

# Weaving Transnational Activist Networks: Balancing International and Bottom-up Capacity-building Strategies for Nonviolent Action in Latin America\*

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Latin America has been a laboratory for innovative strategic nonviolent action to confront oppression, corruption, human rights violations, and authoritarianism. One of the most salient explanations for why some movements achieve greater scale and effectiveness in meeting their objectives is the skills of movement organizers in unifying the population, planning strategic moves, and maintaining nonviolent discipline. The training and education to improve these skills often requires resources, transnational networks, and information sharing from external actors to complement the contextual knowledge, local legitimacy, and embedded institutional networks of local insiders. This essay proposes a model for international support of nonviolent action training and education that avoids the pitfalls of imposed liberal peacebuilding and colonizing hierarchies that could undermine movement legitimacy and expose activists to greater scrutiny and repression. In order to illustrate how the model works in practice, the essay examines the case of the Regional Institute for the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Action in the Americas.

**Keywords:** nonviolent conflict; education; training; peacebuilding; Latin America; civil resistance; transnational networks

## Introduction

Nonviolent civil resistance is a powerful approach that has been used to mobilize populations against injustice, repression, and occupation. It has pitted “people power” against corrupt corporations and political leaders, violent authoritarianism, human rights abuses, violent nonstate actors’ encroachment on local territories, and discriminatory social practices, among many others (Sharp 2005; Mouly, Garrido, and Idler 2016; Greene 2017; Peñaranda and Sulewski 2018). The number of nonviolent campaigns has increased over the past two decades, and the vast majority of which, and

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those that are most successful in ushering in meaningful democratic improvement, are bottom-up, based on broad coalitions of civil society actors (Karatnycky and Ackerman 2005). In Latin America, such nonviolent movements are sometimes seen as alternative “vectors of contestation” to more institutional forms of electoral and partisan competition (Schock 2003; Pugh 2008) and have often led to a deepening of democratic participation and concessions by governments (Greene 2017; McManus, and Schlabach 1991).

Ackerman and Merriman (2015) argue that the success of such movements, in contrast to conventional wisdom, is primarily due not to structural, political, or environmental factors like the repressiveness of the opponent, the wealth of the society, or the regime type. Instead, they argue: “Skills and strategic choice often matter more than conditions in determining the outcomes of these conflicts” (67). The agency of those involved in nonviolent struggles, the strategies they design, the choices they make, and their organizational acumen—all of which require skills—are more important than conditions, and success is possible regardless of political and economic contextual factors. Several studies have employed systematic data collection on a large number of transitions and nonviolent, as well as violent, campaigns and offered empirical support for this argument; they found that conditions do not offer a statistically significant explanation for success (Marchant et al. 2008) and that nonviolent more than violent movements succeed across a wide range of political and economic contexts (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

If this is the case, then it follows that capacity building to increase the skill level of organizers and activists in key sectors of a society would be critical in scaling up nonviolent resistance efforts to a level that can mobilize large sectors of the population and achieve enough leverage to influence political outcomes. As Ackerman and Merriman argue: “The skillful civil resistance leader wants to create disruption in order to maximize defections and optimally wants to employ tactics where relatively small disruptions lead to large numbers of defections” (2015, 68). The three key skills that these authors identify as contributing most to the leader’s potential for achieving this are the ability to unify people,<sup>1</sup> operational planning, and nonviolent discipline.

The ability to unify depends on skills in aggregating interests into a coherent vision that can attract a broad base of support, negotiating and maintaining coalitions, and building unity around well-selected strategic goals. These skills as well as operational planning and nonviolent discipline require study, training, practice, and strategy. If these are the key factors in movement success, how might nonviolent activists wishing to increase their effectiveness and scale up their efforts acquire such skills? This essay examines the potential role that external, international actors can play in helping such activists build capacity, while examining a pedagogical model that avoids the potential pitfalls of a colonizing and hierarchical form of assistance that could undermine the legitimacy and goals of nonviolent movements. Recognizing that knowledge, resources, and relationships must cross two borders that are marked by inequalities and hierarchies of privilege—national borders and

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<sup>1</sup> “Unity” as a concept can be thought of as having three critical dimensions: unity of purpose (agreement on ends and means), unity of organization (different echelons of participants/leaders cooperating cohesively), and unity of people (different demographic groups cooperating cohesively). See Popovich et al. (2007). Each of these different dimensions calls for distinct skills on the part of movement organizers.

educational/scholarly boundaries between “experts” and activists being studied—the essay proposes ways to rethink hierarchical social relations and structures of knowledge production and dissemination. It then illustrates the plausibility of this model through the experiential case of the Regional Institute for the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Action in the Americas.

