

CREATIVE NONVIOLENT ACTION:
LEVERAGING THE INTERSECTIONS OF ART, PROTEST,
AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
TECHNOLOGY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

by

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A THESIS

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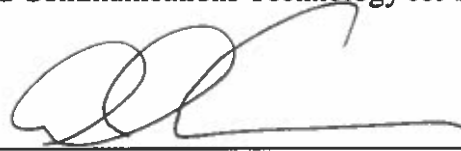
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An Abstract of the Thesis of

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This thesis investigates the relationship between creative works and nonviolent protest. It studies the impact of visual and performative art on movement building and examines the features of Creative Nonviolent Protest that make the process a viable method for cultivating a culture of peace. This thesis addresses artistic mediums from movements of United States Civil Rights era and recent demonstrations against police brutality. It uses these exemplary models as the basis for an analysis of the dynamic intersections between creative cultural production, nonviolent protest, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). This thesis contends that art and creative media enhance nonviolent protest and movement building. It argues that ICT and the mobile-social network facilitate the rapid expansion and increased participation in social movements. It draws the conclusions that combining creative mediums, nonviolent direct action, and new technologies in social movements has the power to sustain broader public participation in the project of establishing social justice and peace today.

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Introduction

Nonviolent public protest is a vital sign of life in a healthy democracy. It is the act of protest that signifies that citizens are engaged in the political process and that we have a stake in the direction in which our country moves. When we rise up, declaring outrage at injustice and at that which is outdated, when we speak up, collectively proclaiming a new vision and course for society, this is when a democratic system is truly thriving. In particular, when we choose to protest in both creative and nonviolent ways, we invite others to participate with us in a collective process of social, political, and cultural evolution that is as powerful as it is peaceful.

The Civil Rights era is perhaps the most notable time in United States history when these activities were taking place. The mid 1950's to the late 1960's were characterized by conflict between institutions of power and the citizens that these institutions were, supposedly, designed to serve. It marked a period of substantial legislative and cultural change in the U.S. The public protest that persisted throughout the decade directly shaped the culture and political climate of the nation. Throughout this period, visual and performative works of art emerged, which actively engaged a public audience with the social and political messages of the movements from which these works of art originated.

As I reflected on this period as one that was markedly active with creative nonviolent protest, I became curious as to how the relationship between art and activism has transformed since. Are visual and performative media central to nonviolent protest movements today? What is the relationship between creative expression through the arts and nonviolent direct action with political purpose? How have new technologies been

incorporated into the production and distribution of activist art and to what effect? In the pages that follow, I offer an investigation of these questions and endeavor to provide a meaningful analysis to deepen our understanding of the intersections between art, nonviolent protest, and new Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). I hope that this investigation may contribute to an ongoing inquiry and to the practice of building and sustaining future social movements. Perhaps the ultimate goal of this project is to provide insight into the capacity afforded by combining these media and leveraging them to create lasting social change.

I will begin this discussion with a presentation of a lexicon that defines peace, nonviolence, violence, and social justice within the context of protest. I will then engage three case studies from the Civil Rights era—Chicano theater, Black Church music, and the peace sign—to offer an analysis of these mediums as expressions and characteristic embodiments of the missions of the Chicano, African American, and Vietnam antiwar movements respectively. In order to discuss the role of, and relationship between, art, nonviolent protest and ICT currently, I will briefly examine the widespread use of new and emerging ICT throughout the U.S. Specifically, I will consider the function of the Internet, new media, and mobile devices in grassroots organizing and the production of creative cultural works. Combining lessons learned from the creative nonviolent protest of the sixties and the function of new technologies in movement building in recent years, I will study art activism and ICT use in the context of the protests that began in Ferguson, Missouri in August of 2014, in response to police brutality. I will utilize the protests in Ferguson, and the #BlackLivesMatter campaign that has grown strong since, as a case study in order to demonstrate the capacity of creative expressions, direct

action tactics, and technological tools to engage public participation in nonviolent protest in 2015 at a grander scale and at far greater speeds than was previously possible. Finally, I will present the significance of these findings and their potential correlation to addressing the issues we face today in the continuing struggle for greater equity, social justice, and peace in the United States.

I contend here that the practice of creative nonviolent protest is an accessible and transformative process for advancing any campaign that aims to achieve greater social justice and peace within society. Within that, I endeavor to prove that audience members experience the political messages carried by creative media in intimately personal ways. I assert that the power of the arts in movement building and nonviolent direct action is the capacity of creative media to personalize that which is public, and to weave profound connections between maker, medium, viewer, and the broader socio-political issue at hand. I underscore the ways in which new ICT and the mobile-social network function as a unique creative medium for political expression. Furthermore, I suggest that this medium facilitates the rapid expansion and increased participation in social movements because of its quality of timeliness and its capacity to synthesize the expressions presented through multiple media—traditional and digital—simultaneously.

A Lexicon: Nonviolence, Social Justice, Peace and Protest

A discussion of creative nonviolent protest requires an understanding of nonviolence itself, in addition to understanding both violence and peace. This discussion also warrants the definition of the term social justice, which is often used in combination with or in place of these terms. The definitions discussed here will serve as the conceptual framework for understanding how creative nonviolent protest can be used as a process to transition society from systems of oppression and violence toward systems of social justice and peace.

Johan Galtung defines peace as a collection of “social goals...agreed to by many, if not necessarily by most,” that are “complex and difficult, but not impossible to attain.” He relates peace to violence in these terms: “peace is absence of violence” and “violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations.” According to Galtung, peace and violence are opposites (“Violence, Peace and Peace Research,” 168). He explains that, when human beings are being physically and mentally inhibited from embodying their fullest potential, violence is involved. Violence is the cause of that discrepancy between a person’s actual circumstances and an alternative state of wellbeing that would be otherwise possible to attain.

Galtung builds a solid framework for conceptualizing how violence and peace relate to each other and how they function. He describes three types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural. Direct violence is interpersonal violence where the actor and the subject are closely related; the actor intends to achieve an outcome, for example, the injury of the subject through physical beating. Structural violence pertains to the social

systems and institutions that inhibit the transformation of a subject's, latent potential into its actual realization. The restriction of a constituent's ability to participate in voting, or the practice of Stop-and-Frisk policing, are both examples of structural violence at work. Cultural violence refers to the symbolic realm with a pervasive and all encompassing presence. Where cultural violence is present, morality is blurred in a grayscale such that actions and structures, which may otherwise have been clearly identifiable as 'violent' or 'peaceful,' become imperceptible within the culture. Cultural violence is the manipulation of images in public space such that these images, and people's understanding of them, reinforce actions of direct violence and systems of structural violence. For example, a racist portrayal of an African American male in film perpetuates the very ideologies that predicate the perpetration of direct and structural violence on black men. Based on an analysis of six aspects of culture in relation to violence, religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science, Galtung suggests that there may be a tipping point at which individual components of cultural violence accumulate to such a degree that together they create what can simply be called a violent culture ("Cultural Violence").

Each of these three types of violence is correlated with a temporal aspect: direct violence is an event, structural violence is a process, and cultural violence is a persistent field for representation from which collective and individual perceptions are drawn. These three types exist in relationship to each other in a "violence triangle" with one type at each point ("Violence, Peace and Peace Research"). This change may also be conceived of as a multidirectional flow where direct, structural and cultural violence all influence one another through a network of interconnection.

Galtung's definition of social justice builds on those earlier definitions of peace and structural violence. Social justice is the type of peace that is absent of structural violence; it is the "egalitarian distribution of power and resources" throughout society to all citizens ("Violence, Peace and Peace Research," 183). Social justice relates to all three levels of violence and peace, but the term is most closely related to structural and cultural levels of violence and is perhaps a more accurate term for what may also be called structural peace.

