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Sitting Silently at Home: A Critique of *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*

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Farnia, Nina

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# BOOK REVIEW

## **SITTING SILENTLY AT HOME: A CRITIQUE OF *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX***

Nina Farnia\*

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\* J.D., UCLA School of Law, 2009; M.A. in Urban Planning, UCLA School of Public Policy, [2009]; A.B., University of Chicago, 2002. I would like to express my deepest thanks to Professors Cheryl Harris and Saúl Sarabia who have been my teachers, mentors, and friends. Their encouragement and guidance have not only enriched this project, but also my experience as a student at UCLA. Also, my thanks to Beth Ribet for her comments and support. To the Southwest Youth Collaborative and to Farhad and Ozzie Farnia, thank you for teaching me how to critically engage the concept of liberation and to live a life in its pursuit. And finally, to the editors of the anthology and the authors of its various chapters, my thanks for starting this challenging, but vital conversation. I look forward to the conversations that will follow.

In May 2004, I attended a conference entitled, "The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex" at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The conference was organized by the national organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and brought together activists, community organizers, and public intellectuals from around the country to discuss the proliferation of non-profit organizations and its relationship to social movement work in the United States.

At the time, I was working as a youth organizer at Southwest Youth Collaborative ("SWYC") in Chicago. SWYC is both a social service and community organizing group working in the Black, Latino, and Palestinian immigrant communities on the South Side of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Following from the philosophy that people who do not have food and physical or emotional health cannot work toward radical transformation, we were committed to maintaining this dual approach to community work, one that conducted grassroots organizing and provided basic services. We provided social services such as after-school programming, GED and job training classes, youth counseling, and welfare assistance to help people access government programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Medicare.

Unlike most social service organizations, however, we also had a commitment to community organizing. We organized campaigns demanding that the Chicago Public Schools stop tracking students of color into General Education classes as opposed to Advanced Placement and other college prep classes, and to end zero tolerance policies in the schools.<sup>2</sup> After the war

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1. I use the term "Black" with a capitalized "B" in accord with the assertions of Kimberlé Crenshaw and Neil Gotanda. "Black" is a term that describes a cultural group with a specific experience and history, thereby invoking deep social and political meaning as a liberating term. Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Race, Reform and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law*, 101 HARV. L. REV. 1331, 1332 n.2 (1988) ("Use [of] an upper-case "B" reflects [the] view that Blacks, like Asians, Latinos, and other 'minorities,' constitute a specific cultural group and, as such, require denotation as a proper noun."); Neil Gotanda, *A Critique of "Our Constitution is Color-Blind,"* 44 STAN. L. REV. 1, 4 n.12 (1991) ("Black 'summarizes' relations of racial subordination, [while] white 'summarizes' racial domination. As a term describing racial domination, 'white' is better left in lower case, rather than privileged with a capital letter. 'Black,' on the other hand, has deep political and social meaning as a liberating term, and, therefore, deserves capitalization.")

2. Zero tolerance policies are policies that require no tolerance for certain, specified acts. Such policies are not uniform across high schools. That is, they are applied to different kinds of acts. These acts can range from carrying weapons or

in Afghanistan began and immediately prior to the Iraq War, we expanded our organizing to include a campaign against racial profiling and police brutality by the Chicago Police Department.<sup>3</sup> Because of the War on Terror, both local law enforcement and federal authorities had heightened surveillance<sup>4</sup> of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities.<sup>5</sup> We aimed to both document and challenge this heightened surveillance. We also conducted political education on the War on Terror and the history of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and played a leading role in citywide antiwar efforts in Chicago.

As the United States continued its war in Afghanistan and began preparing to send ground troops to Iraq, foundation funders became increasingly interested in our work. On the surface, we were appealing for several reasons. First, we were one of few community organizing groups in the country doing multiracial organizing that included Arabs. And amidst the War on Terror, liberal foundations increasingly felt the need to fund those presumed to be most impacted by the war, including Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities. Second, the foundations that approached us were against the ascendance of the Republican Party, and thus eager to fund any community-based effort to organize against the Iraq War—organizing which in

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illegal substances, to tardiness and chewing gum. Often, this meant that students could be suspended or expelled for committing such specified acts.

3. During the summers, we held a Summer Youth Liberation Institute where, amongst other things, the youth in our program conducted a community-based research project. In 2003, we “doorknocked” 800 homes in the immediate vicinity of the community center and surveyed youth and adults on their experience of racial profiling and police brutality after September 11, 2001. Through the findings of this research, we learned that members of all communities of color in our neighborhood, and not just Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians, reported experiencing higher levels of profiling and brutality after 9/11.

4. Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities commonly reported experiences of airport-related surveillance. However, communities we researched reported random visits by the FBI, increased police stops while driving, and surveillance committed by neighbors. In such instances, neighbors often kept a watchful eye over their Arab, Muslim, or South Asian neighbors, and then reported what they considered “suspicious activity” to the local police, FBI, or ICE.

5. I use the terminology of “Arab, Muslim, and South Asian” with some hesitation, as it leaves out whole communities—the Armenians, the Kurds, the Assyrians, and others—who might experience interpersonal and institutional racial subordination because of their phenotype, their nationality, their accent, or their relationship to the communities invoked in the War on Terror.

their eyes worked to undermine the legitimacy of the Republican Party.<sup>6</sup>

During site visit meetings with one of these foundations, we were encouraged to engage in voter education and voter registration campaigns to support the Democratic Party in the 2004 elections. However, as a small community organization, we knew that any resources given to electoral organizing would take away from our community campaigns and our social services, and we did not wish to define our organizational mission in that way. We decided against pursuing any electoral work, but we were aware that in refusing to listen to our funders, we were putting our money on the line. Still, we made the choice we needed to make. That particular grant was not renewed, and since then, SWYC has experienced a general decline in funding for organizing.

It has now been almost four years since INCITE!'s groundbreaking conference. I recently visited Chicago and spent time in the neighborhood where I once worked. Many of the youths I worked with four years ago are now young adults. Despite our efforts as an organization, some of the youth seem to be no better off than they would have been without us. Several of the young men I worked with, now between sixteen and eighteen years old, have been in and out of jail. A few have been picked up off the street by police officers for minor offenses, taken into jail, beaten, and then released. More than a few of these young people, men and women alike, have children of their own. And despite all our efforts to funnel our youth into college preparation courses in high school, many are not planning to go to college. They do not have the money or the social networks to do so.

However, there are some "success" stories. A few of the youth we served are now in college, and though they are fighting forms of interpersonal racism that they did not encounter in 'the hood,' they are surviving in their new environments. Some of the

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6. Foundations all over the country have taken an interest in electoral organizing. Though the root causes of this new interest are uncertain, it is linked to two phenomena: the Republican Party's successful use of electoral strategies, and the success of both grassroots organizations and labor unions in California in using electoral strategies to get 'their' people into office. For example, in Los Angeles, the former executive director of Community Coalition, Karen Bass, is now a member of the California State Assembly. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was elected after a citywide coalition of labor unions and community-based organizations conducted "doorknocking" drives, voter education, and voter registration.

young men, the ones I recall yelling at the most for fighting, for “borrowing” my car, and in general, for causing the kind of trouble youth like to cause, are now holding part-time jobs in addition to attending community college. I don’t know how many lives our work actually changed. But knowing that we were unable to effectively challenge the horrific social conditions in which these young people live, I hope we were able at least to help a few of them attempt to build healthy lives for themselves, despite all they are up against.

Many grassroots organizations around the country have similar struggles. They attempt to create structural change while also trying to provide resources for communities of color. These are the same resources that the federal government used to provide, but no longer does.<sup>7</sup> On a day-to-day basis, such organizations may do the “political work” of conducting grassroots campaign meetings around the issues impacting their communities and generating both long term and short term strategies to address such issues, while at the same time they do the “social work” of counseling youth and parents, providing homework assistance, seeking out government aid for families living under poverty, and locating substance abuse programs for both youth and adults struggling with addiction. And just like Southwest Youth Collaborative, such organizations have both their success stories and their failures.

*The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, edited by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, evaluates the socio-political contradictions of challenging the state under the rubric of a state-proctored project: the non-profit industrial complex (“NPIC”). The book contains essays written by a wide array of authors including scholars, social service providers, community organizers, and activists. Some challenge the notion that social movement work needs foundation funding,<sup>8</sup> others talk of the importance of using

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7. See Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *In the Shadows of the Shadow State*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX* 48 (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence ed., 2007) for a discussion of the reduction in state-sponsored social programs.

