

Claremont Colleges

Scholarship @ Claremont

Pitzer Senior Theses

Pitzer Student Scholarship

2019

Confronting the NGO: Struggling for Agency and Approximating Freedom through the Works of Michel Foucault and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Samantha Coss

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.claremont.edu/pitzer_theses



Part of the [Civic and Community Engagement Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Latin American Studies Commons](#), [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)



Confronting the NGO: *Struggling for Agency and Approximating Freedom through the Works of Michel Foucault and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*

By Samantha Coss

Department of International Intercultural Studies
Pitzer College
Claremont, California
May, 2019

Faculty Advisors:
Professor Joe Parker
Professor Lako Tongun

SUMMARY

This project aims to consider the proliferation of the NGO in the 21st century and the implications that this model has for justice, freedom and social change. The nonprofit, or nongovernmental organization, will be examined using theorists and thinkers Michel Foucault and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in hopes of understanding the ways in which the NGO limits freedom and perpetuates violence. There will be an exploration of struggling for agency beyond the nonprofit, including an introduction to examples of other change-making models from the United States and Latin America. The goal of this project is to critically examine the current frameworks for social change-making and to find more ethical ways of democratic social transformation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. PROLOGUE: <i>A Taste of the NYC Nonprofit</i>	4
2. INTRODUCTION: <i>Weighing our Changemaking Tactics</i>	7
a. Thesis Statement.....	9
3. CONTEXT.....	10
a. PART I: The Nebulous Nonprofit/NGO.....	10
i. Defining the NGO.....	10
ii. Defining the Nonprofit.....	12
b. PART II: The Journey to NGO Ubiquity.....	15
4. METHODOLOGY.....	21
a. PART I: Michel Foucault.....	21
b. PART II: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.....	26
5. CRITIQUES.....	29
a. PART I: Foucault.....	29
i. NGO as <i>Dispositif</i>	29
ii. The NGO's Discursive Regime.....	35
b. PART II: Spivak.....	38
i. Spivak's Critiques on Self-Styled International Civil Society.....	38
ii. The World Social Forum and International Civil Society.....	44
iii. Limits to Freedom? <i>Neoliberal Capitalist Expansion and Exploitation; Neo-Imperialist Violence and Imposition</i>	48
6. STRUGGLING FOR AGENCY: <i>Approximating Freedom</i>	56
7. OTHER MODELS.....	60
a. Sista II Sista.....	61
b. Looking to Latin America: <i>The Zapatistas, the MST and the MTD</i>	66
i. Ejercicio Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, México.....	68
ii. Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, Brasil.....	71
iii. Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados, Argentina.....	73
c. Reflections.....	75
8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	77
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81

CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE: *A Taste of the NYC Nonprofit*

I spent a semester of my college career in New York City participating in an academic program focused on international affairs. The program offered riveting classes, but the most appealing aspect was an incorporated internship. Each student interned with an organization in Manhattan that somehow dealt with international affairs. Many of these organizations were nonprofits.

I had previously interned with two nonprofits before I arrived in New York. Both organizations were day labor centers that provide job locating assistance to immigrants, among other services. While applying for internships I initially looked for similar organizations, but I ended up following a completely new path. I accepted an internship with a philanthropic foundation. I chose the organization due to their motivating global work, but a glaring fact framed my especially unique opportunity: the founder of the organization was a quite famous celebrity and pop-star.

My boss from the philanthropic organization introduced me to the “big idea.” The “big idea” can be thought of as an ambitious project which a Western organization thinks up and installs in a community, usually within the Global South, without much consultation from the community members themselves. These “big ideas” fail on numerous accounts: they are unsustainable – often running out of funding, materials, labor or support rather quickly; imposing on communities who may not want nor need them.

I arrived to my first day of work nervous, yet excited to work among people who shared my goals and values: wanting to create positive, ethical, sustainable social change; without using the “big idea.” What I could not have anticipated was how my perception of international (and national) change-making would shift; how I would begin to understand nonprofits,

nongovernmental organizations and philanthropies in a new light; that this entirely exciting, positive experience would also push me to criticize the systematized social movements of our era beyond any consideration I had made before.

My first day of work occurred on-site at the location for the organization's annual gala event. As I was oriented to the small-team dynamics, I immediately began working on a research project as I watched an intricate dance unfold among a team of workers who were setting up the gala. Over the next few days, carpets unrolled, lights and screens went up, cutlery was laid out perfectly and speeches were practiced. It was my first time exposed to the "gala:" a staple installation in the philanthropic world. Most large foundations put on a gala each year to raise money, but also as a branding tool. Celebrities show up, providing mutually beneficial notoriety for both parties. From my first day on I was struck by the money and the grandiosity. I began to recall snippets of conversations with my supervisors from before, at the smaller nonprofits I had worked at in the past, discussing the "necessary evil" of foundation funding.

I noticed the wealth beyond the gala. In the fundraising world, wealthy people often commit large amounts of money to many causes without hesitation. Additionally, I interacted with for-profit companies, navigating a fascinating dynamic between the two sectors. I sometimes researched corporations' models for fundraising, knowing that they were some of the richest companies in the world largely due to their exploitation of employee labor. Although I was taught to vet partners, this detail remained unquestioned. Not only do large corporate partners or other foundations need vetting, but so do smaller projects. I began to notice the competition within the nonprofit sector. Many organizations apply for the same grants and are then pitted against each other, motivated to specify the uniqueness in their proposal. *Might we all*

have a good vision and come together to work on it? There was intermittent collaboration, but I found myself wondering how common that comradery is.

I considered the potential and power of unification. Unification to fight against the “big issues.” I contemplated what the “big issues” really are. While I confronted some perplexing questions, I simultaneously had many inspiring experiences. I listened to calls between organizations banding together or discussing their methods to practice accountability and safety in local contexts. I learned about programs. I researched. I wrote. I learned about advocacy and the use of social media platforms to leverage celebrity influence on world leaders and government officials. All of this led me back to questions of socioeconomic status and the role of the state. How could I have so many critical questions while also participating in what felt like a powerful social transformation?

As my internship came to a close I asked myself more and more questions, such as...

- What is the best way to make change?
- Why is the nongovernmental sector going it alone?
- Can we truly make change from within a capitalist system?
- Who has the resources to donate time and money to a foundation? To serve on a board of directors? To found a foundation?
- Should the wealthy and famous influence and shape the world as they do?
- How does the language of “development” and “aid” shape global change?
- How do nonprofits direct the way that resistance occurs and social movements form?
- Could nonprofits be a threat to democracy?

This paper is both an investigation into these questions and an approximation to some answers...

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION: *Weighing our Changemaking Tactics*

When contemplating the questions: how do we create a more just and equitable world and what is the best way to enact social change, a common answer is: through the nonprofit. The public consensus on nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seems to be that they are positive social institutions. Any person volunteering or working to provide relief to populations victim to marginalization, discrimination, violence or disempowerment should inherently be working toward a progressive agenda, positive social-change and a more equitable society, right? Well, it may not be so simple.

In the United States, nonprofits were created by the elite class as foundations to protect their wealth from taxes. Throughout history nonprofits have protected the status quo by providing services on an individual basis while perpetuating capitalist frameworks rather than interrogating the distribution of wealth and systemic oppression that accompanies it. The “Nonprofit Industrial Complex,” (NPIC) is a well known approach used to examine the issues with our current model for change-making. I will frequently reference a book throughout this paper called *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded, Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, which was edited by “INCITE!,” a network of radical feminists of color. INCITE! has defined the NPIC as “a system of relationships between the State (or local and federal governments), the owning classes, foundations, and non-profit/NGO social service and social justice organizations” (INCITE!, xiii). An additional description of the NPIC is given by Dylan Rodríguez, defining the NPIC similarly as “a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements” (INCITE!, 8).

The NPIC arose as a specific term tied to the Military Industrial Complex (MIC), the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and the Academic Industrial Complex (AIC). These methods are useful in understanding the ways in which capitalism and corporations control particular “industries,” and the NPIC allows a developed understanding of how state co-optation has protected the ruling class’ power and caused potentially progressive change-makers to cater to their needs, watering down movements and supporting the status quo. We can, however, expand upon the critiques of the NPIC to further examine the complexities of the nonprofit as well as the NGO on an international scale.

I will examine the nonprofit and NGO using two theorists’ methodologies to offer new considerations on their complexities and issues. Through the lens of Michel Foucault’s analysis of the modern power/knowledge regime and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s thoughts on democracy and International civil society, as well as both theorists’ approximations to freedom, I will explore the NGO and the questions I posed in the Prologue.

According to Paul Kivel’s U.S. Economic Pyramid, 1 percent of the population in the United States holds 47 percent of the nation’s wealth while 19 percent of the population holds 44 percent and a remaining 80 percent of the population holds the last 9 percent (INCITE!, 131). This top 1 percent controlling the majority of the country’s wealth also commands public services and dictates what movements receive funding, time and other resources. While it might feel exciting to see a wealthy CEO or our favorite pop-star start a foundation or make a large donation to a cause we agree with, it is at best precarious and at worst a threat to democracy to have a small group of people controlling the majority of a nation’s wealth and therefore shaping the future of a nation. It is equally if not much more dangerous for international NGOs to intervene in another countries’ processes of change-making on behalf of their own values.

Thesis Statement:

This paper examines the NGO and the ways in which it propagates oppressive and exploitative practices of a Capitalist system in the interest of the state, as well as a colonial agenda of the West in the name of “democracy.” The goal of this project is to critically examine the current nonprofit model and its frameworks for change and to find more ethical ways of democratic changemaking. Our worldwide communities cannot fight for relief *from* oppression or simply for improved access to equal opportunities; we have to fight oppression itself. In attempts to move toward systemic change, I will look to domestic and international examples of grassroots organizations and social movements outside of the NGO and propose some potentials and possibilities to struggle for agency, approximate freedom and create radical, lasting change.

While some call for the death of the NGO, I argue that suddenly dismantling the cushion between the state and society would leave people in critical, unstable positions. Rather than foolishly dreaming of demolishing the nonprofit or NGO, I advocate for an examination of the weaknesses in the system while focusing energy toward rethinking potentials for radical change. Groups should work *together* toward social transformation instead of in competition for funding. Nonprofits and NGOs should be flexible and prioritize the needs of people affected by marginalization, discrimination, violence, disempowerment and disenfranchisement, rather than responding to frameworks set by the ruling class and state or defining the limits of resource distribution and therefore change itself. NGOs should never dictate social movements; they should respond to them. Rather than providing services to individuals, NGOs should work with and in support of activists and grassroots organizations to address systemic oppression and create systemic change. It is time to rethink our current conceptions of equity and justice to allow for a reimagined approach to change-making and societal transformation.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT

PART I: The Nebulous NGO

A plethora of entities claim nongovernmental and nonprofit status. Although these are commonly referenced names, one may still wonder what exactly constitutes a nonprofit or NGO. What do they do? How do they operate? What type of organizations qualify under these titles and are they the same thing? This explanatory section purports to clarify some common questions about these structures.

Defining The NGO

A nongovernmental organization, or NGO, is intuitively an organization which operates independently from governmental influence, involvement or oversight. NGOs may sometimes receive government support in the form of funding, but this is not required. While the name “nongovernmental” distinguishes it from governmental bodies, the use of the word “government” in the title also less obviously (and somewhat ironically) indicates proximity to the state. NGOs generally work toward the benefit of society or human welfare, often collaborating on projects that the government is also involved with. NGOs focus their efforts in fields such as community health and health crises, education, environmental issues, economic and development programs and social issues like women’s or children’s rights (Key Differences).

The term “nongovernmental organization” originated in the Charter of the newly formed United Nations in 1945, in Article 71 (Facts and Stats). There are currently 10 different types of NGOs: Big International NGO (BINGO), Civil Society Organization (CSO), Donor Organized NGO (DONGO), Environmental NGO (ENGO), Government-operated NGO (GONGO), International NGO (INGO), Quasi-autonomous NGO (QUANGO), Technical Assistance NGO

(TANGO), Grassroots Support Organization (GSO), and Market Advocacy Organization (MANGO) (Key Differences). As of 2015 there were an estimated 10 million NGOs in existence worldwide (Facts and Stats).

According to Article 71 of the UN Charter, an NGO can be any kind of organization provided that it is independent from government influence and is not-for-profit. While most NGOs do not generate profit, few nonprofits are NGOs. While both work toward shared goals of societal improvement, their key differences are in organization and scope. Typically, NGOs are organizations tackling larger, international undertakings, often focused on working within countries in the “Global South”. The Global South is a term that refers to low and middle income countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. These countries are often called newly “industrialized” or “developed,” or in the process of industrializing or developing. The Global South does not necessarily coordinate with the geographical south.

