



Social Justice Movements as Border Thinking **An Anzaldúan Meditation**

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Abstract: The theme of this article is the implicit and inherent sovereignty that existentially accrues to social justice movements. I argue that movements naturally point to where society or social institutions are undemocratic, and that the resistance to this fact by institutions, their exclusion of movements and the political demands made on them, produce an integrity in movements that they don't always recognize. As excluded yet interior to the functioning of institutions, and included in the social domain of institutions yet external to them, movements appear as border regions, or border thinking, with respect to social institutionality. Using a homological approach to the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, I investigate what this sovereignty that underlies the existence of movements entails, and signifies. Through that homology as a lens, I look at the various inherent dimensions of social justice movements, their ability to ground alternate political structures, their natural ability to produce pro-democratic operations, and their possibility of bringing together varying strategies that are often held to be incommensurable ideologically.

In their book on *Poor People's Movements*, Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward theorize a strategic difference in social justice movements that for them determines the successes and failures (never wholly separable) of such movements.¹ The dichotomy they develop is between organizing mass mobilizations and building permanent organizations. They look at the histories of civil rights, industrial unions, and the welfare rights movement of the mid-60s to 70s (in which they were personally involved), and they suggest that, in each case, the potential mass power of the movement was derailed or dissipated by focusing on organizational forms whose purpose was ironically to give that power

permanence (PPM,307).

For instance, when the welfare rights movement won concessions from state and federal governments in terms of benefits for economically displaced persons and changes in how welfare was dispensed (which often involved the humiliation of the recipient), it was through mass mobilizations at the welfare centers (PPM,275ff). It was these mass mobilizations that produced a social recognition that recipients were real people living in real oppressive conditions, while providing them with avenues for social and political participation in their lives. When the movement leadership decided to consolidate this militancy in the form of political organizations that could

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influence political parties and negotiate from strength with legislators, its abandonment of mass mobilizations eroded the participation that was needed to provide cohesion and strength for just such organization. For Piven and Cloward, the difference in focus between mobilization and organization marked the axis along which a movement succeeded or failed (PPM,278).

This paradox, wherein a movement can put an end to itself by the very means with which it seeks to guarantee its survival, has been noticed by others. In his book, *Doing Democracy*, Bill Moyer attempts to give it a positive spin.² He provides a map of movement stages by which activists and organizers can judge where they are in the movement-building process, so that set-backs and erosions can be seen as natural phases and transcended. For him, as for Piven and Cloward, a movement's purpose is to influence political structures, and win concessions from the institutions they confront. In Moyer's schema, movements begin outside institutions in order to eventually "use institutional channels to bring about change" (DD,112). Where he differs from Piven and Cloward is in focusing on the consciousness of activist organizers as central to building a movement, while the latter see social conditions as determining the involvement of poor or dispossessed people.³

For both, however, the movement is an instrumentality, something to be molded by activists or leaders for the purpose of correcting the abrogations of social institutions in the interests of the material needs of people. They do not ask what it really means that a social justice movement exists. Their concern is with the dynamics of how a movement counterposes itself to institutionality and wins influence. This implies assuming that society is democratic, and that the political expression of people's needs will have a place at the table, even if people have to fight their way in.

Yet something lurks in the background that disturbs this assumption. In describing

the birth of movements, Piven and Cloward say, "Masses of people become defiant; they violate the traditions and laws to which they ordinarily acquiesce, and they flaunt the authorities to whom they ordinarily defer" (PPM,4). It is a collective defiance, by which people wrench themselves free from tradition, and transform their entire being, their very sense of themselves, both emotionally and rationally (my thanks to Mohammad Tamdgidi for emphasizing this in his presentations and communications). In other words, more is at stake than can be subsumed by demands for benefits or recognitions. And the multiplicity of forms of organization that arise, the fluid segmentation of activities and perspectives, bespeaks a heterogeneity that could hardly find a "place" for itself at so limited a venue as the political "table."

One thing that implicitly resides in a movement's existence is a concept of justice, a call for ethics that precedes issues and demands. An anti-war movement is a call for justice in demanding the cessation of the mass murder that a war of aggression (such as the US invasion of Vietnam or Iraq) constitutes. Environmental movements call for justice for future generations, and for all life, in demanding that the planet we all call home not be bulldozed by corporate resource extraction. The demands for affirmative action and reparations by black and Native movements are calls to rectify past and present injustices that have wrought segregation and cultural destruction. A call for justice is not a demand to sit at someone else's table, to be grudgingly accommodated as a former non-participant, and included under the former rules. It is a vision of inclusion and social participation that does not depend on another's invitation, but rather goes without saying. In particular, it is a vision of human well-being that precedes the exclusionary interests of property or profitability, in which human rights precede property rights or governmental power. To put people first is to put in question the ethics of the "table" itself.

Whose table is it?

