



ABSTRACT

The anti-globalization movement is resolutely anti-imperialist, and increasingly says so. It works on issues of economic, political, and cultural justice and autonomy of indigenous people and the Global South, as well as workers and oppressed people in the Global North. Despite this good work, the North American segment of the movement has been harshly criticized by anti-racists within and outside the movement. This paper examines the anti-racist discourse about the movement. It begins with a comprehensive survey of the data available on these issues. The following analysis pursues a number of dimensions, finding that movement “framing” by activists as well as outsiders has played a powerful role in alienating anti-racists from the anti-globalization movement, that

anti-racists are not satisfied by the way in which the anti-globalization movement connects the global and the local, that it is organizing strategy (neither goals nor tactics) that is often a source of conflict, that this strategic difference reflects assumptions of how empowerment happens and of subjectivities of proto-activists, that the anti-globalization movement’s assumptions are rooted in a white cultural individualism, and that this individualism also explains why countercultural politics are often experienced as exclusionary by activists of colour. The paper concludes by suggesting the use of Massimo deAngelis’ re-articulation of the meanings and practices of responsibility and solidarity in the anti-globalization movement.

HOW CAN ANTI-IMPERIALISM NOT BE ANTI-RACIST? THE NORTH AMERICAN ANTI-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

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Shortly after the November 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, that mobilization and the larger anti-globalization movement were criticized by anti-racists. Subsequently, a discourse appeared around issues of whiteness and anti-racism in the movement. This paper describes and analyzes that discourse in the interest of helping activists move forward. Scholars of social movements may also find the analysis useful.

The object of study and source of the data is the discourse of anti-racism/anti-oppression¹ within and addressed to the North American² anti-globalization movement. The Colours of Resistance Network has gathered much of this discourse. The statements in this discourse are made by a variety of actors, some of whom position themselves clearly within the movement, others of whom feel drawn to it but also alienated from it, and voices who do not identify with, but lend their criticism to or whose views are adopted for inclusion in the collection of articles posted by the Colours network. It is important to note that the

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¹ Genealogically, anti-oppression is a recent iteration of anti-racist work which adopts a perspective of multiple and intersecting oppressions. Although activists with this view sometimes see themselves as entirely distinct from anti-racist perspectives, for the purposes of this paper anti-oppression is treated within the larger landscape of anti-racism.

² The Canadian and US anti-globalization movements share practices but are distinct, as are the two nations’ histories of and discourses on racism. Specific forms of anti-racism have traveled between the US, Britain, and Canada.

discourse under study is not a dialogue. While the anti-racist critiques are easy-to-find and textual, there has been very little *response* from the rest of the anti-globalization movement, and none of that response has taken the form of public texts. To the extent that any response has been documented, it has been captured anecdotally by the anti-racist discourse's texts. In addition to Colours and other public texts, the paper also draws on participant observation at local actions, mass mobilizations, and national-profile trainings.³

THE DISCOURSE: CHRONOLOGY AND CLAIMS

This section first presents a *chronology* of the discourse and then summarizes the *claims* made within the discourse.

Immediately after 30 November 1999 Seattle WTO protests (N30), concerns with neo-fascism were raised. A widely-circulated article by J. Sakai made some outstanding claims: the fascist Far Right went to Seattle to recruit, the anti-WTO movement is nationalist, the anti-WTO movement is composed of the "old middle classes," and the ILWU and other labor unions are "actually fighting the working class."⁴ These concerns have largely died out from the discourse the movement has gained legitimacy with the established New Left.

The first important public text was an article by Elizabeth Martinez on N30, which is constantly cited by observers as well as by anti-globalization activists ourselves. It began circulation in December 1999 or January 2000 and a shorter version was eventually published in the Spring 2000 issue of *Colorlines Magazine*.⁵ While both versions of the article were far more carefully documented than most

³ Actions: Seattle/World Trade Organization (WTO), November 1999; Washington, D.C./IMF-World Bank, April 2000; Los Angeles/Democratic National Convention (DNC), August 2000; Cincinnati/Trans Atlantic Business Dialogue (TABD), November 2000; Québec City/Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), April 2001; Washington, D.C./anti-war, September 2001; New York City/World Economic Forum (WEF), February 2002; Cancún Mexico/WTO, September 2003; Miami FL/FTAA, November 2003; and Transform Columbus Day 2000, 2001, and 2002 in Denver. The participant-observer's perspective is from what could be called a "rank and file" affinity group which is not privy to the internal workings of the Direct Action Network (DAN), the Colours of Resistance network, or of the host city coordinating committees (with the exception of Denver). Trainings: Ruckus Society 2003, Anti-Racism for Global Justice 2003.

⁴ J. Sakai, "Aryan Politics & Fighting the W.T.O.," *Anti-Fascist Forum* n.d.

⁵ Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez, 'Where was the Color in Seattle?: Looking for reasons why the Great Battle was so white', circulated on the internet shortly after N30 (original version at <http://www.zmag.org/CrisesCurEvs/Globalism/seattlekecolor.htm>); shorter version published in *Colorlines*, 3.1, Spring 2000.

essays on this issue, the print version was edited in such a way as to eliminate a lot of the more nuanced data.

In both versions, Martinez claims that 5% of the N30 protesters were people of colour. She explores a number of reasons: activists of colour were "unfamiliar" with the WTO and feared being accused of abandoning community issues to protest WTO. The spokespeople included in media coverage leading up to the event were all white. Those activists of colour who did go to the protests were alienated by the culture at the activists' Convergence Center.

The original version contained five paragraphs describing groups of color which did participate, including the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ) "which embraces 84 organizations primarily of color in the US and Mexico." Had this data been more widely read it would have disrupted the ossification of what is described below as the "Seattle origins" narrative. Also removed from the published version were: a quote from an activist of colour who "originally thought 'the whites will take care of the WTO, I don't need to go'"; a longer discussion of activists' of color reflecting on their experiences of the Convergence, including the quote "It was limiting for people of color to let that one experience affect their whole picture of white activists"; the Coordinator of SNEEJ, Richard Moore's statement that "the white activists were very disciplined"; and the ending quote "We have to work with people who may not know the word 'globalization' but they live globalization." A report from Third Eye Movement was only partly retained in the published version, losing much complexity. In the original version, Third Eye Movement called the experience of the Convergence "culture shock" but also acknowledged they should have spent more time there, and criticized the failure of organizers to fund more people of color to come to the actions but also described gaining new allies and being inspired by the shutdown to use new tactics. The report also gave insight into the specific issues that should have been addressed by anti-WTO activists in order to make more sense to people of color: the prison-industrial complex, conditions of immigrants, and militarization which accompanies globalization projects in the third world.⁶ While the original article read as a guideline for improvement, the streamlined version reads simply as documentation that the movement is both all-white and irrelevant to people of color (and indeed it is often cited as evidence of the latter).

⁶ Saga, for Third Eye Movement, "Rap-tivists Storm Seattle: Hip-Hop Youth Battle The World Trade Organization." *Resist Newsletter*. v9 n3, April 2000. <http://www.resistinc.org/newsletter/>

The hour-long IndyMedia film on Seattle, *Showdown in Seattle: Five Days that Shook the WTO*, released in December 1999, already responded to these concerns. In it the vast majority of the talking heads were people of colour and the explanation of the WTO focused on the impacts for third world peoples (rather than on deregulation, environment, or sovereignty issues). The film included segments on the prison industrial complex and on media portrayals of youth of colour which went beyond the immediate project of portraying what happened in Seattle. This emphasis was consistent in the second, September 2000, edition of the film, *This is What Democracy Looks Like*.⁷ One of the closing statements in the second film was Vandana Shiva's prediction: "There will be attacks from Democrats and Republicans to ensure that the anti-globalization movement ends up looking like and being a xenophobic movement."

Colin Rajah's article on the Washington D.C. 16 April 2000 mobilizations (A16) became the sister piece to Martinez' Seattle analysis. He quoted activists complaining of "a sea of white" and that "Black and Latino leaders were not even asked to speak at the main events, let alone to really help lead the actions."⁸ Another, far less circulated, report on the same event by Robin Hahnel claimed that those involved in A16 organizing made connections with local communities of colour not only by creating "special materials linking corporate sponsored globalization and IMF and World Bank policies to local economic problems like gentrification, job loss, and bank redlining" but also by working in solidarity on a tenants' rights campaign.⁹ A key event in the chronology not documented by these writers was the creation of a squat by A16 activists in an African American neighbourhood. Folks from the neighbourhood were angry about the squat because of the increased police presence it brought. Fellow activists critiqued the squatters for setting up a squat without being well-informed about the community. Whether the squat folks were typically or peculiarly clueless was debated.

A few months later, in preparation for protesting the August 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, the Ruckus Society held a training camp near LA. Participants at this camp broke into caucuses in response to challenges from youth of colour, leading to an ongoing crisis within the Ruckus Society about how to address issues of race and oppression in organizing.¹⁰ At the

⁷ Independent Media Center Seattle and Big Noise Films, *This Is What Democracy Looks Like*, September 2000, <http://www.thisisdemocracy.org>.