Some well known examples of large scale International NGOs are: Doctors Without Borders, a nonprofit international humanitarian medical NGO; Oxfam, which is a confederation of 20 independent charitable organizations focused on alleviating global poverty; Greenpeace, an environmental activism NGO with offices in over 39 countries; the International Rescue Committee, a global humanitarian aid, relief, and development NGO founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein (Hall-Jones). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is now the world’s largest NGO. The Gates Foundation has an endowment of \$28.8 billion and the founders call themselves “impatient optimists working to reduce inequity,” funding projects in various fields including health, education, agriculture, gender equality, water sanitation and beyond (What We Do).

Although NGOs may not technically generate a profit, the “Nonprofit,” label refers to a specific type of organization separate from the transnational entity of the NGO. The nonprofit refers to organizations operating within the United States under a certain tax code law as well as other strict restrictions and regulations. This model will be explained in the following section.

Defining the Nonprofit

The nonprofit is more limited in its classification. In the simplest terms, it is an organization created to fulfill motives other than generating profit: to benefit the public, a specific group of people, or the membership of the nonprofit itself. Although this may seem a straightforward distinction from profit-engaged businesses and corporations, there are certain significant technicalities of the nonprofit. It is important to note these rules while also underlining how varied the assemblage of organizations is that claims nonprofit status.

Nonprofits are dedicated to furthering a specified cause. Nonprofits can be religious, educational, charitable, scientific or literary entities. Examples include hospitals, universities, churches, national charities and foundations. There are two main subcategories within the nonprofit realm: public charity and private foundation. While private foundations can include family foundations, corporate foundations and more, public charities are created to provide “public benefit.”

Most important to note is that nonprofit organizations are tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). With 501(c)(3) status, these organizations can provide donors with a tax-deduction for their contribution, and will not pay income taxes on money received. This surplus of revenue is used to further the organization’s cause or reason for existence. Nonprofits really do make a profit then, it just is not used to benefit any sort of private interests such as distribution among staff members. Additionally, nonprofits must make their financial

information public so that donors can hold them accountable and rest assured that their donations are being put to good use. According to the National Council of Nonprofits, this is the current breakdown of tax-exempt groups and their makeup of the nationally registered nonprofits: Arts, Culture and Humanities (9.9%), Education (17.1%), Environment and Animals (4.5%), Health (13.0%), Human Services (35.5%), International and Foreign Affairs (2.1%), Public and Societal Benefit (11.6%) and Religion Related (6.1%) (What Is a “Nonprofit?”).

Nonprofits have paid staff and often volunteers. Salaries of paid staff are often lower than those who work for for-profit companies, but the variety of nonprofits creates a diverse pay scale as well. Those working for nonprofit universities and hospitals, for instance, generally make more than those working for smaller community-based nonprofits. In addition to paid staff, it is legally required that 501(c)(3) organizations have a “Board of Directors.” The Board of Directors’ role is to hold nonprofits accountable to both their personalized mission and the law. The board must meet at least once a year and although it is not a requirement, the board members are commonly involved in decision-making processes for the organization’s operations.

While the addition of the Board of Directors is a distinguishing factor between the NGO and the nonprofit, something they do have in common is their lack of governmental ties. The IRS has even further restriction on nonprofits, which cannot be “action organizations,” better understood as political establishments. The IRS states that a 501(c)(3) “may not attempt to influence legislation as a substantial part of its activities and it may not participate in any campaign activity for or against political candidates” (Exemption Requirements). The significance of these factors will be revisited in the Critiques chapter.

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), 1.56 million nonprofits were registered with the IRS at the end of 2015 (McKeever). The nonprofit sector

composed 5.4% of the country's GDP that same year, contributing around \$985.4 billion to the United States economy. One year later in 2016, the total amount of private giving from individuals, foundations and businesses totaled \$390.05 billion and 25.2% of U.S. adults volunteered, contributing an estimated 8.7 billion hours of their time. Each year giving increases. According to Charity Navigator, In 2017, total giving went up to over \$4 billion (Giving Statistics). The majority of these donations were made by individuals, followed by foundations, bequests and corporations, in that order. Historically, religious groups have received the largest share of charitable donations. From these statistics we can tell how ubiquitous the nonprofit has become in the United States.

When someone refers to the "nonprofit" in general terms, they are most likely using an umbrella term to capture both of these types of organizations that "do good." Many make associations with images of groups doing charitable work to provide goods and services to those labeled as "vulnerable" populations of society, both domestically and internationally. It is clear that there are innumerable organizations and approaches within this collectivity of the "nonprofit." A 501(c)(3) can be anything from a church to a school and many other things in between. There are 10 different sub-types of "NGOs." To understand this array of complexities, we must first understand how we arrived at the current era of nonprofit and nongovernmental ubiquitousness.

PART II: The Journey to NGO Ubiquity

The history of the NGO is one of a long, slow transition to normalcy. Many large developments in organizing, social change and the provision of social services have occurred over the past few decades since the 1980s, but to grasp their significance it is necessary to look back even further first. In order to answer the question: where are we headed? We must first consider how we got here.

In the early 1800's and prior to the Civil War, individuals executed "charity work" in the United States, not organizations. Following the war which ended in 1865 and "in the face of accelerating industrialization and accompanying social ills, such as increased poverty, community breakdown to facilitate the flow of labor, and violence, local organizations (generally headed by community elites) developed to assist those seen to be 'deserving' of assistance, such as widows and children," (INCITE!, 3). There has been a clear distinction of "deserving" and "non-deserving" populations since the beginning of the nonprofit model, although this has shifted over time.

The first major change to the American system occurred in the 1900s when "the first multimillionaire robber barons, such as John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Russell Sage, created new institutions that would exist in perpetuity and support charitable giving in order to shield their earnings from taxation" (INCITE!, 4). The Carnegie Foundation was founded in 1905, followed by the Russel Sage Foundation in 1907 and the Rockefeller Foundation in 1913. Since their inception, private foundations have focused on ameliorating social issues and poverty on an individual level which has never challenged capitalism's methods of exploitation or Western imperialism. These particular foundations modeled this approach for future foundations. For example, in 1913, Colorado miners went on strike against Colorado Fuel

and Iron, which was partially owned by John D. Rockefeller. The Rockefeller Foundation secretary advocated for quieting the strikes; pushing for individual relief while labeling unions and organizing as societal threats (INCTIE!, 4). This individualization of relief and controlling maintenance of “civil society” is still present in the way that many NGOs operate today.

Before the establishment of these major private foundations, charities were highly unregulated because few states imposed taxes on corporations. With the passing of the Revenue Act in 1913, however, everything changed. The tax-exempt status of nonprofits was created by U.S. Congress as part of this Act, right after the ratification of the 16th Amendment which instituted the income tax (INCITE!, 7). Put simply: the tax-exempt shelter for nonprofits was created directly and corruptly alongside the income tax, as a means for corporations to avoid taxes on their wealth and to leave inheritance for their descendants without paying estate taxes.

During the Great Depression, which began in 1929, the societal influence of foundations was truncated by the economic downfall. Everything began to change again – especially on an international scale – just a few years later, with the onset of World War II in 1939. When the war ended in 1945, the United Nations was established in order to prevent future wars from occurring. As mentioned before, the term NGO emerged at this time as part of the U.N. charter, differentiating between intergovernmental agencies and private organizations. Peter Hall-Jones mentions in a short descriptive piece on the rise of the NGO that “the movement’s origins are much older,” however, giving examples of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1839 and “other early NGOs [that] grew out of wars, including the Red Cross in the 1850s after the Franco-Italian war; Save the Children after World War I; and Oxfam and CARE after World War II.” (cite)

Although the roots of the NGO had been laid and growing for years, our global society now shared some sort of language to describe these types of organizations. At the same time, as

foundations were regaining prominence, they were also transforming more and more into a tool of U.S. imperialism to spread neoliberal democracy globally.

After WWII, foundations were not only used as a tool of Western imperialism, but foundations' surveillance of emerging social movements in the United States also intensified at this time. "During the late 1960s, radical movements for social change were transforming the shape of the United States while Third World liberation movements were challenging Western imperialism. Foundations began to take a role in shaping this organizing so that social protest would not challenge the capitalist status quo" (INCITE!, 7). The Ford Foundation, for example, became notoriously involved in the civil rights movement to steer it in a conservative direction (INCITE!, 53).

Indigenous activist Madonna Thunder Hawk describes in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* how much has changed in the organizing world since the 1960s. She recalls a time long-past when social change was executed through grassroots organizing and community efforts. Hawk says, "activists helped each other out, regardless of the issue. If we had a pressing issue, other folks would drop what they were working on to support us, and vice versa. For instance, many Black Power organizations supported us in Wounded Knee, and I was active in supporting the farmworker struggles" (INCITE!, 103). Eric Tang elaborates on the significance of this period leading up to the Reagan era in the early 1980s. This is when the path toward nonprofit ubiquity became more clear.

Tang names three interrelated factors within the "New Left" during this transitional period which led to the increasing trend toward what he calls "non-profitization" of the U.S. These factors are the "deconsolidation of the party builders and the proliferation of new social movements (NSMs); baby boomers with loot; and the 'legitimacy' question" (INCITE!, 218).

Tang names the first factor “deconsolidate and proliferate.” There was a push during the 1970s to consolidate the political movements of the 1960s, including the Black Panther Party, women’s and queer liberation movements and anti-war movement, into one revolutionary party. But this process of consolidation came with difficulties, including a loss of attention to the particularities of specific struggles as well as a loss of time spent working on each specific movement’s goals. Tang says by the early 1980s, as party-building efforts declined, new movements began to “grow and proliferate, codifying their struggles under new banners,” including: environmental justice, racial justice, no nukes, housing organizing, youth development, and community economic development. Tang adds, “these would, in turn, become the social justice silos that guided the funding strategies of philanthropic foundations” (INCITE!, 218).

Second, as federally funded anti poverty programs designed during the Kennedy-Johnson era were cut back during the Reagan years, community-based movements struggled to find funding. At this same time “baby boomers born to wealth” were inheriting estates, becoming individual donors and even creating family foundations. For reference, from 1975 to 2000 the number of philanthropic organizations grew from 21,887 to 56,582. This growth was significant and created a huge new source of funding for social movements (INCITE!, 219).

Third, the idea of “legitimacy” became a central feature in a drastic change in social movements. Tang says each movement needed to “get with the times (or the *Times*) and make an impression on institutional power, as opposed to being its incessant pain in the ass. Instead of ‘mau-mauing’ the suits for big promises that amounted to mere bread crumbs, it was suggested that the Left try donning a suit and grabbing a seat at the table to win big” (INCITE!, 219). This professionalization of the nonprofit will be explored much more deeply later in this work.

These factors of deconsolidation, the establishment and proliferation of foundations and issue-specific movements and the legitimization or professionalization of the “New Left,” all coalesced during an era in which the state was also cutting back social services. This change was mirrored on the international scene as well. Hall-Jones says, “As the World Bank and IMF forced cuts in public services, NGOs were encouraged to move in to fill the gaps. They were considered: ‘the preferred channel for service provision, in deliberate substitution for the state.’”

As we approach the modern-day experience in this history, an undeniable change altered global society and the ways in which we not only make change, but interact and exist in the world; globalization. As this new era of globalization encroached, fueled by the spread neoliberal capitalism, Subcomandante Marcos arose as a spokesperson for the Zapatistas, a social movement group which I will revisit in the “Other Models” section. Marcos declared this era of globalization the “Fourth World War” (following the Cold War as the third).

Ana Clarissa Roja Durazo expands upon Marcos’ declaration in her chapter “*we were never meant to survive*”: *Fighting Violence Against Women and the Fourth World War* in the book edited by INCITE!. Durazo says:

Violence, in all its myriad manifestations – economic, environmental, militarized borders and wars of terror, attacks on language and culture, and more – is deemed a natural phenomenon by imperial and corporate powers. Like the sun, the market also rises, and money is naturalized as that neutral ingredient which makes the world go round. The same is true of our social movements, which, like many of us, took the bait hook, line, and sinker. The non-profit industrial complex ... emerges from these processes of privatization and globalization, and the non-profitization of our social movements is wielded as a weapon in the fourth world war. (113)

Durazo explains that the nonprofit was concreted during an era of privatization and globalization. According to Durazo, violence is tied to neoliberal capitalism, and the widespread prominence of the NPIC arrives in tandem as a weapon of imperialism. Contrastingly, the International NGO is constantly being debated on whether it works to address the violence and oppression fueled by privatization, globalization, exploitation and Western imperialism, or if it also falls trap to ultimately serving as a tool of these “evils.”

Chapter 3 has provided a context of the rise of the NGO and how we have arrived at normalcy of the ever-present nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations. In Chapter 4 I will introduce the theoretical methodologies I use to examine and critique the NGO in this work; those of Michel Foucault and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

PART I: Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault was a French philosopher and social theorist who completely altered modern conversations on power. Foucault lived from 1926 until 1984. Through his extensive works, Foucault explored the ways in which power regulates, disciplines, polices and surveils on a systemic level, but also how it is internalized by individuals through apparatuses, discourse and the modern power/knowledge regime. These extremely particular concepts will be revisited throughout the remaining chapters, but they necessitate introduction first.