## **International Skills Training and Education**

A veritable cottage industry of providers of training in conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills has emerged in the past two decades, guided by the theory of change that, with greater knowledge of conflict resolution skills, people in conflict contexts can resolve problems peacefully and nonviolently (Dudouet 2017; Pugh, Sulewski, and Moreno 2017). These efforts have increasingly attracted support from large international donors and have been incorporated into international development assistance strategies, with relevant bureaus and offices being established in USAID, the U.S. State Department, United Nations, Japanese foreign ministry, and others (Stephan 2016). Programs like Fulbright and a plethora of international education programs dedicated to peace and conflict (including more than twenty in Latin America by one recent count) have introduced this type of training and expanded transnational academic linkages (Pugh and Ross 2017). There is evidence that the presence of such efforts and the international connections between them and the NGOs and IGOs they support have in many cases led to reduced violence and international conflict (Wilson, Davis, and Murdie 2016; Pugh 2016; Rincón, Sánchez, and Pugh, forthcoming).

Going beyond conflict *resolution* approaches, nonviolent action has also attracted increasing international support, with success stories like the Color Revolutions in Eastern Europe and cases elsewhere pointing to the importance of skills training and knowledge sharing by groups like the Centre for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS, composed of former student activists in the Serbian Otpor campaign), the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC), the Open Society Foundation, and the National Endowment for Democracy. Cited by grassroots activists as increasing their capacity to wage nonviolent struggle in their local contexts are: the video documentary *A Force More Powerful*, the video game training simulation *People Power*, and the books of Gene Sharp’s Albert Einstein Institution, especially his 198 Nonviolent Methods Checklist. Some scholars, pointing out the overlap and complementarity between peacebuilding and nonviolent action approaches, have argued that international donors should increase their support of programs and platforms that can combine both, accompanying grassroots actors in their efforts for justice and adding pressure to turn the leverage they gain into negotiations for peace (Dudouet 2011, 2017; Stephan 2016; Stephan, Lakhani and Naviwala 2015).

## Critical Perspectives on Transnational Solidarity for Nonviolent Action

However, an important critique is raised by critical peacebuilding scholars: that many of these efforts, channeled through state agencies, intergovernmental organizations, or large NGOs or universities based in the Global North, often reinforce rather than transform the power hierarchies embedded in the liberal international order, to the detriment of the agency of those struggling against such oppressive structures in the Global South (Denskus 2007; Mac Ginty 2011).

In Latin America, such critiques have emphasized the importance of bottom-up organizing strategies that avoid mimicking or merely replicating the “development” and conflict resolution models imported from the Global North, and particularly the United States (Wehr and Lederach 1991; Gutiérrez 1988; Freire 1968; Smith and Verdeja 2013). Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, the Argentine founder of Service Peace and Justice (Servicio Paz y Justicia, SERPAJ), observed:

Most of the time when people talk of nonviolence, they talk about street action, about confrontation with the police. But the issue goes beyond the police to the system. Nonviolence means work in education, in health, in the environment, in economics—a nonviolent economics, because the economy we now have is very violent. We lack alternatives that expand the social, political, economic, and technological horizons of nonviolence to their fullest extent. It is necessary to begin to have a much more holistic vision of how nonviolence can liberate. (1991, 247)

Education for nonviolent action in this conception, then, must be not only about experts educating people in Latin America about specific techniques and concepts, but restructuring the form of education so that it connects and liberates communities and peoples, rather than isolating and stratifying the “enlightened teachers” from the “ignorant learners.”

The eminent Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez framed this argument through the lens of liberation theology, recognizing the heavy influence of the church and its moral framework in the region: “A broad and deep aspiration for liberation inflames the history of human-kind in our day, liberation from all that limits or keeps human beings from self-fulfillment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom. Proof of this is the awareness of new and subtle forms of oppression in the heart of advanced industrial societies, which often offer themselves as models to the underdeveloped countries” (1988, 17).