Nonviolence is both a philosophy and a political strategy. It is an active process of working toward a peaceful outcome, which itself involves only those activities that are absent of violence and, because of this, are conducive to the peaceful ends that they mean to achieve. Nonviolence consists of activities and behaviors that are outside of the standard procedures of the political system, such as agitation tactics like marches or pickets in service to achieving some social or political goal. Galtung suggests "nonviolence is built around the basic hypothesis that persuasion is more effective if it is expressed in action terms, rather than as words" ("On the Meaning of Nonviolence," 252). This definition highlights that nonviolence is not an act of abstaining—except for from violence itself—it is action that seeks to foster peace through the elimination of the violence of social injustice.

Galtung describes this peace, violence and social justice framework mainly in relation to violence. However, he acknowledges that, if direct, structural and cultural violence exist in relation to each other, then direct, structural and cultural peace must also correlate. I suggest here that we include a peace triangle to complement the violence triangle in a comprehensive framework for understanding these terms and their

relationship. Assuming this type of research has any practical application to activism, how can we build structures of peace by focusing solely on structures of violence? If we hope to deconstruct structures of violence, without a framework for understanding peace itself, how can we replace those structures with ones that will serve us more fully? An emphasis on social justice and peace in theorizing these subjects, in addition to a thorough understanding of violence, is essential to the generation and implementation of peaceful processes, peaceful structures, and peaceful cultures.

What is the role of nonviolent protest in transitioning society from oppression and violence to social justice and peace? These working definitions help to clarify the role of nonviolent protest as a process with the power to widely engage the public and with the potential to produce these outcomes. Protest may be defined as a statement or action that expresses an objection or as a firm and emphatic declaration. Synonyms may include words such as complaint, disapproval, dissent, outcry, and challenge. They could also include words such as assert, affirm, announce, maintain, proclaim, declare, and vow. Here, two aspects of the concept of protest become evident: protest is at once reactive or responsive and proactive or creative.

Nonviolent protest provides a model for the transformation of ‘violence triangles’ to ‘peace triangles.’ Because nonviolent protest involves a repudiation of all forms of direct, structural and cultural violence, it enacts a process that is in keeping with the peaceful ends that it strives to achieve. In other words, nonviolent protest is a peaceful process that will remodel ‘violence triangles’ into ‘peace triangles.’ With a creative nonviolent approach the means and the ends are woven together intimately through enactment.

Nonviolent protest movements that grow in strength are usually perceived as threats to the institutions of power and the established status quo that they relentlessly resist and vigorously challenge. As soon these activities, and the people participating in them, are identified as opponents they are often targeted, suppressed, and rendered obsolete by the those institutions that they publically threaten. Although this is true of many movements historically, and of course it is not always the case, altogether abandoning nonviolent protest as a viable means of challenging structures of violence and creating structures of peace is not productive. Rather, the incorporation of creative cultural production with political purpose in nonviolent protest is a method of change making that warrants further exploration.

What role do visual arts, theater and other types of cultural production play in creating outcomes of social justice and peace? The creation and replication of imagery, script or song as an aspect of nonviolent protest activity allows for rapid dissemination of information and serves as a protective shield of anonymity through which artist-activists and the general public alike can participate in nonviolent protest. Of particular interest in the pages that follow are the myriad examples of nonviolent processes and creative mediums working in harmony to engage people in the hard work of changing predominantly violent aspects of society into predominantly peaceful forms. Carrying these concepts throughout provides a framework with which to analyze the intersections between nonviolent protest and creative expression. This framework may serve to illuminate the dynamic relationship between these mediums—political and artistic—so as to clarify the transformative power that they may have to influence cultural evolution.

We Shall Overcome: Black Church Music in the African American Movement

The African American civil rights movement led the way to confront issues of injustice and inequality on a large scale and to legislate permanent change, not only for African Americans, but also for all U.S. citizens. As the black struggle for freedom in the south built momentum parallel movements, such as the Chicano movement and the Vietnam antiwar movement, emerged in their own contexts.

Allison Calhoun-Brown describes the involvement of the black church in the African American movement in the article "Upon This Rock." The black church, a term used to discuss all predominantly black Christian congregations, had been at the center of African American communities for decades. It served as a place of worship and as an autonomous social and political space. The church housed the arts, social services, civic associations, and business enterprises. It was the effort to build black churches in the nineteenth century, independent of white churches, which is cited as one of the first black freedom movements in the U.S. Since that initial liberation movement, the black church has established that central to its mission is the ongoing work of guaranteeing freedom and justice for black people in society (169).

Calhoun-Brown studies the influence of churches and ministers on political behavior in the black community. Discussing the connection between the black church and the mobilization of African Americans in the movement she writes: "In the case of the Civil Rights Movement, the receptivity of African-American religious culture to the message of nonviolence is what really linked the black church to the movement" (170). Martin Luther King Jr., a minister himself, had at first been resistant to join in a

politicized campaign. However, it was the intrinsic connection between the faith he cultivated through the black church and the principles of nonviolence that were resonant within the church, yet applicable beyond, that compelled him to take up the leadership positions that he held.

King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957 following the success of the Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama the year before. The SCLC was an umbrella organization that worked within networks of established associations. The work of the SCLC included coordinating large voter registration drives and protest campaigns throughout the south including those in Albany, Georgia, St. Augustine, Florida, and Birmingham and Selma, Alabama (“Southern Christian”). The SCLC empowered people with the philosophy of Christian nonviolence. Movement leaders brought the work of civil rights into the black church to contextualize issues of racism and discrimination as acts of moral misconduct. They declared that this moral misconduct needed to be challenged not just by African Americans, but taken up by all people with a virulent sense of personal responsibility. As a result of the organizing work done by the SCLC in the black church community, activism eventually came to be understood as what Calhoun-Brown terms “practical Christianity” (172). The message of nonviolence, given new and culturally relevant meaning, mobilized members of the black church community to engage in direct action and more fully participate in the movement.

The movement was not formed from within the black church, but in partnership with it. One cultural resource that was brought creatively into the work of protest, and that became integral to sustaining the African American freedom movement, was

music. Songs rooted deep in the history of the black people, from slavery to the establishment of the independent black church itself, gained new relevance and meaning in this context. From the earliest days of movement building through to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, black church music was a force that kept people going forward. By drawing upon black church music as a cultural resource the movement built strength, incorporated and retained participants, and continued to empower and unite people.

Black church music translated the promise of an ideal heaven after life into the reality of earthly goals—goals that could be achieved through participation in nonviolent direct action in the movement. Transmuting metaphors with spiritual significance into touchstones for the meaning and value of nonviolent action in the African American movement, the songs of the black church gave new life to the people who sang them. In a discussion of “Singing Civil Rights” in *The Art of Protest*, T.V. Reed writes, “music was the heart and soul of the movement, but it was always also a highly practical tool in the struggle” (14). Singing, as a cultural ritual, had been at the heart of the black church community for generations. In the African American movement, strategic organizers found ways to engage that traditional cultural structure to build solidarity and unity in new ways, which manifested as a strong front to wage nonviolent resistance against racism and injustice.

Perhaps the most profound work of the songs of the black church as they were incorporated throughout the movement was the way that they shored up the courage of the singers. Music served to stop fear in its tracks. The lyrics and the melodies of the songs both acknowledged fear and directly challenged it. Cordell Reagon, a founding

member of the Freedom Singers group and of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), described his experience singing this music in the movement:

You know you are...going to get beaten, you know you might even get killed, but the sound, the power of the community, was watching over you and keeping you safe. (Quoted in Reed, 26).

