

Review of 'A Guide to Civil Resistance: A Bibliography of Social Movements and Nonviolent Action. Volume 2'

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ABSTRACT: Review of Carter, A., Clark, H., and Randle, M. *A Guide to Civil Resistance: A Bibliography of Social Movements and Nonviolent Action. Volume 2*. London: Merlin Press, 2015.

Keywords: civil resistance; social movements; nonviolence; bibliography



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This is the second volume of *A Guide to Civil Resistance: a bibliography of social movements and nonviolent action*. The bibliography was originally conceived to provide a history and account of the development of social movements over the last seventy years, and signpost directions for future development. The contributors to the bibliography have long been involved in peace movements themselves; Michael Randle and April Carter met shortly before the 1957 Aldermaston march, and have been working and contributing together since. Howard Clark had chaired the *War Resisters International* with which both Michael and April were involved, until his early death at the end of 2013.

Volume 1, originally published in 2006 but greatly revised and updated in 2013, was organised broadly geographically (with sections on Africa and former Communist states) and charted key people-power movements and their resistance to authoritarian regimes.¹ The revised version included much greater coverage of the Arab uprisings, the Occupy movement, and greater coverage of Sub-Saharan African social movements.

In contrast, Volume 2 is organised thematically around social movements which use nonviolent action. Sections cover social and economic justice, environmental protest, indigenous movements, peace movements since 1945, resistance movements against specific wars, feminist movements, LGBT movements, campaigns against governments, campaigns for civic, cultural or national rights, and concludes with resources on NVDA training. Many of the sections include examples of some of the more creative tactics employed by social movements, factory occupations, land squats etc. which show a development from the traditional tactics of resistance, street demonstrations and lobbying for change.

Each section begins with a short essay to give context to the history of the social movement in question. The essays are explicitly international, drawing on a variety of geographical examples, and make explicit mention of social class throughout. Because of the huge breadth of social movements—and writings about them—this is obviously not a comprehensive and exhaustive bibliography. While it is by necessity indicative, it ably manages to feel inclusive in that examples are brought together from a wide range of contexts, geographies and settings and largely from the perspectives of the actors within the social movements themselves. It also manages to maintain an international dimension in the examples with a select few from a UK perspective (the main contributors to the bibliography all hail from the UK despite engagement with nonviolent movements around the world).

One stated criteria for inclusion is that the works are coming from an explicitly *activist* or

¹ Volume 1 is available completely searchable at: <http://civilresistance.info/>

activist sympathetic perspective. The majority of the entries are annotated to give greater context and overview—particularly useful as much of the content is natively print. Although the items in the bibliography are mostly written in the English language, there are a select list of general titles on nonviolence in French, German, and Spanish at the end.

The section on social and economic justice is huge in its scope. From workers struggles, to housing, land, and corporate control of daily life. There are then a number of interconnected struggles which deal with the sections on multinational corporations and global economic infrastructure (e.g. IMF, World Bank) that have created an environment which enabled the financial crisis of 2008 and ultimately the movements which emerged in resistance to the 2008 crisis, the Indignados, Occupy etc. but link these back to movements in Latin America in the late 1990s.

The bibliography signposts several other resources, firstly the accompanying website at <http://civilresistance.info> which as well as being the home to the online version of Volume 1 (and hopefully soon Volume 2 also²), has made several other out of print works on nonviolence available online. If the bibliography is able to continue to expand and update online as the compilers have intimated they would like it to do, it will truly become a key resource for activists, students, and historians of social change movements. The other key resource the bibliography cites is *Commonweal Collection*,³ the peace and nonviolent social change library based at the University of Bradford, of which both Michael Randle and April Carter have been trustees over its 60 year history. Where this bibliography introduces the reader to social movements often otherwise lost or hard to discover, the Commonweal Collection and the University Special Collections house primary research materials relating to many of the social movements in question.⁴

So in conclusion, *A guide to civil resistance* is not just a bibliography but a guide for activists and students of social change to get better informed of the history and development of nonviolent and social movement ideas throughout the world, and hopefully will continue to develop into an increasingly useful source over time.

2 A grant has recently been secured to allow this work to take place.

3 Commonweal Collection is a nonviolence and social change library housed at the University of Bradford (although still run by an independent trust). More information about Commonweal can be found at: <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/library/sites-and-collections/commonweal-collection/>

4 <http://www.brad.ac.uk/library/special-collections/>