

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Civil Disobedience



CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

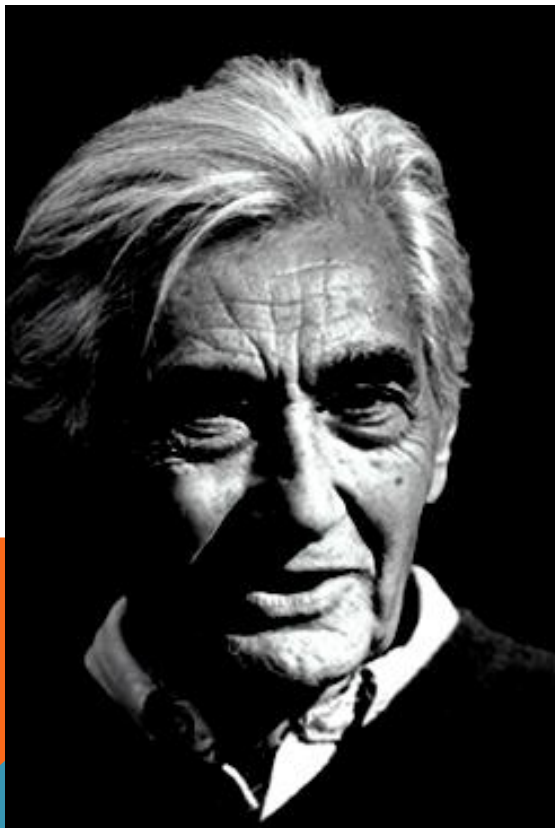
Hoffman and **Graham** offer the following as a definition of civil disobedience:

It is morally justified lawbreaking, normally intended to change a particular law or policy.



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Civil disobedience has three components:

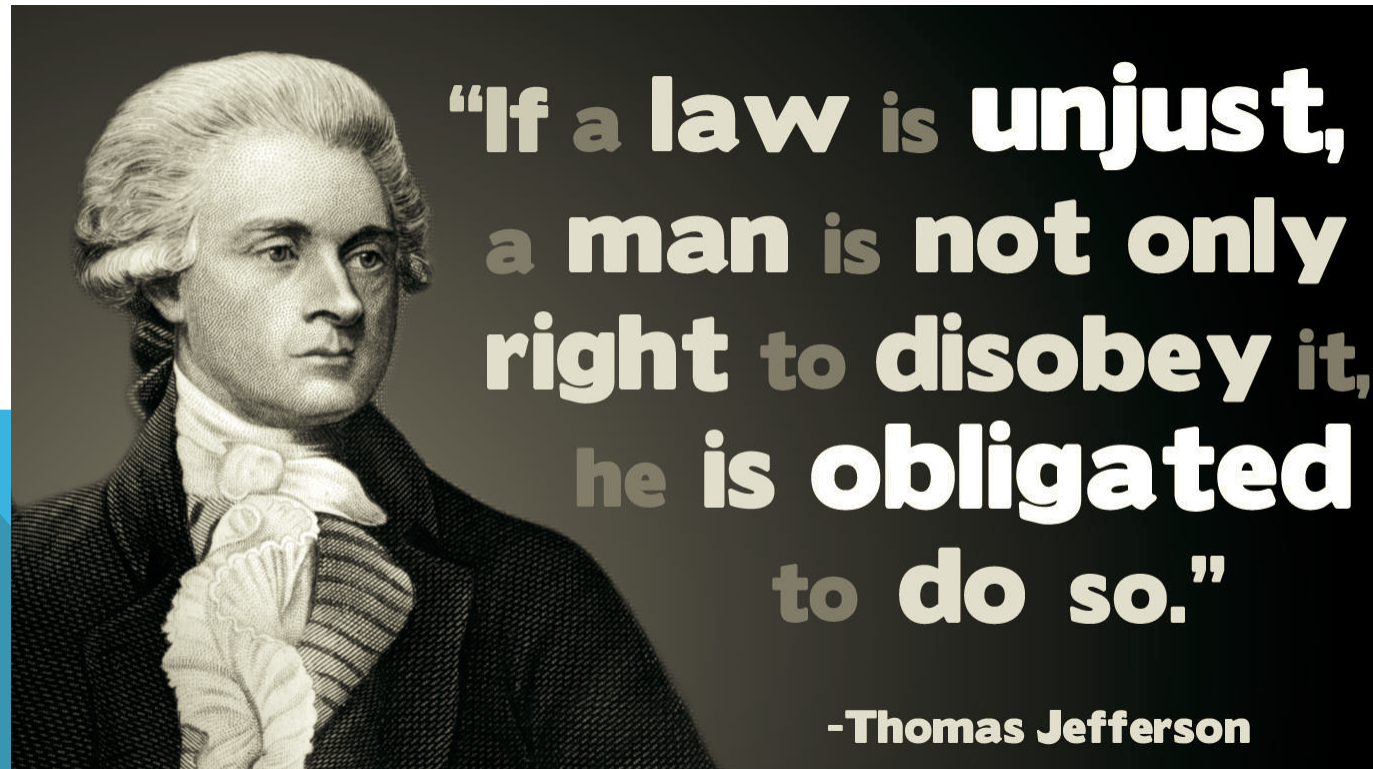


“Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of leaders... and millions have been killed because of this obedience...Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves... (and) the grand thieves are running the country. That’s our problem.”

Howard Zinn

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1. It involves
breaking the
law – it is not
simply a legal
protest