Reagon, and all those who joined together in song, courageously faced their fears and the violent individuals and structures surrounding them. They sang their way into action. Music in the movement gave people the freedom to transcend the challenges of reality in the present. Through the act of singing, people were free to create, if momentarily, the brighter future that they envisioned and longed so much to build.

“We Shall Overcome,” perhaps the best known anthem of the Civil Rights era exemplifies the way that music brought people into a unique space and acted as a unifying cultural resource. As Reed notes, the song, originally titled “I’ll Overcome Someday,” was a version of a folk song sung by slaves in the field that was officially published by Charles Albert Tindley, an African American Methodist minister, in 1901. “We Shall Overcome” is a compilation of many different influences and many of the people who have surely contributed to its development have gone unnamed because the nature of making the music is such that, through collaboration and iteration, new versions of the piece evolve constantly. As elements are added and changed, others are trimmed away, and it is not always clear who contributed each detail. The melody is reminiscent of Roman Catholic Marian hymns of the 18th century and the lyrics are the result of collaboration between black and white singers and activists at the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee in the late nineteen fifties (Bobetsky, 2). The lyrics were originally sung, “I will,” as this was a traditional way to express personal responsibility

in the black community, even as part of a group, 'we.' In churches in the early days, for example, the lines "we are not afraid" would have been sung as "I am not afraid" (Adams). Bernice Johnson-Reagon, another member of the Freedom Singers explains that in order to even have the group, all of the 'I's', the individuals, need to be accounted for:

It is when I say, 'I'm gonna bring cake,' and somebody else says, 'I'll bring chicken,' that you actually know you're gonna get a dinner. So there are many black traditional collective-expression songs where it's 'I,' because in order for you to get a group you have to have I's. (Quoted in Adams)

When singers and organizers from the Highlander Folk School started teaching the song in cities throughout the south, and in Albany, Georgia where Johnson-Reagon lived, they brought with them the 'we' version of the piece. At this point, as the organizers suggested making the change from 'I' to 'we,' Johnson-Reagon fully embraced the switch:

And you know what I said to myself? 'If you need it, you got it.' What that statement does for me is document the presence of black and white people in this country, fighting against injustice. And you have black people accepting that need because they were also accepting that support and that help. (Quoted in Adams)

As the song emerged from the black church and was incorporated into the movement more fully, Johnson-Reagon and others sang 'we.' This change in language collectivized the struggle of the singers and invited others into the movement by offering a shared space shaped by a common lexicon. The simplicity of the lyrics distilled politically complex and morally weighted concepts into a clear, concrete and empowering discourse. This distillation of discourse created a community of 'speakers' who were as

much activists as they were artists, even if they only embodied these qualities in transitory timeframes through the very act of singing. The anthem that has become a touchstone of the African American movement, and for the entire Civil Rights era, took hold.

“We Shall Overcome” uplifted African Americans and their allies in the movement and has since become the sound of a call for peace around the world. Taking the practical and political messages of nonviolence and imbuing them in folks through song, and the ritual of singing together, gave people spirit and with that spirit, great power to persevere. In song, people crossed a bridge between the challenges of reality and the dreams of a more desirable future. The transcendent experience of singing the lyrics of “We Shall Overcome” allowed for the transformation of the uncertain future into a sure and instantaneous creation of that future through the present moment. Music of the black church, as it was integrated in the African American movement, bridged racial divides and united African Americans with their white allies, while simultaneously bridging the divide between the mundane and the imaginary. Song served as an expressive medium for a future that could only be dreamt; yet, it made that future real for protestors through the very act of performing. Transcendent and practical performance was not unique to the use of black church music in the African American movement. It was a practice that profoundly shaped the Chicano movement as well.

El Teatro Campesino: The Original Theater of the Chicano Movement

The Chicano Movement was the process by which Latinos in the U.S., specifically Americans with Mexican heritage created a politicized collective identity and won concrete victories for new liberties and protections under the law. The term Chicano unified Americans with Mexican and indigenous heritage by tying these identities to a shared homeland: Aztlan. The Chicano Movement was shaped and led in large part by the farm worker and the student movements within it. The work that began in Delano, California in 1965 with the farm worker's strike became a national civil rights project as the movement gained momentum in cities throughout the U.S.

In 1965, Filipino farm workers in the Coachella Valley of California began a wildcat strike demanding an increase in their hourly wage. Because of the speed at which grapes ripen, the strike put enough pressure on growers that in just one week the farm workers received the raise in pay that they had demanded. Farther north in Delano, California, Filipino workers, and the Chicano workers alongside them, faced different challenges. Leaders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta formed the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). The organizers created the association with the intention to organize the San Joaquin Valley for five years in preparation for a moment of opportunity when they could leverage their power to gain better wages. However, when the Filipino workers in Delano went on strike, the NFWA had to make a decision: either to immediately join the strike in solidarity, despite the huge financial burden this would put on the Chicano farm workers they represented, or to continue building their movement. Would they choose to organize with Filipino workers to fight their shared exploitation?

Chavez and Huerta, among other leaders within the NFWA, made the decision to strike. After about three weeks, more than three thousand farm workers had left their jobs. These walkouts had significant economic impacts on dozens of grape growers and farms in Delano and throughout the San Joaquin Valley. Soon after, with no response to their requests for negotiation from the local growers, Chicano leaders began to advocate for a nationwide consumer boycott of California grapes. They sent organizers across the country to build support for the boycott and for the farm worker's strike, which quickly became the heart of the Chicano movement. In 1966, Chavez and the farm workers of the NFWA embarked upon the Peregrination, a march—staged as a pilgrimage—from Delano to the state capital in Sacramento (*Chicano!—The Struggle in the Fields*).

It was on this momentous march that Luis Valdez had the opportunity to offer his passion for theater to the striking farm workers and the Chicano people. Valdez put on plays throughout his youth and studied theater at San Jose State University. He contended that theater could be a powerful tool for catalyzing personal politicization and collective action in the farm worker strike. He began working with a small group of farm workers in the evenings to rehearse material that they then performed on the road the next day. These initial rehearsals, during which actors worked from scripts written by Valdez, evolved into improv-based dramas called *actos*.

The Peregrination march marked the beginning of the original Chicano Theater, *El Teatro Campesino* (*El Teatro*). The *acto* was a short scene, usually developed through improvisation based on a rough written outline. The actors built off of this script organically, enacting a story or message relevant to their fellow Chicanos in the audience. These short plays were a unique combination that synthesized elements of

satirical and morality dramas. They were the product of many influences, some of those that Valdez notes specifically include: Japanese and European theater, Mayan and Aztec mythology and ritual, Italian and Mexican comedia, Pagan ritual, American proletarian theater, and the guerrilla theater of the 1920's (Huerta, "Chicano Expressive Culture").

Within the wider Chicano movement the farm worker's struggle emphasized that nonviolence and creative forms of protest went hand in hand. Yolanda Broyles-González elucidates the creative power of El Teatro and its artistic and political role in the Chicano movement in *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement*. She explains that the material that El Teatro worked with was intentionally crafted to reflect the daily experiences of strikers in ways that facilitated nuanced understandings of their own life circumstances, provided comedic respite in the face of pain, developed personal empowerment, and fostered political engagement. Drawing on the Mexican carpa tradition, a humorous theatrical medium that emerged from the working class and was common in the 1920's and 1930's, El Teatro intentionally incorporated a sense of humor to unite people and to more gently address tough issues. Use of humor was essential to the creative process. Cesar Chavez noted of El Teatro that:

With carpa, we could say difficult things to people without offending them. We could talk about people being cowards, for example. Instead of being offensive, it would be funny. Yet it could communicate union issues. (Broyles-González, 13)

This was particularly useful in convincing folks to join the march and to leave their jobs. Using humor, El Teatro engaged new farm workers on the road and kept spirits high among strikers who had been marching since the very beginning. With a dose of humor El Teatro was able to communicate politicized messages in a way that would be received and internalized differently than if organizers had solicited participation in a

purely intellectual or verbal manner. As an experimental and creative space the theater had its own way of disarming folks and drawing them in. These confrontations with the creative were in a sense nonconfrontational in that they allowed space for the individual to question freely for him or herself.