8. See Madonna Thunderhawk, *Native Organizing Before the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 101; Robert L. Allen, *From Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 53; Tiffany Lethabo King & Ewuare Osayande, *The Filth on Philanthropy: Progressive*

non-profits as a tool to build social movements,<sup>9</sup> while others argue that the non-profit industrial complex has co-opted any potential for a true revolutionary social movement in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

This anthology provides a point of reference from which to start a larger conversation about the role of non-profit organizations in the United States. It begins by developing a definition of the non-profit industrial complex, and then critically engages the work those in the complex are doing.<sup>11</sup> By engaging in a historicized discussion of the inception of non-profit organizations and foundation funding, the anthology leaves the reader with a heightened understanding of the historical role of non-profits in maintaining white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy in the United States.<sup>12</sup>

Most compelling are the accounts of people who currently work or have worked in non-profit organizations, as they are the most capable of understanding the conditions under which they organize. Alisa Bierria discusses the "dual identity" her organization, Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA),

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*Philanthropy's Agenda to Misdirect Social Justice Movements and the Just Redistribution of Wealth and Power, in THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, supra note 7, at 79.*

9. See Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 41; Stephanie Guilloud & William Cordery, *Fundraising is Not a Dirty Word: Community-Based Economic Strategies for the Long Haul, in THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, supra note 7, at 107.*

10. See Dylan Rodriguez, *The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex, in THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, supra note 7, at 21; Adjoa Florencia Jones de Almeida, Radical Social Change: Searing for a New Foundation, in THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, supra note 7, at 185; Paula X. Rojas, Are the Cops in Our Heads and Hearts?, in THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, supra note 7, at 197.*

11. See Rodriguez, *supra* note 10, at 21.

12. Frances L. Ansley, *Stirring the Ashes: Race, Class and the Future of Civil Rights Scholarship*, 74 CORNELL L. REV. 993, 1024 n.129 (1989). By "white supremacy" I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. See also Cheryl Harris, *Whiteness as Property*, 106 HARV. L. REV. 1709 n.8 (1993) (examining "the emergence of whiteness as property and trac[ing] the evolution of whiteness from color to race to status to property as a progression historically rooted in white supremacy and economic hegemony over Black and Native American peoples").

created in order to maintain its funding while staying true to its political values.<sup>13</sup> Amara Perez, from Sisters in Action for Power, provides a compelling articulation of the role that values and intentions should have in liberation politics and organizing, and argues that if we are not honest with ourselves about the contradictions under which we work, we become ever more susceptible to ideological and material cooptation.<sup>14</sup> Tiffany Lethabo King and Ewuare Osayande, who take on foundations directly, offer an illuminating conversation about the historical role of foundations in maintaining white supremacy.<sup>15</sup> Ana Clarisa Rojas Durazo talks of the cooptation of the violence against women movement, a discussion that could not be more timely considering the recent rise in such violence.<sup>16</sup> And the women of Sista II Sista end the anthology with a discussion of organizing strategies, asserting that multiple strategies are needed to “crack capitalism at its core.”<sup>17</sup> Though these passages vary in perspective, the continuous strand in all is the various authors’ immense commitment to, and understanding of, grassroots organizing.

Other chapters work to provide the socio-historical context out of which the non-profit industrial complex emerged, and how the complex, as an arm of the state, functions to quell radical dissent. Dylan Rodriguez discusses the relationship between the prison industrial complex and the non-profit industrial complex, arguing that the two are mutually constitutive.<sup>18</sup> Ruth Wilson Gilmore continues the discussion Rodriguez begins by looking at how non-profit workers have used the non-profit model to their benefit in the past.<sup>19</sup>

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13. See Alisa Bierrria, *Pursuing a Radical Anti-Violence Agenda Inside/Outside a Non-Profit Structure*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 151, 164.

14. Amara Perez, *Between Radical Theory and Community Praxis: Reflections on Organizing and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 91, 99-100.

15. King & Osayande, *supra* note 8, at 81-82.

16. Ana Clarisa Rojas Durazo, “*We Were Never Meant to Survive*”: *Fighting Violence Against Women and the Fourth World War*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 113, 118.

17. Nicole Burrows, et. al., *On Our Own Terms: Ten Years of Radical Community Building with Sista II Sista*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 227, 234.

18. Rodriguez, *supra* note 10, at 22-23.

19. Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 48, 51.



In publishing this anthology, INCITE! Women and Color Against Violence took a necessary and important step to start a conversation that many grassroots organizers and scholars have been engaging in for some time now. While INCITE!'s effort to incorporate the perspectives of both academics and grassroots organizers is commendable, the different authors in the book are evaluating very different phenomena and responding to different questions. Some authors talk of the day-to-day experience of non-profit work, others discuss the historical formation of 501(c)(3) status, and others take the ambitious step of challenging contemporary grassroots organizing work in the United States. Some engage in a much needed conversation about the cooptation of organizing in Palestine, and several others speak to the specific challenges facing groups who do anti-violence work in the NPIC. Thus, laudably, the anthology incorporates a wide range of perspectives.

However, the various chapters are not in conversation with one another. Only two authors in the anthology, Eric Tang and Ruth Wilson-Gilmore, seem to be having a dialogue with another. The lack of conversation between the other authors leaves the reader confused as to how the anthology answers the very questions that it asks. Should those who support radical transformation abandon the non-profit industrial complex as a tool for movement-building, or should they continue to conduct grassroots organizing and education work in whatever system is available? It seems that the authors who do not work in non-profit organizations are responding to this question, while the authors who provide personal accounts of their experience as non-profit staff leave this and related questions unexamined.

The project of this Review is to deconstruct the non-profit industrial complex into its various parts and to historicize the role that non-profit organizations have played in creating and shaping transformational social movements in the United States. First, while it is accurate to assert that the NPIC is an arm of the state often functioning to quell radical dissent, the broad claim I make is that the NPIC is not a monolith. Within the non-profit industrial complex are a variety of organizations conducting many different kinds of community work. Moreover, individual organizations change over time; in one moment they may organize campaigns challenging the state's authority in their community, while in another moment they participate in projects and systems that ensure the state's authority. And most notably,

many of these organizations simultaneously display such tendencies and behaviors. They may have different projects, missions, and goals that often compete with one another, leading to a constant reshaping of the organizations' work and their relationships to their communities and to the state. In other words, more often than not, these organizations are struggling with themselves.

Second, non-profit organizations have historically played a critical role in the formation of social movements in the United States, but it is unclear what understanding of social movements animates the critiques made in the anthology. Though some authors argue that the NPIC has coopted radical social movements, it is uncertain what, in the view of the authors, a social movement actually is. Do these non-profit organizations comprise a social movement? Historically, what has been the relationship between non-profits and social movements in the United States? Paula X. Rojas provides an insightful discussion about the role of non-profit organizations in social movements in Latin America, but without a conversation about U.S. movement history, Rojas' insights seem inapplicable at best.<sup>20</sup> Because the concept of social movements is insufficiently engaged, it becomes difficult to have an effective conversation that re-imagines resistance in contemporary America. At the end of his piece, Eric Tang quotes Jerome Scott in asserting that non-profits are not the movement.<sup>21</sup> But then what are they? These questions have yet to be answered, and loom largely not just over the anthology, but over radical Left politics in the United States in general.

I begin in Part I with an exploration of the non-profit industrial complex both in theory and practice. How does the modifier "industrial complex" work to create new understandings of non-profit work? Who is in the non-profit industrial complex? What is the role that these organizations take on in contemporary America? And what are solutions to this problem? In looking primarily at the chapters written by Dylan Rodriguez, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Ana Clarisa Rojas Durazo, and Alisa Bierria, I hope to shed light on the difficulties of working in the NPIC.

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20. See Rojas, *supra* note 10, at 197.

21. See Eric Tang, *Non-Profits and the Autonomous Grassroots*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 215, 224.

In Part II I raise the question of social movements. Briefly using examples from the Iranian Revolution and the Black Freedom Movement in the United States as guides, I hope to provoke discussion about contemporary organizing in the United States.<sup>22</sup> I argue that though radical non-profit organizations working in communities of color are doing effective and invaluable organizing work, it is disingenuous to talk of such work as a social movement. Thus, though the critique of the NPIC is valid, it overstates the harms committed by those working within the NPIC, for such work may be necessary if we hope to see the advent of mass-based social movements in United States during our lifetimes. That is, though not a movement, this work is valuable to the movement-building project.

I also attempt to historicize the work of these organizations. What relationship does contemporary grassroots organizing have to the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s? And finally, what is the relationship between heightened domestic repression, grassroots organizing on the Left, and movement-building in contemporary United States? It is often in moments of silence when we do our best reflection. In these quiet, sometimes lonely moments, we can think critically about where we have been and who we want to become. Ultimately, I argue that grassroots organizing aimed at radical transformation in the United States is in a moment of seeming silence, one where vital work is happening on the ground, in communities all over the country. This silence allows for practice, reflection, and the sharing of knowledge. Thus, though the noise is not as loud as it was during the days of the Black Panther Party or the American Indian Movement, it is this silence that is critical to our survival.