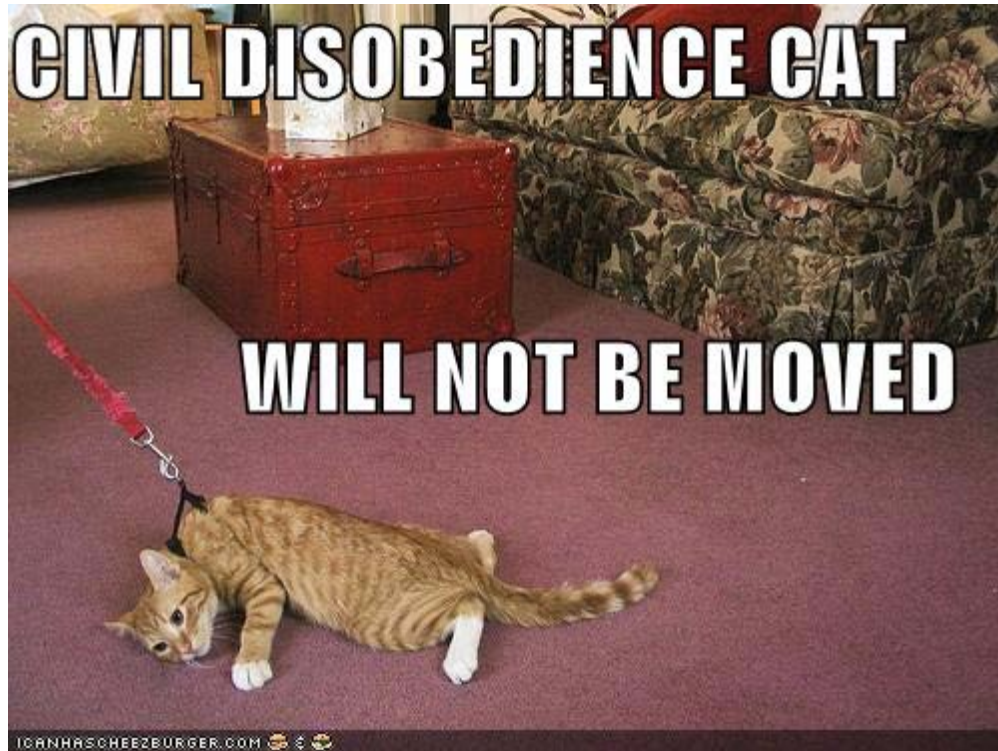


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2. There are moral reasons justifying the action



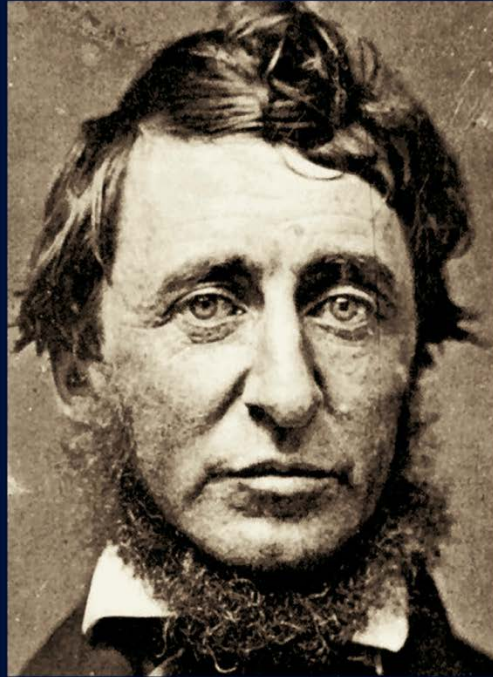
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3. The aim is to change the *law* or *policy*; it is not intended to bring down an entire political system. Civil disobedience is not revolution.

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In his essay “Civil Disobedience” (1849), **Thoreau** argued an individual has a moral duty to break an unjust law (“Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine”).

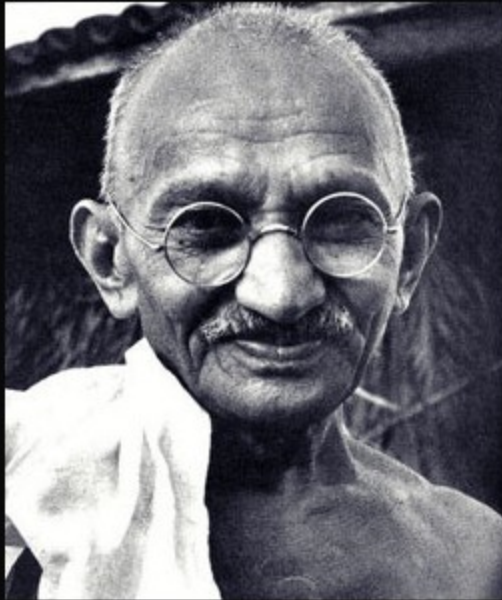


Under
a government
which imprisons
any unjustly,
the true place for
a just man
is in prison

- Henry David Thoreau

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Gandhi read “Civil Disobedience” while in prison and developed both its theory and practice in his struggle against British rule in India.



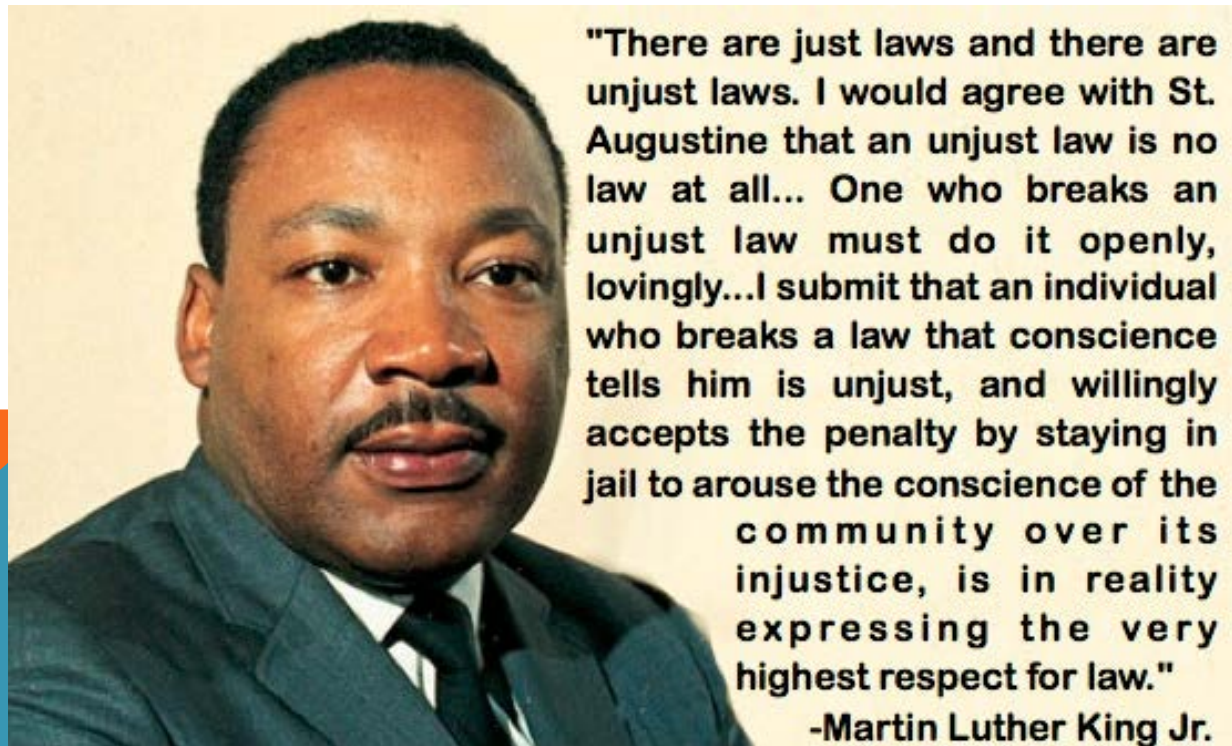
Satyagraha largely appears to the public as Civil Disobedience or Civil Resistance. It is civil in the sense that it is not criminal... [The civil resister] considers certain laws to be so unjust as to render obedience to them a dishonor. He then openly and civilly breaks them and quietly suffers the penalty for their breach.