In raising this question, a movement inherently opens pro-democratic possibilities, political options outside the institutions upon which it makes its demands. It is a pro-democratic ethos produced by the very institutional exclusion (of justice, rights, or participation) that brought the movement into existence in the first place. That exclusion implicitly renders the demand for influence a structural demand for democracy, that is, for an inclusive political process whose source is external to the given institutionality, yet internal to its domain as an excluded possibility of institutionality. In other words, a social justice movement, by its very existence, constitutes a borderland at the edge of institutionality in the sense that Gloria Anzaldúa writes of it in her book of that name.⁴ Perhaps a dialogue with Anzaldúa on this question can offer some insight into an alternate terrain on which the paradox that Piven and Cloward identified within social movements can find a different ethical existence.

THE EXISTENTIALITY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

Let us begin with the most fundamental assumption made about a social justice movement, whatever its demands or the institution it confronts. That assumption is that a movement, by its existence, proves that society is democratic; it demonstrates that society is open to all popular expressions of protest and political influence, and that the right to assemble and demand the redress of grievances is real and extant. But in fact, the existence of social justice movements indicates just the opposite, that society or its institutions are not democratic.

If democracy means that people structurally participate in the making of their own political destiny as well as exercise control over that destiny, then the channels and avenues of expression and participa-

tion in the functions of governance must be available and operative (PPM,xi). The fact that people have to organize social movements to gain the ability to speak, to address or oppose policy that had been made without them, to proclaim the injustice of policy in which they were not consulted, and to demand to be consulted in the making of policy, means that those channels of expression and participation had not existed, had been closed or withheld. When movements form to call for an end to police brutality, the death penalty,⁵ discrimination, segregation, white supremacy, sweatshop conditions, slum housing, the prison-industrial complex (which I list to map out the kind of political terrain I am looking at), all of which violate the basic tenets of democracy, it means there are no established channels in the structures of governance through which to curtail these violations, or to rectify these injustices. In other words, the issue of justice cannot be adequately addressed through the mere ability to assemble and demand redress of grievances.

In addition, the necessity to organize such a means of expression for a group, a class, or a community implies a further injustice; it points to where people had been silenced institutionally, insofar as their social needs were excluded from policy-making. For instance, the granges and industrial union movements arose to stop capital from running rough shod financially over people who had only their labor to live by; these movements had no extant structural means for confronting and stopping the prerogatives of property that such financial power represented. Civil rights movements formed because there were no structural means of curtailing the cultural assumptions of white supremacy or the assumed entitlements of patriarchy. The disenfranchisement of black people under Jim Crow meant that no access was permitted for cancelling the segregationist legal structure that regulated debt servitude, inherent impoverishments, and social controls en-

forced by arbitrary imprisonment in chain gangs. Capitalist operations (production, marketing, etc.) are all undemocratic; though unions can address wages and hours, no union movement has ever been permitted (without repression) to question the prerogatives of property, nor the autocracy of production management, let alone bring such prerogatives to a vote. For capitalism, to do so would destroy the commodity character of labor that it relies on by rehumanizing the worker.

In other words, the existence of social justice movements points to where society is undemocratic in essence, where it silences people so that the prerogatives of power remain unquestionable. Institutional silencing does not signify that speech has been prohibited; it means that though people speak, it is in the context of already having been spoken for, so that what they say is heard as something else. To speak for people transforms what they say into what is thereby given for them to have said, what is assumed or provided for them to say. It thus transforms their thought into what they do not think, but rather into what others think for them.⁶ Segregation was legitimized by proclaiming black people not ready for participation, though that assumed a prior participation that segregation itself was designed to curtail or prevent. An anti-war movement gets denigrated as unpatriotic, so that objections to the criminality of war are rendered treason rather than calls for justice. To be spoken for is a form of oppression because one is not free to be oneself. All relations of domination depend on the ability of the dominant to speak for the dominated; that is, to tell them who they are, why their subjugation is rational or just, and why it is actually a form of equality. One speaks for others in order that one's domination of them not appear as domination.

When the means of expression against injustice are withheld, it means that the political space in which people can express themselves has been close down. Unions

form against capital shutting down the political space concerning property rights; third parties form against the two party system shutting down electoral space through monopolized control over candidates and issues. Civil rights movements form against the segregation and disenfranchisement that racialize political space.

Ironically, the most subtle form of "speaking for" others is perhaps the most revelatory. In the US, the current mode of representational democracy operates through single delegate districts. But this implies that elected representatives cannot represent. Because each district of a modern, industrial, urbanized society like the US contains many contradictory class, cultural, ideological, and community interests, no single individual can represent them all. Single delegates can offer representation only to districts of relatively homogeneous interests, in which political differences have a common socio-economic foundation. In the absence of the ability of representatives to represent, a separation occurs between legislature and electorate. The legislature lapses into horsetrading projects and making internal political deals, and each representative essentially goes to the highest bidder. The representative "speaks for" his/her district in a way that silences all political interests except the most powerful.