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22. I employ this term broadly to incorporate the various struggles that Black Americans engaged in during the second half of the twentieth century, from the Civil Rights Movement days of the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the early Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee to the Black Power configurations of Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, and the later SNCC. Conceptually, the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement are often perceived of as distinct. Barbara Ransby uses the same terminology to discuss the movements in which Ella Baker was a part in her biography of Ella Baker. See BARBARA RANSBY, *ELLA BAKER AND THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT: A RADICAL DEMOCRATIC VISION* (2003).

I. THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX: DEFINITIONS  
AND QUESTIONS

*I never worked for an organization, but for a cause.*<sup>23</sup>

Ella Baker, 1968

In the first chapter, “The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex,” Dylan Rodriguez sets the tone for the rest of the anthology.<sup>24</sup> He begins by defining the non-profit industrial complex as 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, since about the 1970’s.”<sup>25</sup> In this definition, Rodriguez identifies the relationship between foundations and non-profit organizations as one manufactured and organized by the state through the state’s deployment of 501(c)(3) status, a status that enables organizations to receive funding from both corporate and private foundations, and then requires them to report their activities both to funders and to the state.<sup>26</sup>

To begin, it is important to understand what dynamic Rodriguez is identifying when he deploys the term “non-profit industrial complex.” In order to provide for the needs of their communities and to conduct their work, organizations need funding. Because raising large sums of money can be difficult, especially for grassroots groups with few staff, non-profit organizations turn to large philanthropic foundations for support. From these foundations, organizations can receive anywhere between a few thousand dollars and hundreds of thousands of dollars at a time. In exchange for funding, organizations may have to change their programs to fit the expectations of the foundations. In addition, they must report all of the activities conducted with that funding to the foundation; and notably, organizations with 501(c)(3) status are audited by both the federal government and their state governments every year. Thus, through both the funding mechanism and the reporting mechanism, the state and the corporate class are embedded within all 501(c)(3) organizations. That is, the funding mechanism and the reporting mechanism together allow foundations to influence the work of those

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23. *Id.* at 209.

24. Rodriguez, *supra* note 10.

25. *Id.* at 22.

26. *Id.*

they are funding, and the surveillance of the state by way of annual auditing allows the state to monitor the activities of all 501(c)(3) organizations.

From the 1950s to the late 1970s, much radical organizing against the status quo was done through mass-based national and sometimes global movements. Today however, much of the grassroots organizing and movement-building designed to resist and challenge oppressive state practices and policies is conducted inside organizations with 501(c)(3) status. It is done on a smaller scale in institutions all throughout the world, ranging from schools and universities to religious, non-profit, and non-governmental organizations. With his definition of the NPIC, Rodriguez develops a meta-theory defining the role of the non-profit industrial complex as an arm of the coercive state, and ultimately identifies the paradox of challenging the state while also being forcibly accountable to the state.<sup>27</sup>

The NPIC, in managing and controlling dissent, is the “natural corollary to the prison industrial complex.”<sup>28</sup> While the prison industrial complex polices and incarcerates members of “marginalized, racially pathologized communities,” the non-profit industrial complex absorbs and manages organized dissent through the non-profit structure.<sup>29</sup> In essence, those most likely to engage in dissent—members of racially marginalized communities—are heavily policed and incarcerated, while those who actively attempt to engage in organized dissent are ideologically managed and controlled.<sup>30</sup>

After defining the non-profit industrial complex, Rodriguez asks a series of compelling questions.<sup>31</sup> First, why does the “U.S. non-profit and nongovernmental organization-enabled Left generally refuse to embrace the . . . work of a radical counter-state, anti-white supremacist, *prison/penal/slave abolitionist* movement?”<sup>32</sup> Non-profit organizations—as a state-proctored project—function to quell dissent and social resistance, thereby maintaining the white supremacist, capitalist, and patriarchal status quo. Thus, Rodriguez asserts, non-profit organizations could

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27. See generally Rodriguez, *supra* note 10.

28. *Id.* at 22. For an understanding of the term “industrial complex” and its roots, see Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 42.

29. Rodriguez, *supra* note 10, at 23.

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 22.

32. *Id.*

never embrace the urgent work of a radical counter-state because in fact, by managing and controlling dissent, they function to quell any potential for radical social change in the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Second, Rodriguez asks whether a “*radical freedom*” not determined by the limitations of “the historical ‘freedoms’ invested in white American political identity—including . . . ‘democracy,’ ‘civil rights,’ ‘the vote,’ and even ‘equality’—logically suggests the *end of white civil society*”?<sup>34</sup> In his view, white civil society “continues to largely define the terms, languages, and limits of US-based progressive (and even ‘radical’) campaigns, political discourses, and local/global movements.”<sup>35</sup> This white civil society, guided by imaginary notions of voting power as related to democracy and its potentiality to liberate, has subsumed the mission of radical transformation.<sup>36</sup> Designs of reform take center-stage as notions of radical transformation that can upturn white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism are set aside. Thus, according to Rodriguez, enacting radical transformation has become almost impossible to imagine.<sup>37</sup> In answer to his second question, he asserts that because the non-profit industrial complex is the natural corollary to the prison industrial complex, true radical change demands the end of civil society and the NPIC, just as it demands the end of the prison industrial complex, for the two “enable more vicious forms of state repression.”<sup>38</sup>

While I agree with Rodriguez’s characterization of the NPIC as a tool used by the state to manage dissent, this narrow definition of non-profit work also colors over the vital role that non-profit organizations play in the U.S. today, a historical moment characterized by the ascendance of the conservative Right.<sup>39</sup> In order to problematize the non-profit industrial complex, as defined by Rodriguez, it is important to ask who is in the non-profit industrial complex, and then determine what other roles the vari-

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33. *Id.* at 23.

34. *Id.* at 22.

35. *Id.*

36. *Id.*

37. *Id.*

38. *Id.* at 23.

39. In light of the reduction in state-sponsored social programs, funding for community work, and the increased challenges facing grassroots organizations resisting state policies, the importance and relevance of grassroots non-profit organizations that conduct community campaigns and provide vital social services should not be taken for granted.

ous members—different non-profit organizations—play in contemporary United States.

A. *Who Are the Members of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex? What Do They Really Do?*

A question central to this critique is who precisely comprises the NPIC? Interestingly, at least as gauged by the introduction, Andrea Smith asserts that this anthology is not “concerned with particular types of non-profits, but the non-profit industrial complex as a whole and the way in which capitalist interests and the state use non-profits . . . .”<sup>40</sup> She does not differentiate by size, scale, function, or mission. The methodology employed to evaluate this relationship is to look at the whole of the non-profit industrial complex without disaggregating it. Having 501(c)(3) status entrenches the organization in the state, and the grassroots work done on the ground furthers state interests, regardless of its nature. Thus, an organization’s community work, be it community education or social services, is irrelevant to the struggle for justice so long as it functions within the non-profit system.<sup>41</sup>

However, Ruth Wilson Gilmore does what Andrea Smith and other authors in the book refuse to do. She disaggregates the non-profit industrial complex into its various parts, evaluating the varying roles that different organizations play. In her chapter, Gilmore uses examples from the middle of the twentieth century to show that it is possible to use the NPIC to one’s own advantage.<sup>42</sup> Though she begins by discussing the limitations imposed on organizing work done under the rubric of the NPIC, she ends by arguing that some good can come of this work, even if it is done within a state-sponsored project such as the NPIC.<sup>43</sup>

In her chapter entitled “In the Shadow of the Shadow State,” Gilmore asserts that when the book was published in 2006 there were nearly two million non-profit organizations in the United States, ranging from educational institutions, hospitals, schools, museums, operas and ballets, think tanks, foundations, charities, and grassroots organizations.<sup>44</sup> These are all

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40. Andrea Smith, *Introduction to THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 3.

41. *Id.*

42. Gilmore, *supra* note 7.

43. *Id.*

44. *Id.* at 45.

501(c)(3) organizations, yet they are very different in scope and mission.

