was not the threat of the school system falling apart or black youths with guns facing off the oppressive police force; the threat they perceived to be dangerous was the rising consciousness of self-determination that was awakening the most disenfranchised and militant members of the black community towards a macro critique of the capitalist system. The following year of 1967 was also noteworthy due to

the occurrence of unparalleled urban revolts in black communities (Allen 1990: 128). These urban uprisings made it clear to the powers that be that certain overtly racist and classist elements within the capitalist model need to be reformed in order for capitalism and their control of the economy to be maintained.

Also in 1966, the Ford Foundation became heavily involved in almost all major protest black groups, including powerful organizations such as Congress of Racial Equality, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League (Allen 1990: 73). By operating both directly and covertly amongst those in leadership positions, the foundation's goal was to “channel and control the black liberation movement and forestall future urban revolts” (Allen 1990: 73). They stressed that in order to preserve the status quo, certain leaders of the black power movement must be brought into the mainstream since they were rejecting their status as a docile group on the periphery of the economy (Allen 1990: 212). So, the response of the elites towards the rising consciousness of the black movement was to create class of black capitalists and managers who would in turn instill the capitalist values as a living proof that anyone can in fact assimilate to the system if they worked towards it (Allen 1990: 212).

The formation of the National Urban Coalition in 1967, which included 1200 business, labor, religious, civil rights and government leaders, marked the shift in which the business corporate interest became the key stakeholders in responding to the “urban crisis and the race problem” (Allen 1990: 215-216). Their initial response to these uprisings was to recommend the welfare state model reforms such as expanding job opportunities and enforcing civil rights laws (Allen 1990: 195). So, certain black leaders

received jobs in middle management, academia, corporations and non-profits, which created a small Black middle-class (Kivel 2007). In other words, in order to quell the revolutionary fervor growing in many black communities, concessions were made through providing certain leaders of the movement with economic and political power (Allen 1990: 139). The unequal power relations embedded in capitalism stayed intact, but the rise of few prominent black leaders into capitalist positions of power gave the illusion to rest of the black community that real progress was being made. Even though the federal programs for the black communities in the 1960s did not create any structural changes, the positive publicity that these programs received appeased those who had sympathized with urban blacks (Piven and Cloward 1977: 31).

So, even though the majority of black communities remained at the lower levels of stratified society, the emergence of few high-profile wealthy black served as the justification that everyone is provided with equal opportunity at upward mobility as long as they worked hard and followed the rules. This also cemented the notion that people who did not find success in capitalism should be condemning themselves and not the restrictive and unequal system. For the elites, this was seen as a success, as the new capitalist black leaders functioned as living proof for the rest of the population that the American Dream was still a reality while the modalities of state-sanctioned violence such as assassination and false imprisonment practically crushed the resistant spirit of the militant aspects of the movement. While the black power movement dismantled the overt Jim Crow segregation through political reform, forms of institutionalized racism remained and is still prevalent in society while economic redistribution to black communities have been largely unfulfilled.

Perhaps the most significant benefit for the elites was that by making these small concessions to the leaders and organizations who were considered to be more “reasonable”, they were able to marginalize the more militant radicals as “extremists” while pacifying the anger and frustrations of “ghetto youth” (Allen 1990: 139). The proliferation of modalities of punishment functioned to protect the “white national body from the allegedly imminent aggressions and violations of its racial Others (Rodriguez 2007: 25). The State created coercive programs such as COINTELPRO to surveillance and punish any remnants of the revolutionary aspects of the movement. The State was able to manufacture hysteria around the boogeymen of “domestic threats,” which generated a popular consensus around the supposed need for paramilitary policing towards “dangerous” communities and organizations (Rodriguez 2007: 25). The system has continued to preserve this “popular consensus” through its relationship with the NPIC, which has subverted potential sites of revolutionary resistance into a passive space that upholds the status quo.

Today, things have become even harder for radical organizations from people-of-color communities to mobilize for social change. Due to the reification of the law and order State, if radical activists from people-of-color communities criticize modalities of state-sanctioned violence such as police brutality or colonialism, their movements are heavily criminalized as threats to the system that must to be eradicated for public safety. Also, due to the restrictive policies that prohibit mass public gatherings through imposing harsher tax laws on community-based organizations and the repressive laws that denotes a certain number of people (of color) congregated together in public space as a “gang,” the possibilities of organizing a mass movement in public space has become severely

constrained (Rodriguez 26). Therefore, the nonprofit sectors have become the only acceptable space where activists can “organize” without the fear of being criminalized. Due to the potential of criminalization and lack of funding for radical projects, political resistance from communities of color have become predominantly reformist nonprofit organizations that reproduce the buffer zone and do not pose a direct challenge to the system.

From Social Change to Social Service

During the Reagan-era of the 1980s, the neoliberal policy-makers effectively endorsed and instilled the mantra that the capacity of the federal government to influence economic and social sectors must become limited. They pointed to the economic downturn as proof that the “too big” federal government was a hindrance to economic and social development. Massive cutbacks to the social welfare state followed, and coupled with the growing unequal distribution of wealth and resources in society, the need for public welfare grew even larger and became more pressing. The nonprofit organizations were touted as the low-cost alternative to “big government,” and would admirably be able to fill in the gaps where the federal government cut back from (Alexander, Nank and Stivers 1999: 455). Preaching the private market concepts of efficiency and accountability, the antistate state actors provided legitimization to the nonprofit sector (Gilmore 2007).

Yet, with the budget cuts to state-based social services and government funded projects, nonprofit sector became ever-more dependent on private money to continue providing services to the growing numbers of marginalized people under neoliberalism (Arnové and Pinede 2007: 395). Even though these foundations seemed to provide more

flexibility compared to the strictly bureaucratized state funding, the reality is that these foundations exist to reproduce the current unequal power structure of society through merely giving small sum of their enormous profits derived from exploitation under the pretense of benevolent philanthropy. Therefore, in order to maintain control over the social justice sector, these foundations fund specific short-term social service projects rather than long-term social change programs that defang the movements of their radical potential.

Under this model of social justice organizing, the nonprofit organizations have become almost completely reliant on private foundation monies to combat the ever-growing needs of those who were being left out due to neoliberal policies that have exacerbated the unequal distribution of wealth while slashing the welfare safety nets. In order to meet this increasing demand for their services, various non-profits were forced to seek out even more funding from the foundations, leading them to spend inordinate amounts of time on writing proposals, meeting foundation guidelines, or soliciting private donations by forming relationships with individual elites (Kivel 2007: 139). These service-based nonprofit organizations have turned into a shadow state (Gilmore 2007), filling in the gaps in social services that have historically been subsidized through the state. The shadow state is a term that refers to the expansion of the nonprofit sector into the realms of direct social services that the New Deal/Great Society federal agencies once provided (Wolch 1999, Gilmore 2007: 45).

The dependence of the social justice sector to foundation funding have eliminated potential sites of radical social change and turned them into organizations that merely ameliorate the problems created by capitalism through providing individual social

services. In other words, the foundations' control of resources have given them the power to dictate which organizations are funded, essentially attaining full control over what social problem warrants attention and what types of response. Working under the strains of foundation funded projects, it becomes contradictory for these organizations to pose a direct challenge to the capitalist state. So, the majority of the organizations that unswervingly critique the neoliberal state or challenge the inequality of wealth and power distribution are unable to compete for funding unless they radically transform their own visions to ones that befit the ideological demands of the funders.

While service is honorable work that has good intentions, the work itself masks the unequal distribution of money, goods and other valuable resources. For example, when temporary shelters are propped up in place of permanent housing or free clinics as substitutes for universal health care system, the focus of these projects are eroded from challenging the status quo into “temporary provision of social services to keep people alive” (Kivel 2007: 135). Even the service sector of the nonprofits have begun to suffer under the NPIC as “the shift from service delivery to increasing emphasis on management concerns such as need documentation, fund-raising, and outcome measurement makes the less tangible civic dimensions of nonprofit organizational life increasingly tenuous” (Alexander, Nank and Stivers 1999: 462). Instead of being able to make autonomous decisions based on the needs of those they serve, these organization are forced to develop their programs based on the demands and restrictions of the funders (Alexander, Nank and Stivers 1999: 462). Therefore, this overreliance on private funders and foundation and government grants has transformed the focus of the organizations from the very communities to the reformist and moderate goals of the

foundations.

Non-Profit Structures Modeled After Tenets of Capitalism

The problem with the nonprofit industrial complex is more than just the dependency on foundation grants, but how the 501(c)(3) non-profits are forced to adapt to the capitalist model of business culture that demands “professional businesslike premises and practices” (Perez 2007: 95). The driving ideology behind this transformation are grounded on the fundamental tenets of neoliberalism, that the private market is efficient, fair and unfettered since everyone has the same access to participate in it and the best organizations will rise to the top. Due to the bureaucratization and professionalization of the work culture that is necessitated for incorporation to nonprofit status, instead of organizers, community members and leaders, there are now executive directors, project directors, board members, receptionists and clients.

The funding process itself is emulated after the for-profit business model, as the foundations analyze their charitable donations in similar fashion as business investments. Foundations want “packaging and production of success stories, measurable outcomes and the use of infrastructure and capacity-building systems” (Perez 2007: 92). This is no different from a private market model, as these nonprofit organizations are effectually competing to sell their packaged productions to the foundations. The organization that receives the funding must provide short-term reports to the funders to ensure that their stated project goals are being met, which are displayed through “concrete” returns to show that they are good for the foundations’ “investments.” This current structure moves the organizers away from their communities, forcing them concentrate the majority of their energies towards demonstrating outcomes that can be visually sold to the funders

through tables, charts and numbers (Perez 2007: 93). Success is therefore quantified, measured in numbers such as how many clients received their services in the last month and how many people showed up to a rally.

The dependence on foundation grants has created a landscape of rivalry for limited funding amongst organizations that should be mobilizing together (Alexander, Nank and Stiver 1999: 453). This practice is unsustainable for cultivating mass mobilization, since there is no incentive for competing organizations to collaborate and share strategies. This “movement market” (Perez 2007: 92) pushes organizations working on similar issues to compete instead of uniting towards a movement-building culture in which activists can share their successes and failures openly to forge together a blueprint for organizing effectively around their issues. Furthermore, since these organizations only promote their successful strategies and accomplishments in order to receive or renew their grants, movements become stuck repeating the same tactics and strategies that were deemed as success.

The focus of nonprofits has become more specialized under the control of the NPIC. Since these organizations compete for limited funding, instead of organizing for the general welfare of the entire community, they must search for a specialized niche project to stand out amongst the competition. For example, many ethnic-based 501(c) (3) immigrant rights organizations provide similar services for their specific ethnic communities, such as language translation and English classes: due to this, there is very little interaction between immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds, thus making the potential for mass mobilization less likely. Also, as the nonprofits attempt to adapt to the market strategies demanded by the funders, they end up privileging narrower and short-

term vision of individual needs over community needs (Alexander, Nank and Stiver 1999: 460). Bounded by quarterly or yearly grant cycles, visions of long-term commitment to organizing are disregarded for quick measurable goals that can be sold to the funders.

Due to the business-like structure, it is now more important for nonprofits to hire people with management skills as opposed to those who possess community organizing skills that can foster community leadership and empowerment. The staffing process is skewed towards the elite, preferring to hire those with college degrees instead of someone who have insider position and can firsthand delineate the needs of their communities. This model has also reproduced hierarchical positions within these organizations that mirror the very oppressive structures that social justice movements are supposed to be challenging. By creating specific positions of hierarchy in the organizations, the low-level organizers are more accountable to their bosses instead of the community members that they are supposed to support. This corporate business-like atmosphere of the nonprofits has fostered feelings of disillusionment, burnout or a mentality of doing just enough to get paid (Kivel 2007: 139).

Masking the Exploitation of Capitalist Profit with Philanthropy

Under the NPIC, the wealth that foundations have exploited from the working class are now being recycled into charity programs to aid the poor and marginalized. Yet, elite foundations ran by powerful capitalists such as the Rockefellers and Fords have accumulated their wealth through the historical process of exploitation of working class communities and nation-states. For these foundations to take that wealth and use it to ameliorate the problems of capitalism through various nonprofits represents another cycle

of oppression for the oppressed. So, within the current structure, any critique of the unequal concentration of wealth or demand for redistribution of wealth is unimaginable since the winners of capitalism are once again entrusted with the resources that they exploited from the working class. Through this process of philanthropy, the elites are able to hide the historical exploitation under the facade of benevolent charity.

Within the current foundation culture, “white people and white institution continue to control the wealth gained through the exploitation of wealth and resources” (King and Osayande 2007: 80). From a critical race perspective, one can argue that the Left progressive philanthropy “... protects white wealth and undermines the work of oppressed communities of color” (King and Osayande 2007: 80). The system that places wealthy white males who have benefited from the present model of capitalist inequality at the helm of these foundations and organizations is directly opposed to the aspirations of historically exploited people-of-color communities demanding economic redistribution of wealth and power. This is why in the year 2002, “only 1.9 percent of all grant dollars went to African-Americans, 1.1 percent for Latina/os...” (Ahn 2007: 68). This implies that the majority white elites are funding mostly white organizations; this process once again keeps the wealth away from people-of-color organizations seeking redistribution and structural changes to the overall system (King and Osayande 2007: 81). If these foundations endow grants to people-of-color organizations, they specifically fund ones that do not challenge the modalities of capitalism while hiding the roots of exploitation and where the wealth actually came from. King and Osayande (2007) argue that “if Black organizations write anything to a foundation or a corporation, it should be demands for reparations--- not proposals requesting money” (87).