When a social justice movement arises, it means that people have ceased to accept being spoken for. Against all modes of silencing and injustice, the movement opens a political space of expression. In doing so, it not only points to where social institutionality is undemocratic and unjust; in demanding that silencing and oppression cease, it establishes a space for voice, for people to speak for themselves, a space in which to refuse being spoken for. For example, an anti-death penalty movement arises when people refuse complicity in the judicial attribution of revenge that the death penalty signifies; in abjuring revenge as itself unjust, they demand that state-spon-

sored murder cease. A civil rights movement arises when the people racialized by white supremacy refuse being represented as inferior or unready for participation by a culture that superiorizes itself by speaking for them and segregating them under those auspices.⁷ Third party movements continually arise because people refuse to be silenced politically by what they perceive should represent them. But even when third party or community based candidates are elected, they get absorbed into the insularity and autonomy of the legislative culture. The movements that elect them find that the real difficulty involves holding those they elect to speak for them accountable to the movement that put them into office. In other words, their real struggle is not to be silenced by their very attempt to establish a voice in government.

In sum, the existence of social justice movements implies two things: a withholding or disabling of democratic participation by social or political institutions, and a silencing of the people thus institutionally excluded by being spoken for. Beyond the dichotomy between mass mobilizations and organizational forms designed to speak in different ways to institutional policies—a dichotomy that Piven and Cloward see as contradictory and Moyer sees as symbiotic—a social justice movement opens a space of democracy in which people can speak for themselves. (The movement may not empirically comport itself in a democratic fashion, but it provides that potential by standing outside anti-democratic institutionality.)

On the other hand, the autonomy assumed by people speaking for themselves through a movement can only appear to the institutionality that had spoken for them as an act of resistance. In response, institutions develop forms of counter-resistance in order to preserve their legitimacy. Institutional resistance to movements does not necessarily take the form of suppression (such as the firing of all air traffic controllers in 1981 by Pres. Reagan). There are sub-

tlar forms—such as the two party system fielding two pro-war candidates in 2004 in the face of a growing anti-war movement against the war in Iraq. Mary Louise Pratt gives an example of institutional resistance in a story of Native American graduate students in California who asked local high schools to stop using Indian symbols as mascots. “The resistance they encounter comes less from peoples’ attachment to the symbols than from the pain and guilt whites must experience if they acknowledge the racism of the symbols”—which would be an admission of non-legitimacy.⁸

Institutionality is always a complex structuring of advantage, a privileging of those inside (who obtain social integrity as subjects through it) over those outside it who become the (dehumanized) objects of its operations. To contest that boundary on a pro-democracy basis puts the institutional subject-object relation in question, deprivileging the status of those included as “subjects,” as well as their assumed right to speak for its “objects.” When people speak for themselves, they escape institutional domination as objects. No war could be fought if people had subject status that gave them the power to just walk off the field, and countermand orders. To allow people to speak for themselves with respect to war would break the necessary equation between nation and obedience, killing and national security. It would reveal that nothing is more undemocratic, more destructive of democracy and the sovereignty that is its necessary condition, than war.

Thus, institutions must both pretend to be democratic and disparage movement demands for democracy, precisely to preserve their legitimacy as institutions, and their ability to speak for people.⁹ Ironically, what institutional resistance to movements points to is an implicit existential sovereignty that precedes both the movement’s mobilizations and its organizations. It is that sovereignty that forms the basis for confronting institutionality from a poten-

tially democratic space, and grounds its political stance. Sovereignty constitutes the possibility of an alternate political structure outside institutionality. Indeed, sovereignty is the fundamental condition for democracy. If a people or group is to determine their own destiny, they have to be sovereign in that destiny in order to participate in determining it. (In that sense, intervention in another nation, of whatever kind, because it destroys sovereignty, makes democracy impossible for it.)

If an institution is to re-legitimize itself in the face of a confrontation with a social justice movement, it is the movement's sovereignty that it must disrupt, in order to subvert its pro-democratic posture or essence. The level of violence it will allow itself is the measure of its desperation in re-legitimizing itself.

Though political violence or derogatory misrepresentation signifies that power has no other response to a movement's demands for justice, it will often get popular support for those activities. In assaulting a movement, institutions preserve themselves as a pole of social identification for civil society at large; they thus implicitly preserve the mainstream cultural identities constituted by such identification (this is, essentially, a definition of "mainstream"). Popular hostility to social movements always represents such an identification seeking to conserve that cultural identity. Institutional violence (even in arbitrary form), like the revenge ethic of the death penalty, or the dehumanizations performed in prisons, is then seen as re-legitimizing that cultural identity. In restoring the sense of subject status granted people by institutional identification, it transcends issues of democracy or justice. White supremacy, for instance, is always violent toward those it racializes because any sense of dignity in a person of color signifies a sense of autonomy that instantly disrupts a white person's ability to speak for the other, as well as his identification with his culturally concocted supremacy.¹⁰

In sum, while social justice movements arise out of specific institutional injustices, they are given an existentially sovereign character by institutional exclusion, which engenders a pro-democratic alternate political space that transcends their specific demands. It is a place where alternate political structures become possible.