El Teatro brought people together not only with its sense of humor, but also with its collaborative creative process. One actor, Felipe Cantú, described the nature of the material and techniques as “communal” and the process of developing and performing the actos as “free and constant sharing...stealing!” (Broyles-González 15). This stealing was a joke amongst El Teatro participants because the process was inherently collaborative such that ‘stealing’ came to be a critique of the privatized and monopolized nature of the standard entertainment industry. To joke that a scene or idea was ‘stolen’ was also a way to simply acknowledge that between actors, nothing in El Teatro could really be stolen. The whole process was about sharing together creatively in a way that gave people a sense of purpose and identity, both as individuals and as a group. The theater gave people the opportunity to discover their identity in ways that were not available to them in other venues within or outside the movement. The playful and enlivening quality of the performative pieces strengthened group solidarity. It promoted spontaneous creativity as a process with which to confront injustice and oppression and to negotiate one’s daily life with a more buoyant spirit.

Perhaps one of the most defining artistic qualities of the works of El Teatro, especially in its very early days as it emerged in the Peregrination march, was its “Rasquachi” aesthetic. Rasquachi is a Mexican term meaning “brash and hybrid...held together with movidas...movidas are the coping strategies you use to gain time, to make

options, to retain hope.” With its rasquachi character, El Teatro embodied the “aesthetics of the underdog” (Huerta, “From the Margins...”). The making of the works of El Teatro and the growth of the Chicano movement shared this organic and meandering hybrid process.

This underdog status was transformed into the site of empowerment for Delano farm workers and for Chicanos throughout the U.S. Embracing this underdog aesthetic, with a sense of humor, self-respect, and a dignified purpose, El Teatro found ways to engage people and to keep them dedicated to the struggle. Through the actos put on by El Teatro, the striking workers, who were gaining a new consciousness of their own oppression, became empowered heroes meanwhile their oppressors, once powerful, were undermined.

Valdez emphasized the transformational quality of the work of El Teatro for individual participants—both actors and audience members—and for the Chicano people as a whole. The way that the performance flipped the script of life experience, if temporarily, activated people in meaningful ways:

Its not primarily language based theater. Its theater of rhythms, beats, of rituals, of visual imagery, its something else. Its theater of action. Its either social action or we're doing sacred theater, but its action. Action.
(Broyles-González, 19)

In its capacity for active engagement of the actors and of the audience members, El Teatro was formed as “an instrument in the evolution of our people” (Broyles-González, 88). This evolution was not just social and societal in scale, but it was deeply personal. The spirit was conceived of as a “blueprint for motion and not for thought” and it was through that active participation in collaborative theater that people became

empowered to move with their individual blueprints and the shared blueprints of the unified Chicano people (Broyles-González, 91). By empowering people to act, in both senses of the word, El Teatro protested injustice and created models of resistance.

El Teatro gave the performative medium political power. It enhanced the practice of nonviolent protest, a process to which the NFWA leaders were steadfastly committed even if, and especially when, late in the farm worker strike some frustrated and impatient participants considered violent retaliation against noncompliant growers. El Teatro kept farm workers engaged and focused on a long journey for justice, yet simultaneously offered people a release from the mundane challenges of the daily routine on the march. El Teatro inspired a new consciousness in the Chicano people that took hold and spread across the country as the entire Chicano movement grew ever more powerful.

In July of 1970, five years after the first day of the farm workers strike, the NFWA finally negotiated a meeting with the growers in Delano. Twenty-six Delano growers signed new labor contracts with the NFWA. The United Farm Worker union was officially formed (*Chicano!—Struggle in the Fields*). More work was yet to be done. Around the same time, Chicano students and lead activists within the movement were organizing in response to the Vietnam War and formed the National Chicano Moratorium Committee (NCMC) to engage the Chicano community in opposing the war while maintaining a focus on social justice at home in the U.S.

The Peace Sign: Icon of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

The U.S. involvement in Vietnam gave rise to copious public protest and over time, a strong antiwar movement emerged. The Vietnam antiwar movement formed gradually as the U.S. engaged in a proxy war up until 1965, at which point President Johnson entered into a full-fledged air and ground war in Vietnam. By 1969, people across the U.S. were turning out in the hundreds of thousands to protest the war. During those massive demonstrations a symbol that had been associated with antiwar sentiment in the United Kingdom made its way onto signs, posters, t-shirts and various other materials displayed by protestors in the streets of the U.S.

That symbol is what is now most often recognized as the peace sign and originated in the UK about ten years earlier. On Easter weekend in 1958, organizers from the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War (DAC) gathered protestors for a nonviolent march from London to the site of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston (Sinclair). The DAC leadership established its purpose in the following terms: "to assist the conducting of non-violent direct action to obtain the total renunciation of nuclear war and its weapons by Britain and all other countries" ("Archive of the Direct Action Committee Against Nuclear War"). The network of organizations that collaborated in creating the protest formed a coalition called Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

In preparation for the march, the CND called upon Gerald Holtom, an active campaign participant, professional designer, and graduate of the Royal College of Art, to envision and develop a symbol for nuclear disarmament that would be the emblem of the CND and the entire movement. The image needed to be one that invoked personal

responsibility as well as solidified collective unity of purpose. It needed to communicate the campaign message in a unique way and to engage people broadly in the cause.

Holtom got started, but struggled to create something original. He worked and reworked drafts and ideation sketches of potential designs. He was having a great deal of trouble because of the pressure he felt to adhere to the high ideals that would need to be embodied in the symbol—ideals in which he was very personally invested. Andrew Rigby, author of “A Peace Symbol’s Origins,” discusses the necessary function of the image that would represent the CND and points out the shortcomings of Holtom’s initial designs:

Everybody believed nuclear disarmament was desirable. It was not enough just to call for it. The [initial] symbol did not implore individuals to take direct creative action to combat the nuclear threat. The key to nuclear disarmament was unilateral action.

Despite Holtom’s initial dissatisfaction with a number of his concepts for the design, perseverance and adherence to purpose ultimately led him to create the symbol that is the iconic peace sign today.

The final CND logo design contains the semaphore signs for ‘N’ and ‘D’ and means nuclear disarmament. Holtom’s inspiration for the image, in addition to the semaphore signals, was Spanish painter Francisco Goya’s piece entitled, “The Third of May 1808,” in which a peasant stands with arms outstretched before a firing squad. The painting echoed Holtom’s feelings of deep despair. He articulates this in a letter to the editor of Peace News, written in 1973, about his creative process:

I was in despair. Deep despair...I drew myself: the representative of an individual in despair, with hands palm outstretched outwards and downwards in the manner of Goya's peasant before the firing squad. I formalized the drawing into a line and put a circle round it. It was ridiculous at first and such a puny thing. (Quoted in Rigby)

The artist-activist continued to struggle to find a way to invigorate action through image. He was determined to make the symbol measure up for "positive, practical, creative action" when he experienced a kind of revolution of thought around the image and began to embrace it (Rigby). Holtom realized that when inverted, from the despairing person with arms hung low into a rejoicing person with arms cast upward, the symbol contained the semaphore signal for the letter 'U.' U stood for Unilateral, which was exactly the kind of action Holtom and the CND wanted to inspire individuals and governments to take in opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare. Upon making this personal discovery Holtom wrote:

The symbol therefore means ND: Nuclear Disarmament implying negative despair which, by a Revolution of Thought, is turned into fire realisation that the answer lies within the grasp of each individual: Unilateral Disarmament--if the individual disarms himself he no longer constitutes a threat. (Quoted in Rigby, 477)

Empowered with this realization, Holtom embraced the image. It was established as the CND's logo and became an uplifting and inspiring icon for unilateral nuclear disarmament in the UK and around the world. The symbol made its debut at the march to the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston, which took place over the course of four days, from Good Friday through the Monday after Easter. The peace sign was used in black on a white background for the first two days of the protest activities and in white on a green background the next two days of protest activities.