⁸ Colin Rajah, 'Globalization and Race at A16 in D.C.', *Colorlines*, 3.3, Fall 2000.

⁹ Robin Hahnel, 'Speaking Truth to Power: Speaking Truth to Ourselves', *Z Magazine*, June 2000.

¹⁰ The Ruckus Society refuses to provide documentation or interviews about this process. However, at a 2003 training they mentioned a policy shift from doing week-long action camps held

Convergence Center for the Los Angeles Direct Action Network (DAN-LA) posters on the wall announced "principles of anti-oppression organizing"¹¹ as well as "mandatory anti-oppression trainings for white folks." Inquiring repeatedly into the context for the posters, I was only informed of two precipitating incidents. (These were: In Seattle some activists had made comments such as "Black people just want to shop" and "people of color aren't interested in direct action." In New York, the Direct Action Network (DAN-NY) had "refused to translate materials into Spanish."¹²) The Friday 18 August debriefing at the Convergence Center captured the divergence between people who felt the action was a success because there were "no major incidents," the protest was mindful of community vulnerabilities, and "kept people safe" and those who felt the actions were "scripted," "elite," that "spontaneous action" was discouraged, that "peaceful" tactics were enforced, and that it resulted in an "internal step backwards."

Colours of Resistance (hereafter 'Colours') was founded around November 2000¹³ and has become the most prominent vehicle for anti-racism/anti-oppression organizing in the North American movement. Colours is a grassroots network of people who actively work to develop multiracial, anti-racist politics in

in rural areas and emphasizing technical skills (climbing, etc.) to doing weekend sessions in urban areas focused on direct action planning and strategy.

¹¹. (1) Power and privilege play out in our group dynamics and we must continually struggle with how we challenge power and privilege in our practice. (2) We can only identify how power and privilege play out when we are conscious and committed to understanding how racism, sexism, homophobia, and all other forms of oppression affect each one of us. (3) Until we are clearly committed to anti-oppression practice all forms of oppression will continue to divide our movements and weaken our power. (4) Developing an anti-oppression practice is life long work and requires a life long commitment. No single workshop is sufficient for learning to change one's behavior. We are all vulnerable to being oppressive and we need to continuously struggle with these issues. (5) Dialogue and discussion are necessary and we need to learn how to listen non-defensively and communicate respectfully if we are going to have effective anti-oppression practice. Challenge yourself to be honest and open and take risks to address oppression head on."

¹². While it is unreasonable to expect activists to compile comprehensive, systematic empirical studies, the many articles written on the topic provide little documentation of the nature and extent of racist events. Two articles provide some compilation of data. Gabriel Sayegh, 'Redefining Success: White Contradictions in the Anti-Globalization Movement', posted on Colours of Resistance website <http://colours.mahost.org/>, n.d. Sonja Sivesind, 'Combating white supremacy in the anti-globalization movement', posted on Colours of Resistance website <http://colours.mahost.org/>, n.d. Also see Aziz Choudry "Bringing It All Back Home: Anti-globalisation Activism Cannot Ignore Colonial Realities." *ZNet* 3 August, 2001. <http://www.zmag.org/Sustainers/content/2001-08/03choudry.htm>

¹³. Colours' website does not provide a founding date. Infoshop.org lists the Colours website as "new on the web" in November 2000. Colours is housed in Montréal.

the movement against global capitalism. Their website gathers documents written from the anti-racism/anti-oppression perspective, some of which are published only on the internet but many of which were circulated prior to Colours posting.¹⁴ A conference called “Colours of Resistance,” but not affiliated with the network, was held in Montréal in March 2001 in preparation for the Québec City protests.

Also in 2000, young white anti-racist organizers founded Anti-Racism for Global Justice (ARGJ). They identified with the anti-globalization movement and embraced the Challenging White Supremacy¹⁵ concepts that “the most effective way to create fundamental social change in the U.S. is by building mass-based, multi-racial grassroots movements led by radical activists of color. We also believe that the major barrier to creating these movements is racism or white supremacy. One way to challenge white supremacy is to do anti-racist training workshops in our own communities.” Challenging White Supremacy was founded in 1993 and both organizations are based in the San Francisco Bay Area in California, U.S. CWS workshops were “designed by a group of white anti-racist organizers” who “believe our special responsibility is to help white social justice activists become principled and effective anti-racist organizers—both to challenge our white privilege and to work for racial justice in all our social justice work.” By 2002, ARGJ had run over 50 four and five hour workshops for over 1600 primarily white social justice activists around the country.¹⁶ ARGJ is part of the Colours network.

At the Québec City FTAA protests in April 2001, elaborate systems of gender and ethnic equity were used at the bilingual spokescouncils and the protests were trilingual. Issues of class came to the forefront as neighbourhood residents who had not agreed to any “action guidelines”¹⁷ joined the protest, some throwing beer and wine bottles across the fence at the occupying forces. The same kinds of issues were raised by Canadian activists of colour as had been raised with regard to Seattle.

In the Summer of 2001, Some Colours affiliates were involved in “Strategic Resistance,” an invitation-only conference for anarchist and anti-authoritarian

¹⁴ <http://colours.mahost.org/>

¹⁵ <http://www.prisonactivist.org/cws/>

¹⁶ <http://cwsworkshop.org/>

¹⁷ Typical “action guidelines” read as follows, from the A16 2000 Washington DC protests: “1. We will use no violence, physical or verbal, towards any person. 2. We will carry no weapons. 3. We will not bring or use any alcohol or illegal drugs. 4. We will not destroy property (excepting barricades erected to prevent us from exercising our First Amendment Rights).”

organizers which focused on anti-oppression organizing. It was held in Los Angeles in August. Two reports on this conference explained that it was useful in helping activists to think about the issues, but neither conveyed specific new concepts or organizing procedures.¹⁸

After 9/11, the North American movement, with impressive plans for the Fall IMF/World Bank meetings scheduled for end of September, was bewildered. NGOs which had seemed radical in Seattle suddenly fell silent save liberal pro-Arab American statements, isolating the direct action components of the movement which braced for increasing surveillance and harassment under the new anti-terrorism laws. The movement foundered, shrunk, retrenched, and emerged as two embattled and battling movements appearing side by side in New York in February and DC in September 2002. The anti-war/“global justice” mainstream, recommitted to permits and pacifism and an increasingly isolated, paranoid, and ideologically elitist Black Bloc, whose survival (and attempt to keep the idea of direct action alive in the movement while also supporting its own diversity and suffering intense police harassment) was no mean feat.

Approaching the June 2002 G8 meetings in Kananaskis, some anti-oppression organizers were writing “[t]his time we should encourage people NOT to come at all, unless they are from the region’ and instead ‘make principled connections with those people and movements who are already fighting against their oppression, in our own communities.”¹⁹ Interestingly, the Convergence des Luttes Anti-Capitalistes (CLAC, Anti-Capitalist Convergence from Montréal—one of the important groups in the Québec City mobilization) did not provide clear leadership or discussion of these issues in their G8 preparation caravan.²⁰

By early 2003, however, the growing legitimacy of the anti-war movement (and the unity between anti-globalization and anti-war forces in Europe and Latin America) enabled North American anti-globalization NGOs to join in

¹⁸ Rahula Janowski & Chris Crass, “Strategic Resistance Against Global Capitalism: lessons from a conference on strategy and anti-racism.” Larry George, “Strategic Resistance Organizing Conference – a look back,” Los Angeles Indymedia, August 21, 2001. <http://www.la.indymedia.org>

¹⁹ Yutaka Dirks, ‘Doing things differently this time: Kananaskis G8 meeting and movement building,’ posted on Colours of Resistance website <http://colours.mahost.org/>, n.d..

²⁰ When the CLAC caravan came to New York City in April as part of their Anti-G8 Roadshow and Caravan, I was late to the meeting. Concerned by the call “NOT to come,” I asked a number of people who had been present during the day what the caravan’s message was about the Kananaskis meetings. Oddly, no one seemed to have an answer. People directed me to CLAC’s booklet <http://www.tao.ca/~takethecapital/pamphlet.html>, but it also did not present arguments about whether people should attend the protest or not.

wholeheartedly. The combination of anti-war and anti-globalization analysis led to various forms of anti-imperialist analysis throughout the year at the massive February 15 and March 15 anti-war actions, the DC IMF/WB actions in April, the Cancún WTO actions in September, and the Miami FTAA actions in November. The North American anti-globalization movement's frame has developed since 9/11 to become wholeheartedly anti-imperialist, constantly connecting racist militarism with processes of globalization. The anti-globalization movement has a much more coherent analysis of issues, strategy, and tactics than the anti-war movement, and there are many attempts to educate, as well as continuing to move together. Extensive direct action was organized by anti-globalization activists in opposition to the war on Iraq in early 2003; this struggle was particularly rich in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The direct action sectors of the anti-globalization movement have also made national calls for participation in a number of actions since Seattle which make connections between domestic and international manifestations of imperialism. These include: the June 2, 2001 protests of police brutality in Cincinnati, annual Transform Columbus Day protests in Denver, annual November protests intending to shut down the School of the Americas, anti-war protests in DC in September 2001 and October 2002, poverty-alleviation actions of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty,²¹ the Latin American Solidarity Coalition actions in DC in April 2003, and the joint calls against the FTAA and the School of the Americas for November 2003.²²

In the interests of a comprehensive summary of the concerns expressed by the anti-racist discourse on the anti-globalization movement, this section presents each of the distinct claims found in the discourse:²³

²¹ "In the autumn of 1990, the founding conference of OCAP took place. After some debate, it set a course for the organization that committed it to mobilizing poor and homeless people to fight back through militant, direct action and rejected notions of basing the organization on methods of consultation and compromise with those in power...As a militant, anti capitalist organization, we reject the notion that we have any common set of interests with those who hold economic and political power. We also reject the rituals of token protest that confine movements to the level of futile moral arguments. We fight to win and are part of a growing force in society that is ready to organize on just that basis." see <http://www.ocap.ca>

²² The perspectives and experiences of different communities of color are not identical, and may be becoming more uneven. The recent Cancún WTO protests caused Chicano activists to recognize this struggle as their own and as a not-very-white struggle, but did not impact other communities similarly.