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1968) criticized dominant educational and training models as contributing not to liberation and transformation, but as replicating the structures of dependency and domination. He argued that the “banking model” that assumes an outside, elite expert who fills the empty heads of students with content is less helpful than a dialogical, elicitive strategy in which knowledge is mutually produced. This approach assumes that everyone brings to an educational

encounter important insights and life experiences and that the creation of knowledge is reciprocal, collective, and nonhierarchical.

Taking this critique a step further, Ivan Illich (1968) offered a provocative and cutting reprimand of international service and volunteer programs and of the students who came to “help” and “serve” their Latin American counterparts through them, in a famous speech in Mexico. He argued that such programs reproduced North-South power hierarchies and inequalities and undermined local priorities and agency in favor of paternalism and self-serving feelings of accomplishment by the young “helpers.”

Given these cautionary critiques, then, how can outsiders and local insiders complement each other in designing educational and organizing spaces to empower activists wishing to use nonviolent action to pursue strategic political goals, oppose repression, and/or improve democratic outcomes?

## **A Balanced Approach to Transnational Network Solidarity**

Two primary ways that outsiders can contribute to capacity building for nonviolent activists without reinforcing oppressive hierarchies are to: a.) facilitate knowledge sharing and act as channels for demonstration effects as they share research findings, general concepts and techniques, and experiences that have worked in other contexts, offering repertoires from which local activists can select, innovate, and adapt; b.) provide resources, convening experience and facilitation expertise and contacts to bring together compatible and experienced activists from the region, and provide an accompanying infrastructure to support efforts to build and maintain networked relationships and transnational structures of mutual support.

Outsiders are unlikely to play a constructive role in nonviolent campaigns by attempting to direct the goals, generate/manipulate grievances, influence targets, or pour in large-scale funding for a campaign itself, because legitimacy is the primary currency of nonviolent organizers attempting to build broad participation. Thus, these activities can undermine the legitimacy of a grassroots movement by allowing opponents and regimes (and potential allies) to credibly question the widespread domestic support for the movement’s goals or to dismiss the movement as “paid” and “foreign-led.”

Instead, transnational networks and resources can help strengthen domestic activists who have already identified a goal with broad support among the population by transmitting knowledge about what has worked elsewhere and motivation that success is possible, by sharing experiences and studies that might contradict the rhetoric of domestic regimes. They can also help by supporting spaces and platforms that allow activists to meet, deliberate, coordinate with each other, and strategize to accomplish their goals. Gleditsch and Rivera (2017) argue that the demonstration effects of successful campaigns in other countries can be quite important in making it more likely that nonviolent action will occur and scale up. They point to the importance of geographic proximity, claiming that such

diffusion is particularly likely in neighboring states, given similar regional context and easier access to personal interactions among activists.

Transnational networks can also provide linkages to disseminate the voices and stories of those experiencing repression during the campaign to a broader international audience of potential allies who can put diplomatic, economic, or other forms of pressure on the regime or opponent. Keck and Sikkink (1998) describe a “boomerang effect” in which these strengthened transnational network ties can increase the leverage of domestic activists in achieving change. Outside governmental and corporate actors can invest in promoting the general opening of democratic spaces and in removing their consent and support for oppressive governments that are impeding the movement’s organizing and expression. Despite these potentially helpful roles for outsiders, the key decision making, strategizing, goal setting, and mobilization functions of a nonviolent movement must be carried out by insiders with credibility and legitimacy within their own context and with a direct stake in the outcome.

Gerald Schlabach cautions North American promoters of nonviolent action that the understanding of nonviolence in Latin America is less about individuals mastering and training others in a set of tools that work, and more about the “building or rescuing of community,” reminding the rest of society about the values, culture, and common history that bind them together and that require inspired resistance to oppression and division. He says: “Latin American nonviolence reminds us that no direct action, however dramatic and media-grabbing, can take the place of patient, persistent, and empathetic grassroots political education and community organization... Too much emphasis on the ‘direct action’ part of ‘nonviolent direct action’ may actually alienate peace and social activists from our own peoples” (Schlabach 1991, 259–260). For this reason, while the “training” part of nonviolent action pedagogy is certainly important for sharing lessons learned and inspiring tactical innovation, the transnational community-building component that follows, in which structures and relationships facilitate stronger ties of trust and empathy, may be even more critical for deep and meaningful change.