Foucault draws an inextricable link between power and knowledge, forging this amalgamated concept of power/knowledge. Power, for Foucault, is reinforced through socially accepted forms of knowledge such as scientific understanding, forming what he calls a sort of reigning ‘regime of truth.’ He says:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.’ (Rabinow, 72-3)

Foucault mentions “discourse” in this quote, a key pillar of his theories on power. Discourse for Foucault forms knowledge, but he thinks about discourse differently than how it is used in colloquial English. Discourse, for Foucault, refers to:

Ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them.

Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. (Weedon, 108)

Everything has a discursive aspect, producing a certain set of knowledge which is inscribed in the power relations of the moment. But it is significant that discourse is not just linguistic, it carries out force relations on the *body*. This corporal aspect is what truly distinguishes Foucault's usage of the term.

Discourse informs the social aspect of knowledge, how it is mediated by history rather than demonstrating an all-accepted truth. Power is also maintained by this continually generated discourse. Various societies and institutions operate using distinct discourses which create corresponding power/knowledge regimes. The NGO, for instance, has its own discourse, supported through the language of poverty and "underdevelopment," and carried out through force relations on the body. This discourse supports the NGO's assumptions and politics of "truth," allowing the organizations to sustain their work and the need for it.

Another of Foucault's frameworks: the "apparatus," lends itself useful to the analysis of the NGO. *Dispositif*, the French term for apparatus, is Foucault's understanding of the ways in which power is generated and exercised. The word has been translated into English using varying words, but the concept generally refers to mechanisms which enforce, structure and shape power/knowledge structures within society. Foucault gives one of the most thorough explanations on his term in an interview titled *The Confession of the Flesh*, where he describes *dispositif* as:

A thoroughly heterogenous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid ... The apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements ... by the term ‘apparatus I mean a kind of a formation, so to speak, that at a given historical moment has as its major function the response to an urgency. The apparatus therefore has a dominant strategic function ... (Gordon, 194)

Any institution, administrative process, knowledge structure, and so forth in which power is exercised could be an apparatus, such as the college application process, the prison, or in our case, the nonprofit or nongovernmental organization. Surveillance is highly prevalent within apparatuses, which continuously spawn ways and means for power to be created or maintained.

Over the years many have criticized Foucault for his lack of discussion on agency. Upon closer inspection his work focuses on reconsidering conceptions of resistance and social transformation. His discussions of potentials for resistance are subtle and focus on one main idea: the pervasiveness and instability of power. Power is omnipresent: diffuse and originating from innumerable points. Because power is always changing and manifesting in different ways, this apparent lack of concentration or core origin means that power is inherently unstable.

Foucault argues that we give too much “power” to power, so to speak. He says

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.” (Discipline and Punish, 194)

Although power/knowledge for Foucault is pervasive, it might not be the grim, all-powerful and ominous thing that many make it out to be. Power/knowledge is constantly shifting, a flexible, nebulous concept mediated by history, sustained through discourse and supported by apparatuses. Power is embodied and enacted, not possessed. This is motivating.

Colin Gordon edited a defining collection of selected interviews and other writings by Michel Foucault titled *Power/Knowledge*. On the last page of his afterword he writes the following passage which complicates our understandings of Foucault's thoughts on power and resistance:

There is a different kind of challenge which might be considered here: what if instead of stigmatizing the unacceptable in order to supplant it by the acceptable, one were to call in question the very rationality which grounds the establishment of a regime of acceptability and the programmatic logic whereby the 'unacceptable' is regularly restored to the 'acceptability' of a norm? It is at the points where the role of a whole species of rationality and the status of a whole regime of truth can be made to open itself to interrogation that the possibility of a profounder logic of revolt may begin to emerge.

(Gordon, 258)

This quote suggests that rather than looking to replace an oppressive regime with a "freer," liberatory one, a "profounder logic of revolt" may appear when we move away from all-encompassing ideas on truth or "freedom," and instead question the way that power and knowledge are produced in society.

Foucault's methods of understanding power initially seem to only reinforce the pervasiveness of it and how each sphere of the world, from small communities to societies or countries, create their own oppressive power/knowledge regimes. It may seem pessimistic when

considering potentials for resistance. However if we can begin to understand the ways in which power is constructed socially and is not an unforgiving truth, we can also begin to understand ways to adjust our current systems, such as the NGO. We may not immediately reach an “acceptable,” or perfect version of justice. In fact, we will most definitely not, according to Foucault. If we approach these issues from a more realistic framework, we can aspire to create social transformation and potentially rewrite the negative connotations of power in order to reclaim it.

PART II: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Spivak is an Indian scholar, literary theorist, feminist critic and radical thinker. She has been largely influenced by Michel Foucault among other theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Karl Marx and Edward Said. At the core of Spivak's approach is a field called "Subaltern studies." Subaltern studies is a key component of postcolonialism. The concept of the "subaltern" has roots in Antonio Gramsci's writing on agrarian peasant workers with weak socio-political consciousness, but it has transformed drastically through the retrieval of the term by the Subaltern Studies group in India, who use it to talk about rural Indian resistance to British colonial rule. Spivak has re-molded the discussion of the subaltern farther yet, by emphasizing the gendered nature of the subaltern and highlighting its transferability to other countries throughout the Global South. (*Can the Subaltern Speak?*, 78)

Spivak considers the "subaltern" as "the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat" (*Can the Subaltern speak?*, 78). Although this definition is all-too-often reduced to read as "rural and illiterate women and men of the Global South," Spivak urges her readers not to reduce the subaltern to a certain demographic; it is more than that. Spivak thinks about the subaltern in terms of position; the spaces cut off from social mobility: "situations in which when resistance is performed there is no infrastructure to produce recognition" (*Resistance*, 72). She explains:

Subalternity is not a pathetic thing about subaltern folk. It is a description of a political or social position. The subaltern speaks for themselves. So what is the difference between them and any other human beings? ... the problem is not located in their being deprived

of interior life but in having the access to the public sphere so that their resistance can be recognized as such. (“Resistance”, 73)

The subaltern is not recognizable within the public sphere. Spivak clarifies her use of the word “silence” to describe this process done to the subaltern: “between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization.” The values of Eurocentric, Enlightenment discourse exclude the subaltern so that they experience “a violent aporia between subject and object status” (Can the Subaltern Speak?, 306).

It is imperative to note this dynamic of blockages between the subaltern and the so-called “public sphere,” when considering the transnational NGO. Spivak speaks more directly to the NGO than Foucault and she is highly doubtful about its potential to impact for ethical change. In her book *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak describes the “highly gendered and self-styled International Civil Society,” or the “positive name for that which is not the state (nongovernmental)” (31). Spivak’s methodology is especially advantageous when considering divisions between NGOs and the communities which they purport to “serve,” as well as the ways in which the NGO sustains the status quo. The people and places implicated in NGOs’ projects (i.e. those affected by changes implemented by the NGO), are often not included, considered or understood in processes of strategizing for change. The subaltern is cut off for various reasons, including but not limited to, an inability to write or speak in the Eurocentric modes of communication, an absence of an invitation to communicate at all, or a general un-welcome-ness and lack of historic presence within the “public sphere.” Due to the valuation of Eurocentric,

liberal, Enlightenment knowledge, the subaltern is denied the opportunity for communication or potential to be understood by those running the NGO.

There will always be force and violence at work in all subaltern/non-subaltern relationships, but through Spivak's subaltern studies we may also begin to encounter potentials to leave behind violent practices and embrace ethical social change to apply to the current NGO model. Spivak pushes us to reimagine communication and understanding between the subaltern and the "public sphere." She urges us to imagine a non-Eurocentric world; thinking beyond Western, liberal, capitalistic frameworks which ostracize the subaltern, and she finds it crucial to move toward a world in which the subaltern does not accept subalternity as normality. In the context of the NGO, this would require breaking free from that which perpetuates the status quo and does not address historic patterns of inequity and injustice, leading to a questioning of the entire premise of charitable or philanthropic "giving" as normal. How could this hierarchical relationship give subalterns traction *and* center them within the public sphere? Additionally, Spivak encourages practices of accountability and responsibility between non-subalterns and the subaltern other (Death of a Discipline, 69).

By understanding the subaltern methodology, we may begin to promote inclusive spaces in the world, where the subaltern is heard and their resistance *is* recognized. Spivak wants to locate the agency of the subaltern. She probes her reader: *Does the subaltern possess agency? "Can the subaltern speak?"* In the end, this may very well be an unanswerable question, but Spivak pushes for finding ways to foster more opportunities for agency. In addition to a Foucauldian analysis, Subaltern studies will serve as the second methodology for my investigation into and critique of the NGO.

CHAPTER 5: CRITIQUES

PART I: Foucault

NGO as *Dispositif*

Foucauldian thought provides an important lens to understand the NGO world, through his concept of *dispositif*. There has been ample debate around the use of the term itself, in French: “dispositif,” which is often translated to “apparatus,” in English. Many theorists believe that this translation loses some meaning of the term. Dispositifs, or apparatuses, can also be thought of as structures or formations, which guide and shape our entire society as we know it.

As described in Chapter 4, Foucault describes the *dispositif* as a thoroughly heterogenous set of elements, or the network established between those elements, including discourses, institutions, architectural forms, laws and so on. He summarizes the term as “a kind of a formation, so to speak, that at a given historical moment has as its major function the response to an urgency” (Gordon, 194). Foucault returns to the language of strategy and function, explaining that:

The apparatus is essentially of a *strategic* nature, which means assuming that it is a matter of a certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilizing them, utilising them, etc. The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue from it but, to an equal degree, condition it.

(Gordon, 196)

Foucault is most well known for his examination of power in its inextricable tie to knowledge, demonstrated through his joint concept of the power/knowledge regime. Most important to note is that Foucault acknowledges that the apparatus is always inscribed in power and knowledge

relations, conditioned by the power/knowledge regime, but without completely controlling the population or allowing no room for the possibility of personal freedom within the system. He uses words such as “develop,” “block,” “stabilize,” and “utilize,” to verify this point. Foucault abridges the lengthy definitions with a succinct statement: “This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge” (Gordon, 196).

Giorgio Agamben provides a helpful synopsis of what he finds to be the three most important points from this interview in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*:

- a. It is a heterogenous set that includes virtually anything, linguistic and nonlinguistic, under the same heading: discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on. The apparatus itself is the network that is established between these elements.
- b. The apparatus always has a concrete strategic function and is always located in a power relation.
- c. As such, it appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge. (Agamben, 3)

The apparatus is a mechanism for directing and dividing bodies. Institutions such as prisons and insane asylums are examples of apparatuses. As are schools or the college application process. Apparatuses direct our every move, every day. They become invisible in their ubiquity, and they function within the “general body economy.” The modern knowledge/power regime dictates what the body should do, creating a general body economy. This concept riffs off of the classical definition of economy used by theorists such as Marx. To Foucault, the surveilling of one’s body is even more powerful than the coercion of state apparatuses.

Dispositif is a useful way to consider how the nonprofit has come to surveil the world of social change. The NGO surveils the way that change is made, through its reiterated structure.

One example of this surveillance would be the Board of Directors, who affect the decisions that are made, projects funded and ultimately what social change is (or is not) impacted. Sometimes the NGO operates in conjunction with the state, but most often it operates outside of state apparatuses, surveilling individuals as well as enforcing self surveillance within the structure. People working within the nonprofit participate in self-surveillance and this process is best described through Foucault's "panopticon."

The panopticon is an industrial design for a prison in which the prisoners' cells are located in a stadium-style ring surrounding a guard tower. This design is constructed so that "prisoners, knowing that a guard might be watching at any time, would protect themselves by policing their own behavior, whether or not a guard is actually watching" (Parker, 272). Prisoners internalize the rules of the prison and begin to surveil themselves to avoid punishment. Foucault argues that modern society functions like the panopticon. Subjects in modern society are compared to the prisoners of the panopticon, constantly surveilling their own bodies. Furthermore, subjects are not people or individuals; they are not free. Alternatively, subjects are effects of power; places where discourses come together.

Self-surveillance is particularly dangerous because subjects may not (most likely will not) realize the force relations at work from the power/knowledge regime. For the panopticon to function, self-surveillance becomes second nature. Foucault says we take these apparatuses and surveillance for granted. More significantly, we "suppose that they come from our own thinking" (Parker, 270). Surveillance and self-surveillance not only direct our actions, but lead subjects to believe that they are making independent choices. Every subject in modern society is affected by this surveillance and self-surveillance of the body. Changemakers partake in processes of self-surveillance. Those employed within the nonprofit apparatus constantly self-surveil, which

directs the ideas in which they put forward, how radical they are, the language they use, which of their projects they decide to work on, and so forth. But there are clear external processes of surveillance in the nonprofit dispositif as well, which are also often linked to other dispositifs. A clear example of this is the professionalization of the nonprofit.