Routinization of Activists

The cooptive elements of the NPIC have fostered immensely deleterious influences on the emerging leaders within marginalized communities. As new leaders arising from oppressed communities are provided with jobs in nonprofits, their interests in maintaining their jobs become aligned with maintaining the overall system (Kivel 2007: 139). These jobs are inherently dependent on elite foundations, therefore their roles in these nonprofit organizations becomes to “suppress potential opposition from community members--- no matter how illogical, exploitative, and unjust the system is” (Kivel 2007: 139). Therefore, these jobs end up reproducing the inequalities of wealth and power distribution in society as something natural and inevitable (Kivel 2007: 139). The hiring of the community leaders into positions of paid administrative jobs has effectively separated the organizers from their communities while forcing them to be accountable to the demands of the funders (Kivel 2007: 136). The loss of the potential radical leaders within these communities renders many of them powerless to transform the circumstances which force them to need assistance in the first place. Also, since mass movements and revolutions require millions of people who are committed and not getting paid, attempting to conceive grassroots organizing as a careerist model is unsustainably demanding few people to work full-time to make up for all the work that should be accomplished together with millions of dedicated people.

Concluding Thoughts on the NPIC

The relationship between social justice organizations and foundations is complex and multi-layered to say the least. Reflecting on her struggles with the organization, Perez (2007) asserts that the “nature of non-profit structures, the power and influence of

foundation funding, and the relationship of both to social change organizations present complex and challenging questions for the movement” (91).

Although the neoliberal policies has led to an even more pronounced stratification in society, instead of coming up with more safety-nets, this regressive process has been accompanied by escalation of cuts to social services, education and healthcare (Ahn 2007: 63). The gaps left by the slashing of the public welfare state have been partially filled by various social justice organizations in an attempt to meet the needs of those who have been abandoned. The nonprofits have become the predominant space in which individual-based service programs have flourished (Gilmore 2007: 45). Wolch asserts that the dismantling of the New Deal government agencies and policies has led to the proliferation of what she has termed the shadow state (Wolch 1999). The shadow state fulfills the role of taking up where the government had left off, forcing them to become more dependent on private philanthropy to sustain their work.

Under the NPIC, the funders ultimately determine the trends of social justice through funding organizations that work on issues that they feel is most politically relevant at the time. The abilities of the organization to assess the needs and goals of the impacted community become eroded as they are forced into depoliticizing their visions into digestible products that the grants mandate (Guilloud and Corderly 2007: 108). Movements become corporatized and the idea of community organizing and empowerment becomes a byproduct of the funding itself (Durazo 2007: 117). NPIC forces activists to “spend more time raising money for salaries, sending in reports, and schmoozing with funders”, instead of putting their efforts into community organizing and social change activism (Thunder Hawk 2007: 102). Now, the predominant focus of

nonprofit organizations is on raising money to sustain their organizations and not on unifying their target community to mobilize for social change.

Additionally, through the NPIC, the scope of the issues that these nonprofits work to mitigate have become more specified and narrow: the forced specialization of their everyday activities limits their vision to connect these issues to the larger systemic problems of capitalism. Since the nonprofits are forbidden to advocate for systemic changes and bounded by the narrow focus of their grant contracts, any radical work to challenge the status quo is quickly unfunded and even possibly, legally held responsible (Gilmore 2007: 46). Furthermore, just the sheer process to secure funding for the organization not only takes away valuable time away from organizing in the streets to meetings with funders, the incessant need for funding often requires organizations to take on additional work that does not always align with their priorities (Perez 2007: 92).

The jobs in the NPIC reproduce the status quo by “controlling” those who want to make profound and radical social changes (Kivel 2007: 135). Since the most marginalized groups have historically clamored and struggled together to advance social change, the ruling class necessitates a mechanism of control to maintain the social roles that people are expected to fulfill in their daily lives in the institutions they participate in. So, the NPIC reproduces outdated notion of the American Dream through providing opportunities for a few people in the bottom sector of the economy to move up the ladder (Kivel 2007: 135). The few who make it out of the bottom are propped up and paraded as living proof that the system functions fairly, for as long as one works hard they can get ahead and benefit from their arduous work ethic. Yet, this focus on individual achievement blames others who have been structurally constrained from upward social

mobility as ones that did not work hard enough.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

What is Autoethnography?

For my methodological inquiry, I desire to locate myself reflexively within the project in an autoethnographical manner. I stand with the position that ethnographic research is not an “innocent practice,” since the process of researching and writing enacts and shapes the world that one gazes into (Denzin 2006: 333). The researcher is both imbued with the subjective choice over “who, when, where, why and how” the research process is carried out and given primacy over the critical decision of what is contained or left out in the final textual representations. Therefore, the entire process of being out in the field and writing about one's findings must be interpreted as a contested realm in which one can either challenge or reproduce the dominant paradigm of representation in academia.

Within this complex realm, I agree with the position that the canonical way of doing and writing academic research is “advocating a white, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective which disregards other ways of knowing as invalid and inauthentic” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: 2). Instead, our ethnographic ethics must reflect the postmodern reality that “different kinds of people possess different assumptions about the world—a multitude of ways of speaking, writing, valuing and believing—and that conventional ways of doing and thinking about research were narrow, limiting, and parochial.” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011: 3). It is then the responsibility of us who advocate for social justice through their research to embark on projects that contest the embedded “way of knowing” that privileges “the researcher over the subject, method over subject matter, and maintains commitments to outmoded

conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability” (Denzin 1992: 20 quoted in Spry 2001: 710).

As qualitative researchers, we must transgress the hegemonic boundaries of former indoctrinations that falsely assume academic research needing to be “value-free and neutral,” and instead work to accommodate and reflect on the diverse impacts that their subjectivity has on our projects. This democratic practice subverts the archaic approach of discounting or suppressing the researchers' personal feelings and prejudices and opinions as if they do not exist or impact the research product. In this light, the facade of an objective and detached researcher turns into a fallacy, as we acknowledge that are innumerable ways in which ones personal experiences affect the process of research. Therefore, the antiquated inquiry into the uncovering of “grand theories and master narratives” crumbles into nothing but an illusion, as the outdated concept that “a single standpoint from which a final overriding version of the world can be written” (Smith 1989: p. 58 quoted in Denzin 1997: 55) is supplanted by a position recognizes the impossibility of a singular “Truth” being “out there” to be captured. We instead situate our understanding with the belief that we occupy a postmodern transnational world in which identities and knowledge are relentlessly ruptured, reproduced and negotiated as we navigate the many spaces of power relations.

Autoethnography can be explained as a form of critical ethnography that describes and analyzes (graphy) personal experiences (auto) in order to bring understanding to cultural phenomena (ethno) (Ellis 2004). The method incorporates the basic tenets of autobiography and ethnography: hence, “as a method, it is both a process and a product (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011: 1). I agree with the statement, “... this is

where the strength of qualitative methods resides—is when it articulates how claims matter on the level of the individual, when it shows how the material consequences of discursive systems, legislative policies, and interpersonal interactions happen on individual bodies.” (Ellis 2004).

Autoethnography as a performative method provides an alternative in the practice of academic knowledge creation and diametrically confronts the fictitious dichotomy between the researcher and the researched. It is a method that encourages connection with the readers, replacing the archaic concept of the neutral researcher into a performative and vulnerable one that visibly incorporates their personal standpoints throughout the entire story (Doty 2010: 1948). Instead of privileging the abstract theory and analysis over the embodied self, autoethnography works to “reestablish the intimate connection between our bodily experience in the everyday world and our conceptual life (Michael Jackson 1989: 18 quoted in Conquergood 1991: 181). Reflexively situating oneself in the text becomes an embodied practice, an intensely sensuous way of knowing in which the embodied researcher becomes the instrument of knowledge seeking (Conquergood 1991: 180). Through autoethnography, the self-reflexive critique upon one’s positionality as researcher desires to inspire the readers to critically examine their own standpoints, life experiences and relations with others (Spry 2001: 711).

In this sense, autoethnographical texts must seek verisimilitude, so that the experiences that are being described are believable and lifelike to the readers (Ellis 1999: 674). Through verisimilitude, “the readers come to know some things told, as if he or she had experienced them” (Stake 1994: 240 quoted in Denzin 1997: 10). These stories are not of some people or culture that is “out there” in the world ready to be analyzed and

presented, but they are about ourselves and our relationship with the world around us (Richardson 1999). Therefore, the stories it tells should be generalizable, as the writer must provide opportunities for the reader to “live vicariously” through the text. Even though it is about the perspective of the researcher, the writing should include other characters and must “attempt to reach beyond the self of the writer” (Ellis and Bochner 2006: 437). It is taking the personal to the realms of general as well as entering and documenting the “moment-to-moment, concrete details of life” (Ellis 1999: 671). These experimental writings must be respectable to both literary critics as well as social scientists (Denzin 1997).

Similar to feminist politics that “the personal is political”, the more inward one’s writing turns, the more its universality becomes salient (Richardson 2002: 415). The autoethnographers depart from their personal lives, giving attention to thoughts, feelings and emotions of their physical, mental and sensory experiences. Through writing about a particular life, the research attempts to understand a way of life through placing their “lived experiences within a social and cultural context” (Reed-Danahay 2009). Through this methodology, the reader is invited to respond to the story being told instead of being told what is going on in the story. Therefore, it is not enough to tell personal stories to evoke emotions from the reader, but it must also be a “stimulus for social criticism and social action” (Denzin 1997: 200). The practice of autoethnography becomes more than a platform for speaking truth to power, but is about being dangerous to the institutions of unequal power structures in society by exposing the roots of the social ills that we represent through our research (Madison 2009: 191).

This project is also particularly influenced by Simmel's inquiry into how form

shapes content. The form of autoethnography is nebulous, in which one can incorporate fiction, first-hand storytelling, poetry or theater to shape and produce their content (Richardson 2008). As qualitative researchers, I agree that we must reach for audience beyond the academy and as we move them to change the world towards the one we want to all want to live in. It is an emergent method, one that pushes the researcher to be performative and encourages the readers to action. These stories are grounded on the meanings that the researcher attaches to their experience, and not about accurately portraying the facts of what happened (Ellis 1999). Furthermore, since past events are recalled from the position of the present, there cannot be a “complete” autoethnographical study.

CHAPTER 6: IMMIGRANT RIGHTS AND NPIC: ORGANIZING OR OFFICE?

Looking up at the clock, it dawned on me quickly that I had spent another day inside the office. *At least time went by quickly, and the quarterly report is finally finished.* Shutting my computer down, I rushed to catch a bus to an immigrant youth meeting to come up with a general plan for an “undocumented and unafraid” rally. *Gotta get some school work done.* Reading and writing on the bus had become a habitual act, as being a full time graduate student and an organizer meant I had to adapt to balancing my time. Reeling from the exhaustion from crunching numbers in front of a computer screen all week long, I walked into a rather plush office building in the middle of downtown LA; nonprofit organization that operates out of the building was letting the group utilize the space to meet.

How are you? I'm tired, but feeling good to be here. Greeted by familiar faces and warm hugs, the foreign space seemed actually inviting. Even though I was one of the maybe two or three others who held a job as a paid organizer within the group, I was never made to feel like an outsider or someone who was just there because they were paid. Plus, we had all become close friends-- the solidarity and affinity for one another was incredibly transformative. Much more organic than the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the nonprofit world, even our meetings had no planned agenda but rather discussed what we felt was important for that given moment. Maybe most importantly, no one told this group what to do, what to say, or how they would achieve justice for themselves. They were only accountable to each other, and organizing with them made my role as an immigrant rights organizer feel complete.

Yet, my nonprofit position was consumed by the demands of the funders that kept

me inside glued to the computers. The energy in the office was always low, as most of the work that the majority of the staff performed was mundane individual-based services that nevertheless provided most of the funding we sustained ourselves on. *Just another job*. Saddled with the desire to work on both spectrums, I spent numerous hours past my required schedule in order to attend meetings, marches and direct actions with my friends. Even though the experience was both incredibly humbling and rewarding when I was outside of the office, chopping up my time between school and these two disparate worlds within the immigrant rights movement made me burn-out and ultimately forced me to choose the side I believed in more.

This section on the trajectories, goals and boundaries of the immigrant rights movement based specifically in Los Angeles since 2006 will attempt to weave my autoethnographical accounts with the chronological history of the movement. By retelling the story from my perspective as a participant, I hope to illuminate on broader scope of the movements' failures, fractures, as well as the victories. Furthermore, my experience of navigating the nonprofit industrial complex within the 501(c)(3) will serve as generalizable example to augment the position that social justice movements must begin turning their focus away from the cooptive demands of the foundations and towards the needs of the communities that they work in.

Undocumented Immigrants: A Quick Glance

There are about twelve million undocumented people in the United States. Seventy-six percent of the undocumented immigrant population is Latino, although the overall numbers comprises of people from all over the globe (Becerra, et al 2012:112). Contrary to the xenophobic argument that “they are taking away our jobs,” the

undocumented immigrant population contributes positively towards the financial gain of the overall US economy in both federal and state/local level (Becerra, et al 2012: 128). Last time there was any constructive reform to overhaul the broken immigration system was in 1986, when then-president Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act that allowed about 2.7 million undocumented migrants to adjust to legal status (Briggs 2012: 959). Many of the undocumented population work precarious jobs that have nominal pay, marginal protection from unscrupulous employers and socially positioned at the bottom of the economic sphere with almost no opportunities for advancement. They make up a sector within the working class that serve as a super-exploited labor force, a mass of bodies that are paid the least and has the least amount of rights to ensure fair working conditions (Robinson 2009).