²³ Individual citations are not provided for these claims because they have been repeated in many discourse texts and it is difficult to assess the first appearances of each.

- The movement is inadequately diverse.
- When confronted with the lack of diversity in the movement, whites tend to claim that their groups are already open and accessible, or propose to solve the problem by doing "outreach."
- White-dominated organizations have exclusionary practices and when challenged refuse to respond, calling concerns about racism, sexism, etc., "distractions" from more "urgent" work.
- They see race as "subsumed under the 'big tent' of globalization" and not needing to be addressed independently or directly.²⁴
- White activists speak, meet, plan, strategize, and organize in culturally-specific ways and are often not open to feedback about how their methods make people of color unwelcome, uncomfortable, or disinterested.²⁵
- White activists "fetishize" tactics and ignore strategy, because they don't care about building a long-term grassroots movement.²⁶
- Activists who can afford time and money to travel to mass events must be affluent and they protest at low risk because they know that their "white skin privilege" will protect them from police brutality.
- White activists position themselves as the experts and are the visible spokespersons and *de facto* leadership.
- Cultural styles preferred by anti-globalization activists are alienating to people of colour. These include lifestyles, food preferences, intellectual styles, meeting styles, and protest tactics.
- Local communities of colour are put at risk by mass protests operating out of their neighbourhoods.
- Anti-globalization activists do not seem to care about domestic problems faced by people of colour within the US and Canada, continuing a tradition of organizing which ultimately perpetuates white supremacy.

²⁴ Daraka Larimore-Hall & Tracie McMillan, "growing pains," *the activist* (Young Democratic Socialists), xxix.1 (Summer 2002): 7–10.

²⁵ Similar and related criticisms appear around issues of middle-class culture, male domination, and culture of the intelligentsia.

²⁶ Daraka Larimore-Hall & Tracie McMillan, "growing pains," *the activist* (Young Democratic Socialists), xxix.1 (Summer 2002): 7–10.

- Anti-globalization activists “ignore” and “appropriate” the historic struggles of communities of color and “people in the South.”²⁷
- Activism around issues in third world countries is psychologically remote and therefore easier than activism around issues of race at home.
- Privileged activism on behalf of oppressed others is paternalistic and salvific.

Activists with these concerns have also developed proposals for addressing the problems. The following is an attempt at a comprehensive list of each distinct proposal made:

- Anti-globalization organizations should prioritize “anti-oppression” training and organizing techniques.
- “Challenging white supremacy” must be the primary work of movements which seek to challenge globalization.
- Instead of ‘outreach’ and ‘recruiting’ people of colour, activists should question their own organizations, asking “Whose voices are heard? Whose priorities are adopted? Whose knowledge is valued?”²⁸
- Rather than creating new projects, anti-globalization activists should go support what people of colour in their town are already working on.
- Activists should be equally or more committed to working on local struggles being waged by people of colour as to international actions.
- People of colour have been fighting globalization for 511 years and therefore are experts who should be looked to for leadership in fighting the current phase of globalization.
- Privileged activists should yield to marginal voices, diverse definitions of radicalism, and alternative ways of organizing.
- More privileged groups in the anti-globalization movement should use their resources to send third and fourth world representatives to international conferences and on speaking tours and to fund local campaigns in communities of colour.

²⁷ Pari Zutshi in Daraka Larimore-Hall & Tracie McMillan, “growing pains,” *the activist* (Young Democratic Socialists), xxix.1 (Summer 2002): 7–10.

²⁸ Chris Dixon, “Ten Things to Remember: Anti-Racist Strategies for White Student Radicals.” n.d.

As mentioned in the introduction, responses from the anti-globalization movement have not taken the textual form that the critique itself has taken. Therefore we only know about the responses that the anti-racist critique itself has documented, and we know little to nothing about the extent of these responses. Some of the documented responses are:

- There isn’t time to address issues of racism and sexism.
- Discussion of racism, sexism, etc. is a “distraction” from the work that needs to be done.
- Addressing these issues is simply not necessary or relevant to the larger project of fighting globalization.
- Many people have issues of intense concern but no one has the right to demand that the whole movement stop and do a training in their favorite “single issue.”
- People are whining and should just get to work.
- People concerned with domestic issues of gender and racial equity are reformist or missing the point about a larger threat.

ANALYSIS

The goal driving this analysis is to enable anti-racist and anti-globalization activists to understand one another’s perspectives. It is critical that anti-globalization activists understand why their anti-imperialist work often fails on anti-racist grounds. At the same time, anti-racist activists may find it useful to re-read some aspects of anti-globalization activism in ways that will aid in communication and collaboration.²⁹

Framed! Conceptualizing Anti-globalization

Many of the anti-racist critiques of the anti-globalization movement hinge on a particular conceptualization of it. This conceptualization (or what in social movements literature is called a “frame”³⁰) defines the historical narrative of the

²⁹ Much of the analysis that follows was performed jointly by Amory Starr and Rachel Luft. The method of analysis used was an intense distillation of perspectives. The version of anti-racism which was used to perform this distillation was not the anti-racism articulated from within the anti-globalization movement, but instead one from outside it, best represented by the influential People’s Institute <http://www.thepeoplesinstitute.org/>, whose analyses were often present in (but not at all completely encompassing of) the anti-racist-anti-globalization discourse. Readers should be aware that references to “anti-racist perspective” below are not descriptive of anti-racist-anti-globalization practice.

³⁰ Snow, David and Robert Benford. 1988. “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization.” In Klandermas, Kriesi and Tarrow, eds. *International Social Movement Research: From Structure to Action* Vol. 1 pp.197–217.

movement, the key actors, logics, and themes. Frames shape how movements are understood by activists themselves as well as observers. Frames are often contested, and this is certainly the case in the anti-globalization movement.

512 Year Struggle: From indigenous and other Global South perspectives globalization is the latest form of colonialism. Vandana Shiva says “The first colonialism lasted 500 years. The second, so-called ‘development,’ lasted 50 years. And this one, ‘free trade,’ lasted only 5 years!”³¹ For indigenous people, the anti-globalization struggle has been continuous and virtually uninterrupted.³² For postcolonial peoples, this latest form originates with the implementation of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s. The World Development Movement’s “States of Unrest” reports trace the anti-globalization movement to the surge of IMF Riots in the Global South: “protests against these institutions and their policies were not limited to privileged ‘students and anarchists’ from rich countries, as some politicians would like us to believe. The report set the European and North American demonstrations into their wider context, showing that they were only one element of a much larger movement rooted in developing countries...”³³ A variety of US groups take this perspective. Peter Hardie of TransAfrica Forum argues that this perspective is particularly relevant to African Americans.

Understanding the political arena as a global one is the best solution to the ongoing plight of African Americans today. We will not solve our employment problem until we understand labor as a global phenomenon, employers as global actors, and much of the wealth in our country (and the world) as the plunder of corporate thieves, rinsed in the blood of Africans and other indigenous peoples... Depressed wages, the increased gap between rich and poor, the sale of the public domain (schools, water and utilities, roads, prisons) to privateers... As corporate wealth and power grow unfettered, Africans throughout the world share a special place of exploitation, regardless of their nationality... We need better and deeper connections to popular movements and organizations in other countries. And there are many such opportunities.³⁴

³¹ IFG, International Forum on Globalisation. 1999 (Nov 26 & 27). *Teach In on Economic Globalisation and the Role of the World Trade Organization*. Benaroya Symphony Hall, Seattle Washington.

³² see Bill Weinberg, *War on the Land: Ecology and Politics in Central America*. 1991: Zed Books, London. Al Gedicks, *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations* 1998: South End Press, Boston and *Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations*. 2001: South End Press, Boston.

³³ Jessica Woodroffe and Mark Ellis-Jones, “States of unrest: Resistance to IMF policies in poor countries.” World Development Movement Report, September 2000. and “States of unrest II” at <http://www.wdm.org.uk/cambriefs/debt/Unrest2.pdf>.

