

INSURRECTIONARY UPPRISINGS

A Reader in Revolutionary Nonviolence
and Decolonization



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AFTERWORD

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...colonialism is not only a contest over territory, but over the meaning of life itself.
—Nick Estes

This is what true revolutions are about. They are about redefining our relationships with one another, to the Earth and to the world.
—Grace Lee Boggs

These two epigraphs that I have excerpted from this compendium encapsulate my thoughts on revolutionary nonviolence: those lingering colonialities (Williams, 2016), with their necrophilic inclination, will subsume everything if we allow them; resistances to them urge us to remember and re-envision sustainable relationalities. I perceive revolutionary nonviolences as significant parts of our pluriversal toolkit of resistances. I am intentionally using nonviolence in the plural because the amalgam of beautiful and thought-provoking writings in this volume represent old and new wisdoms. They remind us that as we theorize and strategize anew that we must give plenteous nods to that which is still relevant and generative from our past (without puritanically deifying all things pre-colonial); in other words, Sankofa as symbol, signpost, and praxis!

I grew up in the twin island republic of Trinidad & Tobago, just off the coast of Venezuela. It is purported that on his third trip to the Caribbean, Columbus took a more southerly trip, and as his ship sailed up between Venezuela and what was then called Iere (an Indigenous name for Trinidad meaning Land of the Hummingbird) he spotted three mountain peaks which reminded him of La Trinidad, the Holy Trinity. With the zeal and hubris that accompanies the term *terra nullius* (Latin for ‘nobody’s land’), Columbus renamed Iere to Trinidad, and the name stuck. When I utter the name of my country, it is a signification for colonialism, slavery, indentureship, and myriad hybridities emergent therefrom. As an example of the connection between coloniality and modernity (Mignolo, 2009, 2011; Quijano, 2007), the name and the State itself are imbued with lingering colonialities such as hierarchization, violence as disciplinary technology, exploitation, exclusion, and marginalization. One of the sinews that connects coloniality and modernity is a logic that impels us to invade, seize and own. This logic to own and thingify (Césaire, 2000) humans and the Earth itself, in the parlance of dynamical systems theory, has become a negative attractor. Vallacher et al (2010) describe an attractor:

as a subset of potential states or patterns of change to which a system’s behavior converges over time. Metaphorically, an attractor ‘attracts’ the

system's behavior, so that even very different starting states tend to evolve toward the subset of states defining the attractor... When a system's dynamics are governed by an attractor... the system is resistant to perturbing influences that would otherwise move it to a different state or pattern of changes. An external factor might promote a temporary change in the state of a system, but over time the system will return to its attractor (p. 265).

This logic to thingify persists and has warped human relationality (with each other and with the Earth). However, imprisonment of the human spirit can be and has been fodder for revolution! The spirit to live and be free is perhaps a positive attractor, informing patterns of transgressive and liberatory behaviors in the face of dehumanization. So when I utter the name of Trinidad, it also is a signification for both the many un-remembered peoples who, in small and large ways,¹ fought against the grips of oppression, and as well as for the likes of Claudia Jones, Eric Williams, Stokely Carmichael, George Padmore, and CLR James. There is perhaps a vibrant dynamism in the interstices of the dialectical relationship between the negative attractor of the logic of coloniality and the positive attractor of the revolutionary spirit to live and be free; may this dynamism be nourished by the ancestral power of maroonage.

I am from Laventille,² a socioeconomically disadvantaged community that brims with creativity. Laventille, a much smaller, but very similar version of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, sits atop a hill rimming the Trinbagonian capital city of Port of Spain. When I see those hills of Laventille, and similar hills across the Caribbean and South America, I imagine the enslaved—once-plantation-property—escaping with revolutionary vigor, into the wild hills, to reclaim not only their freedom but also their subjectivity. These maroons did this all across the putative ‘New World’; the Haitian Revolution being one of the most seismic consequences of maroonage. Maroons—despite the pernicious, white supremacist attempts at inculcating inferiority—knew that they were not born for enslavement, so they delinked from that odious apparatus, and set about creating a life for themselves outside that ontologically-narrowing, ethically-emaciated sphere. The Black Lives Matter movement is contemporarily an example of insurrectionary maroonage. With this spirit of maroonage, of abolitionism, we must delink from today’s entrenched and violent apparatuses of oppression, and re-envision radical alternatives. As Kali Akuno stated (in this volume) ‘we can’t mediate our way to liberation through a series of compromises with capital’

1. When I use the words 'small' and 'large', I do not mean a hierarchy of importance, but more so to note that some actions are, for varied reasons, more legible to wider and diverse audiences. I do believe in the power of micro-revolutionary actions; that is, the often quiet, under-the-radar defiance (both inadvertent and intentionally strategic), the amalgam of which can build pressure, create fissures, and over time, render corrosive impacts on larger structural hindrances to social change.

2. Laventille, said by many, is the birthplace of the steelpan. The first steelpans invented were made from old oil drums. The steel pan, according to Caribbean intellectual Lloyd Best (2001), is an incarnation of the ingenuity of a denigrated people accustomed to taking the discarded and crafting something of purpose; I aver that that is perhaps at once our ancestral fight for life and a sublimation of some of the prolonged violences rendered upon us.

Ergo, we need a nation state, an Actuating revolution in the now (C. Boggs, 1977)

I do think that attractor presupposition, my aforementioned education for *ana* experiment in *wi* thoughts. But definitive conclusions are the MLK Jr.'s injunction for and of revolution of values, *and* ends. I lution of values, because anthropogenic further blurs the line (such as revolution in topographies (say nonviolence has co-opt), holistic (i.e. Earth), community-pluriversal in implacability.

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Ergo, we need alternatives to capitalism, to the exclusionary bureaucratic modern nation state, and to practices of individuals privatizing and harming the Earth. Actuating revolutionary nonviolences is a form of maroonage, and as we enact them *in the now* for a world that we (re)envision, they become prefigurative praxes (C. Boggs, 1977) and, in so doing, become life-giving attractors.

I do think that consciously enacting revolutionary nonviolences as a positive attractor presupposes deliberate preparation, and since I am in the field of education, my aforementioned postulations necessarily beget the question: what does education for *and of* revolutionary nonviolence look like? It is a nascent thought experiment in which I am currently engaged, therefore, I have few solidified thoughts. But definitiveness isn't my final goal because such singular-self-directed conclusions are the hallmark of coloniality, exclusion, and ego. Guided by Dr. MLK Jr.'s injunction that moral means are requisite for moral ends, an education for *and of* revolutionary nonviolence must be concerned with content, form, values, *and* ends. I concur with Grace Lee Boggs' assertion that we need a revolution of values, because I think that as space exploration/colonialism advances, as anthropogenic global warming imperils livelihoods, as artificial intelligence further blurs the boundaries between human and machine, values and praxes (such as revolutionary nonviolences) will hopefully help us navigate fast-changing topographies (social and otherwise). An education for *and of* revolutionary nonviolence has to be iterative (because of inevitably constant attempts to co-opt), holistic (i.e. intentionally re-tethering cartesianized mind-body-spirit-Earth), community-oriented, substantively intersectional, planetary in scope, and pluriversal in implementation.

As we continue to sketch, strategize, trial-run and course correct our revolutionary nonviolences, may our imaginations be not restricted or our energies blunted by the myopic dictates of realpolitik that charge us as naïve. Many of us are still here because of the audacity of our ancestors; dare to summon them!

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Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) is widely considered one of the most important political theorists of the 20th century; many of her ideas have had a lasting impact on political thought.

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