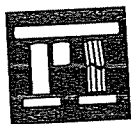


HANDBOOK ON WORLD SOCIAL FORUM ACTIVISM

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CHAPTER 6

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND SOCIAL FORUMS

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At the 2003 World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Nilo Cayuqueo, a Mapuche activist from southern Argentina, protested that Indigenous issues become marginalized in mass movements of civil society.¹ Rather than meeting alone as Indigenous peoples in a small room, Cayuqueo argued, they should have a platform at one of the massive plenary sessions so that their concerns would reach a larger audience. If they were not allowed a place on the main stage, perhaps they should organize their own event instead.

This story points to broader issues and struggles that Indigenous peoples face in organizing within the context of the Social Forum process. While Social Forums provide a convenient venue for Indigenous activists to gather and strategize around common concerns, their voices and issues are often marginalized in broader organizing efforts. Activists want to take advantage of opportunities to share their experiences with a wider audience, but a lack of numbers and resources hinders their ability to capitalize on these massive gatherings. Should Indigenous peoples take advantage of the momentum that the Social Forum process provides, even though they risk disappearing into a larger movement? Or should they retreat into their own spaces where they have more control over their messages, even if this means losing the partial access to public stages that they enjoy as part of a Social Forum? Whether to merge or retreat is by no means a new concern, and it echoes long-running debates

about whether Indigenous peoples should organize on an ethnic basis as peoples with unique cultures and concerns, or whether they should join the left in a broader class-based struggle (Hale 1994). Participating in Social Forums presents Indigenous activists with tradeoffs that require strong local bases and parallel political spaces in order to successfully solidify their place in the overall scheme of social movements.

This chapter provides an overview of Indigenous participation in the Social Forum process. It is based on collaboration with, and observation of, Indigenous involvement in the WSFs as well as their own transnational gatherings. We struggle together with Indigenous activists as to whether Social Forums are the best venue to broadcast their concerns, or whether Indigenous issues would be better served by creating separate political spaces. Perhaps the best solution is to work simultaneously with broader Social Forum processes while at the same time working to consolidate their own bases as Indigenous communities.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES AND THE PROCESS OF TRANSNATIONAL RECOGNITION

The problems that follow the expansion of capitalism greatly affect Indigenous peoples. Corporations continue their excessive exploitation of oil, natural gas, forests, and minerals, which takes a great toll on Indigenous lands. Indigenous peoples are often targeted because they oppose the methods of extraction that corporations use that threaten the survival of all. As Mander (2006: 4) suggests, "paradigm wars" are "the opposite understandings of how human beings should live on earth." In contrast to the Western world, Indigenous ways of thinking emphasize reciprocity, collective ownership, and community values. For that reason, native cosmologies do not align well with capitalist expansion. With a different value system, Indigenous peoples are often relegated to the margins, or ignored completely when economic expansion occurs within their territories.

Indigenous peoples have long resisted corporate invasions into their territories that are rich with precious resources. Structural adjustment programs and free trade agreements further inspire Indigenous mobilizations. In southern Mexico, the Mayans organized a neo-Zapatista movement to oppose the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) because they feared it would increase already large disparities in economic wealth and threaten their communal lands. Both federal governments and global institutions repeatedly violated the International Labor

Organization's (ILO) Convention 169 that grants Indigenous peoples "the absolute right to be consulted about decisions that affect their territories or resources" (Bell 2006: 182). Rather than a complete stoppage of industrial development, Indigenous peoples want to be consulted as to whether these projects can be pursued in more appropriate and less invasive manners (Corpuz-Tauli 2006: 51). Their grievances, unfortunately, often fall on deaf ears. Neoliberal policies have particularly negative repercussions on Indigenous peoples.

The more neoliberal policies chipped away at Indigenous cultures and ways of life, the more Indigenous peoples felt compelled to "go transnational" and target international governance institutions. Political and economic globalizations caused Indigenous peoples to engage in new methods of mobilizing for their rights and lands (Bell 2006). Although Indigenous peoples have realized some significant successes and are more judicially and electorally savvy at a local level, they also need to address global forces that affect their sovereignty.

With an increase in globalization, transnational social movements also rise to address pressing concerns of human rights, environmental degradation, and capitalist exploitation (Robinson 2002; Silver 2003; Tarrow 2005). Transnational movements play a large role in fostering political exchanges between allied actors "facilitated by global economic integration and communication ... linking preexisting domestic communities with actors from other countries" (Fox and Brown 1998: 30). Given this reality, creating transnational linkages with other social movements can increase the opportunities for local groups to realize political gains.