³⁴ Peter Hardie, “Apartheid Still Matters: Framing an African-American Internationalism,” *The Black Commentator* September 25, 2003 <http://www.blackcommentator.com/>

“**Globalization from below**”³⁵ is the convergence of peoples’ movements in attempts to forge a new hyper-democratic, participatory, and people-centered world system. Its most prominent form is the World Social Forum, which invites all of “civil society” to assert that “Another World Is Possible” and to develop visions for it.³⁶ Other manifestations are the international organization ATTAC, founded in France, which aims “to put the brakes on most of these machines for creating inequalities between North and South as well as in the heart of the developed countries themselves... [and] to create a democratic space at the global level. It is simply a question of taking back, together, the future of our world”³⁷ Jubilee and other international movements to repudiate third world debts also represent this perspective. They collectively assert that “Countries of the North owe Third World countries, particularly Africa, a manifold debt: blood debt with slavery; economic debt with colonization, and the looting of human and mineral resources and unequal exchange; ecological debt with the destruction and the looting of its natural resources; social debt (unemployment; mass poverty) and cultural debt (debasing of African civilizations to justify colonization)... Our struggle is similar to those of Seattle, Washington, Prague and Nice.”³⁸

Peoples Global Action (PGA) is a sector of “globalization from below,” a “non-organization”³⁹ that emerged from Encuentros hosted by the Zapatistas. PGA’s five hallmarks include “A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements’ struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples’ rights, as well as the construction of

³⁵ Falk, Richard. 1993. “The Making of Global Citizenship,” pp. 39–50 in *Global Visions: Beyond the New World Order*, edited by J. Brecher, J. B. Childs, and J. Cutler. Boston: South End Press.

³⁶ The first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil, simultaneous with the meetings of the World Economic Forum in late January, 2001. Approximately 20,000 people participated, including 4,702 delegates representing 117 countries, 2,000 participants in the Youth Camp, and 700 participants in the Indigenous Nations Camp. The second World Social Forum, held again in Porto Alegre in early February, 2002, attracted over 50,000 participants. Its theme, “Another World Is Possible,” has since been taken up in a variety of fora. The third forum doubled in size yet again and fomented regional fora all over the world. The fourth forum was moved to Mumbai, India in 2004.

³⁷ International ATTAC Platform, adopted December 11–12, 1998, Paris. see <http://www.attac.org>

³⁸ “The Dakar Declaration for the Total and Unconditional Cancellation of African and Third World Debt” “Dakar 2000: From Resistance to Alternatives” conference that was held in Dakar, Senegal from December 11–17, 2000. at <http://www.50years.org/updates/dakar1.html#MANIFESTO>.

³⁹ Midnight Notes, *Auroras of the Zapatistas: Local and Global Struggles of the Fourth World War* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2001), p. 105.

local alternatives to global capitalism.”⁴⁰ Active in the network are the aggressive land occupation movements emerging all over Latin America and also in South Africa, in which urban and rural working classes are together asserting land rights by direct action.⁴¹ Livelihood movements by fisherfolk, forest gatherers, and farmers are asserting Farmers Rights, Rights to Food Sovereignty, Rights to Livelihood through new international alliances and are also taking direct action to protect their economies from corporate predations. The Third PGA Conference was held September 2001, at which more than 150 delegates from organisations of all the continents met in Cochabamba, Bolivia hosted by a federations of peasants and domestic workers. The network has been instrumental in recent “Global Days of Action” such as J18, N30 and has been credited with conceptualizing both the Seattle protests and the international Independent Media Centers <http://www.indymedia.org>.⁴² Anarchists who participate in anti-globalization are best be characterized by the PGA frame.

Northern Convergence: Anti-globalization is also understood as a re-articulation and new collaboration of existing movements (some decades old) in the Global North such as the anti-roads movements, movements connected with the concepts of “small is beautiful,” “voluntary simplicity,” bioregionalism,⁴³ the anti-genetic engineering movements, grassroots organic food struggles, movements concerned with child labour, movements against privatization, anti-corporate movements concerned with issues of cultural homogenization (anti-McDonalds, AdBusters, etc.), Central American Solidarity movements, Fair Trade movements, the European and U.S. Jubilee 2000 movement to forgive third world nations’ debts, anti-consumption movements such as Buy Nothing Day, anarchist and other youth movements, and the whole variety of New Social Movements which in Europe have taken the form of Autonomes, Social Centers, and antifa (antifascism). According to George Katsiaficas, not only class is abandoned, but also nationalism: “To the extent they become revolutionary, their international commitment will be to ecology, feminism, racial solidarity, and peace, not to any

⁴⁰. <http://www.agp.org>

⁴¹. James Petras, “The Rural Landless Workers Movement,” *Z Magazine*. March 2000: 32-36.

⁴². Notes from Nowhere, ed., *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*. 2003: Verso, London.

⁴³. E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York Harper & Row, 1973). New York. Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977). Duane Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich* (New York: Morrow, 1981). Peter Berg, “Bioregion and Human Location” *All Area* #2, Spring 1983.

nation-state.”⁴⁴ The convergence of movements around generalized anti-corporate perspectives and opposition to Free Trade Agreements has expanded their frameworks to multi-issue analyses, new alliances, international solidarity, and more comprehensive perspectives on the meaning of corporate globalization.

Seattle Origins Narrative: A popular North American conception of the anti-globalization movement is that it began on November 30, 1999 when a brand new movement coalesced in the streets of Seattle. Those who found themselves joining up had previously only poorly articulated grievances with some aspects of Free Trade Agreements and had hardly expected to find themselves arm in arm, Teamster and Turtle, anarchist and anti-debt campaigner, family farmer and product safety campaigner. Through the cathartic effects of this euphoric experience a new movement was born, which had little conception of the historical struggles underlying it, and credited itself with “giving birth to a new global movement” as it pocketed the greetings and congratulations coming from people around the world. After Seattle, the new North American movement remained obsessed with mass mobilizations and quickly settled down to bickering about property crime, permits for marches, “reformism,” unions, 911, and war. Meanwhile the movement learned that Europeans had been having impressive mass mobilizations for several years before Seattle and that there were “mobs” to attend in exciting places like Cancún. Young white hippies and punks quickly turned their backs on unions and NGOs, adopted “protest hopping” as a lifestyle and began to glorify their time in jail, their radical “direct action” tactics, their culture of selfless filth and urban gleaning. They traveled to Prague in September 2000, Québec City in April 2001, Genoa in July 2001, and some even went to the World Social Fora in Porto Alegre.

It’s just imperialist protectionism: Since Seattle, while some communist and socialist groups have embraced the anti-globalization movement as a step in the right direction, more rigid first world communist groups have insisted that the North American anti-globalization movement is ultimately a protectionist and nationalist attempt to keep jobs, comparative advantage, and third world resources in first world control. These groups propose that organized first world workers will always take nationalist positions so as to protect the unequal benefits of the world system to which they have grown accustomed. They will defend their high-paid jobs from third world competition and from domestic minorities

⁴⁴. George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*. 1997: Humanities Press, New Jersey: 265.

and immigrants while also defending the favorable terms of trade which increase their global buying power. This frame interprets first world movements against third world child labor as attempts to unfairly police and punish third world countries. And they see the overall movement against Free Trade as a chauvinist attempt to protect first world standard of living, domestic regulations, and global power.

The anti-racist/anti-oppression critique relies heavily on the “Seattle Origins Narrative, with occasional references to “It’s Just Imperialist Protectionism.” Anti-racist critics position themselves in the “512 Year Struggle” frame and overlook entirely that many of the movements and activists who they purport to critique are also in that frame, or in one of the similar frames—Globalization from Below, PGA, or Northern Convergence.

Making the Connections

When first confronted by diverse, non-working class movements for liberation, Marxists saw an overemphasis on race and gender as incorrect political theory—what they called “superstructural epiphenomenon.” Since the 1970s, however, race and gender have been well integrated into many schools of radical political theory. While sometimes falling into debates about whether it is capitalism or white supremacy that runs the world, such hierarchies are becoming less legitimate with the rise of “anti-oppression” theory which acknowledges “intersectionality.” Within activist globalization scholarship, issues of cultural imperialism and gender are at the center of the analysis. Anti-imperialist analysis links domestic troubles of racial and economic injustice to international processes of conquest and economic empire, which have always used racism, sexism, and other assertions of cultural superiority as tactics. For anti-racists, however, *no* theoretical definition or ideological commitment in and of itself can be antiracist

Many sectors of what became the North American anti-globalization movement developed from internationalist work (such as Central American solidarity work) which already recognized in practice the essential racism of empire throughout its many forms. Brian Dominick states how the Zapatistas requested a new form of international solidarity work that echoed Black Power exhortations to white allies. Whereas before, solidarity meant sending off the fruits of our privilege (including people to do “protective accompaniment”) to try to “offset the horrible things that our military and our economic system were doing,” the Zapatistas challenged allies to take on the harder task of intervening in US foreign affairs. “Solidarity for the Zapatistas meant, first and foremost, that we’re kicking ass here at home. They said ‘We can hold these folks for a little while longer, but if you can remove the boot from our neck by stopping your society from funding our government who is doing it directly to us...’”⁴⁵

As a result of this movement foundation, in contrast with the perception that “September 11 threw many young white activists...into a tailspin,”⁴⁶ what actually happened was that two of the major US student activist groups, the 180° Movement for Democracy and Education and STARC (Students Transforming and Resisting Corporations) promptly took anti-imperialist positions after 9/11. Meanwhile, non-campus white-led organizations, such as ANSWER,⁴⁷ organized massive anti-imperialist responses to the so-called “wars on terrorism.” Also responding immediately was the American Friends Service Committee, which has been “bringing a critique of global capital into peace work” for decades.