## **Illustrating the Model: The Latin American Regional Institute**

I turn now to an illustrative example in order to show the types of interactions through which institutions and allies in the Global North and in Latin America can partner with each other to increase capacity and organizational skills and strengthen networks of activists in the region. The Latin American Regional Institute for the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Action launched its

inaugural cohort in a week-long training in Quito, Ecuador, in February 2018.<sup>2</sup> The Regional Institute is a cooperative program organized by four institutions: the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC), FLACSO Ecuador, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE), and the Center for Mediation, Peace, and Resolution of Conflict (CEMPROC). The program received more than 125 applications from activists, academics, professionals, students, and others from 25 countries, including most of those in Latin America and several from elsewhere (see Figure 1). Ultimately, 35 participants from 11 countries came together to learn about strategic nonviolent action, share their own experiences and lessons learned with each other, and develop plans to mobilize their new transnational social capital to strengthen and scale up their campaigns. Several of the activists were included as cotrainers, sharing case studies from their own experiences in five different countries in the region. All participants were given the opportunity to share information about their campaigns through a poster exhibit that facilitated exposure to new tactics and methods, as well as relationship building among activists, scholars, and institutional representatives. There was a core facilitation team of ICNC staff and partners, a FLACSO professor, and several guest instructors from PUCE and elsewhere, representing at least six different countries.

**Figure 1: Geographic Representation of the Applicant Pool**



ICNC is one of the leading international NGOs working on education, research, and advocacy around nonviolent action, having been founded in Washington, DC, in 2002 “to develop and share knowledge related to nonviolent civil resistance and its practice with interested recipients throughout

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<sup>2</sup> The author, engaged in action research, was part of the organizing committee during the planning phase of this institute, although not physically present during the program. He is grateful to the organizing partner institutions for making the event possible: to ICNC for its financial support (as well as its central role in developing, planning, and facilitating the program); to the University of Massachusetts Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security and Global Governance, which helped fund some of the research assistance for this project and the travel of one of the activist/scholars; and to the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies (MACLAS) whose Wladyslaw Maryan Froelich Research Award made possible the participation of several activist/scholars. He acknowledges that his positionality as a white man born in the United States, who lived in Ecuador for a year and studied, worked, and traveled there regularly for fifteen years, may influence the ways he perceives and interprets the impact of this program for nonviolent action campaigns and transnational activist networks in Latin America.

the world.”<sup>3</sup> FLACSO and CEMPROC—both of which have a long history of working on issues of peace in Ecuador, FLACSO since 1974 and CEMPROC since 2003—have convened international educational courses for several years on conflict transformation. The combined expertise of the host institutions and the reach of their networks among Latin American activists and scholars were quite significant, but ICNC in particular does not have a long history of working in a sustained way within Latin America, so some of the questions about outsider allies raised earlier in this essay became relevant. For ten years, ICNC’s flagship educational program had been a summer institute held at the Fletcher School at Tufts University in Boston. According to ICNC President Hardy Merriman, however, they made the strategic decision to discontinue that program and shift to a strategy of regional hubs that would create sustainable institutes in different geographic regions, starting with Latin America. The reasons were partly a function of the success of the summer institute—demand was far outstripping ICNC’s capacity to meet it, showing a need to scale up—and partly a recognition of the reality that geographic proximity makes subsequent coalition building and mutual support in movement organizing more likely (Gleditsch and Rivera 2017). Those who attend a training together are more likely to collaborate on specific action plans if they are from the same country, or at least the same regional context (say Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, for example).<sup>4</sup> By partnering with institutions with an established reputation in the region, ICNC enhanced the local credibility of the institute with key target populations and activists.