(Mahatma Gandhi)

izquotes.com

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In 1963, **Martin Luther King** wrote “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” a plea to fellow church leaders to accept the legitimacy of non-violent lawbreaking in pursuit of equal rights for US citizens.



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Reasons for breaking the law fall into four categories:

- 1. *Individual self-interest*** – A law is not in the individual's interest.
- 2. *Group interest*** – A law is not in the interests of a particular group.
- 3. *Morality*** – A law is morally wrong.
- 4. *Justice*** – A law is unjust.

Most theories of civil disobedience rest on the third and fourth categories.



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Democracy and Obedience

Civil disobedience plays a special role in democracy, because it not only indicates the moral limits of majority rule, but also forces us to reflect on the justifications *for* majority rule.



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Rawls: Civil Disobedience and Conscientious Refusal

He believes that it is only in a society where there is partial, rather than strict, compliance with the principles of justice that civil disobedience has a role. This is because civil disobedience is an appeal to the majority's "sense of justice." The majority is being asked to respect principles that it implicitly accepts.



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Not exactly civil disobedience, probably more conscientious refusal, but pretty gutsy nevertheless!

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The leading idea behind **Rawl's** theory of civil disobedience is that in breaking the law *the civilly disobedient are addressing, or appealing to, the sense of injustice of the majority.* However, he sets out a number of conditions required for it to be civil disobedience...



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First, the injustice must be clear. Breaches of the first principle (equal liberty) more important than denial of the second (guarantee of a social minimum)



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Second, it need not involve breaking the law, which is the object of civil disobedience (i.e. protesting high tuition by blocking traffic on a road)



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**Third, it must
be a public
act...**

(sorry, I'll
stop now)



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Fourth, it must be non-violent and not constitute a threat...



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**Fifth, the civilly
disobedient
must accept
the penalties
for lawbreaking**



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Sixth, even if laws are seriously unjust, civil disobedience must not threaten the stability of the political system

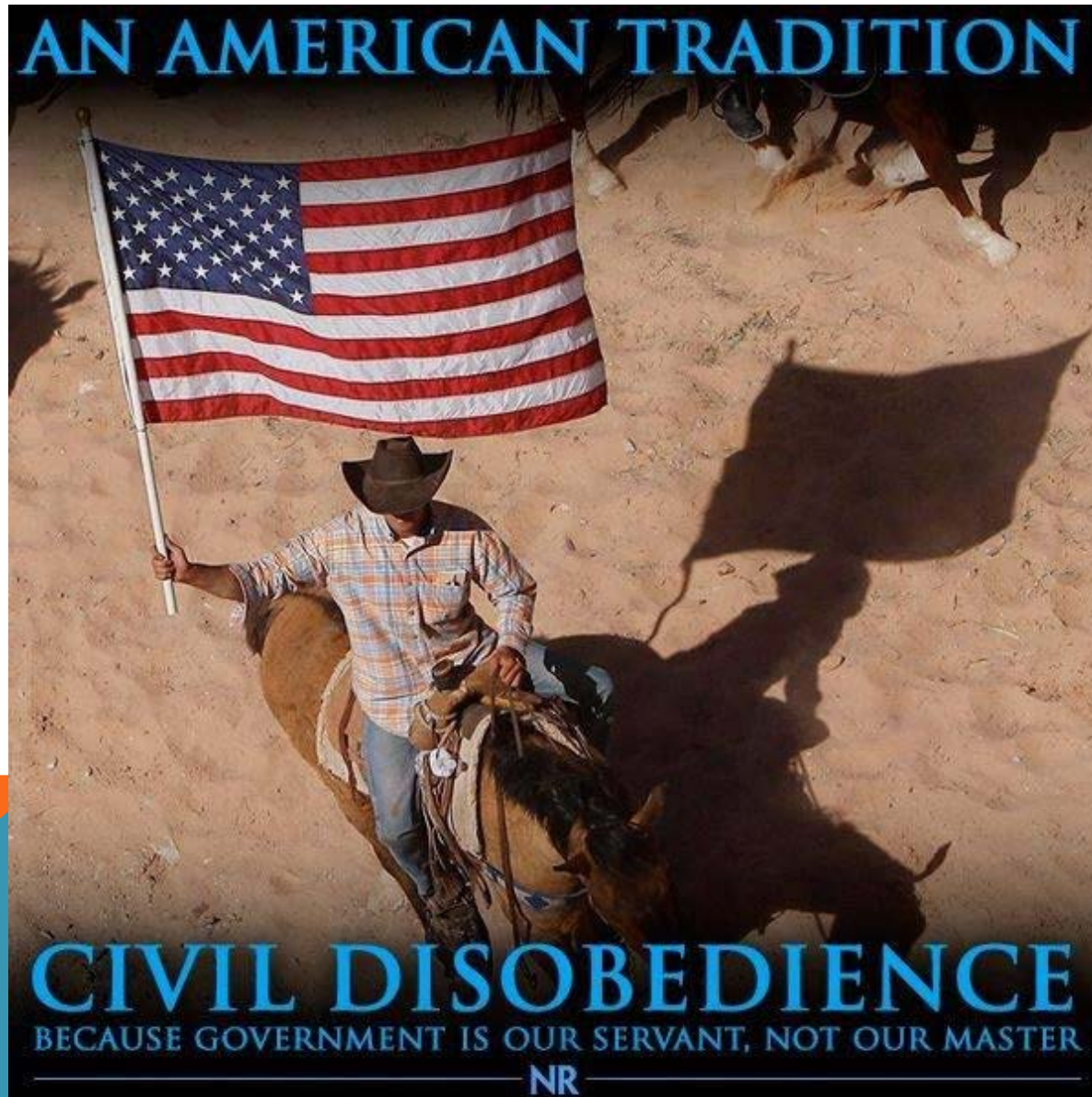


(otherwise, it is better to describe it as revolution)

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Finally, civil disobedience takes place within the fidelity to law. This is the entire project of civil disobedience. The civilly disobedient do not seek to bring down the existing system, but rather they want to strengthen it by removing injustice, such that the system will win loyalty of all citizens. In this sense the civilly disobedient demonstrate fidelity – or faithfulness – to the law.