The undocumented immigrants, who are relentlessly under the looming threat of deportation, mostly keep to themselves about the exploitation and violence they experience as people without legal papers on a daily basis. In order to navigate society without attracting too much attention to themselves, many of them have come to depend on nonprofit organizations for assistance with personal issues such as deportation, status adjustment, and language translation. Many of these organizations are ethnically-based, as it provides a specific niche for the organizations when applying for funding and discussing personal issues such as being undocumented is probably more comfortable with people of same ethnic background. Also, in order to foster a safe space, some immigrant rights organizations have opened up their offices as a space for people to simply get together and meet other members of their communities.

The History of Immigrant Rights Movement in Los Angeles.

Piven and Cloward (1977) maintain that the reactions from the elites towards rising social movements are threefold. They are at first ignored; if they become large enough to threaten the status quo, they are either crushed through force; once too large to ignore or repress, the elites make small concessions enough to appease them, usually mediated through some sort of formalized organizations. The immigrant rights movement has gone through these stages, especially here in Los Angeles.

Before 2006, the immigrant rights movement was mostly overlooked by the political spectrum due to their lack of national presence as a credible unified social movement. Yet with the introduction of anti-immigrant bills such as HR 3447 that would have made it a felony for undocumented migrants to be in the US, the perceived persecution ignited an upsurge of consciousness amongst the immigrant communities to stand up for themselves. In 2006 May Day, also known as the International Day of Workers, over million people marched in Los Angeles alone as part of an informal general strike billed as “a day without immigrants.” Numbers from that day has been touted as the largest demonstration in the history of the United States. The possibility of a substantial uprising of immigrants loomed on the horizon, threatening to breach their prescribed roles as a super-exploited workforce.

In 2007 May Day, I drove up to Los Angeles with a group of friends and a professor from Santa Barbara to participate in the march and rally. We wanted to show our support for the undocumented immigrant community, inspired by the class we had on the topic of global inequalities. When we arrived, we naturally took part in a march of few hundred people on the sidewalk flanked by cops on bicycles, motorcycles and horses.

There was tension in the air that became more ostensible as warnings to stay on the sidewalk blared out of the police loudspeakers. As we got to our chosen end point of a historic park within the city, the cops retreated from the rally itself and formed a circle around the entrance and exit points. Disregarding their presence, the rally for immigrant rights in the park went on as scheduled, unfurling a beautiful and indignant spectacle of powerful testimonies and celebrations.

Are these cops serious? The serene rally hurriedly metamorphosed into a scene of mayhem, as cops who had lined up around the park began methodically moving into the crowd in an organized line, unforgivingly clobbering anyone who was slightly in their way. Indiscriminate swings of batons and deafening sounds of non-lethal rounds of rubber bullets perforated the air and caused panic amongst the crowd. The unfamiliar aroma of tear gas scalded my nose, compelling me to be uneasy about my asthma triggering. Warnings of unlawful assembly were broadcasted repeatedly with the threats that remaining in the area could lead to arrest or physical pain. *This is a nonviolent gathering!* I had never been at a rally that had police acting so pugnaciously, even when we took over a freeway in Santa Barbara the cops were more reserved.

Just keep it moving, but don't run. Instinctually, some of us remained in front of children, as we crept back one step at a time facing off against what seemed like an immovable line of inestimable numbers of cops. *This is terrifying, what the hell is going on here?* The cops commenced to use their gadgets even more arbitrarily, as a rubber bullet hit me in the lower rib area along with myriad of others who were shot with projectiles or hit with batons. I noticed my friends moving frantically, struggling to get out of the pandemonium but not recognizing the geography at all. I directed the group to

our car few blocks away, as all of us walked down the street dumbfounded by what we had just collectively experienced. This encounter with the coercive police state disturbed me to my core and absolutely transformed my opinions about protesting and the police.

The reason presented to the media by the LAPD was that the participants were disorderly by throwing rocks and bottles at the cops. The movement was criminalized even though I did not witness anyone provoking the cops in a threatening manner. I claim that the overwhelmingly fascist reaction from LAPD was a circuitous response from the elite class to quash the indignant spirit of the immigrant community displayed the year before. Defeated by the repressive tactics of the police state, the prospect to mobilize mass numbers for immigrant rights was squandered, and the movement in Los Angeles lost its focus as an internal split amongst the organizations transpired.

Furthermore, the many of the leading nonprofit organizations began concentrating on electoral politics, circuitously endorsing President Obama through establishing non-incorporated community groups and coalitions to work on his campaign to organize the immigrant vote.

With the Democrat Party winning the presidential and congressional elections of 2008 partially due to the tremendous turnout from the immigrant voters, undocumented immigrants and their allies advocating for a path to legalization could no longer be ignored or blatantly repressed. The prospective for reforming the broken immigration system was ripe, especially since President Obama had made a campaign promise to begin working on the issue within the first hundred days of his presidency. I began my involvement in the immigrant rights movement shortly after the elections, being hired as an organizer for a 501c3 nonprofit organization. As someone with a limited experience in

organizing even though I had participated in many protests, this opportunity to join a campaign to achieve justice for a subjugated community seemed like the most suitable work for me.

Since the Democrats could no longer discount the critical mass of politicized immigrants and the potential for them to be turned into a major voting bloc for their party in the future, they feigned support for the community by pledging to pass a bill known as “comprehensive immigration reform.” The nonprofit organizations echoed this call since undocumented immigrants do require legal status in order to continue their struggle for total equality. Yet, I contend that the policy approach played right into the hands of the NPIC, as the nonprofits unintentionally routed the emergent consciousness of the immigrants into a non-oppositional reform based movement. It is not that the nonprofit organizations were purposefully complicit in the process of cooptation; the problem was that by being funded to focus on policy reform, those who sought to push for a more radical agenda was marginalized from the stakeholders table while radical critique of the roots of the immigration problem was disregarded in favor of policy based talking-points.

Nevertheless, the immigrant rights movement in Los Angeles, along with the rest of the country, began to mobilize for a path to legalization for all twelve million undocumented people in the US through the passage of comprehensive immigration reform. Being reform driven, the nonprofits who had prior ties with their political leaders became the chief stakeholders in the dialogue regarding the timing and language of the bill. The political elites, threatened by both the backlash from the xenophobes as well the rising tide of empowerment amongst the undocumented population, played what could be essentially called a “waiting game” with the bill, never formally introducing it in

Congress due to the long-term battle over healthcare reform and the incessant excuse that bipartisanship on socially divisive issues like immigration was required. Month after month, the nonprofits echoed the pretexts of the political leaders for why the bill had been stalled while collecting grant money to sustain their organizations.

In essence, funding a project that strives towards a path to citizenship for the twelve million undocumented people in the US presents minimal threat to the elites; this immigrant population would be merely laterally moving in the economic sphere from the super-exploitable shadow status into another sector of wage-laborers of the working class. The movement was not focused on pushing for redistribution of wealth and power or deconstructing the violence around the social construction of borders and histories of proxy warfare in Latin America, but instead reiterated the Democrat party's notion of "give them papers so they can vote and pay taxes." These policy changes do not address the underlying problems of racism, colonialism and capitalist exploitation that have historically pushed people to immigrate without turning to legal means. Without a doubt, disregarding of the roots of the immigration problem led to our failure in the contested landscape of framing the national conversation. Also, instead of deriving at a humane solution around the broken immigration system, the Democrats attempted to surreptitiously subdue the rising consciousness of the immigrants through unparalleled rise in numbers of deportations and authorizations given to local police to carry out enforcement of federal immigration laws through policies such as Secure Communities (SCOMM). Overtly racist bills such as SB1070 in Arizona were passed, symbolizing how the immigrants were held responsible as the scapegoats for the economic downturn. These forms of repression did not muzzle the mounting politicization of the immigrant

community, as they mobilized to challenge these manifestations of racism and classism through both institutional channels and protesting in the streets.

During this time, undocumented immigrants began developing informal networks within their neighborhoods and schools that functioned as both a safe space to talk about their status openly and to mobilize number of bodies for a protest if needed. These blossoming groups began collaborating with the nonprofit organizations, which were at the time starting to collect substantial foundation grants to organize for a comprehensive immigration reform bill. These informal community groups were mostly led by immigrant youth, and as the upsurge in funding from the foundations led to more resources being distributed through nonprofits, many of these informal groups thrived to a sizeable configuration. Since the undocumented communities lacked many of the resources and spaces that the nonprofits provided, the symbiotic relationship between the two worlds grew into a formidable social movement.

With the encouragement from the nonprofit organizations and urgent need for transformation to their lives, undocumented immigrants began to publicly articulate their own stories despite the fears and menaces of potential deportation. This push was primarily led by immigrant youths, who had been criminalized under no fault of their own. They exhibited less fear than their parents, for this country was their home, a place they were familiar with and where they were willing to risk everything familiar to just be acknowledged as another American. Borrowing from the identity politics of the queer movement, this approach of appealing to the morality of potential allies through interpersonal and emotive connections not only fostered the evolution of moral high ground amongst the sympathetic, but the story-tellers themselves were empowered

through reclaiming their once concealed identities.

What do you mean, they're going to come out of the shadows in front of the ICE building? In Chicago? My rationality is shaken up as more details are shared through the conference call. *They're going to tell their stories in front of the DHS/ICE building and pretty much dare the officials to put them in deportation? I'm blown away.* This was tangible escalation, not the way that nonprofits drew up their plan for reform, but finally initiated by those who were directly impacted. Through this action, the undocumented youth sought to empower those hiding in the shadows and to finally have a say in the debate over immigration by openly putting their faces to their stories. **Undocumented and unafraid.** This down-to-earth but powerful phrase became the leading mantra of the immigrant youth movement.

That's just amazing. Watching the videos from the day, almost everyone in the room crying, as tears of joy, frustrations, and pride poured out. These eight youth from Chicago, speaking truth to power, no fear or hesitation in their indignant stories, sparked an internal revolution in a stagnant movement while placing the oppressed to the forefront of the debate. The participants in the direct action were not arrested or deported for exposing their undocumented status publicly and their fortitude inspired solidarity actions across the country. They had efficaciously ruptured the stringent grip of the NPIC and cultivated a powerful public spectacle to perform their own theatrical arrangements. The triumph emboldened them to not only refashion the tactic of revealing their stories in public spaces all across the country, but gave them the courage to push it even further to disruptive tactics of civil disobedience.

With the shifting dynamics within the leadership position of the immigrant rights

movement, the undocumented community, especially the youth, began to distrust the motives of the nonprofits and collectively decided to advocate for a bill known as the Dream Act. The Dream Act was established to provide paths to citizenship for undocumented youth under the age of 35 who had either attended college or served in the military. Since its first introduction in 2001, the Dream Act had also been held hostage by the political leaders who had utilized it to appeal to the then newly burgeoning Latino population but never coming close to passing it. The bill had been introduced in 2008 yet had been stalled as it was supposed to be part of the comprehensive bill.

Nevertheless, fortified with their mounting sense of empowerment, immigrant youths across the country began consolidating away from the established nonprofits and massively mobilized for the passage of the Dream Act. They publicly criticized many nonprofits for being in bed with the political elites to keep their communities down for their paychecks, and demanded that they support a bill that has been introduced in Congress instead of pandering for one that did not exist. Their argument was sensible, as they recognized that if they at least could work and live in this country legally, it would take much pressure off their parents who had risked their lives and struggled in the shadow economy hoping for better lives for their children.

I gotta quit this job and support my friends. I remember when I made the decision; it was after a one-on-one meeting with a director of a nonprofit at a coffee shop in downtown Los Angeles. I clearly remember her words-- **Why would you want to work on a piecemeal solution like the Dream Act when the entire family needs papers? What about their parents?** That's **selfish**. The word selfish was being haphazardly lobbed around to dishearten the youth from articulating their frustrations

with being pawns in the political game between the nonprofits and politicians. These tactless comments were patronizing and reflected the privileged position from which the nonprofits ultimately viewed their “clients.” *Just statistics to be crunched up as data to parade to the foundations that we are making “progress” since more clients are now more aware of how their situation really is not going to get any better any time soon?* The entire conversation made me feel ill.

This hasty meeting resolved my inner conflict and reaffirmed my anxiety that the nonprofits were indeed more accountable to the funders than the communities they were supposedly struggling for. I realized that we were hopelessly waiting for a bill that was not forthcoming while the anti-immigrant fervor had boiled over into the passage of racist-driven reactionary policies. Not only have the nonprofit driven immigrant rights movement not achieved any progress for the undocumented community, they were actually even more criminalized and marginalized since the campaign to “reform immigration for America” began. *We have brought them more deportations, raids at workplaces, family separations...*

At this point, we were not even fighting the symptoms of the broken immigration system but caught up in the intersection between striving forward to organize around comprehensive immigration reform to earn another round of grants or giving up on policy-work until after the upcoming presidential election. The choice was obvious, as many organizations began to coordinate “leadership trainings” in order to ensure the continuance of the movement and therefore, funding. Yet, because receiving funding for the sustenance of the organization was the primary issue, we never scrupulously deliberated on whether any of the projects that we were being paid to carry out was

actually having positive effects in the community. The reality was that we were not, and the projects we led were akin to petting ourselves in the back for meeting the standard that we set for ourselves to placate the funders. Leaving the nonprofit sector to organize with the immigrant youth movement felt equivalent to being freed from selling my soul for a paycheck.