This display was symbolic of the transition from winter to spring and from a winter of violence to a spring of peace. This march was the first time the symbol, now first recognized as the symbol of peace and second as the logo of the CND, was used to signify nonviolence in protest activities.

The manner in which the peace sign traveled to the U.S. is somewhat unclear. A number of individuals have been mentioned as carriers of the symbol to the states. What is most likely is that the symbol migrated organically and concurrently through different paths with different people. American organizer Bayard Rustin is one link between the Aldermaston march in the UK and the appearance of the CND symbol in protest in the U.S. Rustin participated in the Aldermaston march and returned to the U.S. where he was a central organizer of protest activities throughout the African American movement in the south. He worked with Martin Luther King to organize the SCLC and was, perhaps most notably, a lead organizer of the 1963 March on Washington (Zappaterra). In the U.S., the CND logo took hold not so much as a symbol for nuclear disarmament, but as a symbol for nonviolence and peace in the Vietnam antiwar and various civil rights movements going on concurrently in the U.S.

Although the movement eventually became factionalized and highly unorganized, the initial efforts and the core mobilizers within it were college students. James Max Fendrich articulates the sheer size of the Vietnam antiwar movement and the impact that it had on U.S. culture and politics in his article "The Forgotten Movement: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement." The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a leading organization in orchestrating the movement, had 256 chapters nationwide in 1965. Members of the organization were determined to change U.S.

policy on the war in Vietnam. The mission of the organization, and the very simple reasons that they carried out the antiwar march in Washington, D.C. in 1965, were as follows:

SDS advocates that the U.S. get out of Vietnam for the following reasons: (a) The war hurts the Vietnamese people, (b) the war hurts the American people, (c) SDS is concerned about the Vietnamese and American people. (Fendrich, 345)

The SDS had no idea that the march they planned in Washington in 1965 would have such a major turn out. Initially the organizers expected to see ten thousand people at the event; the actual number of attendees was roughly twenty-five thousand. The timing of the march was due in large part to the 1964 passage of the Tonkin resolution, which authorized the president to take all necessary measures to protect U.S. armed forces in Vietnam. This marked the shift from a proxy war to a conventional war (Kindig). The 1965 march was partially inspired by the events of the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project that took place the year prior and which served as the training ground for antiwar leaders. This event and others, which were largely coordinated by the SDS, had greater impact than the organizers realized as they were orchestrating these activities:

Beginning in 1965, antiwar protest became part of the nation's political landscape. Tens of thousands of American citizens were making history. Their ranks would eventually number in the millions. The volume and intensity of this antiwar protest during wartime was unprecedented. Expansions of the war sparked more massive and widespread protests, and protest generated more public sentiment against the war. (Fendrich, 346)

After this movement defining march in Washington D.C, the percentage of Americans who objected to sending troops into Vietnam grew from twenty-four to sixty-one

percent between 1965 and 1971. On over half of all college campuses nationwide there had been protests and demonstrations; many of those campuses actually closed for brief periods of time to alleviate the tensions that arose from the massive student engagement in protest. Throughout the duration of the antiwar movement, fifty to sixty percent of college students participated in protest activities. Finally in March 1968, President Johnson announced that it was time to shift toward seeking a peaceful settlement in Vietnam and years later the U.S. withdrew from the war.

In demonstrations across the country the peace sign proliferated. It became an emblem for antiwar and for peace. Protestors donned the symbol at home and soldiers brandished it in Vietnam. It served as a quick, clear, and resonant embodiment of the antiwar movement that was underway, and of a shared hope for a future of peace that was far off on the horizon. The peace sign became a signifier for unity and solidarity. As an icon it communicated the message of peace first to a specific community with a shared visual discourse and then it reached many others as the meaning of peace attached itself more tightly to the symbol. As the symbol itself became more mobile by way of various print media and through the creative projects of protestors it in turn mobilized greater numbers of people.

Ken Kolsbun, historian and peace activist, has archived the history of the peace sign. Describing his own experience with the symbol throughout the Civil Rights era he writes:

Like a lot of other young Americans, I took to the street to protest the growing involvement in Vietnam. At each one of the demonstrations I attended, the rallying symbol was that circle with what looked like a drooping tree inside it. The peace symbol. Everywhere I looked- on posters, medallions, earrings, cars, graffiti. That circle design had become a magnet, an icon for the counterculture and the anti-war

movement. What has surprised me in the decades since is that the peace continues to exert almost hypnotic appeal. Its become the a rally cry for almost any group working for social change. (“Author Profile” Peace Symbol)

He goes on to explain that his life, like Holtom’s, became intertwined with the symbol itself. The ‘magnetic’ and ‘hypnotic’ quality of the peace sign was, perhaps, due in part to its simplicity and replicability. Perhaps it garnered such tremendous influence in cultural space and the social imaginary because of the energy imbued in it through the political activities and social projects that it accompanied. During the Vietnam antiwar movement, the symbol became part of the fabric of civic and social life in the U.S.; as it was further embedded into the collective consciousness the symbol took on the power of those who had wielded it and came to signify a shared belief in the possibility of peace.

Creative Media in Motion: At the Intersections of Art and Action

The music, theater and symbol of the Civil Rights era exemplify the arts in action. El Teatro, “We Shall Overcome,” and the peace sign are microcosmic messages of the movements to which these creative expressions belong. They communicate identity, forge solidarity, and make manifest a future that was once only perceptible through the imagination. As participatory practices, or ritual, theater and music touch what is deeply human and bring it forward in collective action. As visual speech, symbol constructs new cultural space wherein the imaginary is made real and the familiar is transformed anew.

As outlets for expression these media circumvent traditional communication channels and give their actors, singers and makers new voice. Through these media the traditional messenger is bypassed and the forum in which to express personal and political truth becomes nearly boundless. Because these art forms seek to express and to create they have a certain power to effect the perceptions of their audiences. Despite their political substance, these creative works do not set out to indoctrinate or manipulate per se. Rather, as neutral, experimental, free and shared spaces, theater, music and visual art offer a flexibility of mind and of body to creators and audiences together and at once.

If we are to consider nonviolent protest itself as a medium or vehicle for social change it becomes more evident the ways that the visual and performative arts unite in protest. The performative quality of direct action and acts of civil disobedience reflects the transformational qualities of visual and enacted creative media. As action is taken in service to a cause it is often as much acting as it is active. In other words, the real

objective is sought through enacted processes that are not necessarily useful or productive in their own right. In this way, nonviolent direct action as performance weaves together the enacted and imaginary with the objective and real.

What is nonviolent about these creative media? How do theater, song and symbol contribute to nonviolent practices of social and political struggle? These media are collaborative and iterative in nature. They are processes themselves in flux and evolution. While one could feasibly depict, enact or perform violence through these media, the media themselves create a kind of out-of-space and out-of-time parallel reality through which to engage with real life circumstance. Even violence portrayed within the container of these art forms occupies a position that allows makers, actors and viewers to see those acts of violence from an alternate perspective. It is in this reframing, reflection and release of the familiar and mundane lived reality that these media assume their most powerful role in nonviolent protest.