The primary dialectic in which movements find themselves is between their own inclusiveness as sovereign and pro-democratic, and the institutional exclusion that engenders that in them. Standing outside social institutionality because excluded as pro-democratic, they nevertheless remain internal to the socius controlled by that institutionality. Including themselves in social institutionality by making demands on it, they find themselves excluded because of those very demands. They are excluded from institutionality while internal to it, and included in the socius of institutionality while external to it. Thus they reside at the margins of institutionality, turning one face (of critique and social demand) toward institutional injustice, and another face (of program and promise) toward the people of civil society—a border region for institutionality in a sense that invokes the thinking of Gloria Anzaldúa. If we now turn to her work, it will be to ask what a homology between her experience of autonomy and resistance and the existentiality of movement sovereignty and pro-democracy might imply.

THE ECOLOGY OF ANZALDÚA'S BORDER THINKING

A border is an artificial line dividing two zones that would have no distinct existence except for that given by the line drawn between them. It always constitutes a coloniality, a form of domination by those who draw that line over those who did not, and did not want to draw it. It invades under the pretense of repulsing an invader. It

creates invaders by closing what had once been open.

Anzaldúa came from a complex of border regions, a Chicano community at the edge of Anglo US, a woman under the eyes of Chicano and Anglo masculinity, a feminist in contestation to Chicano and Anglo patriarchy, a dark woman thrust away by Mexican and US rejection of indigeneity, a woman of color segregated by white supremacy, and a lesbian expelled from heterosexist gender binaries. She lived these borders within a society to which she belonged, yet which excluded her; a society promising to include her if only she would deny herself for it (BLF,20ff). “Each separate reality and its belief system vies with others to convert you to its worldview” (Home,548). Against this, she included herself through activist resistance—through the autonomy of feminist resistance to patriarchal domination; through anti-racism as resistance to white supremacy; through the gay/lesbian community as itself a form of resistance to sexist gender definition and its nuclear family; and through Chicano/a community resistance to Anglo domination (BLF,38).

To see oneself at those borders, internal to the society guarded by them, yet excluded by that society as other, external to its self-definition while residing in its terrain, is to inhabit what Anzaldúa calls “nepantla,” a place between perspectives, a place where identity assumptions cannot not be in question (Home,548). Nepantla is the interstice between given categories and a state of rebellion, neither a mobilization of patterns of activity nor a reorganization of patterns of power; it is an “overlapping space between different perceptions and belief systems” (Home,541). To inhabit nepantla is to construct an autonomy within and among these “separate realities,” a decision to be authentic to oneself and who one finds oneself to be. For Anzaldúa, it constitutes a bridge between who she was made to be by those border regions, and

who she makes herself be out of what she had been made to be.

From this in-between place, “you see through the fiction of monoculture, the myth of superiority of the white races” (Home,549). Resistance produces the awareness that race, femininity, gender and nation are social categories, not “fixed features of personality or identity” (see note 7). Thus, one can see their inherent coloniality, the creation of inside/outside binaries by those given social categories. One’s space of autonomy becomes an alternate space of consciousness, a new consciousness that allows an “us” not bound by monocultures to germinate. While it disrupts the flow of the given, it permits those including themselves in its fluidity to slow down and transform identity (BLF,46), to transform autonomy itself from a relation to the given to an autonomy that is one’s own. As Anzaldúa says, “I find that autonomy is a boulder on my path that I keep crashing into. I can’t seem to stay out of my own way. I’ve always been aware that there is a greater power than the conscious I. That power is my inner self... [in] all my incarnations. ...someone in me [who] takes matters into our own hands” (BLF,50-51). The “heat” of this transformation, this entry into a border between the self as first person and the self as third, she calls a Coatlicue state. It is a name taken from the Nahuatl tradition of Mexico signifying the keeper of the sacred, the mother who preceded the birth of patriarchy (BLF,46). It embraces all the categories in which she “does not fit,” all her incarnations, as an autonomy for which her experiential rebellion is only a means.¹¹

Residence in nepantla, as awareness of “overlapping perspectives,” opens avenues of thinking beyond it. To bridge the gap requires dialogue with others in order to disseminate the change one brings about in oneself by stepping onto the bridge. Dialogue that understands the inseparability of all these given border regions is central to transcending the binary separation of in-

side and outside that defines each border. "To transform yourself, you need the help...of those who have crossed before you" (Home,557). And those who come after are in the same position. In other words, autonomy and dialogue are the necessary conditions for each other.

If her lesbianism rendered her autonomous as a woman, that autonomy became the power of her feminism, and her autonomy as a feminist woman of color became a force for Chicano/a autonomy and community cohesion. Autonomy as dialogue becomes the methodology of inclusion. "Most people self-define by what they exclude; we define who we are by what we include" (Home,3). Indeed, to speak of inclusion goes beyond mere calls for unity or solidarity; solidarity too often implies an imposed homogeneity, an acceptance of a given "self-definition." Resistance against exclusion is resistance against just such "self-definition," evading the power that pre-defines while simultaneously avoiding demands for assimilation in terms not one's own.