Nevertheless, anti-racist activists repeatedly argue that “[w]hether it’s global capitalism...or state authority...connections to everyday lives are frequently lost. What about privatization of city services as neoliberalism on the home front?... The connections are all there...yet many white, middle-class radicals simply aren’t seeing them.”⁴⁸ Despite some clear cases of white activists failing to make connections,⁴⁹ for the most part, an identity-based critique does not hold up.

Take on what they see as the daunting task of confronting international racism, the youth sector of the North American anti-globalization movement may be more familiar with Zapatismo than Chicanismo, the U’wa than the Black Panthers, and debt slavery than cultural appropriation. But the biggest movements on US campuses in the years preceding Seattle were a mix of domestic and international campaigns. The largest were Free Mumia, the defense of affirmative action and ethnic studies programmes, anti-sweatshop campaigns, World Bank Bonds boycotts, and student worker organizing (many campaigning jointly with service-sector workers).

⁴⁵ Brian Dominick, “Anti-Capitalist Globalization Organizing.” *Arise! Journal*, June 2001.

⁴⁶ the claim continues: “Meanwhile, young activists of color jumped into action and created mass antiwar-antiracist movements protesting the bombing of Afghanistan, supporting Muslims against racist attacks, and bringing a critique of global capital into peace work.” Mike Prokosch, United for a Fair Economy, “Three Tasks for the US globalization movement,” <http://globalroots.net/themoment/2002>. [URL Inactive as of 2/24/04]

⁴⁷ Which had already been struggling for some time on the international anti-racist project of ending the sanctions against Iraq as well as the domestic anti-racist Mumia Abu-Jamal campaign

⁴⁸ Chris Dixon, “Finding Hope After Seattle: Rethinking Radical Activism and Building a Movement,” posted on Colours of Resistance website <http://colours.mahost.org/>, n.d.

⁴⁹ Pauline Hwang, while organizing for Québec City, reports being told, presumably by a white anti-globalization activist, that “the off-campus issues I was working on [including the Shakti Women of Colour Collective, Immigrant Workers Center] were not directly related to globalization.” She concludes that “in other words, ‘globalization’ means white college students protesting, not the issues of working class people of colour.” Pauline Hwang, “Anti-Racist Organizing: Reflecting on Lessons from Québec City,” May 2001, *Colours*.

The issue is not whether white activists do long-term anti-imperialist work because even when they do it's not enough to qualify as antiracist.

What's wrong? The Citigroup campaign is an excellent example; for anti-globalization activists it seemed the perfect anti-racist project. Here was a corporation which built prisons in the US, dams in the third world, and was deeply involved in predatory and discriminatory residential lending in communities of color, deceptive loan schemes for trade school students, and manipulative credit card promotions particularly affecting young college students. Here was a campaign that was "local" for a variety of domestic constituencies through which they could experience their co-victimization with one another as well as with indigenous and third world peoples. But the campaign fell flat. Similarly, early protests of NikeTown stores were oddly white and thoroughly opaque to people of color.⁵⁰

The problem is that many campaigns that are about people of color, locally as well as globally, that do indeed "make the connections," are still primarily generated from ideological analysis, not from the immediacy of a particular community need. While anti-globalization activists base their assessment of a "good" campaign on how clearly and compellingly it makes the intellectual connections, antiracist organizers are far more concerned about the intensity with which the issue is affecting the local community. Put another way, for anti-globalization activists "making the connections" is *using* the local to help people understand the global, while for anti-racist activists, "making connections" is talking about the global to help people understand the local.

Fair Trade is another example of this tendency. It is a very analytic, intellectual campaign through which people act in support of working class people of color. Although this campaign is long-term and practiced locally (meeting two criteria for anti-racism), its practice is not driven by an immediate, personal grievance. It is a mobilization developed through an abstract intellectual process of compassion. In communities of colour, there are enough immediate crises! Moreover, agendas that emerge beyond the boundaries of the local community are frequently seen as suspect to communities who have learned historically not to trust the strangers or any "fix" from somewhere else.

The Difference is Strategy

In activist action and campaign planning, groups start by clearly identifying their goals. They then formulate a strategy for achieving those goals. The strategy

⁵⁰ Zak Sinclair, "Don't Think. Just Do It. Tripping in Niketown USA." *Third Force*, July/August 1997.

brings together an analysis of power relations with the resources and context of struggle which will shape tactics. In the end, the strategy is the logic that explains how the chosen tactic will achieve the action's goal. "Tactical fetishism," a preference for or tendency toward the use of the same tactic for dealing with different goals is widely repudiated (even by Black Bloc activists⁵¹). The disagreements between anti-racist and anti-globalization activists are primarily at the level of strategy—not goals or tactics.

The long-term goal of the North American anti-globalization movement is structural change, described variously as "revolution" and "democratization." Some sectors aim to restore the viability of democratic structures linked to the state and some seek to establish independent institutions which reappropriate and reembed aspects of the market. Many sectors work to develop forms of internationalism to replace elite ones; these vary from simple networks of solidarity with no legislative authority to authoritative treaty-type negotiations such as protocols against biopatenting. Short-term (or what are sometimes called "process goals") include empowering people to believe they can make a change and demonstrating that ordinary people around the world already have the technologies, expertise, materials, and skills both to meet basic needs and to achieve higher aspirations such as art, science, and participatory democracy (without "expert" advice and oversight).

Anti-globalization goals are not significantly different from anti-racist/anti-oppression goals. Ending oppression, community self-determination, democratization, and empowerment are the goals of both movements. Since 9/11, increasingly North American anti-racist and anti-globalization movements have been using the concept of anti-imperialism to define and link their domestic and international goals.

These similarities often go unnoticed as activists become polarized around issues of tactics. Tricksters and militants are perceived by anti-racists as not being interested in "organizing" and anti-racists are perceived as inflexible, controlling, or not appreciative of "diversity of tactics."⁵² The concept of "direct action" has

⁵¹ *The Black Bloc Papers*, compiled by David and X. 2002: Black Clover Press, printed by Insubordinate Editions, a project of the Claustrophobia Collective, Baltimore MD. available through AK Press.

⁵² Diversity of tactics is a strategy intended to facilitate the solidarity of many social sectors without imposing uniformity, univocality, or identity. "Diversity of tactics" demands equal respect to candlelight vigils, property crime, permitted marches, mass actions, lobbying and everything in between. "It is mirrored in a rejection of ideology, an emphasis on materiality, and an assertion of the possibility of local self-determination and global justice at once. It asserts the mutual benefit of collaboration without agreement and rejects all tactical and ideological fetishes and efforts by any

been widely and variously misinterpreted (as a specific tactic, as a synonym for mass actions or protests, as militance, as property crime, and as short-term high-risk dramatic actions preferred by anarchists). Unfortunately, some groups such as Ruckus Society have tried to ease the resulting tension by dissociating the term from any meaning at all, redefining it as “any action that makes space for change.” This move tries to dissolve the tension by undermining the possibility for debate rather than furthering knowledge of history⁵³ and precise distinctions between tactics and strategy (distinctions which Ruckus otherwise does a good job of promoting).

A second purportedly tactical debate is over mass actions, to which the anti-globalization movement is often reduced, which are contradictorily portrayed as: excessively militant, symbolic acts irrelevant to local organizing, and “summit hopping”/“protest tourism.” Typically, advocates of mass actions are portrayed in anti-racist discourse as not being engaged in local action, which is, quite simply, an empirically false dichotomy. This accusation implies as well a mis-diagnosis of the local.

groups to impose on others. This framework has been one of the hallmarks of the international movement, articulated alternately by the Zapatistas as ‘one no, many yeses’ and by Uruguayan anarchists as ‘specificismo’, which encourages fluid shifting of tactics appropriate to the situation.” [Jason Adams, ‘Jornadas Anarquistas: Anarchist Convergence in Porto Alegre, Brazil’ *Black Bridge International* February 12, 2002 <http://blackbridge.freehosting.net/brazil.html>].