During this tumultuous time in the movement, nonprofit organizations began to publicly chastise the youth for their lack of political finesse. The problem was not that these organizations did not want the passage of the Dream Act, but that their funding was tied to comprehensive immigration reform; even though so many youth organizers had tirelessly gave their limited time and bodies to organize for comprehensive immigration reform, when these same youths decided they could no longer wait and felt the need to push for the Dream Act, their departure posed a predicament that could hypothetically jeopardize the funding of the nonprofits. So in essence, it was selfish of the nonprofit organizations to hold onto the pipedream of comprehensive immigration reform so that their funding can be renewed instead of being in solidarity with the oppressed to dictate their own movement. Even amidst the criticisms, instead of deterring them, this fracturing from the nonprofits vitalized the immigrant youth movement and the struggle for the Dream Act began to reflect a social movement based on disrupting powerful institutions of the elites.

I can't believe you are choosing a sit-in at a politician's office in fascist Arizona. That's incredible, and I support you guys all the way. I had learned to not be astonished by any direct actions that any of my friends decided to do, but this particular idea, the sheer gravity of what it could possibly mean stunned me. *I love each of you very much*

right now. Even though I wanted to blurt out one of my way too many concerns, I bit my tongue to demonstrate my support. *These negative thoughts are patronizing, I should not assume the worst and let them determine their own path. Focus on the positive; talk about making history.* This is pretty much the ultimate escalation, willingly risking deportation unless their collective demand of putting the Dream Act up for a vote is met. This action juxtaposed both the resilience and the desperation of the youth, who were ready to martyr themselves to display the sheer urgency for change.

I still had to ask the undesirable questions. *How are you going to get through the airport checkpoint? I'd assume they're extra-judicial there and won't hesitate to put an ICE hold on anyone travelling with a non-US passport.* No lawyers could promise them even a safe entry into Arizona; there was no precedent for undocumented person(s) doing civil disobedience and purposefully putting themselves in deportation proceedings. They argued that if they were to get stopped at the airport, the airport itself would serve as the space of struggle. *Talk about instantaneous empowerment.* I teared up, inspired by our own civil rights leaders, my friends. I couldn't possibly imagine anyone in the nonprofit world to ever put their entire life on the line for the cause; *what a privilege check.* It was a reaffirmation of how the oppressed are able to discern their situation much deeper than their masters, since through their persecuted lives they interpret the inner-workings of oppression and how to most effectively confront it.

From the first acts civil disobedience carried out by any undocumented immigrants in this country to reclaiming their once hidden and shamed identities into an empowered manifestation of “undocumented and unafraid,” the organic and unfettered powers of the immigrant youth presented a force of disruption that could not be ignored

or beaten into submission. Even though the mainstream media was divided in its coverage of the issue, speaking on the news gave the undocumented youth another platform to tell their stories to millions of people in an attempt to earn the moral high ground. Their captivating courage was undeniable, epitomized by the immense outpouring of support from their community and allies. Ultimately, the disruptive mass sit-ins in the Washington DC Congressional offices that led to dozens of arrests forced the Democrat leadership to put the Dream Act up for a vote.

Nevertheless, the Dream Act failed to garner enough votes to pass in Congress, leaving the immigrant youths with jaded outlooks of failure, doubts and cynicism. I critically argue that their principal failure to achieve structural justice for their community was the reformist scope of their movement that decided to push for a passage of a bill at a crucial moment in which they could have taken on a more radical stance towards the root causes of the immigrant issue. Yet, by pushing for the Dream Act as the specified objective of the movement, the political elites were able to pacify their disruptive powers by feigning to put the bill to a vote. This meant that the deciding moment for the movements' goal was in the hands of the political elites and not the community itself. The status quo of power structure was maintained through this strategy, even though it was the potency of the youths' tactics of disrupting the important institutions of the elites that initially forced the political elites to make the concession of putting it up for a vote.

The immigrant youth movement itself has not died, for many of the activists have continued to sustain themselves within the safe spaces they created while organizing for the Dream Act. There is growing hope for the immigrant youth movement to mobilize

for radical transformative justice for their community; new leaders have organically emerged to shift the focus of the movement on ending deportations for their entire community while persistently orchestrating their disruptive potentials through civil disobedience actions. The transfer from advocating for policy reforms to opposing the sadistic acts of deportations display the radical potential for the movement to dig deeper into the root causes of their communities' suffering. In the midst of this conversion, they have accomplished a reform victory, as many youths are now able to apply for a work permit and a social security number in lieu of deportation. It's a journey that has seen its victories and failures, and it's a fight that will hopefully continue on until borders are torn down and people are treated as equal regardless of where they were born.

Concluding Thoughts on the NPIC within the Immigrant Rights Movement

This section broadly discusses how the immigrant rights movement led by the 501c3 organizations was fundamentally coopted by the nonprofit industrial complex. Through the demands attached to foundation funding, the culture within the nonprofits was professionalized, bureaucratized and chiefly concerned with renewal of the funding instead of organizing and fighting to end the exploitative conditions of the immigrants in this country. I quickly lay out the tensions I felt within the space, as my political stance and reasons for taking the job were at odds with the demands of the directors and the role I ended up performing.

Even though the official title of my position was immigrant rights organizer, the organization did not have an official grant writer for the immigrant rights project. This meant that my position was also relegated to ensuring that our project was sufficiently funded to pay the staff. This meant I had to engage in the process of writing and editing

grant proposals, reports and renewals. Within the office, my time was predominantly focused on whether the quantifiable numbers on the quarterly report was satisfactory to the funders instead of critically assessing whether we were on the right path of attaining substantive justice for the immigrant community. Even though I desired to be an organizer with radical politics, the demands of the nonprofit industrial complex forced me to be just another bureaucratized office-worker.

Another way that the NPIC manifested itself in the immigrant rights movement was how the nonprofit organization directors barred their staff from critiquing the State's foreign policies. Any condemnation of regressive US foreign policies such as NAFTA that pushed millions of people from their homelands in search of a better life in more affluent neighboring countries was censored as self-defeating rhetoric that would make the movement seem anti-American when these immigrants need to display their love and allegiance to this country to earn their papers. Furthermore, to make demands of ending the inhumane warfare at the US/Mexico border was also denigrated as utopian stance as something that only sounds good in theory and would never be practical and supported by those who make the policies. Therefore, any dissent towards the foreign policies of the US that instilled puppet dictators all over the globe in search of exploitable workforce and resources was shut down by the nonprofits.

So, while my politics reflected a radical stance towards critique of capitalism and exploitation of borders as the root causes of the immigration “problem” that need to be addressed, the directors instead asked me to parrot talking points that reflected how the immigrants loved this country and would be assets to the economy. Instead of recognizing that we inhabit a land that was appropriated and preserved through war and

violence, the nonprofits formulated a defensive stance that begged for forgiveness on behalf of those whose “crime” was crossing over a social construction of a border. These moderate talking points were detached from my personal politics, so I mostly avoided participating in press conferences and other speaking opportunities.

I can now honestly reflect and feel that the few years I spent in the immigrant rights movement was a transformative experience for my path in activism. It truly taught me to be a student and ally for a movement that demonstrated almost the fullest potential of what people-power rooted in affinity and trust in one another can accomplish. While the nonprofit aspect of the movement constantly bogged me down and forced me to feel critical of the overall movement, the lessons learned from those times have provided me with even more of a radical vision as an activist. The people I met from the movement are the most rewarding aspect of my participation, as I have not only earned trustworthy comrades, but people I can depend on as friends outside of the movement.

CHAPTER 7: OCCUPY LA: SUBVERTING THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

The Occupy movement began in August of 2011, as anti-consumerist magazine “Adbusters” put out a call to protest the financial center of the globe; Wall Street in New York City. From this call to action, many of the organizers and activists that came out for the initial rally began to articulate a long-term vision of a long-term protest in public space focused on civil disobedience and disruptive direct actions. Their goal was to protest Wall Street while creating a new world that critiqued the inequities of society through permanent “occupation” of public parks. The reclamation of public sphere as a hub for resistance was something sorely lacking in US social movements, as the nonprofit industrial complex and the criminalization of gatherings in public spaces had sheltered organizers away from the streets and into office buildings.

After the successful occupation of Zucotti Park in Wall Street, more occupations sprang up all over the globe, as the initial surge of the movement symbolized a rousing populous movement that seemed capable of materializing a robust oppositional movement against capitalism and its various social manifestations. Personally, the most attractive and appealing characteristic of Occupy was how it transgressed the prevailing methods of organizing through the denunciation of any political affiliations and refusal of grants or formalized donations from foundations or charities. By rejecting the resources from the elites and instead directly taking in donations from the communities, these spaces of resistance was able to cultivate an oppositional standpoint that radically departed from the overbearing grips of the nonprofit industrial complex. The core idea of the movement was not only about laying siege to the Empire but also fusing together a radical resistance against the non-profit dominated social justice sector.

This is so beautiful. As cliché as it sounds, these words I clearly remember muttering to myself on October 3rd, 2011. As I gazed at myriads of activists, students, workers and the marginalized members of Los Angeles mobilizing together to reclaim the lawn at City Hall of Los Angeles and literally put their bodies on the line to reclaim public space, I became immediately stimulated. Perusing around City Hall Park, the space was inviting and I couldn't help to feel accustomed to the foreign space. From political signs of “we are the 99%” and “this is what democracy looks like” to swarms of multi-colored tents, my entire psyche became “occupied” with excitement and hope. *I never thought this could happen in LA.* The cynicism began to absolutely wear away as I weaved through communities of tents and flourishing political conversations between the participants. The prospect of a politicized public sphere where we can come together to discuss politics and problems of our society seemed almost too good to be true. The penetrating air of collective effervescence felt spiritual, as I envisaged the possibilities of this movement to be the radical solution, to get at the roots of the problems and address it peacefully. *I need a tent.*

The concentration of the Occupy movement to contest the global manifestations of economic inequality caused by capitalism was not unique to this space: in fact, Occupy represented just another chapter in the historical-global uprising against the Empire and its neocolonialist austerity measures enforced by the world banking systems and military power. Diffusing the foundational tenets of these past and contemporary movements, Occupy is first and foremost an anti-capitalist space. This oppositional stance brought together numerous activists with differing political ideologies and threaded them together by their collective desires to create a new world. The tactics the movement adopted was

rooted in nonviolent civil disobedience, following in the footsteps of the Civil Rights Movements and Ghanaian methods: in many ways, I argue that we most resembled the disruptive tactics of the poor people's movement during the Great Depression. The poor people's movement made demands to city hall, rioted and looted, and also collectively resisted the constraints of their class positions through rent strikes and insurgency at relief offices (Piven and Cloward 1977: 54-56).

The occupation encampments were patterned after what are known as autonomous zones, a space in which individual freedom could be expressed and needs of the participants are met without any authorities or elite institutions (Shantz 2011; 2). The camps became a public display of what a new world outside of capitalism could look like, a decentralized community of tribes that consisted of members with affinity for one another making decisions based on consensus. It was where mutual aid was the way of life and the non-dependence on authority pushed us to deal with our problems through Do-it-yourself and direct actions. This further deepened the anti-authoritarianism and self-determinism that represented our spirit and the camp flourished without support from any established elites. So, it functioned as a liminal site, spaces of transformation and passage that allowed people to reskill themselves for the ability to break from the dominant authoritarian and hierarchical models (Shantz 2011: 17).

Regardless of whether the participants identified politically as an anarchist, the canonical tenets for Occupy is grounded in anarchist theory. The word anarchy has its roots in the Greek word *anarchos* and means “without a ruler” (Shantz 2011: 9). Anarchists believe that individuals should be free from all forms of coercion, meaning that there should be no structure or authority in society to dictate one’s behaviors or

limits-- it is basically the idea that one should govern themselves without hierarchy (Jacker 1968: 1). Therefore, anarchists reject all forms of power structures while avowing that any institution or persons that enforce rules of society is restrictive of individual freedom. They argue that dominant institutions and structures of capitalist society are instituted upon modalities of state-sanctioned violence that is implemented by the elites and carried out through laws (Shantz 2011: 10).

Conceptions arising from anarchist theory such as consensus, inclusivity, horizontalism and leaderlessness were endorsed and recognized as the ideological tools necessary for the long-term process of creating a nonhierarchical society. The general assemblies became the hands-on site of real life implementation of these principles. The process and structure of the general assembly allowed any new or old participants to have equal say in any actions or statements that the movement should take on. Various hand-signals allowed for immediate participation without verbal interruptions and arguments. These organic gathering of the people transpired every evening, and the space served as the decision-making epicenter where the different committees and affinity groups within the encampment along with any member of the broader community of Los Angeles converged together to confer over social issues, plan actions and derive at solutions that worked for everyone present.

Consensus process can be defined as the “orientation of discussions toward compromise so as to generate outcomes acceptable to everyone” (Dean 2012: 53). To promote consensus, Occupy Los Angeles general assembly came up with a 100% consensus for passage of statements and 90% for actions. So any proposal for actions or statements that bear the name Occupy LA must be passed by the general assembly

unanimously or close to it; this encouraged those making proposals to group-work their ideas and the need for consensus created an environment in which presenters had to be willing to make amendments to fit everyone's concerns or fail to pass their proposals. This consensus process encouraged more in-depth group discussions, networking amongst people for idea-sourcing and privileging of community needs over individual desires.