Thus, she includes herself in her own terms against a social inclusion that would have excluded her from herself by making her other than who she was. Resisting the terms of social inclusion that would exclude her from herself, she includes herself in a transformed relation. To include herself as a feminist in a patriarchal Chicano community, she includes herself in Chicano/a resistance against Anglo social exclusion and colonialism, not in solidarity with patriarchy, but as an autonomous woman. It is a sense of expanding autonomy that begins with her embrace of her most intimate being, her sexuality (BLF,20).

To help bridge this sense of inclusive autonomy to the concept of democratic sovereignty already discerned in social justice movements, let us focus a moment on its territorial aspect, the coloniality of the Texas border region from which Anzaldúa comes. Texas was originally part of Mexico, incorporated into the US when the US colo-

nized it (BLF,6ff). The (Chicano) communities descendant from the original Mexicans, now US citizens, found themselves inhabiting the same terrain as a dominant Anglo society that related to them as aliens. The need for psychic and cultural defense against social derogation necessitated the maintenance of much of their Mexican heritage, while facing the demand that they adopt allegiance to the US as citizens. As Mexicans, they were absorbed into an excluding Anglo society, and as US citizens, they are expelled from its socius through its enveloping colonialist overlordship. They are silenced by being spoken for as citizens by a nation that excludes them, and they are silenced as excluded (Mexican/Chicano) people by an Anglo demand that they assimilate into a society that disparages Mexicans and Chicanos. It is a double bind. In such a situation, one cannot move either way without doing violence to oneself.

For Anzaldúa, nepantla transcends this double bind as an autonomy within a social framework that doubly refuses autonomy. It constitutes an alternate foundation, synthesizing incommensurabilities. And again, "Coatlicue" signifies a polydimensional connection to an autonomous tradition that provides a foundation upon which to transcend the paradoxical boundary of inclusive exclusion (BLF,47). It remaps the world, bringing its many dimensions into conjunction rather than contiguity as an intersection of identities. It produces a social domain that itself becomes an inside, a place of inclusion, for which excluding institutionality remains the outside. As outside, a Coatlicue domain becomes an inside for which the given (institutionality) remains outside, not across an us-them boundary because coloniality is not a possibility for it, but as a withdrawal of the acquiescence upon which institutionality relies for its existence (BLF,51).

Thus, Anzaldúa shines a light on the hidden structures of alternate sovereignty that already exist within each social justice

movement, and on the potential (anti-colonialist and de-colonizing) power of that sovereignty as the place of an alternate democracy, a place to speak in a voice no longer spoken for. It embraces its difference from the institutionality to which it opposes itself, and re-presents inclusion in a tradition of democracy that had itself been silenced by institutionality.

THE ECOLOGY OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE

Movements begin from a position of unacknowledged sovereignty, of separateness and an "inner self" that "takes matters into its own hands" (BLF,50). They do not draw the borderline between people and institution, between hegemony and those silenced by it; that line is drawn for them. But each movement inherently opens that political borderline into a socio-political space, a place of *nepantla*, a sovereignty bestowed by exclusion in which it opens a space where voices previously silenced (spoken for) can speak. It becomes a place of participation and possible democracy. Facing in two directions, toward the institutionality that excludes and toward other people subjected to that institutionality, a movement becomes a place of alternate subjectivity. It does this existentially, simply because people get together to change their destiny in some way. The movement provides a consciousness of being able to choose.

This is not the strategic choice Piven and Cloward had elucidated between organization and mobilization. It is a choice of where acquiescence is to stop. Yet this is not irrelevant to the choice of strategy; it mediates that choice through its awareness of legitimacy. To build organization in order to concretely negotiate or influence institutional policy is to accede to the legitimacy of the institution, a recognition the movement often offers in exchange for the institution's treating people with respect and dignity

and not as objects. To focus on mass mobilizations recognizes instead that injustice is institutional, and that human respect and dignity lie within a self-awareness of sovereignty. It marks an erosion of the institution's claims to legitimacy. Though this second strategy still makes concrete demands on institutions, they are disillusioned demands, behind which to constitute alternative structures. Where the first strategy seeks to equalize the power difference between institution and people by strengthening the people to the point of breaking through exclusion (DD,18), the second seeks to equalize by withdrawing support from the institution, causing the excluding wall that relies on that support to crumble.

Empirically, the first path makes sense because institutional exclusion and injustice appear as policy that should ostensibly be changeable politically. Thus, people believe institutional protestations of democracy, and override their experience of their own sovereignty (revealed through institutional exclusion) in the belief that immediate concessions are attainable. When the anti-war movement supported Kerry in 2004, attempting to wield the electoral process for anti-war ends, it was in the belief that the institutions of war were democratic, and that war could actually be institutionally undeclared by people who had no role in declaring it.¹² Against the vague hopes that surround such beliefs, the second path appears hopeless; it requires a level of opposition to acquiescence, a refusal of being defined by institutions, and a level of critical thinking that can maintain a collective recognition that injustice is structural and not simply policy. One must confront what one has had to betray in oneself in one's former acquiescence. It means above all to value the alternate political culture made possible by sovereignty, a value that breaks with institutional identification.