These organizations also differ in the socio-political context out of which they emerge. From 1933 to 1973, there was an “unprecedented expansion of government services” including, but not limited to, welfare programs and health care initiatives that came about through either New Deal or Great Society agencies.<sup>45</sup> This period was followed by “an equally wide-scale attempt to undo many of those programs at all levels—federal, state, county, local.”<sup>46</sup> The ascendance of the Right is characterized by, amongst other things, the withdrawal of these services and the subsequent abandonment of the poor and the marginalized.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the Right organized itself around the notion that “the withdrawal of the state from certain areas of social welfare provision will enhance rather than destroy the lives of those abandoned.”<sup>48</sup> However, this abandonment that the political Right orchestrated<sup>49</sup> is coupled with its fear that the “sudden and complete suspension of certain social goods will provoke uprisings and other responses that, while ultimately controllable, come at a political cost.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, as Dylan Rodriguez asserts, it was conceived that the provision of basic services—not enough to build healthy communities and healthy lives, but enough to maintain social and political complacency—would prevent uprisings and other sporadic challenges to the status quo.<sup>51</sup> Enter the shadow state.<sup>52</sup>

Within the non-profit industrial complex is a category of organizations—which self-identify as left-of-center and grassroots—that Gilmore calls the shadow of the shadow state.<sup>53</sup> These organizations, much like the one I described in the intro-

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45. *Id.*

46. *Id.*

47. *Id.*

48. *Id.* at 44.

49. It is important to note that though he is not considered a conservative in conventional political discourse, President Bill Clinton was instrumental in implementing cutbacks on the welfare state in his highly celebrated 1996 welfare reforms. See Philip A. Klinkner, *Bill Clinton and the Politics of the New Liberalism*, in *WITHOUT JUSTICE FOR ALL: THE NEW LIBERALISM AND OUR RETREAT OF RACIAL EQUALITY* 27, 46 (Adolph Reed Jr. ed., 1999).

50. Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 45.

51. *Id.* at 45. “[The state] welcomed non-profits under the rhetoric of efficiency (read: meager budgets) and accountability (read: contracts could be pulled if anybody stepped out of line).” *Id.*

52. See *id.*

53. *Id.* at 47.



duction, often have relatively meager budgets, and the "real focus of their energies is ordinary people whom they wish fervently to organize against their own abandonment."<sup>54</sup> Some of these organizations conduct organizing campaigns that in one form or another demand more services, more funding, and less repression.<sup>55</sup> In essence, they are working against the abandonment described above. Others have both service provision and organizing initiatives. These organizations tend to be located in the poorest communities of America's large cities, and often times, are forced to provide services because the memberships of their organizing campaigns could not survive otherwise.<sup>56</sup> That is, their programs frequently function to prevent their members from being kicked out of school, thrown into jail, or deported.<sup>57</sup> These services include but are not limited to immigration counseling, after-school programming, know your rights and street law classes,<sup>58</sup> and English as a Second Language programs.

There is another category of organizations specifically engaged by several authors in the anthology—anti-violence organizations. In her chapter, "We Were Never Meant to Survive: Fighting Violence Against Women and the Fourth World War,"

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54. *Id.*

55. Many of the authors in this book work for such organizations. See *About the Contributors*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NON-PROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, supra note 7, at 235.

56. Among such organizations are the Arab American Action Network in southwest Chicago, which provides English classes, and a Family Empowerment Program dealing with domestic violence. Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) in Jackson Heights (Queens, NY), has a family services program. Inner City Struggle in East Los Angeles and Community Coalition, which is located down the street from the city of the Los Angeles uprisings of April 1992, both have youth programming. All these organizations' programs are based in community organizing. The provision of services is a small part of these organizations.

57. Though I was hired as a youth organizer for the Southwest Youth Collaborative and the Arab American Action Network, I spent countless hours providing domestic violence support, negotiating with high school administrators who, because of problems they defined as "behavioral," wanted to expel several of the students with whom we worked, and having conversations with mothers and fathers about how to parent their teenage children. Some of my colleagues, on the other hand, sometimes had to go to the local jails to find out why the youth with whom we worked had been arrested and help their families get them out. Still others went to the local welfare office with our members who, while in the office, were treated as less than human, and feeling intimidated, would leave the office without having received their benefits. We were all organizers, but we knew that these kinds of problems were par for the course in community work.

58. "Know Your Rights" classes are typically designed to teach non-lawyers their legal rights for situations when non-lawyers interface with immigration officers or the police.

Ana Clarisa Rojas Durazo discusses the challenges facing organizations who conduct anti-violence work, particularly in communities of color.<sup>59</sup> Durazo identifies how women of color are subject to the “violence of racism *and* violence against women, not mutually exclusive forms of violence, but rather interrelated and interdependent forms of violence.”<sup>60</sup> In order to challenge violence against women of color, many anti-violence organizations have an ethnic or race-specific specialty program inside a larger operation.<sup>61</sup> Embedded within this model, Durazo argues, is the universal assumption of whiteness.<sup>62</sup> That is, the intersectional experience of violence facing women of color (violence specifically because one is a woman of color) is not accounted for in much anti-violence work. For such intersectional violence, note the following example Durazo describes in her chapter:

While working in the “Latina program” at the Support Network for Battered Women, I learn[ed] that an immigrant Latina ha[d] been brutally beaten by “*la Migra*” (immigration law enforcement). I approach[ed] the executive director with an op-ed I wrote on behalf of the program that speaks out against all forms of violence against Latinas, including domestic violence and anti-immigrant state violence. (The executive director’s approval is needed prior to publishing anything). She [told] me the board would never allow such an opinion to represent the organization because it [was] not allowed to take a political stance and “this” (the INS beating, not domestic violence) [was] clearly a political issue.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, this woman’s experience of particularly gendered violence at the hands of the state is not identifiable as an issue this organization is concerned about because it is not ‘domestic violence,’ but ‘political.’ Durazo challenges this distinction between ‘domestic’ and ‘political’ violence, arguing that all forms of social violence are a product of state-proctored patriarchy and white supremacy.<sup>64</sup> As Kimberle Crenshaw argues, “the fact that minority women suffer from the effects of multiple subordination, coupled with institutional expectations based on inappropriate nonintersectional contexts, shapes and ultimately limits the op-

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59. See Durazo, *supra* note 16.

60. *Id.* at 114.

61. *Id.* at 115.

62. *Id.*

63. *Id.* at 114.

64. See *id.*

portunities for meaningful intervention on their behalf.”<sup>65</sup> As in this instance, the particularities of violence endured by women of color cannot be addressed without an explicit understanding of the mutually constitutive ways that patriarchy and white supremacy operate to subordinate women of color.

The critique Durazo offers is as much a political critique of the anti-violence movement as it is a structural critique of the NPIC. Increasingly, the funding that many of these organizations receive has narrowed the issues they work on to program-specific categories and remedies which force the staff, “who often have a great understanding of the scale and scope of both individual clients’ and the needs of society at large,” to function as highly specialized professionals—what Gilmore calls technocrats.<sup>66</sup> As Durazo notes, this dynamic enables organizations to disaggregate patriarchal violence experienced by women from white supremacist violence experienced by women of color as two distinct phenomena. Consequently, organizations tend to have specific projects focused on a racial or ethnic group, as opposed to understanding patriarchal *and* white supremacist violence as impacting all women and men.

This is in part because of the relationships that foundations have to community-based organizations. In her chapter, Gilmore argues that the problem is not just the economic dependency that is created by the foundation-501(c)(3) relationship, but that the work these organizations aim to accomplish becomes impossible under the rigid constraints imposed by the foundations.<sup>67</sup> Foundations often expect measurable outcomes, the organization of projects into forms that do not match the realities of life (as a woman of color for example), and the packaging of remarkable success stories into charts, memos, and portfolios.<sup>68</sup>

In her chapter, “Pursuing a Radical Antiviolence Agenda Inside/Outside a Non-Profit Structure,” Alisa Bierria discusses how the professionalization of grassroots anti-violence organizations streamlined these groups, thereby marginalizing anti-op-

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65. Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color*, 43 STAN. L. REV. 1241, 1251 (1991).

66. Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 46.

67. *Id.* at 47.