⁵³ Voltairine De Cleyre wrote in 1912 that “[e]very person who ever had a plan to do anything, and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct actionist. All co-operative experiments are essentially direct action...Every person who ever in his life had a difference with anyone to settle, and went straight to the other persons involved to settle it, either by a peaceable plan or otherwise, was a direct actionist.” [*Direct Action*. 1986: Mother Earth, New York.] MC Lynx, a contemporary theorist defines it as “the act of taking direct control over one’s own life and destiny and doing what needs to be done without taking orders from anyone or attempting to influence anyone.” Martha Ackelsberg defines it as: “ways for people to get in touch with their own powers and capacities, to take back the power of naming themselves and their lives.” [*Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the struggle for the Emancipation of Women*. 1991: Indiana University Press, Bloomington.] Black Panther experiments with community self-provisioning and self-determination are some of the best-known US direct action movements. Handing out leaflets, holding press conferences, and petitioning politicians to build affordable housing is not direct action because these actions appeal to others to solve the problem. Taking over an abandoned building, fixing it up, moving in, refusing to pay rent, and resisting eviction is direct action. Among those who prefer direct action, anarchists embrace it *in part* because they believe that the state is incapable of enacting justice.

the G8 or the WTO or the IMF/World Bank... big summit meetings are elaborate rituals, ostentatious shows of power that reinforce the entitlement and authority of the bodies they represent....Our purpose is to undercut their legitimacy, to point a spotlight at their programs and policies, and to raise the social costs of their existence until they become insupportable...We can’t and won’t abandon the local, and in fact never have: many of us work on both scales...But many of us have come to the larger, global actions because we understand that the trade agreements and institutions we contest are designed to undo all of our local work and override the decisions and aspirations of local communities.”⁵⁴

In beginning to put *some* of their energy toward “mass actions” (in parallel with ongoing local campaigns), North American activist groups⁵⁵ have adopted a strategy of Global South and European movements, which have long been converging on elite global governance meetings in order to strategically disrupt, discomfort, sunshine, and delegitimize elite and secretive affairs, while sending the “information...out to millions of people in this country and across the world—there is an alternative to this shit, there is something that is anti-capitalist.”⁵⁶

“Mass actions” turn out to be convergences at each of which hundreds of different tactics are enacted by wildly diverse groups over the space of about a week within a strategic framework of “diversity of tactics.” Each convergence has several centers of organizing which provide collective infrastructure and where people coordinate events and actions, often experiencing new levels of cooperation and community. The tactics themselves include permitted candlelight vigils, media stunts, meetings of international solidarity working groups, permitted marches and rallies, building community gardens, educational events in rented halls, militant unpermitted marches, and a few skirmishes with the police and acts of property crime.⁵⁷ Many of the *tactics* used at mass actions and in other

⁵⁴ Starhawk, “After Genoa: Why We Need to Stay in the Streets” August, 2001. at <http://www.starhawk.org/activism/activism-writings/aftergenoa.html>

⁵⁵ Long-term movements such as the Greens and School of the Americas (SOA) Watch had been paying increasing attention to globalization and international economics during the 1980s and 1990s and converged in Seattle with young environmentalists, anarchists, and student organizers.

⁵⁶ Jazz, “the tracks of our tears” 80–99 in *On Fire: The battle of Genoa and the anti-capitalist movement*. September 2001: One Off Press.

⁵⁷ Rough quantitative analysis of Seattle N30 schedules reveals that educational events and conferences outnumbered street actions by a factor of ten. In late 2003 and early 2004 (Cancún and Miami) that ratio had increased in favor of rich, multi-lingual conferences on an array of issues.

manifestations of the anti-globalization movement are not different than those used by anti-racist movements. It is the strategy that is different.

Anti-racist/anti-oppression campaigners see long-term, local organizing on issues organically relevant to a community as the strategy for simultaneously addressing institutional and personal manifestations of oppression. Organizers distinguish between “product”-oriented organizing, in which the most experienced people make sure to get all the work done in the way most likely to “win” the material/political struggle at hand, and “process”-oriented organizing, in which the maximum number of laypeople are involved at every stage. When engaged in specific actions, the external win is considered a bonus; the real accomplishment is the strategic reconstitution of community, and with it the autonomy, justice, and empowerment of people remaking the conditions of their daily lives.

While many anti-globalization activists have process-oriented organizing perspectives, most anti-globalization groups do local actions, many anti-globalization groups are involved in long-term campaigns, and building community is a common concern, these pieces of anti-racist strategy do not appear all at once in the anti-globalization movement. For example: North Americans working on mining and oil exploitation of indigenous lands use the 512 Year Struggle frame, have a sense of the long-term, and take leadership from people of color around the world,—but these campaigns often have very little connection to local community-building processes. Similarly, many sectors in the Northern Convergence perspective, such as Fair Trade and SOA Watch are involved in long-term struggles—but these often do not include the community-building process orientation which anti-racists value. The “communities” built at mass actions are temporary, intense, communal *experiences*, resulting in personal transformations, new skills, and new relationships, all of which may reappear later in another place and which may contribute to local activism when people go home—but these skills and relationships are not embedded in ongoing local campaigns. Frequently the mass actions leave in place new networks (such as a strengthened coalition for police accountability) and new long-term infrastructure (such as community media centers and community vegetable gardens) in the locality—but these have not been built through long term processes of community development.

While anti-racist strategy can be found in the anti-globalization movement, those elements are not at its core, which is more focused on the mechanics of disrupting power through diversity of tactics than on the mechanics of building community—to disrupt power later.

Now we are in a better position to understand what happened at the protests of the 2000 Democratic National Convention in LA. DAN-LA organizers organized 5 permitted marches, intended to be “safe” for “unarrestable” undocumented people, already over-arrested people of colour, people who could be

facing “three strikes” life sentences, and transgender people who face unique risks in incarceration. They used the term ‘direct action’ even though they organized only permitted marches.⁵⁸ For some, this strategy produced what was the most inclusive and antiracist mass action yet. For anti-globalization activists, however, the actions were disappointingly ineffective at disrupting the smooth operation and media coverage of the convention, getting dissenting messages to national and international audiences, pressuring delegates and politicians for accountability, or manipulating media into communicating critiques and alternative. For them, only such successes which would bring new people into the movement and lift the spirits of current activists.

Although the long-term goals of anti-racist and anti-globalization activists are not significantly different, their strategies are—and at the DNC these differences were each described as the correct expression of radicalism. (“White radicals who don’t challenge their white privilege will not be able to see what is profoundly radical about communities of color mobilized, regardless of whether or not the march is legal.”⁵⁹) For the anti-globalization movement, the organizing strategy was to disrupt the Party’s legitimacy at its Convention in order bring maximum public attention to dissent and alternative ideas. For anti-racist organizers, the strategy was to “bringing a diverse and radical movement to the street.”⁶⁰ This strategic difference depended on a different analysis of effective organizing.

Organizing and Empowerment

The mechanics of “organizing” are central to both strategies. Both seek to empower people—encourage them to believe that their grievances are legitimate, that collective action will be meaningful and effective, and that their individual contributions will matter. Key to understanding different strategies are the assumptions about power and constituencies.

Anti-racists develop empowerment through the community organizing “process” tradition of organizers slowly encouraging activists to take on bigger and bigger projects. By working together with neighbors to solve local problems,

⁵⁸ According to MC Lynx, “permitted marches and rallies are never direct action and — unless the purpose of the march is to assert the right to gather and march without a permit—unpermitted marches are not either.” The D2KLA coalition was already advertising 33 other “safe”/legal/permitted events.

⁵⁹ Chris Crass, “Thoughts and reflections on Los Angeles and taking on global capitalism,” circulated in 2000, published as “Confronting the Democratic National Convention and Working to Build a People’s Movement for Justice,” *Socialist Review*, 28(3+4), 2001.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

people discover their power. Anti-globalization activists see that strategy as limited in its appeal and encourage a “diversity of tactics,” including “fun” (party in the middle of a roadway), cultural rupture (costumes, spontaneous theater, adusting), and militancy. From this perspective, spontaneously taking and holding space, witnessing the cops back down, building a barricade with strangers who speak different languages, creatively disrupting elite procedures or messages, or even breaking corporate retail stores’ windows is empowerment comparable to what community organizers call a “small winnable issue.”

But this difference in preference only begins to unravel a set of much deeper issues. When anti-globalization activists focus energy on clever communications and/or disruptions which even the mainstream media will cover, they imagine that the cleverness and surprising courage of these actions will excite people to participate in various capacities or, if they missed out, hearing about these actions or seeing them on TV will inspire people to participate in the next one. Anti-globalization activists assume that planning and executing a good action is an organizing tool. Radical antiglobalization activists put energy into these actions rather than intensive, personal “outreach” because in their experience joining a movement is primarily an intellectual, not a social act. Individualism pre-dates politics, community follows them.

Such assumptions are fundamental aspects of how people organize. Since white organizers assume that activists arrive at meetings having decided already to be committed and to do inconvenient, uncomfortable things in service of their convictions, they make little effort to make meetings themselves comfortable, empowering, or inclusive. The burden is on committed participants to overcome a whole slew of barriers. If people aren’t willing to be uncomfortable, they’re not ready for activism. In contrast, anti-racists endeavor to establish legitimacy, comfort, and confidence by affirming values, traditions, culture, ideas, and leadership of people of color and ensuring that the space is not dominated by white culture, procedures, and ideas (although white people and ideas may be present).