Throughout the past few decades the nonprofit has become “professionalized,” excluding certain individuals from the apparatus and tightening the modes of participation in social movements. Those who do not have college degrees in social service or nonprofit management will not be taken seriously in an interview. Those who do not have the time or resources to volunteer or serve on a board simply do not. Capitalism has informed the transition from working toward social change out of necessity or passion to where it could become a profession at all. This explains how the professionalization of the nonprofit has also become linked to the apparatus of the University. INCITE! explains this as the linking between the Nonprofit Industrial Complex and the Academic Industrial Complex.

From this bridging, the University profits off a new line of work which used to exist outside this dispositif. The normalization of these linked processes of surveillance can be dangerous and a threat to freedom because people take this arrangement of social change as not only normal, but their personal choice. Especially for young college students graduating now, it is not clear the other ways in which social change can occur and has occurred. It proves difficult to think outside the dominant narratives of the apparatus. Agamben comments on this ubiquity of the apparatus and its methods of surveillance in the 21st century. He says:

It would probably not be wrong to define the extreme phase of capitalist development in which we live as a massive accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses. It is clear that ever since Homo sapiens first appeared, there have been apparatuses; but we could say

that today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus. (Agamben, 15)

Agamben more directly questions this proliferation of apparatuses, asking, “in what way, then, can we confront this situation, what strategy must we follow in our everyday hand-to-hand struggle with apparatuses? What we are looking for is neither simply to destroy them nor, as some naively suggest, to use them in the correct way” (Agamben, 15). Agamben pushes us to wonder what the active critic or activist can do in order to not just go along with the omnipresence of apparatuses, simply allowing them to surveil us in our day to day lives. How to confront and struggle with the apparatus is not a simple question and it is one that I will return to throughout this work.

Due to the proliferation of dispositifs such as the NGO or the University, it would be naïve to suggest to completely destroy them; we cannot suddenly terminate a network of all-encompassing, established apparatuses, and if we could it would leave many people in critical, unstable positions. Based on Foucault’s ideas on the instability of power, it seems that wherever there is power there is potential for resistance. Because power is nonsingular, exercised through the convergence of many elements, it is unstable. If a subject becomes aware of their subjectification and therefore lack of freedom and choice, they may actually then be able to resist from within the apparatus. Agamben speaks to this same point:

The problem of the profanation of apparatuses – that is to say, the restitution to common use of what has been captured and separated in them – is, for this reason, all the more urgent. But this problem cannot be properly raised as long as those who are concerned with it are unable to intervene in their own processes of subjectification, any more than in

their own apparatuses, in order to then bring light to the Ungovernable, which is the beginning and, at the same time, the vanishing point of every politics.” (Agamben, 24)

The “Ungovernable” here may indicate that which is not so easily subjected to the surveillance of the *dispositif*. If we begin to understand the ways in which apparatuses surveil and reinforce processes of self-surveillance, we may begin to encounter freedom. Becoming aware of our subjectification may then in turn be tied to freedom.

Foucault’s “*dispositif*” complements an analysis of the NGO quite soundly. The nonprofit and nongovernmental organization are apparatuses, formations or structures, satisfying the three points of the Foucauldian theory underlined by Agamben. The NGO is a network or heterogeneous set, which has a concrete strategic function: to surveil and enforce self-surveillance, shaping and limiting the ways in which people organize and make change and ultimately narrowing the horizons of possibilities for change. The NGO is located within the nexus of power and knowledge, surveilling social transformation through and through. This surveillance is fortified further by the following topic of analysis: the discursive regime of the NGO.

The NGO's Discursive Regime

The NGO as apparatus is supported through the discursive power/knowledge regime. Discourse shapes and complements the processes of surveillance in a modern power/knowledge relation. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Foucault defines discourse as “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them,” and clarifies that “discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern” (Weedon, 108). There is discourse created and maintained *within* the power/knowledge regime of the NGO: between employees and board members, relating to processes of professionalization, as well as between the NGO and its clients. Discourses of “development,” and “poverty,” for instance, shape the seeming *necessity* for the nonprofit model, but also the ways in which actions are carried out *by* the nonprofit.

Lakshman Yapa's article *How the discipline of geography exacerbates poverty in the Third World* is extremely useful in demonstrating this point on the role that discourse plays in sustaining the status quo. Generally, Yapa discusses how “conventional wisdom informs us that poverty represents a lack of development,” and so “naturally, economic development is seen as the answer to the problem” (33). Yapa argues instead that “poverty is a form of scarcity induced by the very process of development” and that “the materiality of the poverty problem does not exist independent of discourses we have constructed to understand it” (33).

Yapa says:

Poverty is a concept that is a discursive aggregation of a series of specific material conditions such as lack of adequate food, housing, clothing, and so on. Instead of asking

the question “Why are poor people poor?” it is better to ask why do particular groups in specific places experience hunger, homelessness, etc. The answers to the latter question are very different from those to the question “why does poverty exist.” (36)

Yapa goes further to point out the harm that is being done by continuing these discursive exercises:

First, by partitioning the world’s people into two sectors – those who are poor and non-poor, we are prevented from seeing the role the non-poor play in creating conditions of material scarcity for the poor ... Second, having created the binary of the poor and non-poor, the latter is held up as a standard for the poor to emulate. There are serious ecological limits that prevent the majority of the world’s poor from ever attaining the consumerist life-styles of the affluent. (36)

Not only is development discourse a causative agent of poverty for Yapa, but it also limits us from seeing other creative ways of addressing the issues we are confronting.

Yapa concludes that “social science could not simply mirror a pre-given world, because the world is constructed by what science describes” (44). If NGOs continue to construct narratives on helping communities that are “underdeveloped,” “disadvantaged,” or “in need of service,” this discourse sustains the need for the apparatus. It also shapes the power/knowledge regime of the NGO and therefore how the organization executes force relations between employees, Board Members, advisors and donors, volunteers and most notably the NGO’s clients.

Rather than focusing on connections made within and among communities, or placing significance on nonhierarchical learning and communication, the apparatus of the NGO creates and maintains discourse on “serving,” “helping,” “aiding,” and “developing” the poor and

underdeveloped. This occurs on international and national levels alike. This exercise of force relations is highlighted by the exclusion of the subaltern, especially within the “International Civil Society.” Spivak’s analysis of the NGO will help to understand the ways in which it excludes the subaltern and privileges the discursive regime of the non-subaltern.

PART II: SPIVAK

Spivak's Critiques on Self-Styled International Civil Society

The following quote, first partially introduced in the Spivak methodology section in Chapter 3, is integral in understanding the various parts of Spivak's philosophies on the NGO. In her book *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak says:

Today, with the highly gendered and self-styled International Civil Society – the positive name for that which is *not* the state (*nongovernmental*) – it can perhaps be advanced that inserting women into the question of institutionalized friendship (“democracy” – as the code name for the political restructuring entailed by the transformation of [efficient through inefficient to wild] state capitalisms and their colonies to tributary economies of rationalized global financialization) is leading to consequences seemingly as predictable as electronic databasing can make them: impatient philanthropy caught in organizational priorities rather than continuing hands-on engagements that would allow nonhierarchical understanding to develop; intervention into cultural systems in the mere name of ‘woman.’ The United Nations in its contemporary formation operates as and gives shelter to the International Civil Society – the forum of NGOs.” (31)

This is a lengthy, complex contemplation of the NGO. In brief, Spivak believes that the realm of the *nongovernmental*, or, the network of transnational NGOs, props up the imposition of Western, neoliberal democracy throughout the world in the name of “human rights,” leading to capitalistic sculpting of social movements and furthering the hegemonic, colonial order of the global society. There is a lot to be unearthed within this quote, so I will consider each thought individually to better understand her impression of the NGO and International Civil Society.

“International Civil Society” is what Spivak describes as the “positive name for that which is *not* the state (*nongovernmental*).” This can be thought of as an immense network of nongovernmental groups and organizations working together transnationally to improve the livelihood of the worlds’ citizens. It has been widely debated whether or not this network works in contrast with the Western, neoliberal democratization of the Global South. Spivak consistently takes a strong stance on the matter, discussing the ways in which International Civil Society intervenes in countries throughout the Global South in the name of “women,” “human rights,” and/or “democracy.” Although NGOs often claim to be working on behalf of their subaltern clients, they offer a narrow avenue of support in terms of social change. These opportunities are highly focused on “democracy,” attained solely by access to voting rights. Although NGOs may not work *for* the state, this is an example of how they work in tandem *with* the state, or to the benefit *of* the state. Ruth Wilson Gilmore describes this effect in her chapter *In the Shadow of the Shadow State*.

Jennifer Wolch first developed the concept of the “shadow state,” or the “contemporary rise of the voluntary sector that is involved in direct social services previously provided by wholly public New Deal/Great Society agencies.” Gilmore explains that, “to do business with the state, the organizations had to be formally incorporated, so they became non-profits. Thus, for different reasons, non-profits stepped up to fill a service void” (INCITE!, 45). Gilmore addresses the shadow state through a particular lens of the Nonprofit Industrial Complex, explaining its tight relationship with the Prison and Military Industrial Complexes. Her expansion on the topic lies in the extension of this metaphor to encompass “the grassroots groups that have formally joined the third sector,” which is neither state nor business, “in the shadow of the shadow state.”

In short, even more community-based organizations that lack 501(c)(3) status work under state surveillance, through the shadow of the “shadow state,” or the official Nonprofit.

William E. DeMars supports Gilmore’s theory, bringing it to a wider, international context in his book *NGOs and Transnational Networks: Wild Cards in World Politics*. DeMars describes the proliferation of NGOs throughout the twentieth century as the “NGO bloom,” which has three dimensions:

First, NGOs are proliferating quantitatively in established issue-areas, including human rights, feminism, population control, conflict resolution and prevention, and democratization. Second, the increase in NGO numbers is a global phenomenon affecting all regions, even Asia and the Middle East where governments have maintained relatively tight control over civil society for decades. Third, NGOs are also proliferating qualitatively, by taking the initiative to colonize or create new issues where hitherto they have exerted limited influence. (34)

Furthermore, DeMars says that the “NGO bloom, in all its dimensions, constitutes a problem for government policymakers everywhere, because the very presence of NGOs alters the context for government policy.” (34) Ultimately, DeMars’ structural theory “portrays NGOs not only as agents of social and political action, but also as constituting the structure of international relations at three levels: the micro-level of individual NGOs, the mid-level of the country or regional network, and the macro-level of the international system. The impact of NGOs goes far beyond success or failure in achieving their official goals.” (61) Gilmore and DeMars offer explanations which deepen our understanding of how the proliferation of the NGO has altered state relations in the 21st century.

Spivak has expanded upon this connection to the state and its efforts to disperse neoliberal democracies globally, as well as the ways that this process is highly gendered. The following quote of Spivak's on the matter has been debated fervently:

This NGOization of the antiviolence movements is also actively exported to other countries, following a model Gayatri Spivak calls [white men] 'saving brown women from brown men' which tends to pathologize communities in the Third World for their 'backward' attitudes toward women. The goal becomes to 'save' Third World women from the extreme patriarchy in their community without looking at how patriarchy is connected to white supremacy and colonialism. Thus, for instance, mainstream feminism groups will support the bombing in Afghanistan to save Afghan women from the Taliban as if US empire actually liberates women. (INCITE!, 11)

This quote is contentious, particularly in its reference to "white men," as this really intends to describe the Western, neoliberal, imperial figure's role in colonial patterns (not always "white," or "male"). What Spivak purports to do here is call out the hypocrisies of NGOs intervening on behalf of the name of "women's rights," while denying its own historic role in the oppression of Third World peoples, specifically women. This is also encompassed in her reference to "inserting women into the question of institutionalized friendship," in the first quote.

In this same quote, Spivak calls democracy the "code name for the political restructuring entailed by the transformation of ... state capitalisms and their colonies to tributary economies of rationalized global financialization" (Death of a Discipline, 38). Unrest equals revolution for the West, and revolution translates as a threat to liberal democracy. On the other hand, neoliberalism supposedly leads to individual freedoms and democracy, for the West. "Democracy," becomes a justification for any type of interference deemed necessary. There was an increase in this form of

transnational NGO intervention following the 911 attacks and the beginning of the war on terror. Following her discussion of “democracy,” which she poignantly calls “institutionalized friendship,” she discusses the “consequences” of these interlocking systems.

Spivak concludes this thought on global NGO culture by ruminating on the consequences, which manifest in “impatient philanthropy caught in organizational priorities rather than continuing hands-on engagements that would allow nonhierarchical understanding to develop.” All of these factors are results of the professionalization and free-market capitalistic surveillance of the nonprofit, encouraged by neoliberal politics. Professionalization is reflected organizationally through the Board of Directors; the creation of the CEO; the sliding pay scale. Spivak also critiques “impatient philanthropy,” speaking to the way that the nonprofit conceptualizes “success.” NGOs work toward deliverables, due dates, annual reports and targets. Rushing to complete a constricted project by a certain due date does not support long term, sustainable change. Making these “successes” presentable, palatable and understandable to Board members and donors takes time and energy, which detracts from the efforts and time put toward organizing and community building.