68. See Perez, *supra* note 14, at 91-100; see also Bierria, *supra* note 13, at 151-64. The chapters by Amara Perez and Alisa Bierria do an excellent job of discussing the day-to-day challenges that organizations struggle with vis-à-vis funders and foundations.

pression theory.<sup>69</sup> Below is an excerpt of a letter she and others wrote to Seattle Rape Relief before it closed its doors:

Why is [this closure] happening now? What is happening in Seattle Rape Relief is part of a larger national movement occurring in sexual assault and domestic violence agencies. The movement is attempting to streamline these organization into being more professionalized and less grassroots oriented. This means less critique of institutions that perpetuate sexual violence, no connection between anti-oppression theory and violence against women theory, less outreach to marginalized survivors (sex workers, prisoners, etc.), no community based fundraising initiatives, thinking about survivors as 'clients' rather than people, and perhaps, most importantly, little to no organizational accountability to the community, specifically survivors.<sup>70</sup>

Here, Bierria identifies the structural limitations facing specifically anti-violence organizations.<sup>71</sup> She links the professionalization of anti-violence work to the problem of theory, identifying how the disaggregation of anti-oppression theory and violence against women theory can function to limit survivors' ability to attain meaningful support.<sup>72</sup>

Several authors in the book remind us that foundations function to protect the wealth of the super-rich: "twice-stolen wealth—(a) profit sheltered from (b) taxes."<sup>73</sup> Relatively meager portions of this wealth from foundations such as Ford, which essentially built their wealth on the backs of the poor, are given to non-profit organizations in the form of grants.<sup>74</sup> In the chapter entitled "The Filth on Philanthropy," Tiffany Lethabo King and Ewuare Osayande highlight the contradictions of using wealth stolen from people of color to then organize for racial and economic justice.<sup>75</sup> Though the expectations of foundations and the contradictions of working with them may seem benign, in fact, "success," as defined for many grassroots organizations working in communities of color, is very different than "success" as defined by the foundations, for this definition is often a politi-

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69. Bierria, *supra* note 13, at 151. The main goals of anti-oppression theory are to transform society so that no social groups are subordinated by or subordinate to others, and to undermine institutional and socially reinforced oppressions that create patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism.

70. *Id.*

71. *Id.*

72. *Id.* at 151-58.

73. Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 47.

74. King & Osayande, *supra* note 8, at 79.

75. *Id.* at 80-81.

cal choice that may look different for community members than it does for those outside of the community.

While working as a youth organizer, I had to impose a rigid timeline on community education and campaign development projects countless times, so that program officers at foundations would know what we were doing and how their money was being used at any given time-period in the year. More notably, I found that even the very structure of the grant reports, and the type of relationship that program officers at foundations foster with community-based organizations, functions to color over the really valuable work of creating “communities in struggle,” communities who are willing and able to fight against their own oppression and envision something better.<sup>76</sup> In addition, for our organization, which on any given day had 200 youth come in and out of our doors, be it through the community organizing initiative, the after-school programming, or just to hang out, there was no way to measure how many of those youth would otherwise have gone to prison or dropped out of school had it not been for the support provided by the organization. In essence, much of our “success” was not measurable. As Alisa Bierria describes in her chapter, the amount of time it actually takes to effectively package an organization’s day-to-day commitments into a neat grant application takes away much material, physical, and emotional energy that could more effectively be used elsewhere.<sup>77</sup>

It is this kind of work, the day-to-day work of developing communities in struggle and all that entails—from restrictive grant applications and deadlines, and the balancing of dual identities<sup>78</sup> (one for the community and another for the funders), to the work of a nature so physically and emotionally consuming that organizers often burn out after only a few years—that Rodriguez and other authors in the anthology describe as functioning to manage and control dissent. And these authors are correct. The relationship between 501(c)(3) organizations, America’s foundations, and the state is a manufactured one. But within that relationship, organizations can and do struggle to challenge the status quo even while they are accountable to the state. And

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76. In her keynote speech at the 2002 INCITE2 Color of Violence II conference in Chicago, Angela Davis asserted that “we have to think about organizing as *producing* the communities, as generating community, as building communities of struggle.” Alisa Bierria, *supra* note 13, at 161.

77. *See id.* at 157.

78. *Id.*

though this work does not produce immediate transformation, one can never know how the fruits of this labor will manifest themselves in the future. In the next section, I will look more closely at the transformative potential of grassroots work, even when done under the non-profit industrial complex.

B. *How Can These Organizations Contribute to the Establishment of a Transformative Social Justice Movement?*

Having acknowledged that the non-profit industrial complex functions to manage and control dissent, is it possible to conceive of the work done under the rubric of the complex as liberatory? This section of the review begins with a quote by Ella Baker, one of most influential and least well-known organizers of the civil rights movement. Though throughout her life she worked for a series of organizations, she understood herself to be a part of a larger cause: the liberation of Black Americans. Today, many organizers who work for non-profit organizations feel as Ella Baker did nearly five decades ago, that they are in fact contributing to something, though it may currently be intangible. What is it that these organizers are contributing to, if anything at all? In addition, are there strategies non-profits can employ to reframe their work so that it effectively challenges status quo conceptions of resistance? This section will attempt to answer these questions.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore ends her chapter in the book with a section that discusses organizing during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> She evaluates how the radical liberationists of the time made the best of the resources they had. "The committed people," she says, "took the money and ran."<sup>80</sup> Because they knew the consequences of abandoning their work and their communities would be too detrimental, they made due with the resources they had.<sup>81</sup> The Montgomery Improvement Association and the Women's Political Council were two organizations involved in antiracist activism in the Jim Crow South.<sup>82</sup> Though playing different roles in the struggle, they stayed relatively independent of the major Black civil rights organizations that were fighting for

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79. Gilmore, *supra* note 7, at 48.

80. *Id.*

81. *Id.*

82. *Id.* at 49.

the same causes.<sup>83</sup> Notably, she asserts, they “were flexible in their design and in their intended longevity, with the outcome rather than the organization the purpose for their existence.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, the organizations were established to fulfill short term goals. Once those goals were fulfilled, the organizations would deteriorate, and different organizations with new, more timely goals would emerge. Thus, she argues, “these organizations [made] pathways and places rather than [search] endlessly for the perfect method and mode.”<sup>85</sup> In essence, they created spaces for the practice of liberation.

This more flexible approach to institution building is a courageous one. It requires that organizers from different groups have enough political trust in one another to build and rebuild anew. Thus, when one organizational configuration falls apart, another may form with different individuals, different leaders, and different intentions. Consequently, relationships with the base become all the more important, for when the organization disappears, the relationships must still exist in order to sustain the cause. Moreover, great focus must be placed on developing relationships with allies rather than partaking in internal institution-building. As Gilmore asserts, “It is the case that when it comes to building social movements, organizations are only as good as the united fronts they bring into being.”<sup>86</sup> Be they relationships to fellow organizers, intellectuals, students, teachers, or other committed individuals, this form of continuous reinvention requires there to be more committed parties with access to different kinds of resources at the table.

Alisa Bierria describes how the struggles she and her co-workers experienced at Seattle Rape Relief led them to found Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA), which prioritized community organizing as the primary tool to increase support for survivors.<sup>87</sup> “We asserted a somewhat vague distinction between being a ‘social service’ organization and a ‘social change’ organization, meaning that we did not simply want to ‘manage’ sexual assault, but to seek strategies to transform the way communities confronted sexual violence.”<sup>88</sup> This work, as

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83. *Id.*

84. *Id.*

85. *Id.* at 51.

86. *Id.*

87. Bierria, *supra* note 13, at 152.

88. *Id.*

Bierria asserts, was wrought with challenges. In the beginning they were interesting to funders, but ultimately the organization developed a 'dual identity'—one for the community and a different one for funders—as a tactic for survival.<sup>89</sup>

Still, within this limiting framework, they were able to develop innovative ways to understand and challenge violence against women. They centered the experience of women of color and poor women who have been raped, and in doing so, realized that many women used drugs as a strategy to cope with trauma.<sup>90</sup> This re-centering of women of color thus led them to reframe drug use, violence, and trauma as mutually reinforcing phenomena, particularly in the context of women of color. This is just one of the many examples Bierria notes as to what effective struggle within non-profit organizations might look like. Bierria ends her piece by asserting that "CARA's story and strategies are not offered as a model for how radical antiviolence organizations can survive within a non-profit structure, but more as an illustration of how, although the non-profit structure specifically works to undermine and threaten our organizations, we can work to practice an ethic of resistance and creativity nevertheless."<sup>91</sup>

In *Hammer and Hoe*, Robin D. G. Kelley considers how the Alabama Communist Party of the 1930s might have influenced the work of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee over thirty years later.<sup>92</sup> Today, he argues, if one were to look directly for the remnants of the Communist Party in Alabama, it may prove too difficult a task.<sup>93</sup> But the work of the "few surviving radicals" had potentially great impacts on the modern civil rights movement.<sup>94</sup>

In 1965 young Stokely Carmichael and a handful of SNCC organizers moved into this black belt county to launch a voter registration drive and to form an independent political party. The tiny band of non-violent student activists was somewhat startled when poor farmers of all ages, especially the older folk, came to meetings enthusiastic and fully armed. . . . How much these young activists knew about the [Share Croppers' Union], the Communists or the 1935 cotton pickers' strike in Lowndes before their arrival is difficult to determine. The fact is, the events of 1935 comprised part of the collective memory

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89. *Id.* at 157.