Since for many white activists becoming radical and active is often solitary and accompanied by being marginalized from family and friends, the experience of critical mass is crucial. The Seattle Origins narrative does get right that Seattle gave meaning, strength, and courage to many activists. As Bill Fletcher, President of TransAfrica Forum, argues, “we need 1, 2, 3, many Seattles, because they help people to know they are not alone.”⁶¹ Paul Rosenberg says “Big mass actions are

⁶¹ Bill Fletcher, “Globalization and the African World: Global Economic Justice and the Struggle Against Racism” CU-Boulder, 15 November 2002.

a necessity... They’re exhilarating and they expand people’s sense of the possible.” And Evan Henshaw-Plath (founder of protest.net) explains “the biggest benefit is that all the people who are doing local actions are given a chance to connect and network. Whereas before, I think there was a pretty severe case of isolation.”⁶²

In this context, “diversity of tactics” is vital to ensure there is something for everyone—including militance⁶³. But the “diversity of tactics” approach doesn’t do it for anti-racists because an “empowering space” is not one with “something for everyone” (diverse individuals) but a space that is dignified and welcoming for oppressed people and *safe* from daily experiences of racism and violence (committed to transforming the experience of the group).⁶⁴

Individualism & Culture

A thread underlying the discussions of anti-imperialism, strategy, and empowerment is that anti-globalization activists have a more individualistic perspective than makes sense to anti-racist critics. This section examines some of the cultural aspects of anti-globalization which reinforce an individualistic perspective and shows how they are linked with whiteness.

Social movement organizing involves movement building and day-to-day organizational operations. Decisions about how to do both are made in a matrix of ideology and culture. There are hegemonic forms of movement building and operations, some of which are conscious decisions linked with particular ideologies (door-to-door outreach, hyper-democratic processes) and others which are

⁶² in John Tarleton, “After Québec, What Next?” *New York Independent*. May 2001.

⁶³ Brian Dominick argues that the Zapatistas inspired North American resistance because “they managed to organize not just some demonstrations, but an army.” *ibid*.

⁶⁴ This fundamental difference leads anti-racist organizers to say “If we’re going to keep escalating the tactics, we’re going to keep turning people off to them.” [Dominick, *ibid*.] But this interpretation of anti-racism is not without its critics. Ward Churchill argues that pacifism sometimes indicates a pathological commitment to pacifism rather than justice. [*Pacifism as Pathology* 1986 (1998): Arbeiter Ring, Winnipeg.] As noted by a recent collective commentary, tactical moderation may actually normalize white middle class perspectives. “But to realize our potential for building a mass movement requires, first and foremost, clarity as to who actually constitutes the “mainstream” and why. The right, the corporate media and elite policy makers persist in painting “mainstream America” as white and middle class. Even many white liberals cling to the notion that building a mass movement against war necessitates the use of techniques and rhetoric that “don’t scare away” middle class whites.”⁶⁴ [Numerous Authors, “Open Letter On Movement Building” <http://www.Znet.org> February 21, 2003] One might observe that a sector of those most intensely victimized by globalization are young men of color for whom militance (sometimes even masked, and often armed) is already a familiar form of social insurrection. Would these folks feel “safe” or absurd out in the open in a permitted march down to a cage encircled by riot cops?

unconscious cultural practices (bureaucratic tendencies, leadership styles, preference for concise speeches). One of the ways that racism is institutionalized is the normalization and deracialization of white culture. The result of this process is that many aspects of white culture which are peculiarly white or even racist become invisible to white people yet are painfully visible, and often damaging, to people of color.⁶⁵ One of the politically salient aspects of white culture is individualism.

Cultural whiteness is particularly interesting and problematic in the case of “alternative” subcultures which experience themselves as countercultural. While these alternatives do, in many ways, explicitly counteract and displace oppressive hierarchies, including racism, they also often carry aspects of white culture as assumptions which are reproduced unquestioned and even invisible to the cultural frontiersmen. Insistent blindness to the whiteness often undermines the subculture’s language of outreach and inclusion.

A common aspect of white countercultures is the tradition of individualistic self-creation in which one’s family, church, and history are cast off in an exuberant personal embrace of a highly ideological, self-defined individualism which has no accountability to an inherited communal culture or history.⁶⁶ Politicization often involves quite abstract compassion for what might best be theorized as “imagined community”⁶⁷ with oppressed people.

In contrast with countercultural politicization, activists of color often become politicized *through* their families and immediate communities. Their developing political principles and work need to make sense in the context of their histories, their families, and the spiritual/religious traditions of their communities. Even though communities of color maintain some hurtful values (such as homophobia), radicals of color do not want to turn their backs on the institutions and values of their communities. If a radical of color is attracted to punk culture, embracing it would come at a significant cost for being able to continue to relate well with their community. While this cost also exists for white people, overcom-

⁶⁵ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies.” 1988: Wellesley Collage Center for Research on Women Working Paper 189.

⁶⁶ The lack of accountability often includes a claim to “exceptionalism” in which white people argue that they are different from other white people, a peculiar practice of ahistoricism fundamental to the construction of whiteness in American culture.

⁶⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 1991: Verso, London.

ing it is made possible by traditions valorizing defiant and expressive individualism.⁶⁸ Individualism in white culture enables white radicals to reject their birth families, their churches, their home towns, and the values they were raised with and to define themselves anew. Radicals of color cannot relate to this behavior, the lack of love it indicates for family, and its lack of respect for history and community. Whites who have apparently abandoned their families are unaccountable free agents who seem untrustworthy to radicals of color.

Two countercultures common in activist circles are punk and hippie cultures. Interestingly, these cultures have a great deal in common. Both resist what they understand to be capitalist interpellations of the body, including grooming, fashion, acceptable body types, and behavior. Both resist middle class concerns with privacy, individualism, consumption, status, and professionalism. Both envision their respective cultures as models for the future. Art, self-expression, and manifestations of community are prioritized while status, middle-class conceptions of dignity, and “legitimacy” are eschewed as relics of the old liberal order. These cultures *as cultures* assert systemic critiques, alternatives, and collective values and each has explicit political sectors, with activist commitments, frames, and institutions.

Some white activists, and some activists of colour, are attracted to hippie and punk cultures. At mass actions, more people appear to be part of these cultures simply because circumstances demand low-maintenance grooming and sturdy clothing, long car trips, and living in public spaces for days on end. Interestingly, however, non-punk/non-hippie whites easily assimilate temporarily to the subculture for logistical reasons. Radicals of color may feel less able to go unkempt or unclean and do not necessarily accept the logistical necessity.⁶⁹

Just as Free Trade Agreements fail to acknowledge corporate subsidies, white visions of a “free market” of cultural choices fail to acknowledge privileges and entitlement, claiming that a level playing field for cultural diversity already exists. While white subcultures may be alienating to many whites, they are actually experienced as exclusionary and painful by people of color. Expressive culture, even when countercultural, can be a manifestation of power.

⁶⁸ Robert Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. 1985: University of California Press.

⁶⁹ Commenting on Seattle, members of Third Eye Movement did not accept the logistical limitations at all, asserting that more money should have been provided to *fly in* activists of color.

...i'm going to stink, i'm going in there even though i'm contagious, i'm going to bring my barking dog, i have the right to do whatever the fuck i want and people just have to deal with it and i'm going to call this "cultural diversity" or "class issues" or "activist dogs." meanwhile other folks around are feeling like another white guy is doing whatever the fuck he wants, which is [again] downright unpleasant for [us folks] who seem to be always subject to some white guy [cop, schoolteacher, boss, landlord...] doing whatever the fuck he wants at our expense even though it's obviously no way to treat other human beings and we don't know anyone in [our group] who would treat people that way nor would [people in our group] let people be treated that way if we had any influence over the situation, which must mean that all these other people in here think that what he's doing is a perfectly fine way to mis/treat (inconvenience/offend) other people...

Individualistic rebellion against oppressive youth and class socialization feels precious. But this part of liberation doesn't put people in a very good position for participating in more collective aspects of struggle. Cultural relativism enables all sorts of hierarchial, oppressive, and selfish (or just self-absorbed) behavior to be dismissed as part of cultural expression. "Culture" is really what is being done and how it's being done.

Prefigurative Cultural Politics

Activist countercultures often emphasize "prefigurative" actions. Such practices embody the movement's vision as if it were already achieved, thereby calling it into being. None of the diverse movements which participate in anti-globalization can be reduced to or represented by their prefigurative tendencies. Prefiguration is more of an ethic than a manifesto, meaning that those who value prefiguration often, but not always attempt to practice it, while also doing extensive direct political work. But some who hold prefiguration dear use it as a litmus test when interacting with other activists.

