



# How Nonviolence Protects the State

*Peter Gelderloos*

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Since the civil rights era, the doctrine of nonviolence has enjoyed near-universal acceptance by the US Left. Today protest is often shaped by cooperation with state authorities—even organizers of rallies against police brutality apply for police permits, and anti-imperialists usually stop short of supporting self-defense and armed resistance. *How Nonviolence Protects the State* challenges the belief that nonviolence is the only way to fight for a better world. In a call bound to stir controversy and lively debate, Peter Gelderloos invites activists to consider diverse tactics, passionately arguing that exclusive nonviolence often acts to reinforce the same structures of oppression that activists seek to overthrow.

Contemporary movements for social change face plenty of difficult questions, but sometimes matters of strategy and tactics receive low priority. Many North American activists fail to scrutinize the role of nonviolence, never posing essential questions:

- Is nonviolence effective at ending systems of oppression?
- Does nonviolence intersect with white privilege and the dominance of North over South?
- How does pacifism reinforce the same power dynamic as patriarchy?
- Ultimately, does nonviolence protect the state?

**Peter Gelderloos** is a radical community organizer. He is the author of *Consensus: A New Handbook for Grassroots Political, Social, and Environmental Groups* and a contributor to *Letters From Young Activists*. He is the co-facilitator of a workshop on the prison system, and is also involved in independent media, copwatching, anti-oppression work, and anarchist organizing.

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