GLOBALIZATION OF INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS

Indigenous peoples have long mobilized in response to cultural, structural, and direct violence associated with imperialism and capitalist development. In North America, native peoples organized against the structural violence associated with being sequestered within reservations, as well as the contested cultural violence associated with unquestioned adherence to Western ideals. During the 1970s, the American Indian Movement (AIM) responded to direct police violence and other injustices done to Native Americans. Indigenous peoples gained a growing awareness that they could challenge previously dominant Western ideals.

The World Social Forum represents a novel approach of organizing civil society on a transnational, horizontal, and South-South basis,

with a particular focus on political and social issues. For decades, and broadly forming one of the principal influences on the emergence of the WSF, Indigenous activists in the Americas had already been following such organizing strategies. They created international pan-Indian movements with the intent to integrate various groups across the Americas to work together for social change. With Indigenous peoples bringing their grievances from the local to the federal and global levels through transnationalism, Indigenous social movements played important roles in advancing the Social Forum process. Their organizing efforts built opposition to neoliberal economic reforms and militarism, issues that were central to the broader WSF. Sometimes Indigenous peoples introduced new issues, such as self-determination and territorial autonomy, that were directly relevant to their lived realities. In addition, Indigenous peoples struggled with many of the same issues that were hotly debated in the WSF, such as whether to take advantage of their unified strength and momentum to create formal organizational structures.

Indigenous activists' coalition work has repeatedly been frustrated by non-Indigenous activists' inability to appreciate the far-reaching and long-term impact of colonialism on native traditions, culture, and ongoing experiences. Moreover, the dominant discourses and structures of cooperation have reinforced Indigenous marginality in coalition spaces. For example, as Indigenous activists mobilized against planned celebrations for the October 12, 1992, quincentennial of Christopher Columbus's voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, divisions emerged between the so-called popular and Indianist wings of the Indigenous movement. In 1991, Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú and other Indigenous leaders who favored a closer working relationship with sympathetic sectors of the left met in Guatemala in a Continental Encounter of Five Hundred Years of Indigenous, Black, and Popular Resistance (Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Políticos 1993; Hale 1994). The Coordinadora de Organizaciones y Naciones Indígenas del Continente (CONIC, Coordinating Body of Indigenous Nations and Organizations of the Continent) was critical of these efforts and denounced this Encounter as an attempt to obtain political goals distant from Indigenous concerns and to usurp Indigenous issues. According to CONIC (1992: 2), "90 percent of the delegates represented the popular sector; and only 10 percent represented Indigenous issues," illustrating "the marginalization of the participation of Indigenous delegates." They declared that this campaign did "not respond to the demands of Native Peoples," nor did it "guarantee that Indigenous proposals

will be respected in the future" or allow for "each people to decide their own destiny." Guillermo Delgado-P. (1994: 82) notes that an alliance between Indigenous organizations and popular movements tends not to work, leading Indigenous movements to reject the patronizing attitudes of popular movements. "From an Indigenous point of reference," Delgado observes, "Indigenous peoples' histories remain colonial when reduced to class." This history and these experiences informed and influenced how Indigenous peoples approached the Social Forum process.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT THE SOCIAL FORUMS

Indigenous peoples did not have a significant presence at the relatively small first two editions of the WSF in Porto Alegre in 2001 and 2002. By the time of the third edition in 2003, Indigenous peoples (along with many other members of civil society) recognized the significance of the Social Forum process and the opportunities and openings that it provided to their struggles. Almost lost among the 100,000 participants, a notable number of Indigenous participants engaged in an important range of meetings and issues. As with other sectors of civil society, these activists scrambled to take advantage of the openings that this huge meeting provided.

Several discussions at the 2003 WSF focused on the impact of extractive industries on Indigenous peoples. Marcelo Claudio from the Asamblea de Pueblo Guaraní [Assembly of Guaraní People], for example, discussed Shell's and Enron's exploitation of petroleum resources on Guaraní lands in Bolivia. Henry Tito Vargas of Vigilancia Social de la Industria Extractiva (VSIE, Social Oversight of the Extractive Industry) in Bolivia argued that it was important to develop alliances between people in North America and Europe, where transnational corporations are located, and the developing world where the impact of their exploitative policies are often felt the most directly and harshly. As Indigenous activists recognized, and as Sikkink (2004) notes, international institutions present political opportunities for collective action at both the domestic and international levels. Indigenous peoples, however, remain at a great disadvantage in their confrontations against global capitalist ventures. Their voices carry little weight in government, and they face enormous difficulties shaping the polity at the transnational level. The WSF held out the promise of helping to surmount some of these obstacles. Nevertheless, feelings of marginalization from the broader WSF process led

some Indigenous activists to propose holding a forum parallel to the WSF when it was scheduled to return to Porto Alegre in 2005.