Horizontalism is a concept that organically emerged from various movements that discarded the traditionally embedded hierarchical methods of organizing, but instead strived to come to “power-with” one another (Sitrin 2006: 3). This praxis was exemplified by working class movement in Argentina of the last decade. The activists practiced horizontalism by making critical decisions about the movement during moments of direct actions and in neighborhood assemblies. It becomes about self-empowerment, process that is oppositional to the entrenched capitalist market relations that define power in terms of accumulation of prestige and goods. I believe that horizontalism should become a central principle for all populous movements that desires to embody true democratic principles and endeavor for anti-authoritarian models of organizing. In this sense, horizontalism serves as both a goal and a tool: simply desiring for an egalitarian society would not actually create one, so activists must also embrace it as a tool to smash the hierarchical foundations embedded in capitalism.

The spaces that adopt these philosophies for their movements are known as prefigurative movements, in which participants are “creating the future in their present social relationships” (Sitrin 2006; 4). We were in the heart of the city, learning through our mistakes of what a different world could look like in the future by actively creating

foundational structures. Social change in this sense is not deferred to the state through asking for reforms, or by taking state power and instituting these reforms themselves; it is to “change the world without taking power” (Sitrin 2006: 4). Prefigurative movements are about fostering true autonomy in the communities, co-creating tools of freedom to find solutions to meet their basic needs. Through collectively uncovering solutions for their needs within the space, tools of freedom are organically developed and utilized to best fit the specific spaces (Sitrin 2006: 115).

My attraction towards Occupy LA propagated exponentially each time I attended a general assembly. Through transparent communication between the facilitators and the participants, the assembly's designed process to empower the most marginalized voices in society such as women, lgbt and people of color was really amazing to me to be part of in practice. For example, in order to speak, one must get on “stack” and wait their turn. To ensure the full potential of horizontalism, we practiced what became known as the progressive stack, a process that insured that those who had not spoken or was part of a marginalized group would be given preference over privileged individuals or those who spoke time after time. The combination of these principles energized me as an activist once again, as I was burnt-out on social justice due to the nonprofit industrial complex within the immigrant rights.

Critical View of Occupy LA: Cooptation and the Internalization of the State

One of the most powerful elements of Occupy was that in order to co-opt a movement without any leaders, the powers that be have to coopt the entire movement. The supremacy of horizontalism provided the movement with the ideological backing to resist the old ways of hierarchical leadership structure. As the participants' lives became

more organized non-hierarchically, deconstruction of the old ways of top-to-bottom structure started to become obsolete within our visions for the new world. Nevertheless, there were obvious problems of cooption from the very beginning stages of Occupy Los Angeles that warrants a discussion.

Even though the principles of horizontalism was commonly espoused and practiced within Occupy Los Angeles, there were cooptive and counter-revolutionary aspects of the movement that posed complications for the burgeoning movement. From the social justice careerists, bank and police-paid provocateurs and informants, and those who could not deconstruct their internalization of the dominant ideologies of the state, ultimately held back the movement from realizing its full potential as a revolutionary and prefigurative movement. I account some of the moments in which I felt disappointed by the actions, theories, and expressions of Occupy Los Angeles and many of its participants.

I arrived at Pershing Square, a place I've walked by hundreds of times while being in downtown LA but never stepped into. Tonight was third meeting to plan a full-time occupation in Los Angeles. Being part of the activism circle within city for few years, I was hoping to see certain familiar faces but hopefully not old bosses. I felt nervous, going to a place by myself and wanting to meet people who I had only briefly spoken to in a chatroom. I spotted the group easily, about twenty to thirty people gathered, noticeable by their exterior. *Some familiar faces but not the ones I was hoping for.* At least people were friendly as I introduced myself to few people standing near me.

I really don't see the marginalized represented here. Not only was there conspicuous amounts of careerists I have seen and met at protest sites in LA before, there

was an apparent absence of immigrants and the houseless even though we were few blocks from skid row. Even more obvious was lack of women present; this unswervingly exposed the tactic of occupying physical space as one that privileged physical endurance and critically displayed how the movement had already failed to address heteropatriarchy. Another problematic aspect was instead of rank-and-file members, upper level representatives and organizers from various unions and organizations were paternalistically speaking on the behalf of those they “represented.” I became almost bored, as the same spectacles of Leftist organizing models was replicating themselves in front of me. It made me realize that we had a long hill to climb and that cooptation had begun even before there was a space of resistance to speak of. *If these people keep taking “leadership” position by planning this, it's going to turn into just another union protest.*

After deciding on the City Hall Park as the most suitable spot of resistance in Los Angeles, there were impassioned debates over the need for permits and negotiations with the city officials and the police. The careerists were insistent on negotiating with the powers that be, claiming that the movement would not last a week without certain permits and it would be counterproductive to focus on defending space when there was so much work to be done in the city in terms of organizing. The other side of the argument maintained that negotiations with the elites is counterproductive since they can at any given time take back any concessions they feign to make at the bargaining table and crush the resistance through sheer force. Also, those opposed asserted that negotiating with the elites reproduced the unequal power structure that the movement was supposed to resist since asking for permission implied that the State makes the final decision on how the public space should be utilized and what bodies, symbols and rituals were acceptable in

that space.

Nothing was really consented on, yet it was apparent that the traditional organizing methods dominated the space. So, the movement started passively, defensively reacting not to the desires of their hearts but the laws of the state; while other occupations across the country “illegally” took parks and put their bodies on the frontlines of the barricades of reclaiming public space, Occupy LA “leaders” sought permission after permission from the established hierarchies of power. After a week or so of occupying the lawn during the day and moving the tents to the sidewalks at night in order to be in accordance with the Jones Settlement that somehow was supposed to provide the homeless population a voice in the process of gentrification in downtown LA by allowing them to erect tents from 9 pm to 6 am in the streets, City Council members passed an emergency ordinance stating that Occupy LA was welcomed to stay as long as possible and the Mayor came down on a rainy day to pass out rain ponchos to those who were supposed to be a threat to his power structure. The irony was overwhelming to many radical organizers, some of which outright left the movement or formed affinity groups with those who shared their views that working with the system in any form or shape were non-transformative and counterrevolutionary.

More significantly, the internal structures within Occupy LA encampment mimicked and reproduced the external hierarchies of the State that the movement was supposed to confront. There were moments during the encampment that fostered personal feelings of disenchantment towards what a radical movement is supposed to represent. I recall some of these distressing moments in the following section.

What is up with this flier? Are you kidding me? There it was, the symbol of

broken trust, careerist gate-keepers shutting down the revolution before it happens. Posted all over the park were fliers with pictures of dozens of Occupiers who had joined a Facebook group to horizontally discuss the development of a committee against police brutality; instead of finding support, their personal information was blasted on a flier depicting them as the risky elements of our communal space that were intentionally provoking the police. The proposal to form a “committee to end police brutality” within Occupy LA was an idea brought up by a group comprised of mostly people of color organizers whose lives, families and communities have been criminalized and oppressed by the color of the law of the LAPD. Instead of solidarity, their intentions smeared by the liberals afraid of shaking the establishment that they have come to depend on.

Don't these careerists and liberals realize most of these organizers are already the targets of the police? Those whose faces were blasted on the fliers are who we can call radical activists: immigrant rights organizers, tenants' rights advocates, anarchists, know-your-rights trainers, militant lawyers, students, the houseless, sex workers, and people-of-color. *These are the dangerous people who want to “provoke” police?* Most of them confront the police state in their daily lives as a member of oppressed groups, and were now being demonized by the “moral and peace police” of careerist liberals who were pathologically holding onto a semblance of their archaic tactics of pacifism as if working with the establishment to “end corporate personhood” truly addresses and confronts the manifestations of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and classism? Most of us feel disgusted by this entire process and many had already turned cynical.

I realize quickly how precarious this flier was beyond the prototypical juxtaposition of sanctity of nonviolence and the unruly aura of violence. This exposure

puts these people in direct danger of surveillance and targets of the police state. *Damn, this is why I said I wouldn't be associating myself on Facebook with the movement.*

Shaking from disbelief, I went off to find those who were being publicly shamed for their collective vision to build a safe space to discuss and act against the historically rampant police brutality in our city. I realize the bridge has been burnt, and there was pretty much no hope for reconciliation between those who supported the group and those who felt we needed to maintain a supposed “friendly” relationship with the police. Feeling sardonic, I looked forward to the general assembly, as we all knew that the conversation would not just revolve around ideological debates about police brutality, but that Occupy LA participants would finally be forced to deal with actual physical safety of people we called comrades.

At the general assembly, the conversation about the pertinent need to address police brutality in order to connect with the everyday Los Angelenos devolves into a spiteful projection of race and class conjectures, with the marginalized and dispossessed people of color “calling out” the middle-class white protesters for their privileges and the defensive white activists playing the reverse racism card. Even though police brutality is not just a race issue, the frustrations of the radical people of color organizers to ensure that their voice was treated as equal in the space turned the conversation into something deeper than just a proposal to start a committee. Interestingly, the person who made the flyer is a person of color and many of the white people present are vehemently anti-racist and realize the significance of confronting police brutality.

Nonetheless, the formation of the committee to end police brutality is not consented to by the general assembly, hard-blocked by a few with their chief concerns of

the unnecessary provocation of the police when things are calm. It's a naïve and privileged argument, as if the state sanctioned violence is dependent on our behavior when they have a free-for-all reign on the streets of Los Angeles every day? Those who have come to trust the police or even be able to smile and say hi to them could not deconstruct their social privileges, which was astounding considering these people claimed to be working with an activist-oriented mindset. *I need some time off, this is going nowhere*, as I take a long-awaited cigarette break. Most members of the “committee” never return, feeling defeated by the counter-revolutionaries and the fact that most people simply still don't get the harsh reality that they witness on a daily basis. It kept me away from the space for a bit, as people I knew and trusted had walked away due to their perceived lack of safety.

This fiasco over the police brutality issue struck close to home for me-- not only because I was a victim of police violence, but due to seeing so many lives of people around me ruined by being labeled a “criminal.” Although privileged due to my Asian ethnicity and the myth of the “model minority,” being a person-of-color in Los Angeles combined with the traumatic experiences of seeing my friends be labeled criminals and marginalized in society, my attitude towards the police had always been filled with mistrust and fear. It is somewhat unnerving that these public servants whose roles are to “serve and protect” strike fear into most people during any sort of interactions with them, especially for those who comprise the most marginalized groups in our society-- the sex workers, immigrants, the houseless, women, the youth.

After writing a paper on the prison abolition movement during my undergraduate years, I adopted a critical perspective towards how police have historically suppressed

various social movements through infiltration, physical beatings and incarcerations. I became a proponent of the notion that our society's version of the criminal injustice system is a racist, sexist and classist institution that fundamentally exists to protect capitalism by criminalizing dissent. So, as occupiers, if we were to learn anything from those who had blazed the path to social justice before us was that the state would utilize every form of coercive strategies of punishment towards us as long as we were protesting the status quo with radical anti-capitalist messages. In this sense, the scale of state-sanctioned police repression can be seen as a measure for how much the movement posed a threat to the system-- more effective and radical our movement became, the forms of repression would most likely turn more violent.

Therefore, formation of a committee to formulate a response to police brutality in our streets is an utmost necessity for a movement that radically challenges the state. Since the role of the police in capitalist society is to protect elite wealth through criminalizing the activities of those who deviate or rebel, constructing proactive strategies against potential surveillance, repression, incarceration and criminalization serves a hard function for the movement. Even more importantly, adopting a critical stance against the violent policing of our city would have displayed solidarity with the most marginalized groups of our society. For me, this failure to seize the opportunity displayed how the social justice movement based in Los Angeles was dominated by pacifism-based models of organizing based in traditional liberal reformism. These defensive tactics and strategies of preserving our good public relations was counterrevolutionary to advancing our cause of critiquing and dismantling the modalities of the capitalist state.

Another example of the way the internalization of the State was exhibited through

the structures of the occupation was the way that the “security team” harassed the hot dog vendors at the park due to the fear that the state health department would shut down the entire camp. Instead of challenging the modalities of the State that was criminalizing working class activities such as street vending, the desire to keep the space of city hall became the chief concern that casted a shadow over looking into the roots of the problem itself. While defending and maintaining the site of the occupation was of course significant for many purposes, it should have never been privileged over the reasons why we were out there in the first place. These issues slowly drove more radical organizers away from the space, leading to a domination of the moderate and Liberal activists who wanted to passively address middle-class issues through traditional rallies and marches.

These ideological clashes persistently crept up during the rest of the months that the occupation stood its grounds at City Hall Park. From the blow-up over whether to accommodate the Farmer's Market that had operated out of the park prior to the encampment to whether we should continue to feed the houseless of the city even if they do not participate within the encampment, the ideological foundation of inclusivity and non-hierarchical organizing was consistently questioned and ruptured. Many liberal middle-class organizers, who mostly did not camp overnight but wanted to dictate the trajectory of the movement, took sides with the state during these moments of contentions, arguing that we needed to present the best “public image” we could. Although the moral high ground could be won through accommodating the state and being “orderly,” going with the status quo would just turn Occupy into another permitted rally that happened to continue for days instead of being the prefigurative and radical space it potentially could have become.

This reproduction of the capitalist power structure displayed how many middle-class white participants who were new to activism did not understand that the state was no longer their ally that they always have depended on, but that no matter how we behaved and followed the orders of the state, the elites were nevertheless designing ways to crush the resistance by any means necessary. Also, through operating their daily lives in an oppressive capitalist society, many participants had internalized the regulations of the state as if it was just a crystallized part of society. Even though the movement was supposed to function as a space to deconstruct and challenge the powers of the state, the internalization of the state's hierarchy and rules within the encampment that mirrored the unequal structures of society discouraged the radical organizers who had hoped that the occupation could be a space to forget the old ways.