As communicative vehicles that are at once out of space and out of time they are poised to question, critique, and play with reality. It is this playfulness of the performative, and of the iterative, which lends itself so effortlessly to nonviolence and nonviolent protest activities. By way of reframing and reflecting what is accepted as real or conventional, these media spark critical rationality. Suspending various conventional truths in an intermediary space, visual and performative works of art facilitate the formation of new logic and the restructuring of rationale around what is true and why we believe it to be true in the first place. As nonviolent practices with intrinsically human appeal, these processes become potential instruments in the ongoing projects of deconstructing structures of violence and implementing structures of peace.

Although Galtung's violence and peace triangles exist separately in theory, in practice these triangles together comprise the crystalline structures of our society. They are bound to one another interlinking like molecular chains that connect individuals, institutions and entire cultures. Balancing this equation is complex. The arts, as a form of nonviolent protest then, serve as just one method with which to create the ripples that may rearrange structures of violence into structures of peace as our engagement with them requires us to suspend the truth of one conventional reality and consider another. Another method, or medium, through which to evoke these shifts is technology. Since the Civil Rights era ICT has completely evolved and has facilitated parallel transformations in the performative and visual arts as they are used in nonviolent social protest.

Networking and Nonviolence Now: The Internet, New Media & Mobile Technology

Access to and use of the Internet, new media and mobile technology has proliferated in recent years. Since the turn of the millennium in the U.S. the evolution of digital technology has completely revolutionized the way people communicate and organize in 2015. These three tools in particular make up the essential infrastructure of a vast network that continues to connect more people each day. For the purposes of this discussion I will call this network the mobile-social network. Last year, the two most populous countries were China and India. The ‘country’ with the third largest population? Facebook. The United States ranked sixth largest and the ‘nations’ of LinkedIn and Twitter ranked at numbers nine and ten respectively. This hierarchy demonstrates how new media such as Facebook, Twitter and others, are building and maintaining substantial user ‘populations.’ ICT makes access to people and information simple and constant (Qualman).

People have access not only to decentralized communication tools such as social media through the mobile-social network, but also to diverse educational resources—and the two often merge into one. Free and open access to speeches from experts on Websites such as TED, the availability of diverse college-level coursework and materials, and podcasts on seemingly infinite topics, are just a few of the ways that people can stay engaged in learning something new all of the time. Learning through more structured online avenues and learning through interpersonal information exchange synthesize into a steady flow of consciousness-raising activity that is freely and openly available for anyone who is plugged-in.

Platforms such as YouTube, combined with mobile devices and camera feature technologies, enable regular people to become active storytellers of issues and events in real time. Independent media organizations can bring together and organize timely information acquired from individuals with unique vantage points to report more comprehensively on current events. These highly decentralized, yet organized, reporting practices offer those who access the information online a more holistic account of the action. Furthermore, they actively subvert the control of discourse by mainstream media sources that are traditionally driven by profit to present a singular perspective. Because there are numerous sources for getting up-to-date information and fact checking different sources against one another, people are empowered and encouraged to formulate their own understanding of the world in which they live. Of course this system brings with it myriad sources of misinformation as well, but still it presents the opportunity for individuals to sift through broader streams of information to locate what is reliable.

Cyberspace has become increasingly more interactive where multidirectional flows of information and communications are the norm. The mobile-social network provides many opportunities for everyone to communicate and collaborate; yet it may be especially useful for creative activists and political organizers. The following section is an outline of four functions of ICT and the mobile-social network in nonviolent protest developed through an analysis of the studies of Kristin LaRiviere (“Protest: Critical Lessons of Using Digital Media for Social Change”), Victoria Carty (“Technology and Counter-hegemonic Movements: the case of Nike Corporation”) and Dan Mercea (“Digital prefigurative participation: The entwinement of online

communication and offline participation in protest events”). These four functions include: (1) technology as recruitment strategy; (2) technology as solidarity steward; (3) technology as social capital; (4) technology as master of logistics.

(1) Technology as recruitment strategy. Using ICT and the mobile-social network, nonviolent protest movements can engage and recruit new participants. The Internet is an open space that people can access from unique entry points. Because of this accessibility, it serves as a bridge between individuals and groups who may not otherwise choose to interact on the ground. In a study of digital media use on college campuses, Kristin LaRiviere and her co-authors found that “digital media creates a venue for groups to easily connect to support an issue together, despite their own physical affinity groups” (13). Using the mobile-social network allows organizers to provide information directly to loose-ties, the individuals who are perhaps most difficult to reach. Those who may never have engaged in protest activities on the ground then have the opportunity to process the information they receive online and to possibly make the decision to participate in the future. Consistent access to educational information through the mobile-social network raises consciousness around an issue. Simply by accessing new information individuals may be guided by their own internal compass to join a movement with little recruitment required. Additionally, because use of ICT and the mobile-social network is widespread among members of the youngest generations, employing these technologies for nonviolent protest may present an opportunity to recruit new leaders to develop within an organization or a movement over time.

(2) *Technology as solidarity steward.* The ever-present nature of ICT and the mobile-social web today serves as a binding tie for long-term solidarity. A movement is embedded in cyberspace through the people who participate and contribute to online media. Websites, social newsfeeds, photo albums, and videos remain even after peak moments of action and protest have passed. The coalitions and connections established throughout the organization and execution of protest activities remain archived on the Internet to the extent that the mobile-social network has been incorporated into the process of movement building along the way. Networks of solidarity remain functionally intact in cyberspace, even as organizations and individuals diverge; these connections, kept live and accessible online, serve as the foundations and plans for future work. Even if people are not always active in protest activities, they are connected along high-tech well-worn paths, which serve as the infrastructure needed to mobilize again. This infrastructure is a tangible reminder of the bonds of solidarity that unite people in the struggle, especially when people are not present together in the same location. The mobile-social network is both static and in flux—the static stewards the past as users present updates of the latest. Real time online archives steward relationships and strengthen inter- and intra-movement solidarity.

(3) *Technology as social capital.* The use ICT and the mobile-social network in nonviolent protest builds social capital and as a result increases the power of the individual. Using these technologies for both communicating and organizing provides a medium to quantify and activate social capital. The mobile-social network scales movements and protest activities often to the point that what began as a single incident or story transforms into the shared understanding and collective action of millions

(Carty, 139). Social networks developed online allow people to give value to an individual through trust and confidence; social capital quite literally elevates the value of one to the value of all those who stand in solidarity with, and in support of, that one. This social capital is valuable in its own right, but it can also be transformed into financial capital or material resource that can be utilized in service to a larger goal. Organizers and individuals alike create, increase, communicate and leverage the value of social connection. In this way, ICT and the mobile-social network have the power to decentralize discourse by facilitating dialogue wherein multiple perspectives are available and viable at once. This shift does more than add new and varied perspectives into the public discourse. Social capital made tangible through ICT and the mobile-social network functions as a new and powerful system of valuing and evaluating people, organizations and messages.

(4) *Technology as master of logistics.* This purely pragmatic function of ICT and the mobile-social network in nonviolent protest is not to be overlooked or undervalued. Use of these technologies allows key leaders at the core of protest activities to plan and execute successful events and actions. While in the past, tools for communication and information dissemination like the telephone or printed materials were certainly effective and facilitated large projects, the new ICT used today offers completely revolutionary advantages and a new perspective on the potential scale of the work that can realistically be accomplished. Today, the ICT available is “instantaneous” in nature and “accelerates activism and builds momentum faster than traditional forms” (LaRiviere et. al., 13). What would have taken several days or a week to organize can now be managed in a matter of hours or a couple of days. ICT and the mobile-social

network surely do not replace face-to-face interaction, but they do enhance the ways that people can work together. Effective use of these technologies is the social super glue that strengthens the organization and execution of nonviolent protest now.