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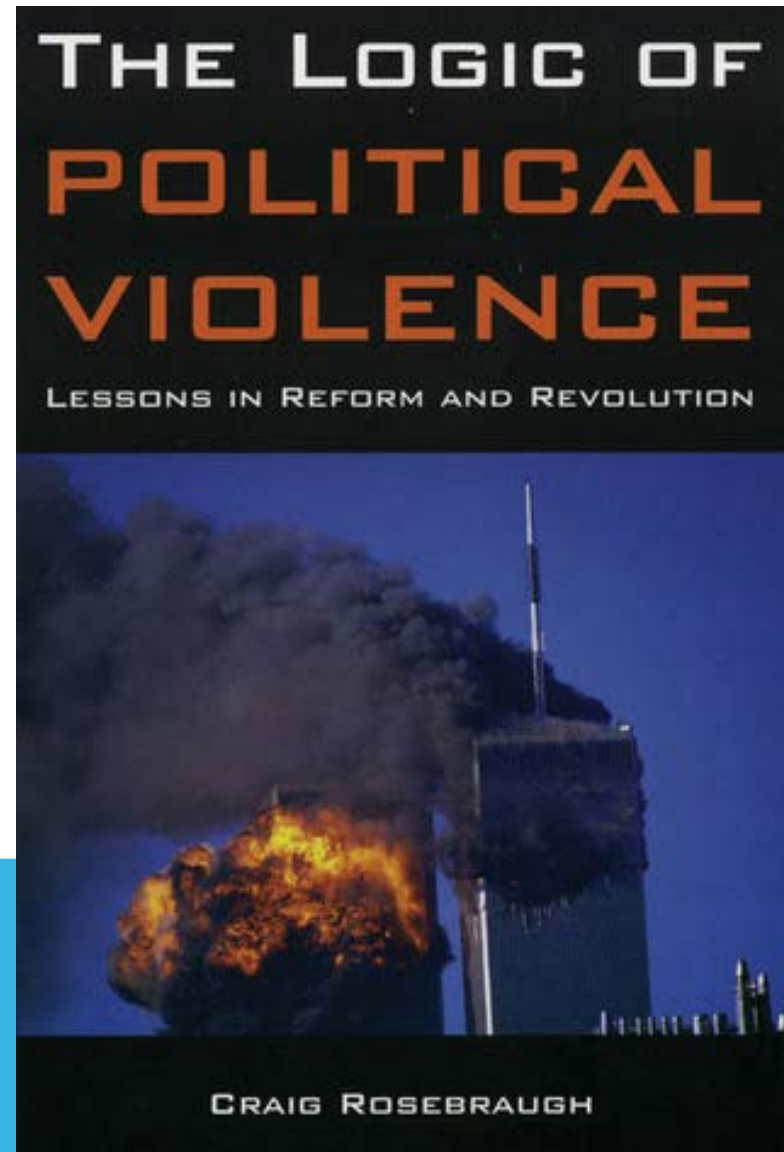
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Political Violence



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Hoffman and **Graham** begin by asking: What is political violence? Can a practitioner of political violence be coherently distinguished from a guerrilla or freedom fighter?

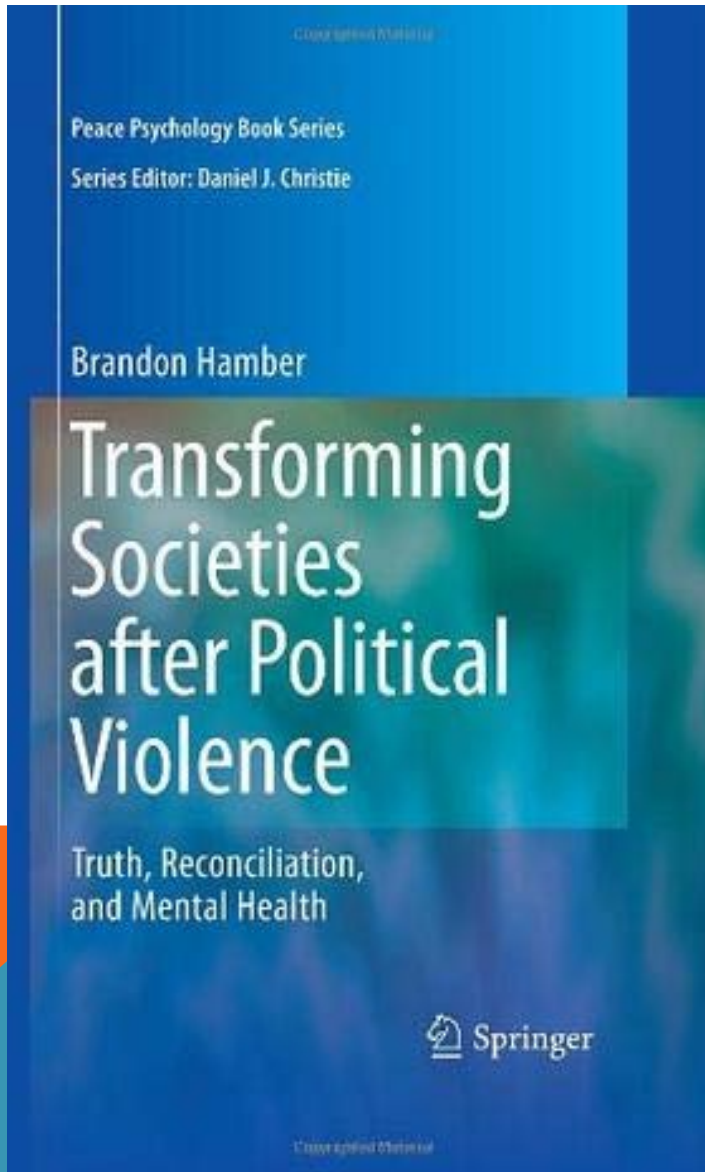


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They believe that an analysis of political violence is particularly important, given the fact that authoritarian regimes often find it convenient to label all manifestations of violent opposition, to be “terrorist” in nature.



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Why does political violence arise and, above all, what can we do about it? We can never eradicate it, if we do not understand it – its sources, its reasons, and its apparent justifications.

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Liberalism and the Question of Violence

The notion of political violence only becomes possible when violence is seen in negative terms.



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Whereas pre-modern thought regarded violence as a sign of human empowerment – hence the positive evaluation of the warrior...



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...liberalism argues for a world in which market exchanges are defined as activity that has banished violence. Thus praise for political violence cannot be squared with the liberal tradition.

Workshop and Conference:

VIOLENCE AND THE HUMAN CONDITION:

Political Violence and Issues of Measurement
and Methodology

MAY 13-16, 2015

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The State and Political Violence

The liberal tradition often distinguishes between force and violence – and thus force and political violence.