George Katsiaficas describes the power of prefigurative projects when he defends "identity construction" as "enacting the freedom to determine one's conditions of existence, to create new categories within which to live." This is a "radically new concrete universal—a reworking of the meaning of human being" in response to the recognition (not only by Habermas) that the entire "life-world" was being "colonized."⁷⁰

One of several ways that anti-globalization activists do prefigurative politics is responsible consumption. Many activists make an effort to be aware of

how much they depend on third world resources and to reduce that dependency. Hence some spend their leisure time re-learning how to grow and preserve food and to make basic items like soap, candles, and clothes. Some people have worked on creating alternative forms of identity and celebration ("Look what I found in the dumpster!") to go along with their attempt to take responsibility for the racist effects of first world consumption. Encouraging a "subsistence perspective" in the Global North Maria Mies & Veronica Bennholdt-Thomsen challenge feminists and other activists within the Global North not to base their liberation on "loot" and their identity on "disgust...degradation and contempt" for peasants.⁷¹

The amelioration of race and class inequality in the Global North through widening the base of mass consumption relies considerably on the resources of the Global South. Reducing Northern consumption is certainly not a sufficient strategy for confronting globalization, but it will be part of any plan for global justice, the real cost of which is not the risks we take in the streets but allowing the peoples of the Global South to keep their resources for their own use. Even activists who understand that consumption politics are inadequate in themselves often practice responsible consumption as a spiritual and emotional commitment to global justice.

These practices are often quite alienating to anti-racist activists. Even though these activities are intensely *local* (unlike mass actions and international campaigns), this doesn't make them anti-racist. When anti-racist activists talk about "making the connections" they don't mean figuring out on an intellectual level how its effects are personal in some local way. What they mean is showing the concern with globalization by working on alleviating its immediate damage to people in the neighborhood. (Of course, the best neighborhood work relies heavily on first world global privileges—too often, and perhaps unavoidably, global and local activism operate at one another's expense.)

Prefigurative politics don't only make for bad anti-racist campaigns, they have another set of effects. Young anti-globalization activists' willingness to go without creature comforts can be strangely intimidating to other activists who can't imagine going a day without a shower or their favorite products. A set of familiar ways of achieving low-consumption (clothing, hairstyles, and accoutrements) have appeared as signs of youth protest culture and define insiders. People of color frequently find these choices to be downright distasteful and experience them more as (white) culture (to which they, once again, don't measure up), than as political acts. One letter to the editor in *Colorlines* contended:

⁷⁰ Jürgen Habermas, "New Social Movements." *Telos* 49 (1981): 33. Katsiaficas, *ibid*.

⁷¹ Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen & Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalised Economy*. 1999: Zed Books, London.

Seattle DAN folks romanticize the wholesale abandonment of mainstream culture. They boast of dumpster-diving and television-smashing, dream of self-sufficiency ... But of course, dropping out of society has a different appeal for those who have always-already been invited to participate fully than it does for those whose invitation is eternally lost in the mail.⁷²

Standard organizing culture for anti-globalization activists is prefigurative participatory democracy in a space that functions much like a squat (meaning that people can meet their [minimalist] daily needs there). For anti-racist organizers, meetings need to be controlled by familiar local activists of color in a dignified, tidy space to which people can feel comfortable “bringing their parents.”

At the DNC in Los Angeles, these cultural conflicts obscured a joint concern. Both activists of colour in DAN-LA and anarchists alienated from it were struggling for democracy against what they perceived to be a covert vanguard operating within DAN-LA.⁷³ If they had recognized one another as allies they might have also discovered many similarities between self-determination traditions in communities of color and goals and practices of anarchism.

CONCLUSION

This paper has distilled a number of deep issues from the apparent conflict between anti-globalization and anti-racist perspectives. These issues result in the anti-globalization movement’s anti-imperialism not being recognized to be anti-racist.

⁷² Sage Wilson, letter to the editor, *Colorlines* 3.2, Summer 2000.

⁷³ At the anarchist conference held in conjunction with the DNC protests there was widespread portrayal of C-DAN (Continental DAN) as “reformist” and “full of paid activists flying around the country from action to action.” [Shawn McDougal “DAN-LA, the Black Bloc, and Anarchism” response to David Graeber on la-anarchists@lists.ao.ca 9.4.2000, posted to DAN-discuss 9.12.2000.] DAN-LA activists of color interviewed during the actions for this project said that the organizing committee was overwhelmed by people they called “outsiders” who claimed to have the right to make decisions because they had so much experience. In response to these critiques, Elijah Saxon writes “it is true that there are individual organizers with strong personalities who work under the DAN banner who at times have difficulty sharing information or might be intimidating and assertive. that is a far cry from saying that DAN is controlled by a cadre of elitist super-organizers.” [Elijah Saxon, response to McDougal on DAN-discuss 9.12.2000] McDougal’s point was to portray anarchists as “stuck in an attitude of tribalism”, where people find it much easier to categorize and demonize people they don’t know than engage them...really is at the socio-psychological roots of nationalism” when, as it turned out, concerns about vanguardism both from within DAN-LA and from the anarchist conference turned out to be prescient. By the time of the World Economic Forum protests in February 2002, this vanguardism had turned into a movement coup by the so-called Pagan Cluster.

- Movement and activist stereotypes (including the “frames” described above, but also extending to issues of age) are being used as the basis of debates which require considerably more precision if they are to be constructive.
- The anti-globalization emphasis on correct anti-imperialist *analysis* as the key to anti-racist campaigns is totally inadequate from the anti-racist perspective which sees anti-racism as a specific kind of *process of local organizing*.
- The movements have, at times, severe differences in what they understand to be “empowering” for strangers (and how differential empowerment is racialized). These differences are rooted in whether proto-actiivsts are conceptualized as isolated individuals or people embedded in oppressed communities.
- The anti-globalization movement assumes (perhaps incorrectly) that diversity of tactics successfully provides space for ideological and tactical expressions of anti-racism (and any other liberatory politics) while the most important aspect of anti-racist organizing is safe, dignified, non-white-dominated organizing culture.
- Both movements “make connections” to the “local,” but they do so differently.
- The concept of cultural diversity does not effectively manage the conflicts between different styles, particularly when some of those styles are practiced in an entitled manner.

Discussing another set of tactical issues, Massimo De Angelis provides a framework which may be useful for activists seeking to develop accountability while also respecting our diversity. Arguing that the core values and aspirations of the anti-globalization movement are rejection of the forced choice between the market and the state, instead embracing “respect, dignity, grassroots democracy and exercise of real power,” he urges activists to move from debates over the “ethical correctness” of particular acts to an evaluation of “whether that action was a responsible action in that context.” What is transformative about his framework is his definition of “responsibility”:

Responsibility is above all a relationship to the other, one that presupposes the belonging in a community...Irresponsibility is not a light criticism, precisely because it presupposes their inclusion in our struggle. You can be (ir)responsible only towards your community, not towards some outside force or some grand ethical concept...And if you are irresponsible towards the ‘other’ in your community, then think twice, because the world we are fighting against is based precisely on this persistent indifference to the other...

He explains that the struggle against globalization requires both local struggles, where “our desires and aspirations take shape” and the increasingly global context of struggle, which is fundamentally the “discovery of the other.” As we become a global community of activists, we develop solidarity through a “creative process of discovery, not a presumption.”⁷⁴ Hence, diversity of tactics as a policy of absolute tolerance is not solidarity. Solidarity requires discovering one another’s needs and figuring out how we can be supportive.

In addition to the challenges and opportunities for activists explored here, there are several points to glean from this study of general importance to social movements literature. First, the persistent misnaming and mislocation of the problem even by activists who identify as movement insiders reveals the complexity of frame mobilization within social movements.

Second, despite the careful distinctions outlined by trainers, anti-racist discourse has a life of its own as a mishmash of various, sometimes contradictory, theories of anti-racism ranging from Black Power to anti-oppression. Activists and critics may create their own amalgams drawing on various trainings, reading, or concepts picked ideas up through activist culture. More detailed case studies could be revealing in how activists and organizations put theory into practice in “messy” ways and what this means for theorists and educators.

Third, the discourse of anti-racism has become hegemonic within activist circles, such that it becomes silencing. The absence of dialogue, dissent, and debate about the anti-racist critiques of the anti-globalization movement is telling—why is it not one of the issues fervently debated all over the internet by activists? Anti-racism is not the only critical perspective with hegemonic status within the anti-globalization movement. Yet other hegemonic positions (such as pacifism and reformism) do not have the silencing power that anti-racism does and are hotly contested. Why is its move for hegemony seemingly more effective? It would be useful to compare the process of silencing with the lively and extensive dialogues regarding pacifism and property crime, which led within a year of the Seattle protests to the breakthrough development and consensual embrace of a new concept and movement strategy (“diversity of tactics”).

Fourth, it is interesting to note that the most vibrant, creative, and confrontational anti-neoliberal movements in Europe are the anti-racist campaigns to support immigrant rights. Using concepts such as “no one is illegal,” “no borders,” “the world belongs to everyone,” and “everyone

⁷⁴ Massimo de Angelis, “from movement to society” 109-124 in *On Fire: The battle of Genoa and the anti-capitalist movement*. 2001: One-off Press: 118-119,124.

is an expert,”⁷⁵ this movement has embraced issues of structured North-South inequality where it hits home, at home, engaging not only the official promoters of free trade policies, but the psychological support for it in the racism of their fellow citizens. A comparative study of the European and US anti-globalization movements’ relationship to immigration would be an excellent addition to our understanding of anti-racist politics.

⁷⁵ See <http://www.no-racism.net>, <http://www.noborder.org>, <http://www.expertbase.net/>