These four functions of ICT and the mobile-social network in nonviolent protest demonstrate the ways that these technologies and protest itself have evolved in stride with one another. Now, ICT in general, and the mobile-social network specifically, are the new medium for the arts in protest. Creative nonviolent protest that incorporates the social and informational component provided by use of ICT and the mobile-social network increases their capacity to impact the public with the messages relayed through a chosen medium. While historically there has always been a mixing between and sharing among different media, now this is even more prolific as the digital world merges with the physical world. Whereas previously visual art and music may have been incorporated in theater, or a number of other combinations of traditional media may have been forged, today all of these media converge along with an informational, educational, social and real-time element. With the use of ICT and the mobile-social network, creative expressions in nonviolent protest today can offer their audiences a kind of multimedia synesthesia that invites viewers into the activity and keeps them engaged creatively.

The Arts Against Police Brutality: Creative Nonviolent Protest Since Ferguson

In 2014 protests erupted in Ferguson in response to police brutality. Police brutality is an issue as old as the U.S. itself but it was brought to the forefront of public attention in a single moment that galvanized a movement. On August 9th, seventeen-year-old Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, was shot and killed by white police officer Darren Wilson. Police units from various precincts in the surrounding area poured into Ferguson as Brown's body lay in the street for hours after the altercation occurred ("Tef Poe: Rapper and Activist). The city law enforcement prepared personnel from nearby precincts and districts as if there had been a terrorist threat or a natural disaster. Within moments, and over the course of the next few hours and the next several months, people in Ferguson, across the state of Missouri, and throughout the nation burst into dialogue and moved into action. As emotions ran high, not all initial responses to Brown's killing were nonviolent; however, the majority of spontaneous and organized protest has been, and continues to be, nonviolent. This incident of police brutality is only one example of the ongoing state-sponsored violence that is systemically enmeshed in daily life in the U.S. In this case an act of direct violence brought to light larger systems of structural and cultural violence that are constantly operating throughout society. Although many may be aware of the way systemic oppression and violence manifests, the outpouring of public protest following Brown's killing brought a new level of attention to this issue.

The killing of Michael Brown is not an isolated event but a microcosm of the commonplace and normalized brutally violent practices of law enforcement agents that are inflicted at disproportionately high rates on people of color. Police brutality, a term that refers to acts of direct violence not authorized within the limits of legal policing, is just one component of a larger system of institutionalized structural violence that is built into the infrastructure of society at large.

Brown's murder comes on the heels of a number of other recent incidents of police brutality inflicted upon young black men, which became highly publicized. As public outrage at police brutality peaked in August, bringing the issue to the attention of the masses, people have organized and mobilized for major change on what is one of today's most urgent civil rights issues. Nonviolent protest in its traditional forms, including marches, rallies, and other direct action tactics have sprung up concurrently throughout the country. Organizers and citizens everywhere have responded to Brown's death with a renewed commitment to seeing that violence is not tolerated and that justice is served. Immediately following the incident, ICT, the mobile-social network and art played a major role. With people connected via social media on mobile devices, the conversations began instantaneously—first from the scene in Ferguson and then throughout cyberspace (“Tef Poe: Rapper & Activist”). Out of these initial communications grew organized collaborations among thousands who were standing up to denounce police brutality.

After the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012, by police officer George Zimmerman who was later acquitted, the social media campaign #BlackLivesMatter

erupted into a nationwide movement that is even stronger today than it was at its inception. Their mission and purpose states:

Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement...#BlackLivesMatter is working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. We affirm our contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. We have put our sweat equity and love for Black people into creating a political project—taking the hashtag off of social media and into the streets. The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation. (Black Lives Matter)

In the context of the events in Ferguson, #BlackLivesMatter has had a massive resurgence as it has been taken up as a digital call to action throughout cyberspace and as the unifying message of protestors in the streets. #BlackLivesMatter stands in solidarity with leading organizations and the people of Ferguson.

A few leading organizations, operating locally in Ferguson, include: Millennial Activists United, The Found Voices, The Organization for Black Struggle, and Hands Up United. Among these organizations there is very strong leadership coming from young people, twenty something's, who have been profoundly impacted. As young leaders step up, they bring with them the ITC tools that their generation has grown up immersed in and which they are particularly adept at utilizing.

Hands Up United (HUU) was co-founded by Tef Poe (Kareem Jackson) and Tory Russell. The organization, alongside affiliates like the Organization for Black Struggle, works for justice for Michael Brown and to put an end to discriminatory and brutally violent police practices. Since the events of August 2014, HUU supports the

Ferguson community with education programs that give youth the skills and knowledge they need to understand these issues at a systemic level and to have a voice in changing the law enforcement's pattern of violence toward people of color and African Americans in particular. The HUU website features a page specifically devoted to "Protest Music" and another that is specifically devoted to "Tech Impact." It serves as an example for the way that organizations form rapidly in response to issues and events today, and the way that these groups seamlessly incorporate technology, direct action tactics, education, and the arts to make effect change through nonviolent means.

Aside from its use of ICT and the mobile-social network as fundamental organizing tools, HUU makes a "Tech Impact" by educating youth in technology platforms. The Roy Clay Sr. Web Development and Entrepreneurship workshop is a six-week program for Ferguson youth. In the program students learn the skills they need to more fully bring their visions to life using technology to be agents of change. The HUU Tech Impact Initiative states its purpose as follows:

The revolution will be digitized. Computer programming and web development are 21st century skills that can be used to activate ideas, grow small businesses and build grass-root movements. As a way to counter cyber warfare, close the digital divide and address the issues of economic equality, Hands Up United will lead technical training workshops to the Ferguson community. (Hands Up United)

The program was started through crowd funding and raised ten thousand dollars in just ten days. This is a testament to the ways that ICT and the mobile-social network have increased the capacity of key organizers and the general public to participate in having an impact not only on communities they serve most closely, but also on a much broader segment of the public (Hands Up United).

In addition to nonviolent protest, there has been an outpouring of creativity and art making in response to the police brutality in Ferguson. HUU co-founder Tef Poe, in addition to organizing action for social justice in his community, is an independent musician. He writes and performs rap music that reflects complex and multidimensional human experience. He was deeply moved by the police brutality inflicted upon Brown and has since become as passionately dedicated his art as he is determined to make change through nonviolent action. He advocates “militant direct action nonviolent protest” and says that his “involvement is from a stance of compassion” (“Tef Poe: Rapper & Activist”). Clarifying his approach to ending police brutality and structural violence against African Americans more broadly, he explains that the ‘militancy’ of direct action nonviolent protest is symbolic and metaphorical, not literal. It is an attitude of active objection to injustice and violence that he takes up in all of the work that he does. It does not by any means involve violence as the literal meaning of the word may imply. He believes in a militant commitment to compassion and to working for social justice despite the intense barriers that structural violence poses for achieving these goals (“Who Is Tef Poe”).

Other artist-activists assume this militant determination to their own practices of nonviolent protest through creativity. The Internet has facilitated myriad collaborations and brought many like-minded and like-hearted individuals into the same space. One such place is the Tumblr page, Artists Against Police Violence. The site is an online space that features art and graphics that are free for anyone to download and use as visual materials for organized direct actions and protest activities. Anyone can submit work to the site and the hosts select artwork to feature and share with the online

community. The site highlights the work of black artists and emphasizes the need to incorporate equally the work of those artists with intersecting female, queer, and transgender identities. The purpose of Artists Against Police Violence is to provide a space to bring forward black visioning and imagery and to build a strong archive of images for organizers of nonviolent protest to replicate and distribute in their work on the ground (“Artists Against Police Violence”).