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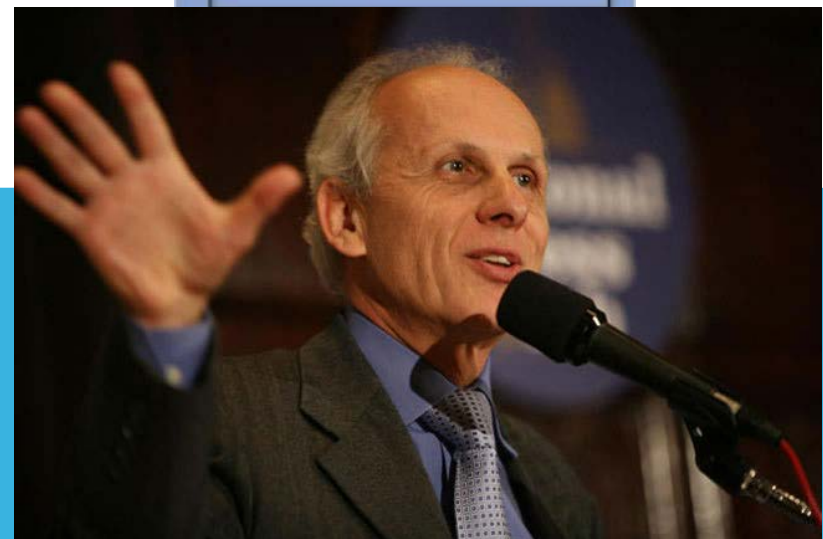
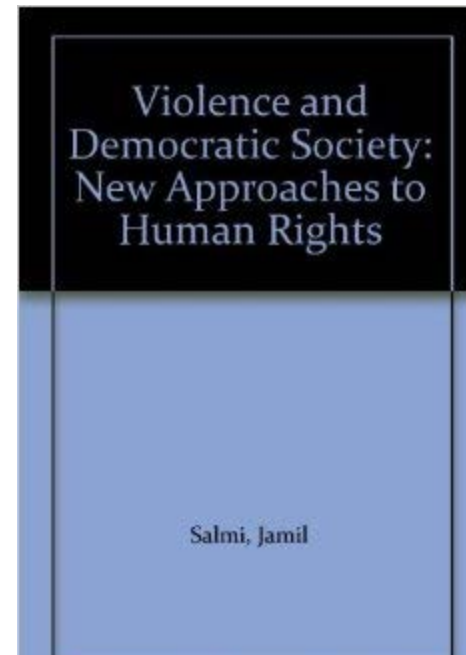
The argument is that because the force of the state is authorized and limited to specific purposes, it cannot be considered “violent” and therefore the notion of political violence has to be restricted to those who oppose the state.



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An Assessment of Salmi

Author of *Violence and Democratic Society* (1993). He defines violence as an act that threatens a person's physical or psychological integrity and distinguishes between four categories of violence:



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1. Direct Violence

Involves deliberate attacks that inflict harm (kidnapping, homicide, rape, torture)



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2. Indirect Violence

Violence is inflicted unintentionally as in cases of *violence by omission* (inaction which contributes to starvation or genocide), or “mediated” violence which occurs when individuals or institutions produce goods or trade in weapons of war which damage the health and environment of others.



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3. Repressive Violence

When people are deprived of their political, civil, social or economic rights



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4. Alienating Violence

Describes types of repression (ethnic and male chauvinism, racism, homophobia, opposition to AIDS sufferers, etc.) which undermine a person's emotional, cultural and intellectual development.



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Political Violence and Terrorism

What's the difference?

Miller argues that “**violence may be permissible in dictatorships or repressive regimes when it is used to defend human rights, provoke liberal reforms, and achieve other desirable objectives.**”

terrorism n. Violence for political purposes or the politically motivated threat of violence which, either intentionally or unintentionally, challenges the state's monopoly on political violence.

meetville.com

Leslie Starr O'Hara

(In others words, such violence should not be called terrorism)

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Just War Theory

Contains two main parts:

1. *Jus ad Bellum* (the right to go to war)
2. *Jus in Bello* (the right conduct in war)



Just War

When is war the
answer?

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Just War Theory



Jus ad Bellum

1. Just Cause
2. Right Authority
3. Right Intention
4. Reasonable Chance of Success
5. Proportionality
6. Last Resort

Jus in Bello

1. Proportionality
2. Discriminacy
3. Military Necessity

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IS SYRIA A JUST WAR?

The morals of WESTERN CIVILIZATION, and of CHRISTIANITY, require that any war meet these requirements, or it is not *de bellis justis*: a JUST WAR. It is a war crime, and a sin

IS AMERICAN WAR ON SYRIA:

A Last Resort?

All peaceful methods, including diplomacy and sanctions have been tried and failed

NO There is a peace conference between Assad and the rebels being arranged

A Valid Cause?

The target nation must be attacking, or a grave and immediate threat to the warring nation

NO The US is not under attack by, or even threatened by the people or government of Syria.

A Valid Authority?

The warring government must be valid, and follow the rule of law

NO The Constitution requires that the Senate issue a formal declaration of war

A Likely Success?

The country going to war must be likely to succeed at its valid cause

NO A "police action" like this tends to turn into an endless Quagmire, as in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam

Proportionate?

The war must not do more harm than good, or in any other way be worse than the cause

NO Each US intervention, it kills more people than the local government was

An Exit Strategy?

The country going to war must be likely to succeed, at its valid cause and ending hostilities

NO A "police action" like this tends to turn into an endless Quagmire, like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Vietnam

One example, but one could find many others...

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Political Violence, Ambiguity and the Liberal State

If political violence can be justified when a state is authoritarian, then the opposite is true – political violence becomes terrorism when employed against a *liberal* state.



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Hoffman and **Graham** suggest that the motivating philosophy in the case of violence against liberal societies is often one of anarchism, and violent outrages do not advance, but set back, the cause of democracy.

INFO KINO OCCUPY HISTORY KINO INFO

THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND

Militanter Kampf der 60er und 70er Jahre gegen Kapitalismus & Krieg in den USA

Doku-Film
USA 2002, 92min
englisch mit deutschen Untertiteln

In den 60er und 70er Jahren war die Polarisierung der politischen Situation in den USA akut mit dem Vietnam-Krieg und den Kampf um die Bürgerrechte verbunden.

Angesichts der scheinbar wirkungslosen Methoden des friedlichen Protests und Widerstands bildeten sich innerhalb der Protestbewegung militante Gruppen, unter anderem der Weather Underground.

Der Film beleuchtet Vorgeschichte und Aktivitäten des Weather Underground. Green und Siegel lassen Aktivisten und Aktivistinnen von damals sprechen und zeigen die vom FBI angewandten illegalen Methoden in der Bekämpfung der Revolte.