90. *Id.* at 154.

91. *Id.* at 162.

92. See ROBIN D. G. KELLEY, *HAMMER AND HOE* (1990).

93. See *id.* at 228.

94. *Id.* at 229.



of Lowndes County blacks in 1965. The armed and poor sharecroppers who followed Carmichael's lead brought a lot from their past to the new movement, including what the [Communist Party] and the [Share Croppers' Union] had left behind.<sup>95</sup>

Here, Kelley identifies how knowledge and the memory of struggle continued on despite the disappearance of the organization in which the elder activists had participated.<sup>96</sup> Such sharing of knowledge and experience is vital to movement-building. Grassroots groups often use community-based education programs to teach both youth and adults about the history of SNCC and other similar organizations and movements. Through this education, community members and organizers learn about the successes and the failures committed by movements before, generating a 'collective memory' of struggle. And though the fruits of this labor have yet to be determined, there is no telling what is to come of this invaluable work.<sup>97</sup>

As described above, the work of grassroots organizers in non-profit organizations around the country and their relationship to their funders and the state is a vexed one. Some authors in the anthology claim that this relationship prevents the growth of a radical, transformative social justice movement, and that today's movement, comprised of non-profit organizations, functions to maintain the status quo.<sup>98</sup> In the next section of the review, I argue that it is disingenuous to talk of contemporary grassroots organizing on the Left as a social movement. The work of these organizations is necessary, for it is laying the seeds of future movements. However, community-based organizing is only one element of a social movement, and thus cannot alone be a movement, particularly if done under the rubric of the non-profit industrial complex.

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95. *See id.* at 229-30.

96. *See id.*

97. I am indebted to Cheryl Harris for this insight. *See also* SONDRÁ HALE, GENDER POLITICS IN SUDAN: ISLAMISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE STATE 248-49 (1996) (asserting that formations of resistance inside women's homes and neighborhoods and women's popular culture are pre-figurative political forms laying the groundwork for the broader development of women's movements).

98. This point will be examined extensively in the next section of the review.

## II. WHAT IS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT?

*The 501(c)(3) is not a movement and cannot make the movement. . . . But things are stirring.*<sup>99</sup>

Jerome Scott, 2005

Many of us on the Left tend to identify our work as part of a broader social movement. That is, our language presumes the existence of an actual social movement that is larger than the organizations or communities of which we are a part. We often hear any one of these statements when engaged in casual conversation: ‘Their organization is a part of the *movement*,’ ‘I don’t date anyone who doesn’t do *movement* work,’ and ‘The antiwar *movement* is too white.’ And the list goes on and on. However, we rarely engage our copious use of the term “*movement*.” Is there an identifiable social movement on the American Left? What differentiates contemporary organizing from that of the 1960s and 1970s—the time of the Black Panthers, the Brown Berets, the American Indian Movement, and countless anti-colonial movements throughout the Third World? Why do we use the term *movement* so generously? What are we really meaning to identify?

The various authors in the book do an excellent job of defining the non-profit industrial complex, as was discussed above. In providing varied definitions of the NPIC and sometimes even disagreeing with one another, they problematize the concept of the non-profit organization and the larger non-profit industrial complex. However, no such work is done with the concept of social movement. In order to understand the limitations of the non-profit model, it is imperative to look at the content and function of social movements throughout history, and to define just what we mean by social movement. That is, though pieces in the anthology assert that the non-profit model cannot produce a radically transformative social movement, no chapter in the anthology clarifies what a social movement actually is, or ideally should be. In the end, without an explicit conversation about social movements, it is difficult to take away from the anthology as much value as one would want.

To illustrate this point, I turn to a cursory examination of social movements. I acknowledge that the subject of social movement composition, purpose, and agendas extends far be-

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99. See Tang, *supra* note 21, at 224. Jerome Scott is the founder and director of Project South, an organization located in Atlanta, GA.

yond the boundaries of this paper and already compromises academic literatures in several disciplines. My purpose here is to clarify more clearly the necessity of considering what a social movement actually is in order to elucidate a critique of the NPIC. I will begin by considering the differences between organizing and a social movement. That is, using the Iranian Revolution as an example, I will argue that organizing, though one of the central aspects of movement-building, must be coupled with a guiding meta-politic—be it anti-imperialist ideology as in the case of the Iranian Revolution, or an over-arching demand for civil rights, as in the case of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States—to begin the transition toward becoming a social movement.

In the second part of this section, I will attempt to provide a historicized view of contemporary resistance by people of color on the Left. That is, where have organizations fighting for radical transformation been in the past, where are they today, and where could they possibly be going? How does the work being done today figure into the larger story? To answer these questions, I will briefly look to the Black Freedom Movement in the United States for guidance.

A. *How Is “Organizing” Different from a “Social Movement?”*

When I first began community organizing work, my father, an organizer in the Iranian Left during the days leading up to and after the Iranian Revolution, had a great deal of trouble understanding my work. In his time, he witnessed thousands of people in the streets all over the United States and Europe and millions in Iran marching to depose the Shah.<sup>100</sup> He and his peers organized hunger strikes to get their comrades out of jail, they held teach-ins and other educational events on college campuses throughout the United States, Europe, and the Middle East, they raised funds for themselves, they recruited new members, and they created a multitude of political organizations. The list is endless.<sup>101</sup> To him, having experienced such mass-based organi-

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100. See SANDRA MACKEY, *THE IRANIANS: PERSIA, ISLAM AND THE SOUL OF A NATION* 271, 300 (1996) (providing a brief history of Iran leading up to and during the Revolution).

101. For a brief examination of the Iranian Left leading up to the Islamic Revolution, see MAZIAR BEHROOZ, *REBELS WITH A CAUSE: THE FAILURE OF THE IRANIAN LEFT* (1999).

zation coupled with a startling popular will, the American Left is a quiet, chaotic mess. A mess, he felt, I should stay away from. He has since come around, and sees value in contemporary grassroots organizing work. But if I were to ask him whether he thinks the work being done today by organizers, activists, and intellectuals on the radical American Left is a social movement, without hesitation he would say no. The grassroots organizing and movement-building that led up to the Iranian Revolution spanned over thirty years and took on a plethora of forms. From student organizing within Iran, to organizing in the streets and religious institutions, to the work done abroad, the grassroots work slowly developed into a popular, transformative movement.

In September of 1978, immediately prior to the Iranian Revolution, Michel Foucault, who had historically shown “an affinity for the Orient,” went to Iran “to be there at the birth of ideas.”<sup>102</sup> He went to Iran because he was excited about the potential of a revolution rooted in part, at least, in spirituality.<sup>103</sup> In his notes, he wrote that “[a]mong the things that characterize this revolutionary event [in Iran], there is the fact that it has brought out—and few peoples in history have had this—an absolutely collective will. . . . Furthermore, this collective will has been given one object, one target and one only, namely, the departure of the shah.”<sup>104</sup> He was enamored with the demonstration in the streets, and surprised that the Iranian people could rise up against such a powerful regime.<sup>105</sup> The quote below exemplifies Foucault’s infatuation with the revolutionary process in Iran:

There was a government that was certainly one of the best endowed with weapons, the best served by a large army that was astonishingly faithful compared with what one might think, there was a police that was certainly not very efficient, but whose violence and cruelty often made up for a lack of subtlety: it was, moreover, a regime directly supported by the United States; lastly, it had the backing of the whole world, of the countries large and small that surrounded it. In a sense, it

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102. I hesitate to use the work of Foucault, as he makes sweeping generalizations about Iranians and the Revolution. See JANET AFARY & KEVIN B. ANDERSON, *FOUCAULT AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION: GENDER AND THE SEDUCTIONS OF ISLAMISM* 3 (2005). But his insights are useful insofar as he identifies the role of the “collective” in bringing about massive change in Iran. For a discussion of the role that Orientalism has played in producing knowledge, see Gauri Viswanathan, *Interview of Edward W. Said*, in *POWER, POLITICS AND CULTURE: INTERVIEWS WITH EDWARD W. SAID* 262, 279 (Gauri Viswanathan ed., 2001).

103. *Id.*

104. *Id.* at 252-53.

105. See *id.* at 254.

had everything going for it, plus, of course, oil, which guaranteed the state an income that it could use as it wished. Yet, despite all this, a people rose up in revolt . . . .<sup>106</sup>

Foucault's understanding of the Iranian Revolution, though compelling, was limited to his own experience in Iran. His presence in revolutionary Iran enabled him to witness the grand moments immediately preceding the topple of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. But he was not witness to the organizing work and the movement-building that created the collective will he spoke of, work that spanned nearly a half century.