The participants were carefully selected to ensure that there was diverse representation by experienced activists and academics from a variety of countries and issue areas, but who had enough common interests to engage in helpful and supportive knowledge exchange. Many had direct experience participating in nonviolent campaigns. For example, the following was reported regarding one participant: “‘Sara,’ helped to found a nonviolent resistance movement of women in [her home country] that use public singing of traditional harvest songs to denounce abuses by the state and demand changes in oppressive state policies. She now helps to coordinate a training initiative for nonviolent action that seeks to develop linkages between universities, NGOs, and other citizen groups.”<sup>5</sup>

It was important to combine the presentation of research findings and experiences from outside the region with a platform that elicited the shared knowledge of the group, given the intention that the participants learn as much from each other as from the facilitation team. This type of learning also bolsters the legitimacy of the strategies and campaigns that the participants design using the tools acquired during the program, as they are the ones deciding on the strategic application of particular concepts and tactics in their own contexts. While the regional institute provided scholarships to some participants to increase access for grassroots actors from resource-poor contexts or from countries experiencing currency inflation crises, funding aimed to help individual activists travel to the institute to develop their skills and education, rather than directly finance their specific campaigns.

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<sup>3</sup> See ICNC mission statement at <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/about/icncs-mission/>.

<sup>4</sup> Telephone interview with ICNC President Hardy Merriman, March 22, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Profile from the 2018 public brochure, “Regional Institute for the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Action.”



Both of these factors (external/internal) were important in balancing the need for resources and information that only outside actors (ICNC) had with the critical local contextual knowledge and networked linkages that only activists from Latin America would have. As Merriman argued: “Movements are driven by indigenous energy, and the movement’s legitimacy is paramount, because its nature is voluntary... They grow or contract based on the participation of ordinary people. Legitimacy and authentic representation are essential if you are going to build your grassroots base.” He explained that a movement that receives direct financial assistance from sources that could be viewed with suspicion by their populations (i.e., from foreign governments or corporations) may have a harder time mobilizing people to participate and may increase the likelihood that their government will target them for repression or persecute them.<sup>6</sup> NGOs and other civil society actors may have an advantage in the type of support and assistance they can offer without doing harm to a movement’s legitimacy.

## **Preliminary Evidence of Impact**

Although a longer time horizon is needed to fully assess the impact of the regional institute’s educational model on concrete campaign effectiveness and scaling up,<sup>7</sup> the immediate outcomes seem to align with the organizers’ goals of creating a space for reciprocal knowledge sharing, high quality skills training, and transnational network building. In the final evaluation, participants tellingly had the most positive perceptions of the peer learning and relationship-building aspects of the institute. In response to the statement, “The contacts and relationships that I gained from the program will be relevant in my current and future study/work/activities,” and the statement, “I learned about nonviolent action and civil resistance from other course participants,” the mean responses were 4.9 out of 5 on a scale in which 5 indicated strong agreement. In the words of one participant: “The program on nonviolent civil strategy was very nourishing, both for its content and also for creating a space for coordination among peers, a space to meet, connect, and start working together.” Another reflected: “The program allowed us to enrich our knowledge of the importance of nonviolence. The experiences shared about nonviolent actions in Latin America permitted us to reflect on the needs and challenges that we live with and how these experiences support initiatives to adapt or replicate methods, campaigns, models, and movement dynamics in order to achieve our goals” (“Final Report” 2018). The crucial observation in this reflection is that the learning platform provided by the external organizers was essential for bringing people together and exposing them to new ideas, but the activists themselves then adapted these techniques and models to more effectively achieve the goals that their movements had already developed. Finally, a third participant evoked the logic of Lederach’s relational web (2005) within a shared geographic context and of Freire’s conception of reciprocal and liberatory

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<sup>6</sup> Telephone interview with ICNC President Hardy Merriman, March 22, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The literature on international education focused on peace and conflict shows that encounters and courses that bring together participants from different conflict contexts or countries can have longer-term political, professional, and networking effects that promote peace (Ross 2017; Pugh 2013; Pugh and Ross 2017). The current research hopes to extend this research agenda to evaluate the impact of international training and educational spaces for strategic nonviolent action organizing.

pedagogy (1968), saying: “This program was a space for collective learning, a space to weave together networks among the various nonviolent resistances in the Americas” (“Final Report” 2018).<sup>8</sup>

A pre-program and post-program survey provided additional evidence that there was significant learning and attitude change as a result of participation, and that activists valued the networks they formed and the information sharing above all other outcomes. The level of knowledge about nonviolent movements and participants’ comfort level in discussing nonviolent action were the two indicators that increased the most from the beginning to the end of the program. In an indication that this program model differed somewhat from standard forms of international support that participants might have experienced previously, they said before the program that the most important things they expected to gain were knowledge about sources of financial support and knowledge of theories and concepts about nonviolent action, while the final outcome was somewhat different. After the program, the top outcomes that participants considered most important were the contacts/professional networks they had gained and knowledge they had shared—both concepts and specific cases from the region. When asked to name as many methods of nonviolent action and specific movements as they could, both the average number of methods and specific movements mentioned increased from the pre-test to the post-test. The importance of having a geographically-focused regional institute was highlighted by the fact that the percentage of the movements mentioned that were from Latin America doubled from 31% in the pre-program survey to 60% in the post-program survey (“Final Report” 2018).