16.1. 20.30h Stadteilladen
ZIELONA GÓRA
Grünberger Str. 73, am Boxi
Berlin-F'Hain

Vollkuche ab 20h
nach dem Film
SOLITRESEN, Free Kicker
und Polit-Mucke

BRING THE WAR HOME

INTERNATIONALISTISCHER ABEND
ANTIFASCHISTISCH & ANTIKAPITALISTISCH @ REVOLUTIONÄR

jeden 1. & 3. Montag im Monat im Zielona Góra, Grünberger Str. 73, Berlin-Friedrichshain
INTERNATIONAL.BLOGSPORTEU



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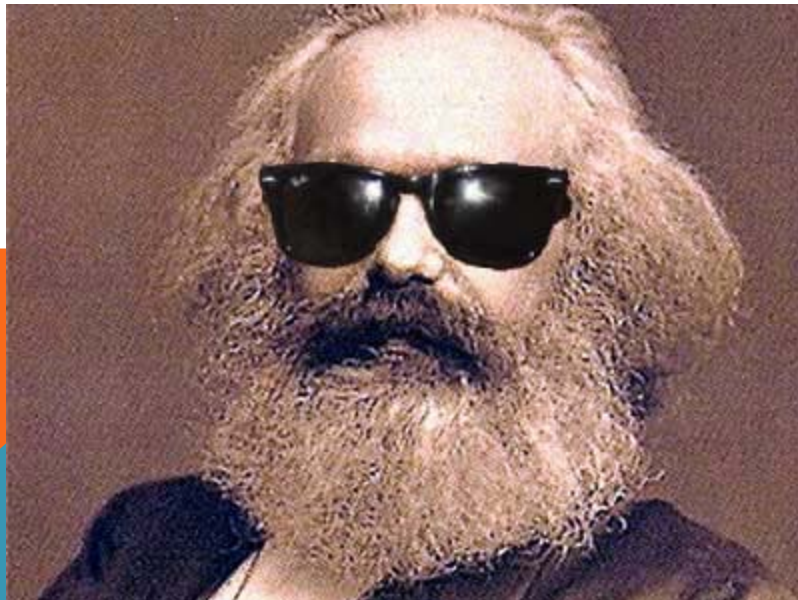


Should the destruction of *property* rather than individuals to be seen as terrorist in nature? (“Soft” political violence?)

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Marx on the Problem of Political Violence

He was actually pretty skeptical about political violence in general (although one could find exceptions in his thought) since it rested on the belief in an abstract will, not in the maturation of material conditions. In many ways he found it naïve and counterproductive.



"There is only one way to shorten and ease the convulsions of the old society and the bloody birth pangs of the new - revolutionary terror."

~ Karl Marx



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For **Hoffman** and **Graham**, the problem of violence arises in Marxism from the belief in the inevitability of revolution. Revolution invariably involves violence and if such violence is directed against liberal society, it counts as political violence. Are they correct in assuming this?

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**Workers of the
world unite!**

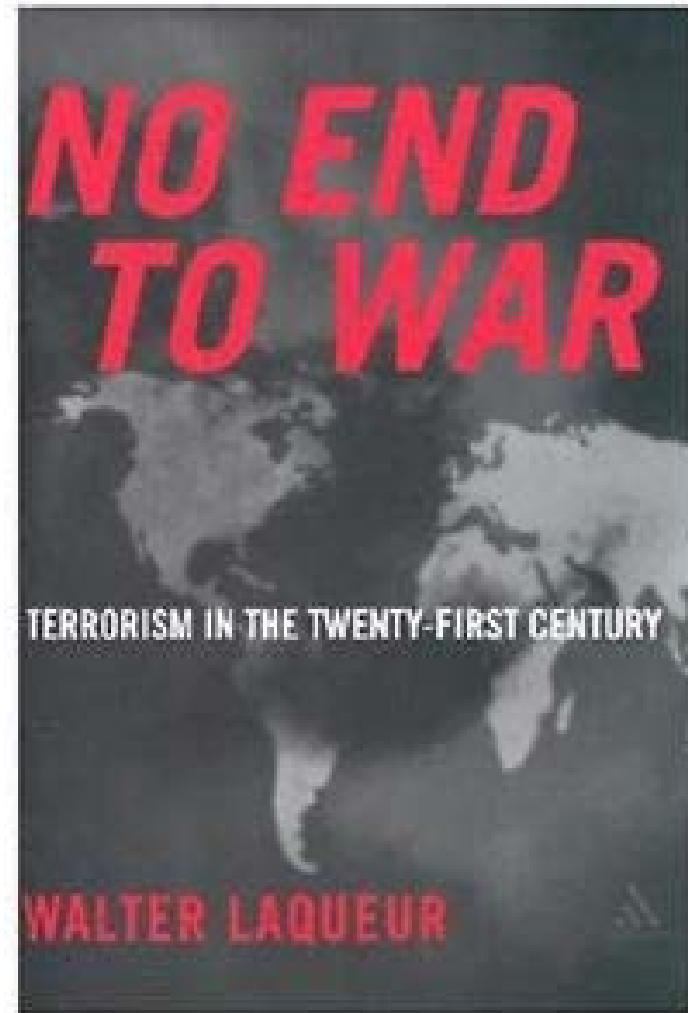
We have a world to win!

**And only
our chains to
lose! Karl Marx**

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A General Theory of Political Violence?

Laqueur argues that there will perhaps never be an authoritative guide to political violence because there is not one political violence, but a variety of political violences. What is true for one does not necessarily apply to the others.



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Laqueur's working definition of political violence:

“The systematic use of murder, injury, and destruction, or the threat of such acts for political ends.”



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The Roots of Political Violence

Just as it is difficult to define political violence, it is also difficult to locate the roots of such violence.