In St. Louis, painter Damon Davis, who had been making art in response to social injustice prior to the events in Ferguson, began to create various art installations with collaborator Basil Kincaid in opposition to police brutality and the killing of Brown in August. Nadine Bloch, in “The Art of #BlackLivesMatter,” describes the two pieces Davis made entitled “Hands Up” and “All Hands On Deck.” “Hands Up” featured several painted plywood hands positioned to appear to be coming up out of the earth. It was installed in the main streets of Ferguson. A second piece, “All Hands on Deck,” was a photography project that involved taking photos of many different pairs of people’s hands. These hand photos were then enlarged and wheat pasted, with permission, to the plywood covered storefronts in the city. The pieces honor those who are organizing and participating in nonviolent protest against police brutality and simultaneously inspire those who see them to pay attention to the issue and to take action themselves. One reason that Davis uses art in activism, he says, is because:

Artists play a vital role, telling these stories and keeping history alive. [The posters] are important for people who may be on the fence to see. Maybe they’ll change their minds [and start supporting us]. And for those who aren’t on our side ... now they know we’re still here. And we’re not going to back down. (Quoted in Bloch)

A performative piece that Davis and collaborator Marcus Curtis made for a Ferguson protest was a mirrored casket. The artists covered the casket, which was originally for a Mexican Día de los Muertos altar, in mirrors. This symbolically placed the law enforcement agents patrolling the protest into the casket. It called upon all who were present to see the piece to empathize deeply with the victims of police violence and to reflect on our shared humanity. This work shows the performative quality of art that is used in nonviolent protest. As pieces are brought off of the wall, or out of the gallery, and put into the hands of people in action, they take on new meanings. Art in action has the capacity to inspire surprise, curiosity, or empathy, and through that process to transform makers, viewers and the cultural environment.

A project called Chalk Against Police Brutality is another creative and visual expression that was combined with protest responding to the police brutality in Ferguson is. This project, which predates Ferguson protests and was reinvigorated by them, gives visibility to police brutality, keeping it in the public eye all across the country. Chalk Against Police Brutality combines on the street chalking with a digital component. Bodies are traced in chalk on the concrete alluding to the outlines of bodies found on a crime scene. These body tracings are usually accompanied by the names of individuals who have been hurt or killed by violent law enforcement agents. The hashtag, #ChalkUnarmed, connects people to messages on Twitter and photos archived on Facebook, which together serve to document the experiences of people and communities who are regularly subjected to police brutality. The archives form a kind of virtual timeline that highlights the work taking place in real time and stores it as a tangible reminder of the efforts of all those struggling in solidarity for justice for

Brown. It connects the events in Ferguson to parallel stories and the larger issue of police brutality as a behavior that is pervasive throughout the U.S.

This brief discussion of the creative responses to police brutality and specifically, to the events that occurred surrounding the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, just scratches the surface of the innumerable ways that people, spontaneously and in structured organizations, continue to engage art in nonviolent protest today. Art and activism have forever forged a strong partnership in opposition to direct and structural violence and injustice. Now is no exception. The difference, however, is in the ways that people can connect with one another and with the work, both creative and political, being done by those around them.

The blending of cyberspace and physical space—through the use of ICT, the mobile-social network, and creative forms of nonviolent protest—has a way of tying the personal and the political even more closely together. Chalk Unarmed, Davis’ public art and “All Hands on Deck” series, and the mirrored casket employed as a performative protest piece, each create space for viewers to absorb political messages in intimately personal ways. The medium becomes a point of access into the hearts and minds of the audience in ways that news reports or facts compiled in academic literature cannot. The creative medium transforms the issue into a personal experience and an experience that can be lived almost in an instant upon encountering the creative work. It is that personal experience with the art that has the capacity to stir empathy within all those who engage with the piece. Activist art that was fixed in time becomes temporally variable with the ongoing use of ICT and the mobile-social network. Individuals can connect and reconnect with the art at varying times and the special limits that once defined these

activities fall away. Technology in this context fulfilled each of the four functions presented previously and as a result strengthened nonviolent protest activity and the proliferation of the creative expressions connected to it. Perhaps the intersections of these three elements throughout the protest of police brutality may serve as an example of the ways in which visual and performative art and nonviolent protest have found unique expression today through a new medium—ICT and the mobile-social network.

Conclusion

In closing, with an understanding of the connection between creative expression and nonviolent protest activities, we may begin to draw conclusions as to why these disciplines or practices have made such a powerful pair since the nineteen sixties—and surely well prior. The intersection between art and action is evidenced by the ways that theater, music and image empower both their creators and their audiences. El Teatro, “We Shall Overcome,” and the peace sign are touchstones for nonviolence, social justice, and peace, not only for the specific groups from which they originate, but also for all people who choose to embrace these ideals and who strive to establish a society founded upon them. As creative embodiments of the spirit of these nonviolent movements, they keep the history of the struggle alive in our collective consciousness even now.

If these creative works have the power to sustain the essence of the movements from which they emerged, how does art reach us so profoundly as part of a nonviolent political process? Perhaps art allows us to synthesize our reality in new ways—to construct new categories and metaphors in the mind and the imagination simultaneously. Perhaps visual and performative media engage us because the processes by which they are made and presented are social and often collaborative. We are brought together in the making, the singing, the performing, the viewing, and together we are remade.

In similar ways, ICT and the mobile-social network have brought us together and facilitated the possibility for new connection and transformation. The Internet, like the theater, is a venue for performance and participation; but unlike the theater, the

manifold 'stages' of the Internet are decentralized, allowing for the participation of all as both actor and audience member interchangeably. The hashtag, that swirls through the streets and tweets in the ether, is like a kind of song or music. It is a distilled message that builds its strength in numbers. The digital album, social blog, Instagram photo feed, or Facebook profile page serve as symbols, and it is on these walls where meaningful images replicate and travel at light speed.

This new medium, the digital, has the capacity to interface with all of these other art forms. The traditional embodied media gain new life as infinite iterations of these originals disperse in cyberspace. Yet, this wired world cannot replace the action and art on the ground. Rather, the proliferation of online media must accompany traditional grassroots activism as it did in Ferguson, and in the subsequent protest responses to police brutality.

When practices of creative nonviolent protest engage with cyberspace, an enlivened multimedia synesthesia experience becomes available to the would-be creative nonviolent protestor—wherever he or she resides. This multi-sensory, active and passive, grounded and wired, creative experience may call forth the civically disengaged, the politically uninformed, and the lifelessly pragmatic. Perhaps the excitement of a creative project such as this will invite the withdrawn to wholly participate. Regardless of what it may do for the new recruit, processes of creative nonviolent action nourish the spirit of veteran artist-activists and serve to sustain the movement itself.

If we are to rebuild a culture that is peaceful, if we are to reconstruct a system that is socially just, if we are to each take direct action that is nonviolent, it is absolutely

necessary that we consider the place of creativity in all of this work. The purely creative is perhaps the very essence of nonviolence, social justice, and peace. The creative principle—as generative, productive, and life giving—offers us hope.

Galtung said that envisioning peace requires that we picture something that may be challenging, but that is not impossible to achieve. When we look at the world in which we live today, we see that there is war, poverty, illness, and natural disaster. Yet alongside these there is also peace, wealth, health and ecological balance. When we take up a realistic perspective it becomes clear that all of these realities actually coexist. Adopting a realistic perspective involves looking at all of these contradictions together and at once and finding creativity in the midst of chaos. These dichotomies, when we view them holistically, can simultaneously motivate and inspire us, giving way to the creative power within that will sustain a lifetime of nonviolent action and produce the peace we imagine.

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