Eviction Night

Even with these hitches, Occupy LA nevertheless remained as a radical space of resistance within Los Angeles, a public sphere where anyone can stop by, pitch a tent, share a meal and converse about any pertinent issue. The tribe-based structure of the camp brought people with similar affinities together, allowing them to organically form committees and affinity groups to focus on the problems within and outside of the encampment that they decided was most necessary. Also, the inclusivity allowed the houseless around the area to have a safe place to sleep and healthy food to eat, which steadfastly demonstrated how our “new world” can indeed take care of one another without depending on elite institutions. Nevertheless, during these couple months, I had neglected the space in lieu of school, stopping by once or twice a week for the general assembly and some time to decompress with friends who were there “full-time.” Then

around Thanksgiving, I received text messages about the looming eviction and how they needed bodies to help defend it.

The atmosphere felt tense-- it was the night of November 30th, 2011. I had arrived early in the day to see if there were strategies of actually defending the space or if people were going to just get arrested for violating park rules. People were scurrying around, some taking down their tents, worried about the impending spectacle of violence that was inevitably coming down on them. I made my way to my friends, who were discussing strategies about the police. *Nothing we can do really, we can't fight back and we really shouldn't anyways.* The general consensus was that people would sit in a circle around our beautiful mural and be arrested one at a time while hoping for thousands of people to join them in their act of civil disobedience. Most of my comrades wanted to take on a proactive strategy, possibly marching out in mass to a different park when the police came in. But they had resigned to the fact that most people would choose to get arrested, as if it was some sort of an honor to do so.

The general assembly that night went through the process as usual. The mood was bit somber, as people had been notified that it was in fact tonight that the LAPD would carry out the eviction. After the assembly, there were affinity-group meetings happening in different sections of the encampment, majority of them discussing the legal strategies around when and if they were arrested. Few hundred people had gathered by this point, most of them not planning on being arrested but there as spectators to what could potentially be an unpredictable evening. By this point, the collective resistance of the encampment had fallen off; people began to passively sit around without concrete plans, not really knowing what to do or how to react to the impending eviction since the

police had kept their plans under wraps.

There are thousands of cops at Dodger Stadium; they're setting up what looks like a processing structure for arrests. This was it, as people began to finally affirm to themselves that they were about to be expelled from the place they had called home for the last two months. As I assisted my comrades to put some of their more valuable possessions in presumably safe areas, more and more people came into the park to tell us about how the cops were redirecting traffic away about a square mile or two in all directions from City Hall. We had no clue as to how they were planning to evict, whether they would forcefully rush in and brutalize everyone or if they would be deterred by the sheer number of possible arrests and negotiate with us. The possible scenarios played themselves out in my head, as I realized that I did not want to be arrested nor should I, since I had a proposal defense to go to the next morning.

Some of us began inspecting for exit points in case the cops came in indiscriminately arresting everyone present. The only place to leave was ironically through the stairs on the side of the LAPD building, as the security guards there said they did not care if we ran through. There was a fleeting moment of understanding between us and the guards as all being in the same struggle as working class people, as they whined about how they were called into work for a nightshift so the cops can evict a peaceful protest. As we get out of the park to do some copwatch, I was blown away by the largest mobilization of cops I had ever witnessed-- every block, there were dozens or more of cops in riot gear, marching uniformly like “stormtroopers” from Star Wars.

We rushed back into the park, hoping to caution people of the sheer numbers of cops that were mobilized to inflict harm to our bodies and minds. In the center of the

park, people were already sitting, waiting for the inevitable end of being dragged out one at a time and be arrested. There was some sense of cynicism in my head, as I almost laughed at people wanting to go to jail over some tents. *We can always get a new space...* It quickly subsided as I saw the look of dejection in my friends, as they were about to lose the place they had come to love. I began to empathize with those willing to not only put their lives aside and live in a tent, but to put their bodies on the line to face the criminal injustice system and all its modalities to symbolically defend the space.

The raid was indeed an impressive moment that displayed the absurdity of the police state. They called their strategy the “Trojan Horse maneuver,” as hundreds of cops uniformly rushing out of the city hall building itself, pushing people down the stairs and swiftly taking all the chokepoints that people could escape from. They surrounded the protesters who were willing to get arrested, pointing militarized weapons at them as if these peaceful resisters were somehow going to fight back. In the face of this ultimate repression, people sang, chanted, and displayed the power of collective resistance in a nonviolent fashion. Then the warning: **you have three minutes to leave or you will be arrested.** I followed out couple of my friends towards a group of occupiers gathered to go on a march as a form of distraction and those unwilling to go down without some sort of agitation. I did not witness how the 292 people were arrested that night, but they were political prisoners and treated like so while in custody of the state.

The mistreatment that the arrestees went through in the hands of the prison system shook most people's cores, as they had never viscerally experienced the overtly fascist system before. Some of them became radicalized through the experience, affirming their belief in their struggle against all forms of inequality as they realized how people of

marginalized communities were mistreated every day. Yet, the majority of those arrested never came back, feeling defeated and traumatized by the experience. Bit by bit, the numbers dwindled in the weeks following the raid, as police suppression amplified and people's resolves faded away due to the lack of communal space to foster personal relationships.

#M17: Spring into Revolt

March 17th 2012, it was the 6 month anniversary of Occupy Wall Street. All across the country, commemorative actions were coordinated to demonstrate that **we are still here and we are not going away!** The winter was brutally difficult; without camp, the numbers dwindled to just few dedicated participants. Even more importantly, the trauma of police violence during the eviction and the following months of escalated state suppression, criminalization and brutality that strived to crush the spirits of the remaining activists had worked to drive and keep people away. Yet, even though the coercive actions from the police apparatus kept our numbers low, those who remained in the midst of the storm developed more solidarity and deeper commitment to the struggle of speaking truth to power through direct actions and civil disobedience.

It's cold, and what's that noise? I woke up in a tent on Main Street in downtown LA to splashes of hammering rainfall. Many of us had been sleeping on Main Street every Friday to raise awareness on the disappearing houseless population due to gentrification and criminalization of the only place in the city that somewhat permitted them to exist. As the city became more redeveloped and the police state interdicted many away from Skid Row to even hidden peripheries within the city, this was celebrated as houselessness became an issue that was “out of sight” for the new downtown dwellers

paying high rent to live where people once slept outside in tents. *Oh well, at least I can sleep in past 6 AM*, I muttered and walked outside to see for myself how adverse the weather really was.

Half-awake and hung over, I looked up a familiar sight of a badge and a uniform. *Why is a cop standing here watching over us in the rain as if he has nothing better to do?* Even though the Jones Settlement permitted the houseless of Los Angeles to pitch their tents on the street for as long as they needed to on a rainy day, the persistent surveillance and intimidation from the LAPD towards the participants of Occupy LA was not going be daunted by mere rainfall or even a federal injunction. Accepting my rude awakening as just another fact of life, I lit a cigarette, grabbed a coffee from across the street and watched comrades slowly taking down their tents as they chattered about the weather and the police. **HURRY UP.** Sounds like a damn machine. *Let's get out of here and find some place to chill until the action.*

That afternoon, we amorphously occupied the east side of City Hall. **Spring into Revolt.** That was the banner that displayed our collective spirit as we set up for the day. Spring literally denoted a new beginning, a crucial moment in the movement to replant the seeds of collective consciousness that brought out hundreds of thousands of people to the streets just few months ago. Even though many of us had not slept and the rainfall had not subsided at all, we figured it would be a joyous yet somewhat mundane day of celebration. It was planned as a small street party that would not only signify our communal resistance, but even more importantly, to have fun for once without being provoked by the police.

Since no disruptive actions were planned, we figured that it would be ok to pass

out zines and eat vegan chili on the sidewalk. This action would be emblematically establishing another temporary autonomous zone, or an impermanent space that symbolizes our resistance and freedom through its mere existence. We had just about everything we needed to take care of the attendees in terms of food, medical help and of course, our own media in case things went wrong. Plus we had plans later in the afternoon to demonstrate against the irony of the Human Rights Coalition giving an award to the CEO of Goldman Sachs, so it was not our intention to give any reason for the police to harass us and hinder us from making it out to the protest.

Take down the tents. Came down the orders from the LAPD. We had screen-print material and the zines in the tents to shelter them from the rain. No one complied, as we knew that three tents on the sidewalk in pouring rain were not against the law. The appearance of resistance is impenetrable, as people literally ignored the police as if they are invisible. **Who owns these tents? We are confiscating them.** The threat of our possession being taken forces few comrades to step up and claim it as theirs, and they irritably acquiesce to taking them down. I realize there are maybe fifty or more police here utilizing their usual intimidation tactics through massive numbers. I'm nervous for some damn reason, anxious as to why there was more police presence than usual, even more than when we were actually protesting. Some of us yell anti-police chants to show our displeasure even though the cops seemed satisfied with us taking the tents down. Indeed, things actually were getting calmer, as the police gathered away from us on the opposite street corner and insinuated that they were leaving us alone.

From the corner of my eyes, I see a comrade by a locked gate; not sure if he had gone inside, but it's a public park that is seemingly always closed. *If I see him, the cops*

must have too. Who the hell knows what they'll assume. I make a quick attempt to warn the comrade to take off his noticeable jacket and blend back into the crowd. Before I can get the words out of my throat, dozens of cops rush in, mercilessly pushing and hitting people with batons to separate everyone away from him so they can make the arrest. The comrade is desperately grabbing at whoever he is able to, looking utterly shocked at the overreaction from the police. More undiscerning swings of batons, people cussing and screaming in pain, as the comrade is finally dragged away by the overpowering number and force of the police. At this point, people are directly in the faces of the oppressors, speaking truth to power, but also in disbelief of what they were witnessing. In the midst of the madness, the comrade is tackled to the floor, as his head is stomped with his arm being twisted in a grotesque position. *Pure terrorism tactics from the police state.*

The temporary autonomous zone has distorted into a warzone. Out of nowhere, two more comrades are targeted for arrest: they are tackled, beat and taken into custody of the state for absolutely no reason except for being present and speaking truth to power. It's a **police riot**, as they swing their batons and aim their less-than-lethal weapons at point-blank distance from a group of people eating chili and hanging out. In the midst of the provocation, occupiers remain disciplined, as we do not physically engage except for vociferous profanities and chants. The cops seem a bit taken back at the militant stance of the crowd, as some us run right into the middle of the street, blocking police cars as we demand badge numbers and to let our comrades go. The legal observer notifies us that he did not see anything we did that warranted such an oppressive reaction, and assures us that those who had been arrested most likely get their charges dropped. This pertinent info does not console us one bit as we are infuriated by the provocation from the police

state trying to incite us into a riot so they have an excuse to crack down on us.

The methodical militancy of our group was unyielding. There were moments where people were tested to their core, as the police state came down with violent force for absolutely no reason. For the rest of the day, marching in the streets felt as if our bodies were relegating between freedom to protest and the potential to be jailed. We moved our temporary autonomous zone to the police station, about hundred or so of us determined to brandish our indignant resilience right at the belly of the beast. The police bring out the riot gear and drive us away from the station with intimidation. Surprisingly from that point on, the police literally left us alone for the rest of the day; I assume that they realized they had overreacted and did not want any more negative press or more likely, they had achieved their mission of making arbitrary arrests and shutting down our temporary autonomous zone.

This day remains in my head as one of the most traumatic moments of police brutality. I have witnessed more violent forms in larger protests, but these people were my family and I was consumed with hurt and anger towards everything that they did to the people I had grown to love. The resulting impact scarred many of us, including my physical body as a baton strike broke one of my ribs. Yet, #m19 also was a forceful reminder to many of us about how much of a target we became to the State. This had a dual impact for our solidarity; some felt the increased repression represented the fact that we were more of a threat as an amorphous bodies of protestors, while there were those who needed to take time off due to the trauma of the months of being physically and mentally drained by the constant fear of being arrested or beat.

Anaheim: City of Two Faces

Although I had taken some time off during the months following May Day of 2013, my participation during the civil unrest in Anaheim following the killing of an unarmed Latino by the Anaheim Police Department remains as one of the most poignant and distressing moment of my activist life. The civil unrest in Anaheim appeared to rise out of nowhere; yet this simple analysis is not taking into account the social, economic and political context of Anaheim and its classist and racist urban geography. This uprising of the people had been brewing for years, as the mounting inequity between the have and the have-nots that reside in the city of Anaheim became too obvious for most of the marginalized to accept.

While Anaheim is recognized to be the “happiest place on Earth” due to Disneyland, many of those who reside in the city are not privileged to enjoy the luxuries of the tourist economy. In fact, the transforming demographics of the city has led to the current context in which immigrants make up more than half of the residents, most of them as workers for the thousands of service economy jobs that uphold the economy of the city. The urban layout of the city revolves around Disneyland, surrounded by mostly people of color communities and both corporate and small businesses. The economic elites of Anaheim live in Anaheim Hills, overlooking the city from their luxurious multi-million dollar homes. So, not only is the economic power of Anaheim located in the hands of the white elites that make up the majority of those that live in Anaheim Hill, the political power that their city council holds is also concentrated in the hands of wealthy residents; unsurprisingly, all members of the city council are white and all but one reside in Anaheim Hills.