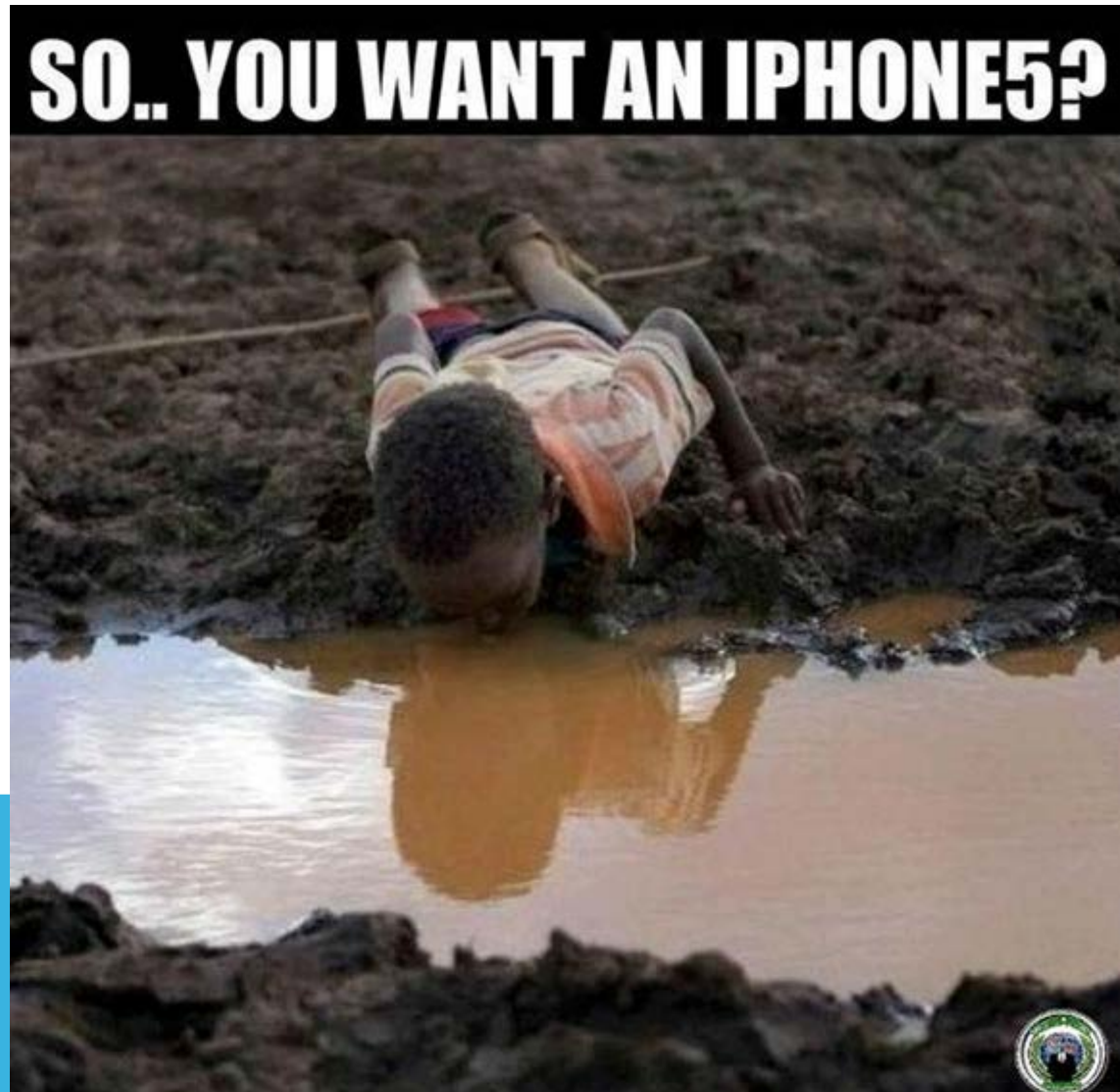
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Hoffman and **Graham** suggest that political violence arises because humans are unable to “change places.” For the authors, there is a multiplicity of factors involved in the inability to change places which includes;



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**Significant
disparities of
wealth;**



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Religious
intolerance;

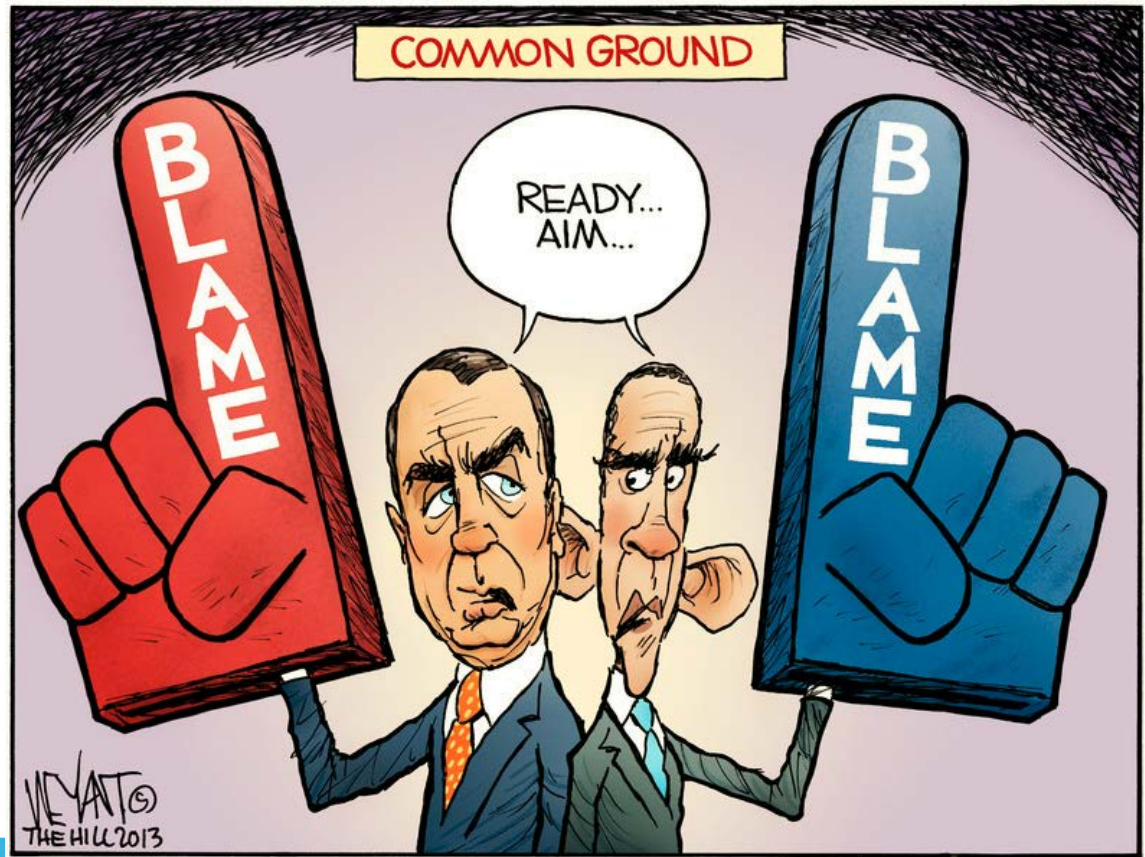


Bitterness and
despair;



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...and the prevalence of a “blame” culture which helps to convert differences into divisions.