It is not uncommon for people to call mass demonstrations in the streets a movement,<sup>107</sup> and, as Foucault did, associate transformative social change with those fleeting moments, thereby disregarding everything that came before.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, others make the opposite mistake. They characterize community organizing—that is, the creation of public, open spaces, the development of participatory organizational structures, recruitment, and popular education—as a social movement.<sup>109</sup> In essence, “movement” is a term that is used quite loosely to define many sorts of political activism. But organizing—the grassroots work that often precedes the existence of a movement and is necessary to movement-building—is different from the social movement itself. According to the Movement Strategy Center,<sup>110</sup> “Social movements are defined by their ability to move large numbers of people to action to achieve structural and cultural transformation on a national or global scale. Engaging a diverse range of communities and approaches simultaneously, social movements unite people through shared strategy, shared principles and shared goals.”<sup>111</sup> Of course, a range of different strategies operating simultaneously is key to successful

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106. *Id.*

107. During the National Day of Action in support of the six Black youth arrested in Jena, Louisiana, Al Sharpton stated that “This is the start of the 21st century civil rights movement.” Ed Pilkington, *Enough is Enough: Racial Protest Brings Thousands to Southern Town*, THE GUARDIAN, Sept. 21, 2007, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,2173842,00.html>.

108. See Movement Strategy Center, Movement-building, <http://www.movementstrategy.org/movementbuilding>.

109. See DONATELLA DELLA PORTA & MARIO DANI, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: AN INTRODUCTION 9 (2006).

110. The Movement Strategy Center is located in Oakland, CA. For more information about the Movement Strategy Center, visit their website: <http://www.movementstrategy.org/movementbuilding>.

111. Movement Strategy Center, *supra* note 108.

movement-building.<sup>112</sup> Thus, movements sometimes have an artistic component and a social services component in addition to their other work. These components, however, are not independent from the politics of the movements. They are all rooted in, and guided by, the ideological commitments of the movement itself. Consequently, what forms the soul of a movement is the sharing of values and vision.<sup>113</sup>

It is often difficult to determine how various collaborations, ideologies, and communities collide with historical moments to create a social movement.<sup>114</sup> In his book, *The Theology of Discontent*, Hamid Dabashi looks at the ideological foundations of the Iranian Revolution.<sup>115</sup> In addition to transnational organizing, the production of an anti-Western, anti-imperialist ideology was instrumental to the growth of the revolutionary movement.<sup>116</sup> Jalal al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati, the two ideologues most commonly associated with the Revolution, made great efforts to translate the writings of anti-colonial scholars such as Frantz Fanon into Farsi to make these works relevant to an Iranian public.<sup>117</sup> Other Iranian scholars such as Morteza Motahhari<sup>118</sup> and Sayyid Mahmud Taleqani<sup>119</sup> transformed Islam into an anti-imperialist, revolutionary ideology in the eyes of the Iranian public.

In the Iranian context, ideological production did the work of unifying the nation behind shared principles of anti-imperialism and the shared goal of deposing the Shah.<sup>120</sup> All organizing that happened from the 1950s up until the Revolutionary moment itself had this goal in mind.<sup>121</sup> Of course, the Iranian Left was not homogeneous: a plethora of strategies were employed, from grassroots organizing and education in Iran, to armed resistance, to placing pressure on the American government for its support of the Shah.<sup>122</sup> In fact, by the time of the Revolution, the Iranian Left had subdivided into a multitude of political orga-

112. *See id.*

113. *See generally* HAMID DABASHI, *THEOLOGY OF DISCONTENT* (2006).

114. Movement Strategy Center, *supra* note 108.

115. DABASHI, *supra* note 113.

116. *Id.* at 16-17.

117. *Id.* at 110.

118. *Id.* at 147.

119. *Id.* at 216.

120. *See generally* JALAL AL-E AHMAD, *OCCIDENTOSIS: A PLAGUE FROM THE WEST* (1984).

121. MACKAY, *supra* note 100, at 272.

122. *See generally* BEHROOZ, *supra* note 101.

nizations and parties.<sup>123</sup> But despite the various differences between these organizations, the goal remained unchanged for decades.

As the Movement Strategy Center asserts, the role of a shared goal and shared vision in creating a transformative social movement is essential.<sup>124</sup> Can the contemporary American radical Left clearly articulate a shared vision? In the American public imagination, is it clear who and what "the Left" is? These questions must be answered before we can purport to have a clear radical movement on the American Left. In the next section of the paper, I will attempt to place contemporary grassroots organizing work done by communities of color within its own history, illuminating its relationship to the movements of the twentieth century.

#### B. *If This Isn't a Social Movement, Then What Is It?*

In *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, Barbara Ransby not only develops a biography of Ella Josephine Baker, she also develops a partial narrative of the twentieth century struggle for liberation in America's Black communities, since Ella Baker's activism spanned from 1930 to 1980.<sup>125</sup> Early on in her career, Baker worked for non-profit organizations such as the NAACP, where she attempted to democratize the organization, "deemphasizing legal battles and giving more attention to grassroots struggles."<sup>126</sup> By the 1950s, her activism had shifted to the grassroots organizing of the Civil Rights Movement, where she worked in organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).<sup>127</sup> In the 1960s emerged the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), and the rise of Black Power, in which she also played a role.<sup>128</sup> She ended her days in support of radical Black activists such as Angela Davis, and began involving herself in Third World anti-colonial struggles such as the Puerto Rico Independista Movement.<sup>129</sup>

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123. *Id.*

124. Movement Strategy Center, *supra* note 108.

125. Ransby, *supra* note 22, at 3.

126. *Id.* at 4, 10.

127. *Id.*

128. *Id.*

129. *Id.*

Thus, the political trajectory of Ella Baker's work is one that mirrors the evolution of Black radical politics in the twentieth century, one that began with legal and grassroots organizing and continued to become mass-based social movement work that sometimes extended beyond American borders. Barbara Ransby reveals in Baker's biography that Baker always had a commitment to the ongoing process of developing a just society, particularly through grassroots organizing.<sup>130</sup> That is, as new spaces opened on the Left, Baker's involvement expanded, but she continued to work to infuse grassroots organizing into every space in which she worked.

In this section, I argue that the era of radical, transformative liberation movements was not created in a vacuum, but rather was mutually constitutive with the political environment of the time. Notably, such movements were the direct product of the grassroots and legal organizing work done in the earlier part of the twentieth century. Without the early grassroots work and the openings provided by the legal organizing work, mass-based movements could not have formed.

During the era of McCarthyism and the creation of the Cold War, domestic repression was quite high.<sup>131</sup> Anne Braden, one of Baker's peers, characterized the period in this way:

I came into the social justice movements at the height of the repression of the Cold War period . . . . Organizations seeking civil rights, peace and justice had been crushed everywhere . . . . Many people [fell] into silence . . . . But the one thing that could not be crushed was a burning desire of African Americans to be free.<sup>132</sup>

During times of heightened state repression, political activism often takes on a multitude of different forms in order to protect itself while still challenging the status quo.<sup>133</sup> In the early 1950s, grassroots organizing was one form by which the Left continued its work.<sup>134</sup> Even the most repressive of states often fail to effectively suppress grassroots organizing because it tends to happen under the cover of already existing spaces, such as

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130. *Id.*

131. *Id.* at 148-69.

132. *Id.* at 149.

133. For example, the rise in Muslim and Middle Eastern comedy, in the form of the Axis of Evil Comedy Tour and the Sultans of Satire, is one way in which activism and political dissent amongst those who are the targets of state repression has rearticulated itself in this particularly repressive historical moment.

134. See CHARLES M. PAYNE, I'VE GOT THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM: THE ORGANIZING TRADITION AND THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM STRUGGLE 67-102 (1996).



homes, schools, artistic communities, and religious institutions, and can thus be more difficult to control.<sup>135</sup>

Another characteristic of organizing during times of heightened repression is the use of the legal strategy. That is, using the law to challenge the inconsistencies of particularly harmful social policies. In the 1950s, the NAACP was at the forefront of legal battles regarding race in the United States, and in conjunction with grassroots efforts, worked to transform the law from within.<sup>136</sup>

In 1954, the Supreme Court ended *de jure* segregation in southern schools via their ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>137</sup> This pivotal decision began a wave of cases ending *de jure* segregation in private facilities.<sup>138</sup> In essence, the tide of the moment had shifted, and the small opening provided by *Brown* gave way to new forms of organizing all over the South. With the Supreme Court presumably on their side, civil rights organizers were integrating, often by force, both private and public facilities all over the region.<sup>139</sup> Employing different strategies, a multitude of organizations arose to challenge civil rights laws throughout the country.<sup>140</sup>

Meanwhile, by the 1960s, Malcolm X had emerged as a Black Muslim activist in the North, one who provided a radical

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135. I wrote the first part of this review while in Iran. Though there is a vibrant women's movement in the country, state repression has increased dramatically since American threats of an attack began. In attempting to weed out anyone conspiring of regime change, the state has become highly repressive, closing all kinds of public spaces from book stores and newspapers to art galleries and community centers. See Robert Tait, *Iran Clamps Down on Coffee Shops*, THE GUARDIAN, Oct. 25, 2007. Consequently, organizing in the women's movement has now shifted into people's homes, where they conduct their popular education workshops and trainings, and recruit new members through existing family and social networks. In essence, creating new spaces has become difficult, but building on the existing ones is still possible. For more information about organizing in the women's movement in Iran, see [www.we-change.org/English](http://www.we-change.org/English).