Similar to most segregated urban areas, the unconcealed inequity between the working class Latino communities and the affluent white suburbs of Anaheim hills is not only displayed through economic disparities, but in the dissimilar ways that these two communities are criminalized and policed. The Anaheim police department has manipulated the public fear of people-of-color gang violence in order to instill punitive laws based on a regressive theory known as the “broken windows theory.” The proponents of this concept assume that just like a broken window left alone at a home in the neighborhood will eventually lead to degradation of the entire neighborhood, criminals can be deterred from committing serious crimes by being consistently punished for the remedial ones. While this theory's merits in practice has been long debated in academia, Anaheim police departments' policies towards the Latino community is an obvious reflection of the real life application of its core ideas: from “stop-and-frisk” that gives police rights to search anyone they deem as suspicious to gang injunctions that allow them to harass a crowd of more than three people as possible gang activities without any other probable cause, these disproportionately punitive policies have not deterred any gang violence but instead has spiraled to feelings of mistrust and fear amongst the working class immigrant community of Anaheim towards the police.

After the Anaheim Police Department killed an unarmed Latino man named Manuel Diaz, the reaction from the working class immigrant community was one of indignation and rage. This was one of the many shootings through the last few years involving an unarmed person by the local police department, unleashing a demonstration of pent-up of anger and frustration distilling from years of criminalization and oppression from the working-class community. As people gathered to protest at the murder scene,

Anaheim police department turned to their tools of physical intimidation by unleashing a line of riot police with less-lethal weapons. Without warning, the residents were shot with rubber bullets and a canine was inhumanely released to the crowd, triggering an already volatile situation into something much more hostile than anyone anticipated. Due to the power of technology that locates the power of media to anyone with a cellphone, the video of unprovoked violence from the police went viral across the country.

The indignation of the residents could not be contained; the next few days brought on a flurry of street protests, culminating each night with pretexts of an insurrectionary riot that could have forever damaged and transformed the public relations of Anaheim, or even more importantly, Disneyland itself. The immigrant residents exercised their anger through multiple channels, including protesting at localities of power such as the police station and City Hall as well as manifesting uncontrolled street demonstrations that led to combative standoff with the police and few broken windows of private properties. It was evident that the coercive and punitive responses from the police on the initial demonstrators led to more intense moments of confrontations that climaxed in multiple arrests and injuries of community members. Yet, instead of being deterred by the smell of tear gas and deafening sounds of less-lethal rounds, the spirit of the people swelled and their demands became more politicized.

As an activist in Occupy Los Angeles and a person with direct ties with the community in Anaheim through my past work in the immigrant rights field, my desired role was to support and foster the revolutionary spirit that inspired us to join their cause. Yet, instead of going straight into a community in which many of us did not live in, we consented as a group to support the next action that the residents were planning on

holding. To secure the trust of the community, a couple of us utilized our networks in the area to find out that for two years prior to Manuel Diaz's death, families and loved ones of other victims of police murders had been protesting at the local police department every Sunday. The residents invited any supporting group to join them on the Sunday of the week of the massive civil unrest in the streets. About couple hundred of activists joined from all over California.

Absurdity of the police state. We arrive to a merger of every police unit possible. *Are there really snipers on the roof?!* Two mounted divisions, military fatigue, AR-15 assault rifles on the backs of motorcycles. A pure spectacle of intimidation and oppression, as the imagery of their brute force outweighed the gravity of the reason why we were there. *Damn, we are here to protest police brutality and they're here dressed for war.* An Orwellian spectacle to say the least. Out of nowhere, there's a loud call for a march to begin. Feeling overwhelmed and anxious, I huddle with groups of comrades; many are in black bloc, employing a tactic of solidarity and anonymity that positions them as potential targets to the police just for their attire, to various groups in matching t-shirts, **justice against police brutality**, of course in tribute to some person of color.

It's a never-ending cycle of violence, as the police brutalize too many communities of color every day in America. Speaking of cops, there were units from every neighboring cities present; Anaheim, Santa Ana, Fullerton, Westminster, Riverside, Los Angeles, and even San Diego police department, of course most of them with absolutely no ties to the community of Anaheim or its residents. Even though most of the protestors were from people of color communities, I could not find more than two or three person of color cops amongst the hundreds of cops. This was not dissimilar from

way policing is carried out in most communities, a paradoxical situation in which the public servants who are supposed to serve and protect their communities end up working in unfamiliar areas that they do not reside in or know anyone in. This lack of personal connection makes it easier for the police to employ brutal suppressive tactics without feelings of guilt-- *Banality of evil*. And of course, white cops in people of colored communities have historically led to violence and mistrust between the two groups.

I'm just here as another body on the line against the state. I reaffirm my role to myself as I sit and listen to the family members share with the crowd their anguish and resolve to achieve justice. The mounted division of cops, towering over the crowd on their horses, seems somewhat nervous and frustrated which fosters an air of uncertainty and uneasiness amongst the crowd as well. The thoughts of what had occurred in Anaheim for the last week coupled with the anxiety of past years' violent situations gripped me to the point where I could not stand still and listen to the speaker rant on about communism or something... Mercifully, the chants of **march! march!** rattles through the crowd, as people mobilize to collectively display their power in the streets against the state. Where to? Disneyland, the happiest place on Earth.

We've made it maybe three blocks before the mounted division arrives: **Get off the streets or you will be arrested!** Blaring sirens, inaudible profanities hurled at the outlandishness of the colossally marshaled police state. "*It's our fucking streets,*" as the resolve to demonstrate the militancy of the People stridently subverts the predictable barks from the State. I can sense the apprehension and indignation amid the crowd, as not one person is moving off the street, discerning the impression of safety in numbers. The police are exasperated, as they quickly realize that collective power of those

assembled will refuse to acknowledge their supposed authority. As I fall deep in thoughts of tear gas, flash bangs, and maybe, possibly, even live ammunition, I tell myself to keep marching forward, trying to ignore the rising feelings of fear in my guts of being beat and arrested. *It's just PTSD*, I once again attempt to convince myself, but the repetitive “click-clack” of the mounted division serves as a visceral reminder of the carnal torture of jail, trial and criminal records. *This isn't really worth going to jail for, is it?* Questioning myself meant I was not ready to confront the modalities of the punitive State. *What the hell does going to jail prove anyways?* I could not help to wonder if the paper the cops handed us earlier said anything about adhering basic traffic laws...

Swings of batons. The mounted division mercilessly attacks, almost as if playing some sort of a sport with the protestors. Yelling and cussing, louder and disorganized than before. I find myself flipping off a sheriff, corporal reaction that suppresses rationality that tells me to get off the street and walk away. **Even more swings.** I feel a sharp pain on my left side but I just keep moving, declining the prospect to project the physical pain onto whichever cop for the consistent thought of arrest is much more overbearing. *Same fucking side as before*, I feel the swelling as I move toward the middle of the crowd seeking for some semblance of security. *Why are people running? Stop running, people will get hurt! Oh I guess I should run too.* Seeing tear gas canisters hits me with as an abrupt reminder that the thin vinegar soaked bandana isn't going to help much-- this sudden realization compels me run faster even with the throbbing pain on my side.

So many cops, damn these sirens. More muddled orders of **get off the street**, overpowered by the chants of *this is our streets!* Disorienting thoughts were running

through my head, as I could not rationally discern what my next move should be except keep moving forward. I witness hordes of cameras of citizen journalists pointed at the brutality of the police, hoping just maybe this time it will make a difference and people will see what a police state really looks like. We do not make it to Disneyland, as the sheer number and brutal repressive tactics from the cops deter all of us from even making an attempt to break one of their lines formed over the freeway that leads to the amusement park. *Let's go back to the police station.* The irony of seeking refuge at the place of their dominion seemed absurd, but somehow rational for the given context. As we caucused and decided to move back to the station, I took the sidewalk, the presumed space of safety.

More cops assembling, louder “click-clack,” and distinct orders of **get onto the sidewalk**. Almost all of us adhere this time, already feeling drained from the mental distress of perceived brutality as well as the sheer physical fatigue from being in these tense situations. *Why the fuck am I being surrounded by horses?!* Panic sets in as mounted division move right onto the sidewalk and surround four of us. *ON THE SIDEWALK?! If a horse kicks me, oh well, I am not getting arrested,* as I maneuver my way in between two horses and luckily out of the kettle. I turn around to see my partner make it out and a comrade being dragged away by cops in military fatigue. It was beyond any of our imagination that they would employ animals that could kill us to carry out arrests, especially on the sidewalk where they had practically beaten us to get onto.

First arrest of the day always sets the tone of the rest of the day, at least for me. The fact that someone got arrested for doing exactly what you have been doing makes you feel criminalized and targeted. At this point, merely being there becomes

psychological and mental torture, triggering memories of preceding times where things went completely wrong in the streets before. This time, the realization that no part of the street including the sidewalk was a safe zone was terrifying and an affirmation of coercive capacity of the police state. I wanted to get the hell out of there but the body kept moving towards the police station. Looking at the time, it had only been about an hour even though it felt like a full day. I was exhausted and ready to sit and recollect myself.

Reaching the police station and seeing the throngs of mainstream media cameras provided a sense of quick relief. *Finally they might just let us chill out.* Yet, once again to my complete surprise, I overhear cussing, screaming and louder and faster sounds of **click-clack**. *What the fuck? Arrests? For what?* I see a comrade I just met earlier being dragged away by his arms as the mounted division once again viciously push and hit people out of the way with their horses and batons to create room for more arbitrary arrests. Barrels of less-lethal-rounds are pointed at me, as I instinctively back up and put my hands in the air to signal no physical confrontation. And just as suddenly as it started, the horses back off, as the police seemed satisfied with the successful snatch-and-grab of two of their targets.

Nevertheless, the situation becomes more intensely terrifying, as the wave of realization that the police are disregarding how they would be portrayed in mainstream media in order to flex their repressive power swept over the crowd. I take deep drags on a cigarette, breathing out the tensions and anxiety that I feel, as I am unsure if I will be next in the wave of false arrests for merely breaking an ordinary traffic violation at most. The tension subsides a little as time goes by, and even the police relax their stance and

people begin to grab food from nearby places. I make my way outside of a restaurant to be told about the plan to attend the vigil that the community was holding on Anna Drive for Manuel Diaz.

The crowd has unquestionably thinned out. The bus that brought the majority of Occupy Los Angeles activist had left, leaving those on the ground with not even half the crowd size that began earlier in the day. *How far is it to Anna Drive?* We depend on a local community member to lead us to the vigil, not realizing at the time that it was about three miles from the police station. Those who are left are the indignant radicals, and without any question, we step onto the street once again where the police had waged urban assault on us just few hours before. *Once we get red-zoned, we go on the sidewalk.* I scoff, as the illusion of the sidewalk being a beacon of safety was shattered by the kettling experience earlier. **Sirens again. Click-clack again.** Somewhat faint, but getting louder and closer. Out of nowhere, there are dozens of cops hanging off the side of a truck in military fatigue with arrays of militarized weapons pointed at us. It looks and feels like a bad Hollywood film set glorifying the bourgeois violence of war, but here in Anaheim? The people around me begin to scurry to the sidewalks as police outnumber the protestors at this point.

You are under arrest. A comrade marching right next to me is taken into a squad car for absolutely no reason. Panic and anxiety sets in again, as more cops on SUVs amass around us and the causes for arrests are absolutely arbitrary at this point. There was no specific reason as to why people were arrested, so any of us could technically be next. *I got to keep moving,* as I led myself across the street from the majority of the group who had been blocked in their path on the sidewalk by the mounted division.

Down the street, I could recognize the perplexed yet concerned looks from the residents who had stopped to witness and even film the spectacle. Things are once again a bit calmer, although the huge presence of police on horses and in military fatigue with their latest gadgets is unnerving to say the least. I just wanted to get the hell out of this city at this point or at least make our way towards the vigil.

Out of nowhere, all hell breaks loose. I am all of sudden caught in the middle of running away from a cluster of police with a small group of comrades, no idea as to why I am being chased but pushed by the fear of being arrested. The cops stop chasing, and I quickly realize that they were targeting a comrade for his sign that displayed Mickey Mouse with machine guns with the fitting texts of, **hey kids check out my military police!** Who would have ever imagined that his lighthearted sign would reflect actual reality? As I gather my breath, about six cops rush out of an unmarked black van, violently arresting the comrade with the sign as if he had committed some sort of grave crime against society. As he is arrested, the batons and weapons rear their ugly heads again.

In all honesty, the most vivid memory of that Sunday was not the swinging batons, barrages of assault rifles or the mass presence of police in military fatigue patrolling the city under the guise of “state of emergency.” It also was not the chants of defiance, flying bottles and rocks and hundreds of people in the streets defiantly disobeying any orders from the police state. I shake with fear as I recall the three mile walk back at night from the vigil on Anna Drive to near the police station where we had parked our vehicle. The constant drive-bys of the police deciding on whether to arrest us for affiliation with the protests earlier can only be described as mental terrorism.

During that walk, we felt lost, scared and ready to get the hell out of a city where nothing seemed familiar or inviting. The eerily quiet nightfall seemed to remove the remnants of the brutal arrests and suppression from the fascist police state just few hours before. But more than anything, the damn fireworks from Disneyland shook me to my core leaving us to murmur about how it would be impossible to live in a place where it sounds like bombs are exploding outside of their neighborhood every night. It was a visceral reminder of the double standards under which this city existed; upheld on the backs of hyper-exploited immigrant working force, the tourists and the wealthy are able to enjoy the fruits of the working class labor power. And this disparity culminates nightly with explosions, car alarms and barking dogs. Of course, the city is organized in a way where only the working class immigrant communities have to deal with this deafening reminder of inequality. To me, this was not unlike some colonized nation-state that one reads about their intro to globalization course.