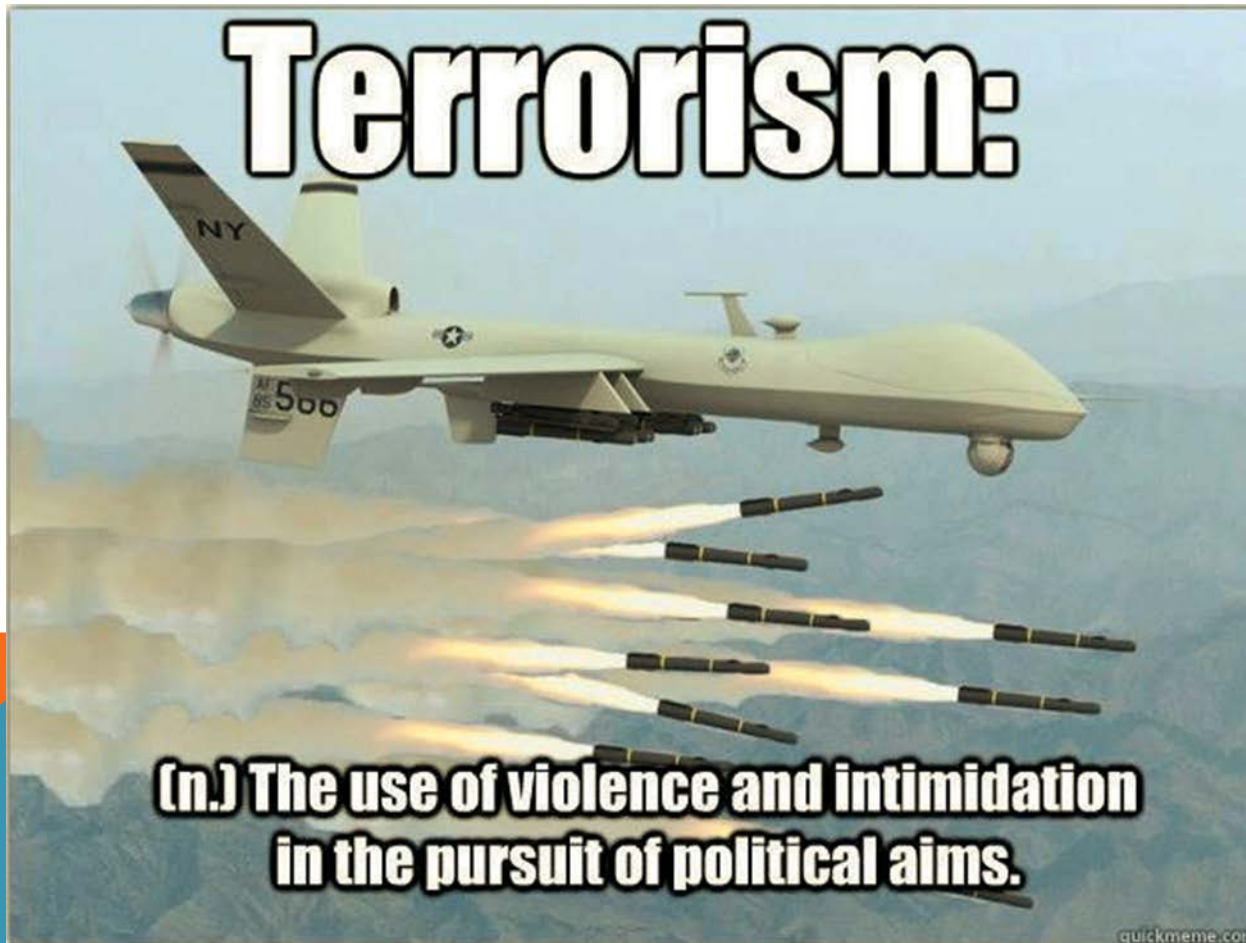
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The authors conclude that when these divisions are not understood, and no realistic strategy exists for overcoming them, we can have political violence.



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The Problem of Violence and the State



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Hoffman and **Graham** point to a good deal of confusion in this area. **Laqueur** suggests political violence exercised by states has caused far more victims than the political violence exercised by small groups.



The power which establishes a state is violence;
the power which maintains it is violence; the
power which eventually overthrows it is violence.

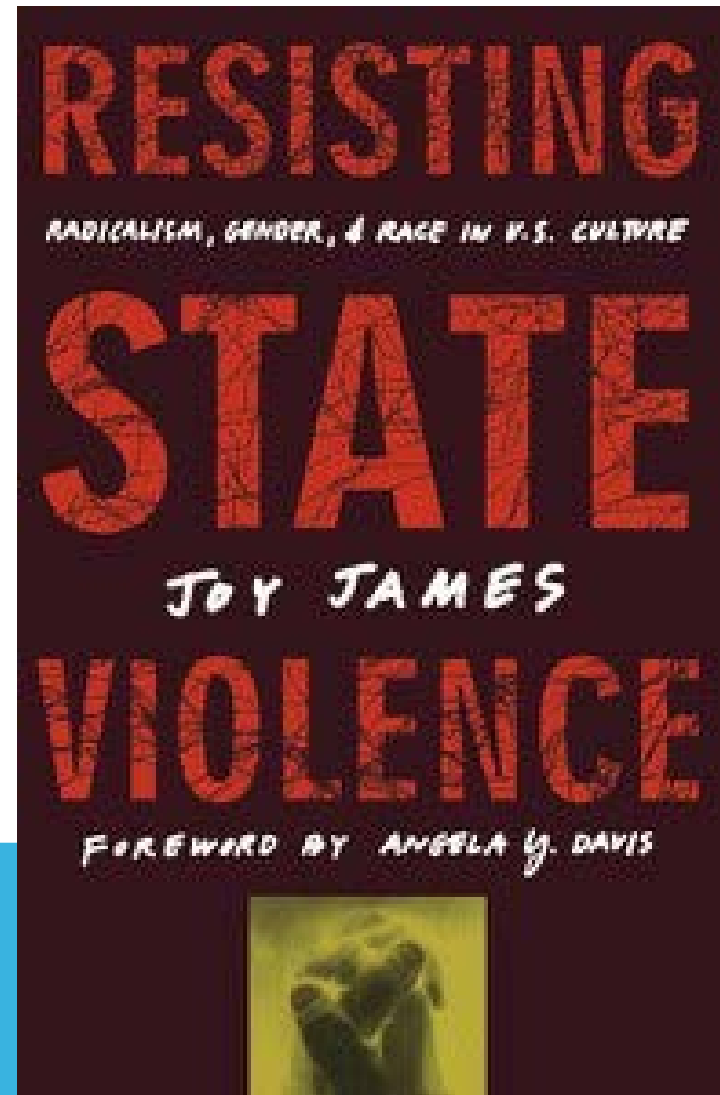
(Kenneth Kaunda)

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States use violence against violence, and **Hoffman** and **Graham** suggest this is a risky and undesirable business. It may be provisionally justified in the sense that under certain circumstances there is no other way to create a framework for policies to create common interests, but the elimination of political violence *must address the question of the state*: otherwise we normalize and naturalize violence.

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To conclude, states use terror to tackle conflicts of interest, so that the problem of political violence is connected to the problem of the state. Without recognizing this, counter-violent measures can make a bad situation worse.



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