While NGO employees are caught up in bureaucratic obstacles and achievements, the “clients,” are forgotten. Appealing to funders means presenting less radical ideas and then foundations and donors end up dictating the movement, rather than responding to it. This model not only creates competition among NGOs who must specify their distinct causes, diverging from one another to secure support, but it also reinforces a hierarchical order of operations. NGOs reinforce hierarchical command chains, not only within the organization, but between them and their clients. This is all part of Western, neoliberal, capitalistic surveillance of the

nonprofit in which the “client,” is not included or centered in the methods of change that will ultimately affect them.

Spivak states that “*The United Nations in its contemporary formation operates as and gives shelter to the International Civil Society – the forum of NGOs.*” She claims that the “forum of NGOs” protects and continues this exclusion of the subaltern. Janet M. Conway’s considerations of the World Social Forum will allow more exploration into the previously mentioned, ongoing debate on the role and work of the International Civil Society.

The World Social Forum and International Civil Society

Janet M. Conway wrestles with the concept of International Civil Society in her book *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and its 'others'* comparing the “easy fit between the global neoliberal agenda and its celebration of civil society and its non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as alternatives to state projects for democracy and development,” on the one hand, balanced by the notion of civil society “as a privileged locus of resistance and democratic and/or anti-capitalist struggle,” catalyzed specifically by the resistance to neoliberal democratization in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s (69). Conway examines Civil Society through the lens of the World Social Forum (WSF), which was first held in Brazil in 2001, described as an annual global convergence of activists, NGOs, and other formal and informal social movements to discuss strategies and build alternatives to neoliberalism and hegemonic globalization. The WSF was produced in direct contrast to the World Economic Forum, which meets annually in Davos, Switzerland around the same time of year. This global convergence aims to create international solidarity within this “global civil society,” while emphasizing the importance of grassroots organizing and building movements against war, poverty and environmental degradation. (World Social Forums)

Conway’s overarching thesis in *Edges of Global Justice* is:

The World Social Forum is a product and an expression of the emancipatory traditions of Western modernity. It is a site for the contentious interplay of liberalisms, socialisms, anarchisms, and feminisms under historically new conditions of global network society, aggressive neoliberal capitalist expansion, and neo-imperialist violence in the name of anti-terrorism. With the appearance of the World Social Forum, we see a new modality of

the political that breaks in significant ways with modern rationalities on the left and is transformative for its participating movements. (Conway, 2)

Conway weighs two sides of the same coin in this passage.

Conway elaborates on how subaltern movements have been “impressing themselves on the terrain of the global justice movements through the World Social Forum process,” while “their partial and contradictory incorporation in the WSF reveals the thoroughly modernist character of the global justice project as one interpolated with coloniality, and which demands that its subjects express themselves in the form and grammar of modern politics in order to be rendered legible to ‘global civil society’” (Conway, 2). The author thus brings to light the ways in which subaltern social forces have altered hegemonic, colonial patterns of social change within the global civil society, yet also are consistently misunderstood within this context of a “global convergence,” even as it claims to be an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate and a free exchange of experiences and ideas. Conway’s conclusion of her thesis is uncertain. She says, “to the extent that the encounter with both lived subalternity and cosmological difference is allowed to disrupt and remake the World Social Forum, it will continue to be at the leading edges of the reinvention of global justice; but at the moment,” she says, “this is an open question.” (Conway, 2)

Since its inception there have been complaints about the World Social Forum and its hypocrisies, especially of excluding the subaltern. Although non-subaltern cultures often permeate subaltern cultures, the reverse is rarely true, and there is no exception of this at the WSF. In Nairobi in 2007, spokesperson Wangui Mbatia expressed conflicting emotions on the subject:

What I like about the WSF is that it brings the world to me as a Kenyan poor person: not only the world but the best of the world ... I am concerned that there are many Kenyans [who] have not been able to attend the WSF. We have had to come every single morning to get those doors open so that ordinary Kenyan citizens can attend the WSF. We believe the WSF is a conversation by, between, and amongst people. It is not fair that 90 per cent of the people in the rooms are not Kenyans. That is not just ... But we are not just fighting to get in: we are fighting to be recognized because we are people too. (Conway, 56)

Four years later, a spokesperson in Dakar echoed similar sentiments and concerns as Mbatia's, asking why the room was "not full of poor people from the region rather than foreigners." (Conway, 56)

Complaints among localized subaltern groups have only grown as the WSF has relocated each year. These complaints often focus on the economic marginalization of the subaltern; the exclusion from accessing the forum and therefore organizing or participating actively in political processes which paradoxically claim to *center* them. Conway says "The struggle to defend and protect the WSF as open space, and as an open-ended experiment in producing a new culture of politics, is indicative of the depth of crisis on the traditional left, the intensity of the search for new modes of politics, and the persistence of its forms of thought, conceptions of power, and practices of the political." (63) While the WSF struggles with issues of misinterpretation, exclusion and possibly even exploitation of the subaltern, it struggles to maintain its image of supporting an open global society. The term civil society captures the horizontal association among those bodies in support of the Forum's principles, but, "in practice, those who are formally constituted as civil society organizations or networks with staffs and budgets have

disproportionate capacity to organize constituencies and mount events and to participate in the governance bodies of the WSF” (Conway, 87). Once again, we see how the WSF prioritizes the non-subaltern’s access to resources, therefore giving them more of a platform to shape change.

Conway is not completely pessimistic about the WSF and International Civil Society, however. She notes that:

The forum, its constitutive movements, their plural discourses and practices are simultaneously within, beyond, and outside the conceptual confines of global/civil society. Simply by overflowing it, the WSF disrupts the liberal paradigm. The irruption of alterity that the WSF is enabling, is provoking critical dialogue across modern emancipatory/subaltern divides, however uneven, imperfectly, and problematically...

Here, we are at the edge of global justice. (Conway, 90)

Conway’s use of word “edge” echoes Spivak’s thoughts on the ways in which the subaltern is “cut off” from the public sphere. Sometimes this cutting off of the subaltern is challenged in the WSF, but often is it upheld. Although the World Social Forum and its network of transnational Nonprofits, social movements and grassroots organizations combat hegemonic, international power/knowledge regimes of social change, this movement lies at the “edge of global justice,” continuing to struggle with full integration and understanding of the subaltern.

Conway’s thoughts on the WSF and International Civil Society supplement Spivak’s views on the NGO and democracy. In the following section I discuss the question of freedom and its potentials within the apparatus of the NGO. Spivak and Foucault converge in this final section of this chapter on Critiques, as I grapple with the neoliberal capitalist expansion, neo-imperialist violence and the limitations on freedom.

**Limits to Freedom? *Neoliberal Capitalist Expansion and Exploitation; Neo-Imperialist
Violence and Imposition***

Spivak is a Marxist, but not a traditional one. Marxism arose from the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the mid-19th century which, in most basic terms, defined societal struggle in terms of class divisions. According to classic Marxism, oppression arises from capitalism and its separation of workers from the products that they make. Spivak wrestles with Marxist ideas in a contemporary framework, centering arguments on capital in the context of the era of globalization and the spread of neoliberalism. Capitalism, for Spivak, particularly exploits the subaltern while also playing part in cutting them off from public spaces. It becomes clear throughout the various interpretations of the NGO that it is a symptom of much larger systems: neoliberal capitalist expansion and neo-imperialist violence.

I mentioned in the previous chapters the ways in which the nonprofit has been directly tied to capitalist and “for profit,” motivations since its inception. The tax exempt status of the 501(c)(3) in the United States was created alongside the creation of the income tax. This corruption of the tax exempt incentive has been critiqued for decades. Gilmore describes private American foundations as “repositories of twice-stolen wealth,” clarifying that they are, “(a) profit sheltered from (b) taxes – that can be retrieved by those who stole it at the opera or at the museum, at Harvard or a fine medical facility,” (INCITE!, 46). It is also important to note that large-scale profit is only attainable through large-scale exploitation. Corporations exploit their workers and then protect that profit through privately created foundations or donations. That money is “given back,” to society and in doing so, the exploited workers themselves. Others call the tax exempt status a process of “stealing public monies,” which should have been taxed and immediately put toward the public benefit, rather than protected and dispersed at a slow rate.

Additionally, we see that when this money is distributed it almost always goes toward “individual relief” rather than “systemic change,” which would challenge capitalism, globalization, exploitation of land and peoples and neo-liberal, imperial imposition and violence; processes which systematically exploit and sabotage the subaltern.

Paul Kivel presents this conundrum in a chapter called *Social Services or Social Change?* Kivel asks, “can we provide social service *and* work for social change, or do our efforts to provide human services maintain or even strengthen social inequality?” (INCITE!, 129). He defines the two terms explicitly: “*Social service work* addresses the needs of individuals reeling from the personal and devastating impact of institutional systems of exploitation and violence. *Social change work* challenges the root causes of the exploitation and violence” (INCITE!, 129). Kivel critiques inequality through his analysis of the “US Economic Pyramid.” This analysis is focused on inequality in the United States, but the same effect is amplified globally.

Kivel critiques the high variation in the standard of living between those at the top of the economic pyramid, the “ruling class,” and those at the bottom, often referred to as the “working” or “lower” class. He says:

The ruling class maintains the power and money to influence, and often to determine, the decisions that affect our lives, including where jobs will be located and what kinds of jobs they will be; where environmental toxins are dumped; how much money is allocated to build schools or prisons and where they will be built; and which health care, reproductive rights, civil rights, and education issues will be discussed and who defines the terms of these discussions. (INCITE!, 132)

Kivel's criticisms of societal inequity echo earlier sentiments. He adds that nonprofits control "billions of dollars of private and government money ostensibly earmarked for the public good, but subject to virtually no public control" (INCITE!, 138).

This domination by the ruling class without public input is highlighted by a question that Brad Evans asked Spivak in a New York Times interview titled *When Law is Not Justice*. Although Evans' question sets out to investigate the curious phenomenon of celebrities and CEOs starting their own private foundations and dictating the direction of public monies without public approval, this conversation moves on to a larger discussion about freedom. This interview will be useful in the following sections considering potentials for moving forward, beyond the nonprofit, as well.

Evans asks Spivak, "What are the implications when the promotion of human rights is left to what you have called 'self-appointed entrepreneurs' and philanthropists, from individuals such as Bill Gates onto organizations like the World Bank, who have a very particular conception of rights and the 'rule of law?'" Spivak responds decidedly, stating, "It is just that there be law, but law is not justice." This scrutiny of the "law," corresponds to her earlier analyses on democracy. For Spivak, human rights is equated with the "law," also seen as the right to a vote.

Spivak explains this thought:

The passing of a law and the proof of its existence is not enough to assure effective resistance to oppression. Some of the gravest violations of rights have occurred within legal frameworks. And, if that law governs a society never trained in what Michel Foucault would call 'the practice of freedom,' it is there to be enforced by force alone,

and the ones thus forced will find better and better loopholes around it. (Evans and Spivak)

She believes that the right to a vote certainly does not ensure protection against human rights violations. Spivak mentions Foucault's "practice of freedom," simply: we are not as free as we think. If we lack awareness of our lack of freedom, then the continues to carry out force on the body without question.

Spivak continues, talking about the vitalness of the "'Intuition' of democracy ... when dealing with the poorest of the poor, groups who have come to believe their wretchedness is normal." Spivak has repeatedly discussed throughout her works how the subaltern takes their subaltern status for granted, yet they do not possess the 'intuition' of democracy, which the non-subaltern does assume and take for granted. The subaltern has learned that the state will ignore or harm them, so they doubt the state and do not participate in democracy. The subaltern knows that the state does not have their best interest at heart, and so they must *learn* what for some is an *intuition* of democracy. Spivak is an educator who works with rural, illiterate women in India. She aims to motivate the subaltern to not accept subalternity. Spivak speaks to education as she continues answering Evans' question:

We have this glamorization of urban poverty by the wealthier philanthropist and aid agencies. There is always a fascination with the picture-perfect idea of poverty; children playing in open sewers and the rest of it. Of course, such lives are proof of grave social injustice. But top-down philanthropy, with no interest in an education that strengthens the soul, is counterproductive, an assurance that there will be no future resistance, only instant celebrity for the philanthropist. (Evans and Spivak)

She then returns to the particulars of question posed, while also somewhat summing up her thoughts:

I say ‘self-appointed’ entrepreneurs because there is often little or no regulation placed upon workers in the nongovernmental sector. At best, they are ad hoc workers picking up the slack for a neo-liberal state whose managerial ethos cannot be strong on redistribution,, and where structural constitutional resistance by citizens cannot be effective in the face of an unconstituted ‘rule of law’ operating, again, to protect the efficiency of global capital growth. The human rights lobby moves in to shame the state, and in ad hoc ways restores rights. But there is then no democratic follow-up, and these organizations rarely stick around long enough to see that. (Evans and Spivak)

Spivak is talking about many of the issues within the NGO, honing in again on the issue of “rights,” better read as voting rights. She declares that NGOs have no sense of local contexts of clients’ communities and what they want. The imposition of the “rule of law,” is to protect globalism, neoliberalism and capitalism. When there is no regard for the effects of this imposition, how can it really be named democracy? Who benefits? According to Spivak it’s the Western, neoliberal state; not the subaltern.