These civil unrests eventually stopped, just like almost all spontaneous insurgent movements. Constrained by the lack of channels to voice their concerns in an accepted manner while maintaining their “nonviolent” stance in order to achieve the moral high ground, the organizers in Anaheim began to turn towards the outlets that no longer posed a threat to the elites. The formalized complaints to the police and protesting to be allotted time during city council meeting to be able to present their issues was the pretty much the only concessions they received. The potential for any insurgent and insurrectionary actions were choked out by the organizers and their wish for nonviolence, even though only violence that occurred against any sentient beings was from the police.

Furthermore, those organizers who decried for nonviolent stance were able to

convey their message on television and radio, defining the boundaries of what would be acceptable “protest methods” to the elites and giving them a pretext to suppress any activities that can be easily marginalized as criminal rioting. It allowed the police to determine what would be “good” and “bad” protesters, leading to them deciding on Occupy as a dangerous threat. Overall, my commentary about the organizers in Anaheim is not to criticize their intentions or to debate the merits of nonviolence in social movements. I agree that moral high ground can be achieved through remaining peaceful in the face of brutal suppression. It is also understandable that since the community members are the ones that bear the aftermath of these protests, it would be wiser for them in the long run to not be so aggressive towards the group of people who can murder you and get away with it. Nevertheless, I feel that solidarity amongst all involved can only be fostered and promoted through the acceptance of all diverse forms of tactics.

Even though Anaheim is going through considerable transformations in its demographics, the city’s political spectrum is not shifting by any means. Also, due to the never-ending service and tourism economy, Anaheim is not suffering the brunt of the overall economic downturn experienced in other urban areas. Yet, there are fractures that became illuminated by the organic uprising of the working class. The continual oppression of the police state justified through the broken windows theory has led the youth to a breaking point with nowhere to receive assistance. As immigrants, the community has less resources and connections to turn to in order to generate a sense of empowerment and seize political or economic power in the city. These structural constraints led to a bottled up feeling of exasperations that spilt over after an unprovoked killing and the repressive tactics of the police that followed afterwards. Even though the

movement has once again subsided into a weekly protest at the police station, the possibility that another civil unrest can rupture the image of the Happiest Place on Earth is seemingly foreseeable.

Occupy LA; Still Going Strong

My participation in Occupy LA has meaningfully transformed my trajectory as a social justice activist. It was one of the first spaces that allowed me to practice my praxis, or the idea of turning theory into practice (Freire 1970). This was the first movement where we were actively creating a prefigurative world in the middle of the urban setting. We never “dropped out,” but we were actually getting people to tune in for once. If any of our efforts bared fruit, criticisms around the one percent in a supposed “classless” society sprung up from the seeds of our civil disobedient direct actions. And we once again exposed the violent modalities of the prison industrial complex backed up by the police departments across the country.

In many ways, being engulfed in the nonprofit sector had depoliticized my theories, unsettling me with a sense of emptiness that remained unfulfilled by permitted actions and visits to Congressional offices. Within Occupy, I was organizing with the radicals; we went to the roots of the problem without being called “socialist utopian” or “paranoid dissidents.” Our overt criticisms of the superstructures of capitalism echoed across the globe, as we deconstructed and opposed all forms of heteropatriarchy, classism, gender inequities and racism through the prefigurative creation of a new world. It was humbling to be a student of various herstories and histories, a melting-pot of divergent standpoints and political views that could not possibly be explained by one grand theory or singular “Truth.”

We were creating something new without any structure, guidelines or blueprint that told us how the process should work. Coming up with these procedural steps was a true test in our willingness to live out the principles of horizontalism. We had to learn to privilege each other's voices through co-creating an open forum for direct participation in the decision making process. Through our daily ritual of general assemblies, we practiced, reproduced and maintained our commitment to the ideologies and tools to change the world. Our lives were a direct representation of what it could be if people seized power and began solving social problems themselves without depending on the institutions that caused the problems in the first place. Although the State attempted to crush this rising consciousness through both overt and covert repression tactics, we readjusted our tactics, morphing into radical foreclosure eviction defense groups and establishing mutual aid with the houseless through feeding the people actions.

My comrades made me feel respected, not as an academic male, but as a student of life wanting to just be part of the radical dialogue and actions to change the world. The civil disobedience and direct actions invigorated my hedonistic desires with the fulfillment that my theory was actually being practiced. The difference in the potential to achieve genuine social change that I felt from Occupy compared to the nonprofit organizing was vast, as the collective effervescence that filled the encampment and the temporary autonomous zones that followed transformed all of us into not only more radical activists, but brought us together as one community. Most times, the Occupy space made me feel at home, feeling comfortable standing in solidarity with people from all walks of life coming together to create structural changes to our broken system. From occupying public space in order to lay siege on the violent notion of private space to

deconstructing just about everything that once stood as an immovable facts of life, the experience of the last two years with the Occupy movement have transformed who I am as a person and an activist.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Our reality is an unequal one: the rich are getting richer, while the poor are getting poorer. A global unified movement that mobilizes against the political, social and economic control of the minority ruling class is necessary vision that must be cultivated. The working class is the fabric of society, the workers that we encounter on a daily basis as we navigate our capitalist world-- the janitors, the waiters, bus drivers, factory workers, mom-and-pop shop owners. They uphold and strengthen the foundations of civil society through their productive activities, yet they do not reap the benefits of their labor and instead struggle to meet their basic needs. The current reality that the majority of the global population lives in abject poverty while being denied basic human rights display the need for movements striving to create structural changes to society.

Historical transformations to social inequality have only occurred when disenfranchised and marginalized communities mobilized and struggled for it collectively. Genuine challenges to manifestations of injustice was most powerful when people mobilized together with shared goals, mutual aid for the wellness of one another and strategies to demand institutional and structural changes. Therefore, activists in all movements need to work on empowering communities to organize together through establishing trust, affinity and love for one another. When the community members develop these feelings of togetherness with people they struggle with, only then they can form a resilient opposition to the ruling-class power (Kivel 2007: 141).

The movements that I focused on this project both made genuine attempts to foster feelings of mutual solidarity and collective effervescence amongst the participants. As for myself, being part of these movements has transformed my praxis to embrace the

emotions of love and trust as the guiding principle for my continuous participation in the social justice landscape. The last few years has completely revamped not only my praxis, but also my outlook on the potentiality of social movements to achieve radical social change. Even though I am still jaded in many ways regarding the status quo, the people I have met throughout the last few years have consistently ignited a sense of hope for the future-- that there are pockets of resistance everywhere, filled with passionate activists who are completely dedicated to achieving social justice. Not only have I become more aware of the powerful possibility of ordinary people to mobilize for social change, I feel ever-more hopeful about the possibilities of a unified global struggle against all modalities of oppression.

The solidarity amongst the immigrant rights organizers and Occupy LA has tremendously grew after we displayed support for each other's cause, culminating a massive march for immigrant rights in last year's May Day activities and at rallies for comprehensive immigration reform. I was entrusted to play the crucial role of mediating between the two groups since I have personal connections and built trust within the immigrant rights movement that most Occupy members do not. Our role as Occupy LA was to radicalize the conversation, as we not only advocate for policy changes but a world without borders and nations-- we have provided the foundation for the immigrant movement to frame their issues beyond "path to legalization." Although the majority of my undocumented friends did not join in during the encampment or actions due to fear of being arrested, the support that Occupy LA displayed towards immigrant rights in the city have successfully instilled a sense of solidarity and a potential for the movements to work together in the future.

Nevertheless, navigating the landscape of social justice dominated by the nonprofit industrial complex has been rather difficult and at times seemingly impossible to overcome. From feeling completely disconnected from my work within the 501(c)(3) organization to dealing with “careerist” activists who were only present to push for their narrow-minded agendas in Occupy, the NPIC has continued to manifest itself through my activist life. Even the Occupy movement with its intentions to resist the traditional models of organizing could not completely shake off the grips of the NPIC, as many activists within the movement took jobs with 501(c)(3) organizations or unions after the encampments were disbanded by the state. This failure to completely resist the NPIC presents yet another challenge to the social justice activists; are we able to stop the machines of the NPIC and foster a revolutionary movement based on community, mutual aid and horizontalism? Can we as activists truly make the claim that an “another world is possible” when our own milieu is modeled after the tenets of capitalism? These questions and doubts must be honestly confronted by those who participate in the social justice sector. .

I take the position that as organizers, we do have a choice; we can continue to cooperate with the NPIC and the elites through focusing primarily on grants, foundations, evaluations and policies, or we can reimagine our roles in society as those invigorated to strive for social change, consciousness-building and liberation of the oppressed communities. Organizers must start examining ourselves through asking the crucial question of “to whom are we accountable to?” The answer must be analyzed through the tangible effects that our work has on the most marginalized sectors of our society. It is possible to do social justice work towards achieving radical social change while serving

the needs and interests of the working class, people of color, women, the queer community, and those with disabilities.

Many of us need to organize outside of the boundaries of the nonprofits as it is almost natural that we become disconnected from our communities when we are inside offices and buildings. Instead, social justice activists must support any public sites of resistance in our communities through which people can come together to realize their collective power (Kivel 2007: 142). We should not be content on providing services and helping few people get ahead while the majority of the communities we supposedly want to organize are constantly oppressed, criminalized and exploited. More importantly, we must not internalize supremacy (Kivel 2007: 146), privileging ourselves and our opinions over those who have less political and social power than many of organizers in the nonprofits do.

All social movements are part of “one struggle” that is taking part in every community outside of the nonprofit industrial complex: therefore, our work must be accountable to these groups and work to seize power together to achieve social change. We must always speak truth to power, willing to lose our jobs over perpetuating the status quo by remaining silent. Social change comes through our affinity and our acknowledgment that we share similar wants, needs, interests and hopes for a better future for all. There needs to be spaces where organizations can come to understand the interrelatedness of our struggles and reject the current model that makes us compete for grants, effectually barring us from mobilizing together to challenge the dominant ruling class. Together, we can and must reject the hierarchical accountability to the foundations, funders and the state and instead be accountable to those who most need our solidarity

and commitment.

I also would like to reflect on the few methodological concerns that have arisen from this project that I am wrestling with. These reflexive accounts are not created by myself, but were moments of co-created time and space that was completely relational. Similar to ethical concerns raised by those who utilize autoethnography as a method, it has become exceedingly difficult to write about people you develop deep personal relationships with. It is without a doubt that language does not mirror experience but rather they create them (Denzin 1997: 5). These tensions are an ethical dilemma, one that stems from the crisis of representation; researchers cannot directly capture lived experiences, but such experiences are created in the social text written by the researcher (Denzin 1997: 3). In other words, these spaces are created, fostered, maintained and ruptured through my project which describes my experience with those who inhabited it with me.

Unlike a typical study in which the relations between the researcher and the participants culminate when the research is finished, in my study, the relational standpoint between the participants and the researcher becomes blurred, and I am forced to think deeply about how I choose to represent those who I choose to put into my study. There is fear that through privileging my voice-- this project is ultimately locating the power in the hands of the researcher's as if it's the only one that matters. Instead of giving credence to those who had co-created these worlds with me, I feel as if I am representing these people from my academic standpoint. These people in my paper who I formed relationships way beyond this project should be at the heart of the paper, yet they seem invisible to me.

I also feel uneasy of being critical of certain situations, since these critiques stem from my theoretical and political point of view and disregard other participants. It feels as if I am “otherizing” those who I stand in solidarity with, analyzing their performances as if I have a privileged academic lens from which I am somehow given the ability to make judgments about those that may see it completely different from me. It does not seem democratic nor subverts the dominant paradigm of research that privileges the accounts of the researchers over the participants. Although I am an insider in these worlds, the autoethnographical style of writing makes me feel distant and at times like an outside researcher.

Furthermore, this project does not feel as if I am confronting the traditional ways of doing ethnography, but using autoethnography as just another tool to analyze and augment the theoretical understanding of social phenomena. While analytic autoethnography is a method that is utilized by certain researchers, Denzin rightfully criticizes this approach as going back the traditional route of describing the world under preferred methods and themes in order to improve the theoretical knowledge of social phenomena instead of striving to make the world better through our research (Denzin 2006: 421). So much of this paper is literature review that does not include my voice, hence making it feel as if this paper is not based in autoethnography but just another academic paper.

Maybe even more importantly, Ellis and Bochner (2006) maintain that just because one positions themselves in the paper does not make it autoethnography. Instead of connecting the personal to the social and attempting to change the world, this paper seems to lean towards theoretical analytics for the sake of new knowledge. Plus, I am

anxious, as my writing lacks the evocative qualities of good fiction-writing, for I have been indoctrinated in traditional forms of academic writing. I have tensions with my work, as I do not feel like my writing truly captured the evocative moments while invoking verisimilitude. It feels like a book-report and the autoethnographical section feels more like typical academic reflexive accounts.

While I acknowledge that these tensions do exist, I also understand that my experience is just “one truth” out of many. There is no singular, objective truth from which everyone's experiences are exact. One cannot capture all the experiences of the participants, but can only strive to recall the moments of epiphany that made these moments memorable for me and evocative to the readers. As Ellis (1999: 673) says, “every story is partial and situated.” My autoethnography is just one perspective, but by attempting to provide an honest account of my reflections of co-created knowledge and space, I am hoping to resolve this tension as much as possible. My project is just one textual representation of divergent experiences that inhabit the stories I told through this project. Through this confession, I desire to continue weaving through this complicated world of performing ethnography to move people to action. Although I am uneasy with certain aspects of the project, I overall feel accomplished with the project.

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