136. See PAYNE, *supra* note 134.

137. *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). Derrick Bell argues that advancements for people of color are only made when those interests converge with the interests of white, middle-class Americans. He uses *Brown* to demonstrate this point. See Derrick Bell, *Brown and the Interest Convergence Dilemma*, 93 Harv. L. Rev. 518 (1980).

138. See *Heart of Atlanta Motel Inc. v. U.S.*, 379 U.S. 241 (1964) (establishing that the Commerce Clause applies to a motel serving interstate travelers, thereby disabling the motel from refusing to accommodate Black guests); see also *Palmer v. Thompson*, 403 U.S. 217 (1971) (asserting that segregation in five publicly operated swimming pools was illegal).

139. PAYNE, *supra* note 134, at 236-64.

140. *Id.*

critique of the integrationist methodology employed by the Civil Rights Movement. Below, he urges movement activists to stop thinking of integration as liberation:

The entire civil rights struggle needs a new interpretation, a broader interpretation. We need to look at this civil rights thing from another angle—from the inside as well as from the outside. To those of us whose philosophy is black nationalism, the only way you can get involved in the civil rights struggle is to give it a new interpretation . . . . I just can't see why, if white people can go to a classroom with no negroes present and it doesn't affect the academic diet they're receiving, an all-black classroom can be affected by the absence of white children. . . . So, in my opinion, what the integrationists are saying when they say that whites and blacks must go to school together, is that the whites are so much superior that just their presence in a black classroom balances it out. I can't go along with that.<sup>141</sup>

Like the roles that Jalal al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and others played in recasting Islam as a political ideology in Iran and thereby influencing the trajectory of the movement itself, Malcolm X played a vital role in producing the ideology of Black Power in the United States.<sup>142</sup> He challenged the rhetoric of integrationism, arguing that integration cannot be a solution to the structural problems impacting Black communities in the United States.<sup>143</sup> Later, both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. united in putting forth expansive critiques of poverty in the United States and the war in Vietnam, making clear that seemingly divergent movements and viewpoints could unite to challenge the state in its efforts to subjugate communities of color in the United States and throughout the world.

In 1966, after the murder of Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party was founded by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, officially beginning what is often characterized as the Black Power Movement.<sup>144</sup> Simultaneous to this, SNCC was incorporating a similar Black Power politic into its vision, transitioning from a traditional civil rights organization advocating for integration into a pan-African, Black Nationalist body with transnational links to

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141. Gary Peller, *Race Consciousness*, 1990 DUKE L. J. 758, 758-760 (1990) (discussing the reappearance and refinement of race consciousness in Critical Race Theory works).

142. *Id.*

143. *Id.*

144. See Huey Newton, *The Founding of the Black Panther Party*, in THE HUEY P. NEWTON READER 49 (David Hilliard & Donald Weise eds., 2002).

anti-colonial movements throughout the Third World.<sup>145</sup> Against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, radical nationalist movements were forming in communities of color all over the United States.<sup>146</sup>

Movement-building is a long process. Had there been no Civil Rights Movement, there could have been no critique of it—a critique which later transformed into Black Power. The Civil Rights Movement was preceded by the legal and grassroots organizing work done by organizations such as the NAACP and the work that led to the passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* and other anti-segregation cases. Without the grassroots work of earlier generations, work that functioned to educate communities that they deserved better and that they could determine the content of their own futures, the South may not have been prepared for the radical politic of Black Power. In essence, the radical movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s found their roots in the legal organizing and grassroots work of earlier times.

By the 1970s, the state had re-organized itself to effectively challenge these radical social movements in the form of COINTELPRO and other various state-run projects.<sup>147</sup> In the 1980s, Reaganism emerged as a guiding force in American politics, cutting social service and welfare programs throughout the country, thereby producing the abandonment discussed in the

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145. The black nationalist position received its first modern wave of sustained mass exposure in 1966 when Willie Ricks and Stokely Carmichael began using the term 'Black Power' during the March Against Fear in Mississippi. The high-profile and polarized controversy over the term 'Black Power' transformed what had been largely an underground conflict into a full-scale, highly charged public debate over the fundamental direction and conception of the civil rights movement.

Peller, *supra* note 141, at 787 (footnote omitted).

146. See generally MIGUEL MELENDEZ, *WE TOOK THE STREETS: FIGHTING FOR LATINO RIGHTS WITH THE YOUNG LORDS* (2003) (discussing the formation of the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican Nationalist group based out of New York); see also LEONARD PELTIER, *PRISON WRITINGS: MY LIFE IS MY SUN DANCE* 87 (1992) (discussing the formation of the American Indian Movement in the Lakota territories of South Dakota).

147. See generally WARD CHURCHILL & JIM VANDER WALL, *THE COINTELPRO PAPERS: DOCUMENTS FROM THE FBI'S SECRET WARS AGAINST DOMESTIC DISSENT* (1990) (investigating the role of the U.S. government in infiltrating and later destroying the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement). COINTELPRO, an acronym for the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program, was a series of covert and often illegal acts used to disrupt subversive political organizations that often worked toward radical transformation.

first section of the review.<sup>148</sup> Thus, the current state of the radical Left is both a product of, and a response to, the state's infiltration of radical organizations and their subsequent destruction. To discuss the current state of the American Left independent of its history makes it difficult for one to grapple with the limitations of the NPIC and create positive solutions for the future. This period is a product of its predecessors.<sup>149</sup> Today, the grass-roots organizing done in communities of color throughout the country is using lessons learned from our predecessors to create new pathways for liberation. Of course, liberation cannot be found in the non-profit industrial complex. But things are stirring. Movements will emerge out of the work that is being done. History has proven this.

### III. CONCLUSION

Prior to the Iranian Revolution, Jalal al-Ahmad sought to challenge the Iranian Left, expressing the need for those committed to liberation and radical transformation to understand the context in which they work and the histories of their communities. Without that, he believed, change would be impossible. He emphasized that

you can only be effective in politics, or in the affairs of a society, when you have weighed the degree of receptivity or tolerance of that society vis-à-vis your ideas. And in order to achieve this measure, you will have to have known that society, its traditions, history, the factors instrumental in making its collective belief, forces that mobilize its masses in the streets, and then its silence, its sitting silently at home.<sup>150</sup>

The various contributors in the anthology are driven by a similar desire to understand why change has been so long to come. "Never before," Dylan Rodriguez asserts, "has the struggle to mount viable movements of radical social transformation in the United States been more desperate, urgent, or difficult."<sup>151</sup>

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148. For a discussion of how groups organized to combat violence against women were coopted into social service organizations, see Durazo, *supra* note 16, at 113, and Paul Kivel, *Social Service or Social Change?*, in *THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE FUNDED: BEYOND THE NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX*, *supra* note 7, at 129.

149. "We had no more courage than Harriet Tubman or Marcus Garvey had in their times. We just had a more vulnerable enemy." Stokely Carmichael (otherwise known as Kwame Ture), civil rights activist, *available at* [http://thinkexist.com/quotes/Stokely\\_Carmichael](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/Stokely_Carmichael).

150. Dabashi, *supra* note 113, at 92.

151. See Rodriguez, *supra* note 10, at 21.

The contributors in the anthology provide a deep, critical engagement of the work done by organizers and activists in the non-profit industrial complex. The problem of attaining radical transformation, however, is one much larger than the NPIC. In a historical moment when the spaces for organizing toward radical transformation are limited, the question of creating such transformation inside institutions designed to subjugate and subordinate is one we struggle with whether we are social services providers and organizers inside non-profit organizations, or teachers, students, and intellectuals inside universities and schools throughout the country. Historicizing these challenges, however, enables us to better understand the context from which this moment emerges, and also allows us to see that this is a struggle generations of organizers and activists have been faced with for some time now. In an effort to change where we are going, we must understand from where we come.