Evans apparently short question brought about a verbose answer from Spivak that highlighted many of her critiques on capitalism’s clasp on change and the nonprofit. She adds to this topic by saying:

Another problem with these organizations is the way they emphasize capitalism’s social productivity without mentioning capital’s consistent need to sustain itself at the expense of curtailing the rights of some sectors of the population. This is all about the removal of access to structures of reparation: the disappearance of the welfare state, or its not coming

into being at all. If we turn to ‘development,’ we often see that what is sustained in sustainable development is cost-effectiveness and profit-maximization, with the minimum action necessary in terms of environmental responsibility. We could call such a thing ‘sustainable underdevelopment.’ (Evans and Spivak)

Spivak’s discussion of “sustainable development,” relates back to the previous analysis of the NGO’s discursive regime, expanded on by Yapa. The discourse of “development” leads to “sustainable underdevelopment,” and the NGO sustains itself.

Spivak’s investigation into democracy begins to rupture our previous notions on the matter, in a similar way to Foucault’s wrestling with freedom through talking about surveillance and the power/knowledge regime. In Spivak’s initial response to the question on philanthropy, she mentions Foucault’s “practice of freedom.” Foucault talks a lot about the fact that people make choices thinking that they are individualized or that they are free to make them, but that really we are not free at all. In this sense, freedom is “practiced,” rather than possessed.

As the interview concludes, Spivak discusses her own visions of approximating freedom. Evans asks her, “You are clearly committed to the power of education based on aesthetic practices, yet you want to challenge the canonical Western aesthetic ideas from which they are derived using your concepts of ‘imaginative activism’ and ‘affirmative sabotage.’ How can this work?” She answers:

So this is how one sabotages. You accept the unbelievable and unrelenting brilliance of Kant’s work, while confronting the imperial qualities he reproduces and showing the contradictions in this work. It is, in effect, to jolt philosophy with a reality check. It is to ask, for example, if this second-naturing of women, servants and others can be done without coercion, constraint and brainwashing. And, when the ruling race or class claims

the right to do this, is there a problem of power being ignored in all their claimed benevolence? What would educated resistance look like in this case? It would misfire, because society is not ready for it. For that reason, one must continue to work — to quote Marx — for the possibility of a poetry of the future. (Evans and Spivak)

Spivak returns to this idea of society not knowing it is not free. If people were aware that they were being made into a subject without force, it would lead to a revolution. But currently, we are denied this education, or “educated resistance,” as she calls it: the process of becoming aware of our own subjectification. Spivak makes a pretty radical claim here: society is not ready to become aware of their lack of personal freedom and choice. This may explain why the NGO continues to operate in such a totalizing style. It would be too much to understand the scale in which we are surveilled and the ways in which we are denied freedom.

Spivak references her own answer to an earlier question from the interview, in which she explains the lack of agency often experienced by the subaltern, leading to violence as resistance. She says:

When human beings are valued as less than human, violence begins to emerge as the only response. When one group designates another as lesser, they are saying the “inferior” group cannot think in a “reasonable” way. It is important to remember that this is an intellectual violation ... it is not that people are denied agency; it is rather that an unreasonable or brutish type of agency is imposed on them ... The oppressed, for their part, have been left with only one possible identity, which is one of violence. That becomes their politics and it appropriates their intellect. (Evans and Spivak)

Spivak advocates for working to counter this “appropriation of intellect” and the narrowing of possibilities for resistance, in order to reclaim non-imposed agency.

Foucault is often questioned for his lack of discussion on agency. He does address agency when discussing the discursive regime, though. In an interview titled *An Aesthetics of Existence*, he explains how one must discover their lack of agency to reclaim it: “One did not suggest what people ought to be, what they ought to do, what they ought to think and believe. It was a matter of showing how social mechanisms up to now have been able to work ... and then, starting from there, one left to the people themselves, knowing all the above, the possibility of self-determination and the choice of their own existence” (“An Aesthetics of Existence”). Spivak and Foucault unite on this point. They both think it necessary for the individual to become educated on their lack of freedom to move toward a possession of agency outside imposed agency, or the options given by the state. Spivak’s ideas on educated resistance and Foucault’s thoughts on agency will guide us into the next two chapters, which describe methods to struggle for agency within an apparatus-dominated era and inspiring examples of organizations and movements operating outside the NGO model.

CHAPTER 6:

STRUGGLING FOR AGENCY: *Approximating Freedom*

As suggested throughout this analysis, there is no simple “fix,” to the issues with the NGO, nonetheless the proliferation of apparatuses, the modern power/knowledge regime or attempting to make social change in or outside of the state. There is not one clear “problem” we are grappling with here and therefore this section does not present a “solution.” In the previous section I analyzed the NGO as dispositif and its discursive regime, the concept of international civil society and neoliberal, capitalist, imperialist impositions on freedom. Although there may not be one solution for these immense issues, in this chapter I present ideas on potentials and possibilities to struggle for new modes of agency, approximations of freedom and future change.

Rather than perpetuating the NGO’s discursive regime we must develop ways to work together as communities and attack systemic injustices. We must reject corporate models and capitalistic shaping of the nonprofit world and instead embrace structures which reflect the world we want to live in. More people have to be involved in decision making processes in order for change to be sustainable; this calls for collaboration between organizations rather than competition among them, and a need for listening to the subaltern or any community members implicated in change-making processes. We must get rid of our reliance on strictly-controlled foundation funding as a “necessary evil,” and consider new ways of resourcing movements. We have to confront our lack of freedom, specifically from the high level of State surveillance, to be able to begin considering ways to think outside of the state or to disrupt the ruling class’ direction of society.

It was noted in the previous chapter that a conceivable first step to grappling with the nonprofit or nongovernmental organization, is becoming aware of the ways in which it restricts

our freedom; how we are not really free. But it cannot stop there. In order to impact change we must consider the ways in which the power/knowledge regime benefits from separating individuals from themselves and from others through surveillance and self-surveillance. Historically, change happens when people work together. Capitalism divides us, not only making us devote time and energy to production, but also making us think that we are choosing this lifestyle. This may come in the form of realizing we are not free at not only an individual level, but a communal one.

Another way in which we need to work collectively is highlighted by the necessity of nonhierarchical organization. This is a tough convention to undo and requires an undoing of the corporate model of the 501(c)(3) and the NGO, which arranges the Board of Directors and funders above its employees, as well as hierarchies within employee valuation governed by pay scales, followed by clients at the bottom of the food chain with little possibility of directing the change that involves them. We must reject the professionalization of the nonprofit and value knowledge outside of the dispositive of the University. This means a valuation of indigenous knowledge, as well as listening to and centering the subaltern and “clients.”

Another way of inspiring collectivity is through personal connection to the issues. This may come in the form of innovative funding models. In order to stop putting so much reliance on private foundations, organizations and movements have to think creatively about funding. If fundraising becomes more democratic, billionaires such as Bill Gates and George Soros will have less control of public monies. Rather than continuing to donate to these depositories of shielded wealth, the public can make donations to a community based organization. The United Farm Worker’s movement did this in the 1960’s with the creation of innovative membership

fees, and some current movements are beginning to integrate more democratic funding models into their structures now too.

Collectivity is inspired by the grassroots organization model. The issue with grassroots organizations, however, is that they are usually working at a smaller scale and it is therefore more difficult to impact larger scale change with this model. To make any sort of difference, this democratic funding model would need to involve more people. The genius of democratic funding and working collectively is that these models create “bottom up” rather than “top down” accountability. This way people have more say in how they want to shape change, there can be more voices heard and involved in decision-making and directing the movement where they want it to go for themselves. Resourcing a movement in this way would also lead to less competition between organizations for funding and therefore more collaboration.

In order to reinforce nonhierarchical organization our movements must also be accessible, in terms of location as well as financial accessibility. If there *are* membership fees, then the organization should make sure that they work for various incomes. This could be executed in the form of a sliding membership fee scale. Participation can also mean numerous things to different people, according to their commitment levels and availability. If there are options for different levels of participation than anyone interested can feel a part of the movement – not just those with college degrees or financial flexibility to not work or to comfortably donate large sums of money.

Once we start to de-professionalize our organizations we begin to notice all the other ways in which the nonprofit has been swallowed by capitalism and its tentacles. Notably, Spivak’s idea of “impatient philanthropy,” trying to meet corporate styled deliverables and deadlines, is relevant. This approach must be countered to create long-term change. If an

organization is accountable to their membership basis rather than a board, it can then start to consider what is most meaningful, not what will look pretty on a corporate slide deck. Things may still happen quickly every once in a while; a last minute strike or boycott, for example – but there would be less pressure to move away from long-term, systematic planning. This also leaves room to focus more on things like education, community development and leadership skills. Getting rid of professionalization as a basis for change will lead to less focus on salary and deliverables and more about change-making and approximating freedom as a lifestyle.

Finally, it is essential that movements have autonomy and NGOs respond *to* the movement, in support of it, rather than surveilling and directing it in every way. This change allows for more flexibility and fluidity to allow for not just social change, but social *transformation* (outside state surveillance). This shift requires a complete rethinking of what a social movement is and what it can look like.

Ultimately, potentials for struggling with the NGO means finding bottom-up accountability, working together to hold each other up. But noting that we must also educate ourselves in Foucault and Spivak's visions of education and freedom. The subaltern doesn't have the "intuition," of democracy and so it must be learned. We are bound in constant power/knowledge relations so this must be acknowledged every step of the way. We also cannot just fight for equal *access* or equal *opportunity*, we have to break down structures and systems. This includes confronting the NGO's issues. To encounter possibilities for approximating freedom it is required to confront exploitation, violence and exclusion. The next chapter is an introduction to four innovative movements that have impacted dramatic social change over the past few decades and have struggled in these ways; beyond the NGO.

CHAPTER 7: OTHER MODELS

Each year, the number of nonprofits created in the United States increases. With such a high rate of NGOs controlling change in modern society, it can be hard to think of alternatives. But for decades before the 501(c)(3) model became so standard, other methods of organization were the norm. The civil rights movement was built on the hard (unpaid) work of many people, many more than Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. The United Farm Workers Movement used democratic funding models and their work was so effective that everyone in the United States knew to not eat Delano grapes. We are living in a world dominated by globalization and capitalism now; what Marcos called the “Fourth World War.” It is a world where apparatuses direct daily life and nonprofits exist within a complex weave of networks.

I will analyze four examples of social movements in this chapter, to think about change beyond the limits of the nonprofit. These organizations have been making change over the past 30 years or so; almost always in direct combat with globalization and neoliberal, imperialist policies. I will focus three Latin American movements: the Zapatistas in Mexico, the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil and the Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina, but before we consider international movements which are uninhibited by 501(c)(3) status, I will explore an example a little closer to home. This is the important story of an organization based in New York, that claimed 501(c)(3) status and eventually rejected it: “Sista II Sista.”

SISTA II SISTA

Some organizations in the United States struggle to comply with all of the measures that accompany the acquisition of 501(c)(3) status. Others try to split their efforts and disguise their rhetoric, presenting one face to their Board of Directors and the state and another to their constituency to seem less radical or to earn funding they need. This can be exhausting and nonprofits or their employees that disintegrate from the pressure are often considered to have experienced “burn out.” A smaller group yet sometimes claim NGO status only to denounce it later on. One of those organizations is Sista II Sista (SIIS).

Nicole Burrowes, Morgan Cousins, Paula X. Rojas and Ije Ude speak to the trajectory of the organization in *On Our Own Terms: Ten Years of Radical Community Building with Sista II Sista*. Sista II Sista (SIIS) is based in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, New York and was started to support young women in developing their personal and collective power (INCITE!, 227). The authors describe how they began as a grassroots, all-volunteer organization in 1996 and remained so until 1999, when they formally incorporated as a nonprofit. They explain that their “work with young women of color is rooted in the principal of self-determination – the idea that all groups are able to identify and work toward solving their own problems ... SIIS has created an organization in which young women of color take leadership in transforming themselves and their communities” (INCITE!, 227). They take a unique approach to their work and their conception of oppression, acknowledging intersectionality as a principle that guides their work and describing the “braid of oppression composed of various strands” that poor and working-class young women of color face, such as racism, sexism and capitalism. “A braid is harder to cut than its individual strands,” they say (INCITE!, 228).

SIIS has followed an interesting and uncommon organizational trajectory. After some years as a 501(c)(3) they decided to stop pursuing foundation grants. Authors describe how:

After 9/11, foundations rapidly started moving in more conservative directions, reflecting the larger national climate. We were doing anti-war and anti-police brutality work, and some foundations found that distasteful in this new political climate ... As the political climate grew more overtly oppressive, our new and innovative ideas came to be seen as threatening and 'unfundable.' (INCITE!, 229)

SIIS was faced with a challenge, to receive funding or to continue doing the work that they set out to do. They realized that their work had not only shifted away from inspiring self-determination, but the way that they were trying to achieve their goals had shifted, too.