All social justice movements contain both approaches. After all, if injustice were not structural, then why would it require the

formation of a movement outside institutionality? And if it were not policy-driven, why would there be a social movement rather than insurgency? The movement lives in the space between these possibilities, as it lives in the space between institutional hegemony and the people subjected to it.¹³ Each approach may think in the same terms (for instance, anti-racist movements, whether integrationist or for black and brown power, both call for a cessation of white deprecation and depreciation of people of color). That is not where the difference lies. It lies in the value given autonomy.

Let us consider the question of demands, for instance. There are two types of demands a movement can make. When Frederick Douglass said, "power concedes nothing without a demand," he did not differentiate. There are demands to which power can concede, whose terms remain within the scope of its institutional operations (civil liberties reside within the terms of governance, wage rates are within the terms of corporate accounting). And there are demands that require a concession of power itself. A union can demand wages and hours, to which an enterprise can accede within its fiduciary operations; but the union demand for a hiring hall would entail a concession of power over governance of the enterprise. A rent strike to force repairs on tenement buildings simply requires landlords to obey building codes. A neighborhood movement to stop evictions of people who can't pay their rent is a movement demanding the power to transform housing from a commodity to a right.

These two types of demand are not strictly separable. It depends on the surrounding political situation. For instance, the voter registration drives of the mid-1960s that followed the initial lunchcounter sit-ins were carried out by diverse civil rights organizations that united in a movement-wide decision to focus on voting. Tactics varied widely, from ad hoc mobilizations to alternate structures such as the

Lowndes County party and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and from lobbying and court cases to tight forms of collective security against white supremacist violence.¹⁴ In the segregationist south, the demand to register and vote expressed both kinds of demand rolled into one. It was a demand that white supremacist institutions change their policies toward black people registering and voting, and it was a demand that governmental institutions cede the power to participate to black people through the vote itself.

What differentiated the various sectors of the movement was their awareness and evaluation of the sovereignty of the movement itself, which constituted the way each person synthesized the in-between, the nepantla of living the movement as a border region between demands for negotiations and alternate political structures.

The consciousness of that state of being in-between legitimacies could be called "movement consciousness." It is the way people see their relation to institutionality in the context of an awareness of sovereignty. That is, the institutions cease to be the context for one's demands, and movement sovereignty becomes the context for how the institutions are in turn objectified. Sovereignty remains the existential foundation for both, and "movement consciousness" then reflects a sense of inclusion parallel to what Anzaldúa has called a "Coatlicue state." That is, a movement is not just an opposition group led by organized activists seeking to restore "social values," as Moyer posits. A "movement consciousness" signifies how a movement represents the consciousness of those who, having lived institutional injustice, understand it in critical consensus as unlivable, and construct an alternate open space, a place to speak for themselves. Within the vast variety of groups that sprang up in the civil rights movements or the anti-war movements, each with their own critical consensus, all had an awareness of being part of some-

thing big. Their common consensus was their awareness of the necessity for democratic space that provided what institutionality withheld, the place where an Anzaldúan sense of inclusion could occur.

A critical consensus is an internal border between the first person "us" seeing "itself" in the third person as other to what they confront, and confront together, a "nos/otras," as Anzaldúa puts it (a "we" composed of "us" and "others") (Home, 570). Each critical consensus is a collective stand on the justice of one's demands and the direness of people's needs. In other words, "movement consciousness" constitutes a critical environment for people, a social context they have chosen for themselves in which to act politically and give themselves historical meaning.

Because each critical consensus germinates directly from the existential nature of a movement, filling its pro-democratic space, it cannot be put to a vote. To do so would be to impose one on others, breaking the commonality of their foundation the same sovereignty. A vote on strategy would be unintelligible because it would assume a homogeneity proper only to organizational form, and not to movement consciousness. However much each consensus might think others wrong or misguided, their common foundation in sovereignty cannot belong to any one. Indeed, while people choose consensus according to personal temperament and experience, as well as ideology, or organizational form, the existential fact of that choice is not negotiable. The relative strength of integrationist or black power ideas shifted within the civil rights movement according to how people perceived the surrounding political landscape. Such shifts reflect a fluidity whose possibility germinates from the same sovereignty as ground. Anzaldúa would call that fluidity the place of Coatlicue, taking the form of endless dialogue, a slowing down of social motion to allow people to take stock of each other.

This fluidity, this recognition of the possibilities that emerge from movement sovereignty, implies a responsibility. Each movement has a responsibility to understand how the voices it contains demand to speak through it, as well as a responsibility to become a voice against being spoken for. It bears within it what un-silenced voices have to say when they speak through it, on all sides of the issues of strategy. It has a responsibility to express what those voices say, from the places it has itself provided where they are not spoken for.