Learning about campaigns in similar, geographically proximate contexts from others engaged in those campaigns facilitated the participants’ ability to identify with and apply lessons from these other cases to their own context. It also made for more constructive working groups and network structures that will permit them to continue supporting each other in carrying out nonviolent action in the future. These transnational connections—maintained through Facebook and WhatsApp groups, personal connections, and regular e-mail updates—can be a valuable resource for activists needing to disseminate on-the-ground stories of their struggles to potential international allies, or scale up the scope of their campaigns (Tarrow 2005), or call on support and pressure from transnational coalitions and activists abroad who can apply pressure to their governments in support of movement goals (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

A number of the participants did in fact use these networks in the months after the program to disseminate news of human rights violations and repression that they witnessed, to call on their friends in other countries to contact decisionmakers to stop arbitrary arrests of social leaders, to share information about grant competitions, and to establish other crucial connections that aided the work of grassroots activists. The types of conflicts in which transnational solidarity can be helpful range from a petition demanding the enforcement of a judge’s injunction suspending a mega-mining project in an Ecuadorian town because of procedural and rights violations (“¡Por el Macizo...!” 2018) to

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<sup>8</sup> All translations are mine.

denouncing the false arrest and assassination of human rights defenders in Colombia (“Afro-Colombian” 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Especially considering the history of negative U.S. intervention in the region (i.e., Guatemala 1954, Chile 1973, etc.), the constructive re-imagining of relationships between Latin American activists and U.S. NGOs, universities, and institutions to be more networked and less hierarchical is important. While allies in the Global North should not lead or monopolize the agenda, they can contribute to the work of nonviolent activists precisely because of their residence in and near the seats of global power and the instigators of many of the unjust systems that affect Latin America: “Local, faith, and justice communities built from the bottom-up are absolutely fundamental, but the nonviolence of small groups cannot take on international systems of hegemony alone. Where the powers that be are international in structure, nonviolent action and networks of solidarity must also be international” (Schlabach 1991, 260).

The regional institute also provided an infrastructure for connecting activists and scholars to produce grounded research contextualized within the Latin American region, including contributions to this special issue of *MARLAS*, that can advance the study of the field of nonviolent action and civil resistance in the region (Peñaranda and Sulewski 2018; Ikeda 2018; Lopez and Burger 2018). These transnational research collaborations play an important role in reshaping the power imbalances of research, as Vasundhara Jairath argues:

By moving centers of knowledge production out of the dominant North and into the South, we arrive at a process of knowledge production more grounded in the conditions of the South. If the historically constructed division between white Western researchers studying the nonwhite incommensurate other is to be challenged not only at the level of individual endeavor but as a structural and systemic challenge, it is through this conscious move toward greater academic collaboration and exchange among the countries of the global South. Given their long histories of colonization, even while exceedingly diverse, the South is placed in a particularly critical position in the project of the decolonization of knowledge. (Jairath 2015, 23)

As the regional institute grows and incorporates a larger and more diverse group of scholars from countries across Latin America as well as the Global North, the hope is that it will produce collaborations that disrupt colonial hierarchies of knowledge production.

This essay has sought to contribute to the literature on strategic nonviolent action by arguing that training and education of activists and nonviolent movement leaders represents a crucial intervention in scaling up and increasing the effectiveness of such movements. It has made the case

that outside actors can be helpful in supporting such educational interventions if they are careful to play a supporting role in creating platforms for reciprocal knowledge sharing and fostering transnational relational networks. These external actors should defer to insiders to determine the goals, strategies, and form of their movement in a way that makes sense in their own context. Examining the case of the Latin American Regional Institute for the Study and Practice of Strategic Nonviolent Conflict, this essay has illustrated the potential for such a model to work in promoting nonviolent change in the region.

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