The organization talks about how their language had to change:

It was one thing for them to support the holistic development and empowerment of young women and quite another when they realized these young women were collectively taking action to challenge the police and other oppressive figures in their lives and community ... simultaneously, we started feeling ever more constrained by the amount of grant writing, administration, site visits, and reports required by our dependence on foundation funding. We were drained by the rejections, the waiting, and the constant explanations of our work to people who just didn't get it, yet greatly influenced its direction. Our efforts to fit SIIS's work into quantitative outcomes began to drain our energy and morale, and before long, SIIS was transformed from a labor of love to a J-O-B. An impasse was coming. (INCITE!, 229)

SIIS was tired. Tired of working within the nonprofit model; tired of having to explain their work instead of just doing it. And so they started to wonder what would happen if SIIS wasn't a

job, but returned to being a life's passion. They decided that "if self-determination is key, then we need to approach collective organizing in ways that build collective power that is truly autonomous from the state. For SIIS, this has meant returning to our origins as an all-volunteer grassroots organization" (INCITE!, 231)

And so they did the unthinkable, denouncing the 501(c)(3) status they had put in work to achieve. Most significantly, they didn't regret making this change. SIIS explains their reasoning:

There is more heart than there is cash for this work. Fighting for freedom has always been, and remains, unpaid work, regardless of what any capitalist system might tell us. Once we connect with that spirit, we will soon realize that we have always been powerful, bestowed with an untouchable wealth – something to which no amount of tracking or monitoring of our organizations will ever give them access. (INCITE!, 233)

They are not, however, unrealistic about this transition and the change it's made. They explain that things moved more slowly after the transition and that they lost some of their staff in the change. But they also discuss how their remaining leadership team stepped up, inspiring everyone involved. They add that they:

Are also not of the belief that 501(c)(3)s are bad. In our view, the problem is a lack of balance. The proliferation of 501(c)(3)s in the US has meant a decline in grassroots movement organizations, and this has definitely blunted our edge and willingness to challenge the system. We need more organizations movements that can partner and collaborate with non-profit organizations to forward their visions. (INCITE!, 233)

In addition to demonstrating an inspiring break away from the hold of the 501(c)(3) model, SIIS also offers concrete and imaginative ideas directly intended for social change organizations. The first over encompassing idea is mentioned above: a more balanced model for partnership

between NGOs and grassroots organizations. Many of SIIS's ideas, such as this one, are inspired by social movements from the Global South.

SIIS explains:

Because many of our members are immigrants or children of immigrants, we feel connected to current revolutionary struggles in Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean. Living in 'the belly of the beast,' we recognize that our role is to learn from and support the leadership of women struggling in the Global South – women who are directly confronting the intersection of sexism and racism under capitalist imperialism. (One way we try to make these direct connections and express solidarity is through the exchange and sale of crafts by various women's collectives.) Through these liberation struggles we are reminded that power does not reside only in state institutions; it also resides in communities. Our struggles must go beyond merely seeking to hold these institutions accountable and instead seek to create alternatives and put into practice how we think our communities should address violence, childcare, health care, education, and other pressing social issues. (INCITE!, 228)

SIIS also offers innovative ideas about fundraising, including throwing benefit parties and "offering one-on-one technical assistance with whatever area of focus folks identify as their priority." They talk about building solid personal donor bases and shifting community members mentality on donations. For instance, in a discussion led by INCITE!, they talk about motivating their membership to donate on an on-going basis: when you go to pay your water bill, you also pay the organization, because it is valuable (INCITE!, Audio). This involves thinking of social change as a personal investment.

SIIS also discusses an organization model they used at one point which was structured like a flower, where each petal is a different area of work, and it is important for people to rotate through each “petal.” Additionally, they found it important to have unpaid meetings to signify a larger commitment everyone was making, whether staff or volunteers. Eventually, after getting rid of their old salary structure, they continued to try and address inequalities in their payment structure. They made the salary flat, irrelevant to education or experience, but they acknowledged even after that change that this was still inequitable because not every individual supports the same size family, or comes from the same socioeconomic class background. SIIS continuously search for ways to make their movement equitable and inclusive. (INCITE! Audio)

SIIS stands out because they take a strong stance on issues in an era where foundations and NGOs talk around issues, using uncontentious language. SIIS realized after achieving 501(c)(3) status, that they could not separate the political from their vision. Their mission was political and they wanted to embrace that. In a world where nonprofits are not supposed to take part in political action, this small declaration is revolutionary. SIIS continues to push the boundaries of change in the 21st century. Even the name itself “Sista II Sista,” pushes back on hegemonic expectations of “approved” language and discourse within social change institutions. In the recorded audio cited above the women speak honestly, even code-switching between English and Spanish, which doesn’t happen often in the traditional NGO world. Like Yapa, the leaders discourage language that “disparages,” such as calling their members “disadvantaged,” or “underprivileged.” (INCITE! Audio) Sista II Sista is a leader among modern social movements, empowering a journey of self-determination. In the following section I will examine some of the previously mentioned international movements which largely inspire SIIS’s efforts.

LOOKING TO LATIN AMERICA: *The Zapatistas, the MST and the MTD*

There are many successful community-based movements that have occurred in the Global South over the past few decades that are useful in considering models for change beyond the nonprofit. I will be considering the Zapatistas in Mexico and the Landless Rural Unemployed Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, which both use NGOs to *complement* the movement in an innovative way. I will then look to the Unemployed Workers Movement (MTD) in Argentina. Paula X. Rojas, one of the authors from the SIIS chapter mentioned previously talks about each of these movements in her chapter in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, titled: *Are the cops in our heads and hearts*. Rojas is involved in changemaking in the United States with Sista II Sista and another organization called Pachamama, both of which she describes as “grassroots organizing work with a multigenerational community of poor and working-class women of color in Brooklyn.” (197) Rojas is also familiar with organizations throughout Latin America, including in Chile, her country of origin.

Rojas explains the “vision” of Latin American movements and how they embrace principles like “*autonomia* (autonomy) and *horizontalidad* (horizontalism); recognize daily life and the creation of liberated communities *as* political work; support collective, nonhierarchical decisionmaking; and aim, above all, to build a society grounded in justice and peace for all” (INCITE!, 199). Rojas introduces diverging cultural concepts on social movements between Latin America and the United States by explaining that “More than once, *compas* from Latin America have asked [her]: Why are you getting a permit from the police to protest police brutality? Why are you being paid to do organizing? Why are people’s movements based in nonprofit offices?” She emphasizes that “behind these kinds of questions are different assumptions about organizing that might challenge activists in the United States to think outside the non-

profit model.” (197) We have arrived at a moment in global history where the NGO is taken for granted despite its relative novelty. This is especially true within the United States. It only makes sense then, to look outside the country for examples of alternative organizing and change-making. First I will consider an organization that has been doing radical social change work for decades; the Mexican Zapatistas.

Ejercicio Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, México

The *Ejercicio Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), or Zapatista National Liberation Army in English, also commonly called the “Zapatistas,” are named after a well known peasant revolutionary Emiliano Zapata from the Mexican Revolution of the 20th century. The Zapatistas are based in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico, and became well known when they staged a rebellion on January 1st of 1994. This was the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed. They had been building a base for over 10 years, since 1983. On this day, an uprising resulted in a “12 day war that succeeded in capturing five municipalities that constitute 25 percent of the state of Chiapas.” (INCITE!, 198)

The historic uprising of 1994 was orchestrated in protest of economic policies instituted by NAFTA which would negatively affect the indigenous populations of Mexico. As the Zapatistas grew in strength, indigenous rights and land reform and redistribution became central principals of the movement. In particular, the Zapatistas protested free trade and integrative policies of NAFTA, mostly the privatizing of “ejidos” or communal farms. Subcomandante Marcos, mentioned earlier in this paper, declared the era the “Fourth global war.” The majority of the Zapatistas’ founding grievances were based on ills caused by capitalism and the imposition of neoliberal policies throughout the Global South, specifically in Latin America countries including their homeland. (Britannica)

In 1995, the Zapatistas held the “Consulta Nacional por la Paz y la Democracia,” in which 1.3 million people participated in making the decision of what the future structure and scope of the EZLN would be.” This *consulta* demonstrates one of the most impressive features of the Zapatista movement, it’s collective spirit. The Zapatistas took the idea of collectivity and

making decisions “by the people for the people,” and amplified it to quite possibly one of the largest scales social movements have ever seen.

The Zapatistas became well known for their indigenous and female leadership. The Zapatistas’ highly autonomous core worked not only to win a specific political goal, but in a fight for self-determination; “creating new communities that model the vision for liberation.” (INCITE!, 200) Rojas tells her readers that “For over 20 years, the Zapatistas have organized almost 100,000 people to create their own separate communities, their own justice system, their own health care system, their own agriculture, and their own educational system.” (INCITE!, 201) The Zapatistas decided to work outside the limits of the state and its accompany modes of surveillance. They demonstrate the ways in which state “control” is instable by creating their own valued, power/knowledge discourse outside of the force relations of the state. Each time the Zapatistas reinforce their own system they weaken a part of the modern power/knowledge regime while also resisting their supposed “lack” of freedom.

The Zapatistas are also a model for how to navigate the proliferation of NGOs based on their unique partnerships and supplementing of their community work with nongovernmental assistance, without reliance or dependence on the organizations. Rojas explains:

The Zapatistas worked with an NGO to produce a video documentation project that would train Zapatista community members to document their work as well as abuses form the state. After then years, each region will have its own video documentation center, and that non-profit will dissolve. The Zapatistas have also partnered with an NGO to help communities create their own education systems. Once this task is accomplished, that non-profit must leave the autonomous territory... (INCITE!, 207)

Additionally:

In all these cases, the membership base does not come from the non-profit. Thus if an NGO loses funding, it does not impact the movement. Nowhere do these non-profits have files of the movement's membership; it is completely separate from the non-profits. NGO "professionals" bring tools and skills but have no decision-making power at all. In many cases (when the NGO is not a front for the political organization), the non-profit workers, though they may work very closely with these movements, are not considered members of these movements – they are supporters or allies and see themselves as such. (INCITE!, 207)

In this example the NGO responds to the movement in the way that is necessary, as dictated by the movement. This allows for the dissolving of organizations once they are deemed unnecessary. This shift in dependence ultimately allows for less restriction when considering what support will be most advantageous. The support is for the movement, not in vain.

The Zapatistas represent an inspiring, unique, large-scale yet grassroots-based movement that has completely altered the world of organizing and change-making. The next movement I will examine is another impactful Latin American movement, which, like the Zapatistas continues operating today: the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil.

Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, Brasil

The “Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra” (MST) or Landless Workers’ Movement of Brazil is a monumental social movement still in existence today. On their website they describe their formation and brief history in answer to the question, “What is the MST?”

The answer is:

Brazil’s Landless Workers Movement, *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)* in Portuguese, is a mass social movement, formed by rural workers and by all those who want to fight for land reform and against injustice and social inequality in rural areas. The MST was born through a process of occupying latifundios (large landed estates) and become a national movement in 1984. Over more than two decades, the movement has led more than 2,500 land occupations, with about 370,000 families - families that today settled on 7.5 million hectares of land that they won as a result of the occupations. Through their organizing, these families continue to push for schools, credit for agricultural production and cooperatives, and access to health care. Currently, there are approximately 900 encampment holding 150,000 landless families in Brazil. Those camped, as well as those already settled, remain mobilized, ready to exercise their full citizenship, by fighting for the realization of their political, social economic, environmental and cultural rights. (What is the MST?)

The MST also aims to operate outside of state surveillance, like the Zapatistas. They also sustain similar relationship with NGOs, providing “technical assistance for agronomy, sustainable development, and organic agriculture.” (INCITE!, 207) One of the distinctive aspects of the MST, however, is their unique approach to education.

MST centers education in its work, including political education, claiming that “One cannot build a movement among people who are not actively engaged in learning.” Additionally, “Given the instability with which people in the landless movement live, education must take place ‘on the run,’ in whatever conditions people are living under. So the MST developed Itinerant Education, an education system available for all children and adults based on Paolo Freire’s principles of popular education, which work toward liberation, not indoctrination” (INCITE!, 204). This shows their imaginative methods of resisting state surveillance and reclaiming freedom and agency in the movement. The next example of Latin American social movements creating social transformation outside of the NGO in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is the Unemployed Workers Movement of Argentina.

Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados, Argentina

The third and final example from Latin America is the Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados (MTD), or the Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina. At the turn of the century, Argentina was seen as a model for economic growth and development under the neoliberal lens (INCITE!, 201). In December of 2001 the Argentinian economy collapsed and a rebellion broke out. People partook in public demonstrations against the imposition and consequences of neoliberalism in their country. The “*piqueteros*” emerged as people took to the streets “beating on pots and pans, directing their opposition to President de la Rúa’s establishment of controls over saving and checking accounts...” (INCITE!, 202). Notably, these demonstrations were spontaneous and involved people from various socioeconomic classes. Before this moment of spontaneous organization the movement had various tactics and scattered groups, sometimes claiming unoccupied factories. After 2001 the dispersed groups networked using methods similar to those of the Zapatistas and the MST; in hopes of building a movement without building a centralization of power.