When this does not happen, a movement reverts to old hegemonies and acquiescences. For instance, the Vietnam anti-war movement eventually became a white movement because the hegemonic thinking of white people involved in it did not know how to step aside and allow those from the racialized internal colonies of the US (black, Latino, Native, Asian) to speak along with themselves. Having already an understanding of coloniality (and that the Vietnam war was a colonialist war), these internal colonies had related strongly to the movement in its early days. But most white people in the movement at that time could not see the existential anti-colonialism of the movement itself, as an alternate sovereignty to the war machine. Thus, it lost its inclusive character.

The environmental movement provides another example. In opposing corporate despoliation of national forest land, it refuses to accept the hegemony of corporate property rights over the world and its people. In extending its reach to environmental racism (a more urban dimension of corporate impunity), however, it does not yet know how to make that an assault on the injustice of housing and neighborhood segregation, which conjoins racialization with property rights. To do so, the environmental movement would have to extend its refusal of corporate property rights not only to a demand that the real estate industry be deracialized, but that housing itself

be seen as a right rather than a commodity.

A movement's responsibility to the many voices within it is an ethical question, an ethical dimension of "movement consciousness." The ethics of responsibility resides within its sovereignty. To refuse to be spoken for means also to refuse to speak for others. This ethical dimension of refusal goes beyond the choices leadership makes with respect to mobilizations and organizations, or which way people choose to turn their autonomous thinking. Whether a movement prioritizes policy demands on institutions or its own alternate structures, this ethical question accompanies its political thinking, as the content of its sovereignty.

Empirically, it would seem that the ground of sovereignty would naturally move people's activity toward building alternate political structures, especially since, in contesting institutional injustice, a movement already constitutes an awareness that injustice is structural, against which it provides a place where justice can envision itself. Yet the question of alternate structures is often waved aside by movement activists who focus on immediate demands, in order to show that the movement can accomplish something real.

Those who follow an electoral strategy, for example, think that electing people to office is proof that the institutions can be used, though holding the elected representative accountable remains a thankless task, requiring direct action. On the other hand, those who engage in direct action see their own repression as proof that injustice is structural, and not simply policy; but then, the necessity to raise money for legal defense absorbs them back into that structure. Thus, a place of encounter between strategies is unavoidable; it is a *nepantla* where the necessity of dialogue becomes the real meaning of the sovereignty, despite and because it produces strategic incommensurabilities. An awareness of the power of sovereignty leads naturally to the building of alternate structures, while an awareness of

the democracy sovereignty makes possible leads naturally to an attempt to realign the institutionalities from which the movement emerged. It is its Coatlicue state that would welcome the incommensurability as a mutual necessity for both those who seek institutional policy change and those who seek to build alternate political structures.

But that is hard to come by. An identification with strategy, comparable to the identification with institutionality from which mainstream people obtain their cultural identity, is very strong. For instance, in the wake of voter registration drives, the civil rights movements divided between integrationists focused on policy demands and running candidates, and a black power movement that sought to counterpose a sense of alternative community sovereignty and self-determination, building neighborhood organizations, unions, and self-help groups against the culture of white supremacy.¹⁵ Both demanded that white society cease its segregation of people of color, and that white people cease speaking for people of color. Integrationism demanded that the social and political spaces from which people of color had been excluded be opened to democratic participation. Black power refused this if it meant adopting the anti-black attitudes of white society, and argued that people of color could not integrate themselves into society until that society ceased constructing its whiteness (or ceased being white altogether) through its exploitation of people of color.

Integrationism countered by saying that to prioritize independence would abjure the claim on society to which the labor of centuries entitled black people. For black power advocates, if integration meant adopting the anti-black attitudes of white society, it would thus affirm social injustice. For integrationists, if black power meant separatism, it would similarly maintain social injustice by abandoning the mass of black people to white supremacy. For the former, integrationism represented an irre-

sponsibility toward black communal consciousness; for the latter, the former represented an irresponsibility to a legitimate claim on the present from the past. Neither by itself was ethically adequate to the legitimacy of the black voices constituting the political space of the movement. Yet both thought of themselves as the only road to realism. And neither would realistically have had the social weight they did without the other.

A similar process unfolded in the Vietnam anti-war movement between those who focused on direct action—anti-draft organizing, stopping troop trains, building resistance inside the military—and others who considered themselves a “peace movement,” focusing on electoral campaigns, lobbying Congresspeople, getting city council resolutions passed, etc. Considerable acrimony developed. The pro-lobbyists accused the direct actionists of antagonizing those undecided (middle-of-the-road) persons that they were trying to reach; the direct actionists accused the pro-lobbyists of abandoning them, isolating them, and thus aiding government repression of the movement as a whole.

Ultimately, it is the meandering itself of movement consciousness among strategies that constitutes an alternate subjectivity beyond that of institutional or strategy identification. That meandering occurs in three dimensions at once: toward the institution that excludes it, toward the people to whom it offers sovereignty and the ability to speak for themselves, and toward the fluidity of dialogue between these critical consensus. It is an ethical relation toward the internal space of the movement, its slowing down and taking stock of its confrontations and negotiations. The sovereignty of a movement is not the resolution or synthesis of these different meanderings among strategies; it is their common foundation, the necessary condition for their possibility.

No organizational structure could concretize their unification, nor mobilization

express all of a movement’s voices. In-between, there is the place and the ethics of sovereignty itself. Within this space, the demand for justice becomes both a cultural identity and its opposite, a participation in pro-democratic process.

NOTES

1. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Hereafter PPM.

2. Bill Moyer, *Doing Democracy* (New Society Publishers, 2001), p. 5. Hereafter DD. Moyer sets out 8 stages of movement development that oscillate between peaks and depressions, and how activists can transcend moments that look like failures. His focus is on building movement activity that will induce policy changes in given institutions of power. His vision of movements remains limited to a leadership ethic. Piven and Cloward set out basically three stages (PPM,3), and would criticize Moyer for seeing the force of popular mobilization as tactical, for the purpose of restructuring given social institutions to which it gives access, rather than demanding institutional accommodation to itself.

3. It is one of those cases where both are right, but touching different parts of the elephant. The economic position of the US right after World War II, and the emerging Cold War were directly relevant to the flourishing of social justice movements. On the one hand, a hegemonic world position undermined the desire by the US elite to continue withholding rights from its citizens. And on the other hand, a significant number of early civil rights organizers were black Korean War veterans, who thought they had fought for democracy only to return home to continued segregation and disenfranchisement. They initiated the critique that called in question US white messianic pretensions. Cf. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle, SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1981); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Hal Draper, *Berkeley: the New Student Revolt* (New York: Grove Press, 1965); Louis Lomax, *The*

Negro Revolt (New York: Harper, 1962).

4. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Press, 1987). Hereafter BLF.

5. The death penalty represents a culturally sanctioned revenge ethic that abandons through self-contradiction all pretense of justice. It contradicts the sanctity of life that it pretends to restore through killing. To place a revenge ethic at the core of a judicial structure is to abandon justice to dehumanized spectacle, and to the raw power that is generated by reserving the right to kill. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

6. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988).

7. Recent scholarship has argued that "race" is not a noun, but a verb; the verb is "to racialize," and it is something that one group of people does to another. In particular, the modern concept of race was invented by European colonialism to hierarchize its relation to those it colonized on a basis that could be "naturalized." In inventing itself as "white" by these means, Europeans became the only group having an interest in "race," or in racializing others, as essential to their own white racialized identity. Cf. Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (New York: Verso, 1996); Steve Martinot, *The Rule of Racialization* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2003). As Anzaldúa says, seeing oneself within a liminal border region, "a demythologization of race occurs. You begin to see race as an experience of reality...not as a fixed feature of personality or identity." Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, eds. *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions of Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 549. Hereafter Home.

In the US, the death penalty has ineluctable ties to white supremacy, stemming from the arbitrary and vindictive power over life and death inherent in the slave system. The revenge ethic embedded in the death penalty is an echo of slavery's barbaric responses to the slightest disobedience. Cf. Saidiya Hartmann, *Scenes of Subjection* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997).

8. Mary Louise Pratt, "Apocalypse in the Andes," in *Encuentros* (IDB Cultural Center), no. 15, March 1996, p. 15.

9. The most common form of disparagement is to label a movement "protest." To reduce it to "protest" pretends that the movement is only expressing belated dissatisfaction with a decision-process, rather than an opposition to injustice. It refuses to hear the substance of the movement's political position, except through additional denigrations, such as "treason" or "anti-Americanism" as levied against anti-war movements.

10. It is against this identification with institutionality that Moyer projects the notion of "basic social values," by which he theorizes the ability of movement activists to build democratic resistance to arbitrary institutional power. His thesis is that return to those basic values will supersede the social status that accompanies the cultural identity produced by identification with those institutions (DD,16-17). The general acceptance of US interventionism, the constancy of residential segregation, and the anti-immigrant movement, would call in question his assumption of what those "basic social values" really were.

11. Gloria Anzaldúa, "La Prieta," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, eds. Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981), p. 205.

12. Steve Martinot, "Pro-Democracy and the Ethics of Refusal," *Socialism and Democracy*, vol. 19, no. 2, July 2005.

13. Piven and Cloward elucidate the conflict and separation of these strategies. Moyer advocates opportunistically prioritizing one in order to put it in the service of the other. Other sociological approaches begin by interpreting movements as searches for identity, ignoring the protestations of injustice the rejection of which places people outside institutions and thus outside the identities given by them; or they see their (sociologist) role as discovering the true interests and ideologies of a movement, as if they can't take the movement's word for what it is doing. Cf. *New Social Movements*, eds. Enrique Larana, Hank Johnson, and Joseph Gusfield (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1994).

14. Hanes Walton, *Black Political Parties*, (New York: Free Press, 1972).

15. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967).