The MTD in Argentina, as well as the Zapatistas and other global movements, used *asambleas populares* (popular assemblies) to determine political agendas through consensus and “avoid power cementing in certain people placed in representative roles” (INCITE!, 203). This method is described in great depth by Rojas:

People gather locally, in their community or neighborhood, on a street corner or somewhere else public and easily accessible to discuss and reflect on issues that need to be decided. What seems like a facilitator’s nightmare – a large, sometimes very large, group of people without a set agenda – becomes a space to practice how we want to live collectively. They may then select rotating representatives who will meet in another

popular assembly to share what is going on throughout the movement. These non-permanent representatives take these ideas back to their original popular assembly, where they then report to fellow community members and gather feedback. Popular assemblies are very inclusive – even children can participate if they are interested ... Sometimes, the decision-making can be slow ... However, similar horizontal non-centralized processes have also been used to make almost spontaneous decisions that led to the shutdown of entire countries. (INCITE!, 203)

The shut down in Argentina in 2001 is an example of one of these spontaneous decisions made by a multitude of people. This proves that the ideas coming out of popular assemblies can be successfully used on a large scale. There are other approaches that came out of this method of collective organizing, such as collective kitchens set up in joint community spaces or homes of MTD members. Rojas notes that these shared domestic spaces were key to the MTD's methods, parallel to the use of pots and pans in the streets which also break down domestic walls (INCITE!, 204).

Finally, the MTD also worked outside of state surveillance. Their particular method is described here:

rather than going back to work for a boss with a miserable wage, they opt to form collectivities of autonomous producers without division of labor; when they decide to take care of their health by trying to break their dependence on medication and on allopathic medicine; or when they deal with education using their own criteria and not those of the state. (Rojas, 202)

The MTD, Zapatistas and the MST are all galvanize possibilities of freedom beyond state surveillance.

Reflections

These three movements establish ways to think outside of the NGO's power/knowledge and discursive regime. The MTD, MST and the Zapatistas all highlight autonomy, collectivity, and combatting of state surveillance. They do not represent "impatient philanthropy," but rather, long term approaches that build community support from below. These movements introduce new options for participation and substantially ground the political in everyday life – creating their own institutions and breaking down barriers between the domestic and public realms. These three movements work to make social transformation and life synonymous.

Rojas underlines the importance and similarity of related slogans used throughout Latin America that relate to this idea. She says:

It is revealing that Latin America has seen a whole set of revolts without leadership, without organizational memory or central apparatus ... The best known instance of this rejection of representation is the slogan 'que se vayan todos' ('they should all go' – all being the politicians) which emerges in the course of the December 19-20 [2001] events in Argentina. Both in the neighborhood assemblies and among the groups of 'piqueteros' (people blocking commercial traffic on major highways) and in the occupied factories, this general slogan has concrete expressions: 'entre todos todo' ('among everyone, everything'), which is similar to the Zapatista 'entre todos lo sabemos todo' ('among everyone we know everything'). Both statements (which express the daily life of the groups that coined them) are directed simultaneously at non-division of labor and of thought-action, and also at there being no leaders who exist separate from the groups and communities. (199, Rojas quoting Raul Zibehchi)

The most radical aspect of these three movements is their challenge of the modern power/knowledge regime and therefore, the state. This acknowledgement that of “entre todos todo,” or that among the people there is sufficient knowledge, directly challenges the assumption that the state is necessary and will provide for all. This is a clear example of the instability in state power, and this privileging of indigenous and other forms of knowledge questions the Western, neoliberal and neo-imperial, capitalist system which exploits people and their lands. We must work outside of the dispositif of the NGO to challenge the power/knowledge regime which encompasses it.

Although each of these movements has accomplished large-scale change in an innovative way, there is not one approach that does it the best. There is no blueprint for change. Although Sista II Sista proves a useful example within the context of the United States, it is also helpful to gain an international perspective on what change looks like. Rojas says, “the principles of the movements in Latin America and elsewhere can help inform our organizing work here. Because they come from people who are not living in the ‘brain of the monster,’ the US empire, they can help us identify the cops in our heads and hearts, release us from the US-centric tunnel vision, and expand our dreams of possibility.” (213) These movements give examples for how to contest, combat, struggle with or strategize to navigate the institution of the nongovernmental organization, while considering the ways in which our current system deprives individuals of their agency and freedom.

CHAPTER 8: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

I have used the methodologies of theorists and academics Michel Foucault and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to analyze what some have called the “Nonprofit Industrial Complex.” I’ve used these theories to understand how nongovernmental organizations around the world operate as “dispositifs” or apparatuses among a proliferation of other dispositifs; enforcing surveillance and self surveillance of individuals within the power/knowledge regime and creating and sustaining the NGO’s discursive regime. I’ve looked at the ways that Capitalism, neoliberal expansion and neo-imperial violence have shaped the NGO, leading to a professionalization, hierarchical organization and class separation within the NGO which concretes the U.S. Economic Pyramid and keeps the U.S. ruling class in charge of public monies. These public monies sit protected in private philanthropies under corrupt tax exempt status. I have considered the ways in which these models for change threaten democracy while simultaneously intervening in other countries of the Global South in the name of “human rights,” and “democracy.”

I have also considered potentials for struggling against surveillance and for agency, examining various examples of social change movements domestically and internationally. First, I looked at an example within the United States, Sista II Sista in Brooklyn, New York, which claimed 501(c)(3) status before renouncing it soon after. I also introduced three different movements in Latin America: the Zapatistas, the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil and the Unemployed Workers Movement in Argentina.

Something that has become clear throughout this work is that there is not a single “solution” to the “issue” of the NGO. Change-making is a process, with no right answer. Sista II Sista ruminates on this thought rather eloquently in a self-published document titled *Sistas Makin Moves*:

Over the years, we have learned many lessons and faced many challenges. Some of the lessons stand out more than others. Among the brightest is our collective understanding that justice is not a product that you arrive at. It's not an 'end.' Justice is something we have to continually imagine, envision, construct, and practice. It is something that you have to incorporate into your daily life and interactions with those around you in your home, work, organization, spiritual/religious space, and in all the other aspects of a human being's existence. Because of this, Sista II Sista will be constantly reshaping and reorganizing itself to respond to our responsibility to model an organization based on the principles of liberation, self-determination, and love. (Sistas Makin' Moves, 207)

What stands out most in this statement is that justice is not an *end*. It may be a goal, as approximating freedom is, but SIIS is aware that justice is not completed in three easy steps. All the steps along the journey are equally important – if not more tangible.

Sista II Sista also highlights that “many different approaches are necessary,” to impact change:

It isn't about topping capitalism in one swift blow, but creating cracks in the system. We are a small crack inspired by larger ones like the MST in Brazil, the EZLN in Chiapas, Autonomista movements in Argentina, the Ogoni people in Nigeria, and many others all over the world. As we build these alternative and autonomous movements we will crack the whole thing. We know capitalism will crack! (INCITE!, 234)

SIIS is working to make long-term change on a large scale, but they believe in the power of impacting self-determination, one “sista” at a time. There is power in the individual journey toward self-determination as there is in the collective struggle toward freedom.

Freedom re-centers the conversation in the Foucauldian perspective. Foucault's thoughts on freedom are sometimes misleading, confusing the reader between our apparent lack and possible possession of it. One of the more direct statements Foucault gives on purposes and ambitions addresses this struggle. He says:

We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political 'double bind,' which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (The Subject and Power, 785)

Foucault finds the state to be the biggest obstacle to individual freedom, which has been surveilling us for centuries. Although he spoke for years on the individual's lack of freedom, he also states in *Truth, Power, Self: An Interview*, that his role "is to show people that they are much freer than they feel ... To change something in the minds of people – that is the role of the intellectual." If we can realize our lack of freedom – potentially through some version of Spivak's educated resistance, denying the appropriation of the intellect and allowing the subaltern to be understood – we may begin to approximate freedom. If the individual subject becomes aware of their own subjectification, freedom may also be possible for collectivities. Although these processes of approximating freedom begin with the individual, they importantly involve a collective awakening. Spivak argues that the non-subaltern must enter into ethical relationships of responsibility with subaltern. To approximate freedom we must re-center society in a nonhierarchical fashion.

If the original question was: what is the best way to make change? Then my argument centers in a change of consciousness, first. We must confront the NGO: working together nonhierarchically, understanding and listening to the subaltern and resisting neoliberal, neo-imperial based violence. Change should happen in light of a gained understanding of our limits to freedom. If the goal is to work together toward justice for people, than it also makes sense that movements originate from people, for people. The NGO does not need to dissipate, but it does need to transform. The NGO has worked well in other countries, where the 501(c)(3) model hasn't monopolized organizing principles. If the NGO is to survive, instead of surveilling change it must support the social movements and grassroots organizations which center their constituents and engage their communities.

The goal of this work was to examine the current model of the nonprofit and frameworks for change and to find more ethical ways of democratic change making – beyond the nonprofit. This is not, however, an argument of death of the NGO. It is impractical to think we could “end the nonprofit,” or that we will encounter a perfect solution to the dispositif's discursive regime. This exploration was intended to open up discussions on how to think critically, question our work and educate each other; forging connections between movements and struggling with the current models for change. Since my journey with the nonprofit started in New York, I have been confronting the NGO. Justice is not an end and change is a process; a struggle for agency. This new journey toward “freedom,” starts when we can shake our previous change-making conceptions and instead look toward one another to find what we need.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agamben, Giorgio. *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*. Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Zapatista National Liberation Army." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 23 June 2017, www.britannica.com/topic/Zapatista-National-Liberation-Army.
- Conway, Janet M. *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and Its "Others"*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- DeMars, William E. *NGOs and Transnational Networks: Wild Cards in World Politics*. Pluto Press, 2005.
- Evans, Brad, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "When Law Is Not Justice." *New York Times*, 13 July 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/opinion/when-law-is-not-justice.html.
- "Exemption Requirements Section 501(c)(3) Organizations ." *Exemption Requirements Section 501(c)(3) Organizations | Internal Revenue Service*, Internal Revenue Service, www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-section-501c3-organizations.
- "Facts and Stats about NGOs Worldwide." *Nonprofitaction.org*, NonProfit Action, 4 Sept. 2015, nonprofitaction.org/2015/09/facts-and-stats-about-ngos-worldwide/.
- Foucault, "An Aesthetics of Existence" Foucault Live: Interviews, 1966-84, p. 310,312; qtd. Gayatri Spivak, "More on Power/Knowledge," Spivak Reader, p. 40
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader*. Edited by Paul Rabinow, Penguin Books, 1991.

- Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1982, pp. 777–795., doi:10.1086/448181.
- "Giving Statistics." *Charity Navigator*, Giving USA 2018, 12 June 2018, www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=42.
- Hall-Jones, Peter. "The Rise and Rise of NGOs." *Global Policy Forum*, May 2006, www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/176/31937.html.
- INCITE!, editor. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. South End Press, 2007.
- "Key Differences between Non-Government Organizations (NGO) and Non-Profit Organizations (NPO)." *Www.cmu.edu*, Carnegie Mellon University, [www.cmu.edu/career/documents/industry-guides/NGOs and NPOs.pdf](http://www.cmu.edu/career/documents/industry-guides/NGOs%20and%20NPOs.pdf).
- McKeever, Brice. "The Nonprofit Sector in Brief." *National Center for Charitable Statistics*, 3 Jan. 2019, nccs.urban.org/project/nonprofit-sector-brief.
- Parker, Robert Dale. *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- "Resistance That Cannot Be Recognized as Such." *Conversations with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Seagull Books, 2006, 57-86.
- Sista II Sista. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex Conference*, INCITE! Audio, UC Santa Barbara, CA, Apr. 2004, soundcloud.com/incite-audio/sista-ii-sista-brooklyn-ny.
- Sista II Sista. "Sistas Makin' Moves: Collective Leadership for Personal Transformation and Social Justice." *Color of Violence*, pp. 196–207., doi:10.1215/9780822373445-024.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Death of a Discipline*. University Presses Of California, 2005.

Weedon, Chris. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. B. Blackwell, 1987.

“What Is a ‘Nonprofit’?” *Councilofnonprofits.org*, National Council for Nonprofits, www.councilofnonprofits.org/what-is-a-nonprofit.

“What Is the MST?” *What Is the MST? | Friends of the MST*, www.mstbrazil.org/content/what-mst.

“What We Do - Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.” *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*, www.gatesfoundation.org/.

“World Social Forums.” *World Social Forums | Grassroots Global Justice Alliance*, Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, ggjalliance.org/worldsocialforums.

Yapa, Lakshman. “How the Discipline of Geography Exacerbates Poverty in the Third World.” *Futures*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2002, pp. 33–46., doi:10.1016/s0016-3287(01)00033-7.