As in Porto Alegre, the vast majority of delegates at the 2004 WSF in Mumbai were local activists from India. A very large number of these were Indigenous peoples, though not the same ones who struggled for a voice in Porto Alegre. Most Indigenous activists from the Americas did not have the resources (or even the interest) to travel halfway around the world for this meeting. Instead, local "Indigenous" peoples, including 30,000 Dalits (untouchables) and adivasi (tribal peoples), attended. They raised new issues for the Forum of communalism, casteism, racism, and patriarchy. In Mumbai, Hindi replaced Portuguese as an "official" language, but the Forum became a de facto bilingual event with sometimes notable and polarizing results. Although translations were provided for major events in the large halls, white European faces dominated English-language events while Indians largely attended events addressing local issues in which Hindi became the *lingua franca*. Without the participation of Indigenous peoples from the Americas, activists lost an opportunity to build a stronger South-South transnational movement.

Indigenous peoples had a vastly expanded presence in the July 2004 Americas Social Forum (ASF) in Quito and the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre. It was largely because of the strength of Indigenous-based social movements and the power they lent to antineoliberal struggles that the ASF was held in Ecuador. Meeting before the ASF, the Second Continental Summit of the Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala (the Americas) gathered 300 delegates to give "birth to new spaces and strategies for Indigenous peoples to reclaim what is theirs and to live with peace and autonomy" (Bell 2006: 181). Delegates debated 10 themes that included land rights, autonomy and self-determination, diversity and plurinationality, intellectual property rights, relations with multilateral organizations, the role of Indigenous peoples in the WSF, gender and the role of women, political participation, militarization, and communication. These themes illustrate the broad conceptual reach of Indigenous movements. Activists refused to limit themselves to narrow "ethnic" issues.

A final statement from the Indigenous summit, the Kito Declaration, strongly condemned neoliberalism and the role of multinational corporations. These entities, the statement notes, "are disregarding our collective rights to our land, changing legislation to allow privatization, corporative alliances, and individual appropriation" (II Cumbre Con-

tinental de Pueblos y Nacionalidades Indígenas de Abya Yala 2004). In response, the delegates resolved to work toward an agenda and alliances to confront these oppressive policies. They declared an unalienable right to their territory, and argued in favor of the legitimation of their own models to govern those autonomous spaces. Finally, and echoing a theme commonly raised in social forum spaces, they expressed solidarity with Hugo Chávez and the Venezuelan people in the face of U.S. imperialist aggression.

Discussions at the summit carried over into the ASF. One of five themes at the ASF focused on Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, and the persistent issues of racism, poverty, and exclusion that they faced. Given that neoliberal policies often have a most intense impact on these populations, a complete rejection of free trade agreements was also ever-present in their discussions. During the Forum, Ecuador's Indigenous federations organized a march for life and against free trade agreements. Although not listed in the official program, it was obviously a coordinated event. While Indigenous movements led the march, it reflected the broad diversity of issues presented at the Forum, including those of gender, sexuality, youth groups, leftist political parties, environmental groups, and peasant concerns. Afro-Venezuelan representative Jorge Veloz noted that "the construction of this other possible world comes through respect, dialogue, and interculturalism." Indigenous peoples and Afro-Latin Americans believed they had unique perspectives to contribute, and they provided leadership and a model for how broader civil society might organize itself.

Half a year later, Indigenous activists once again turned out in force for the 2005 Porto Alegre Forum to meet in a "Puxirum of Indigenous Arts and Knowledge." In the Brazilian Tupi-Guarani Indigenous language, *Puxirum* means "a joining of efforts for a common goal." Their meeting ended with a declaration that "another world is possible, and we are part of that world" (Puxirum 2005). Having their own spaces within the Forum, however, became a double-edged sword. The Puxirum was geographically separated from the rest of the Forum. This created a wonderfully beautiful space for debate and reflection, but also hindered communicating Indigenous concerns to fellow activists. Few of the 155,000 delegates in Porto Alegre managed to wander the several kilometers down the Guaíba riverfront to where the Puxirum was located at the edge of WSF activities. Over the course of the week, Indigenous delegates increasingly left their space to join the Forum's main activities.

Separating themselves from the central thrust of the Forum no longer seemed like such a wise decision.

A year after the Puxirum, Indigenous activists had a rather reduced presence at the 2006 polycentric Forum in Venezuela. Several panels on Indigenous issues were listed in the massive program, but unlike the Puxirum they were spread across the Forum. In the crowded city of Caracas, it became difficult to move from one event to another. As a result, an Indigenous presence was diffused or lost in the confusion. In being reintegrated into the broader Social Forum process, Indigenous peoples lost part of their visibility and initiative. As with Mumbai, few Indigenous activists from the Americas made the journey to the 2007 WSF in Nairobi, Kenya, where again, in the African context, constructions of Indigenous identities took on different meanings. Again, the contextual divide surrounding Indigenous identities resulted in a lost opportunity to build bridges across cultures.

After an absence of four years, the WSF returned to Brazil in 2009 at the city of Belém on the mouth of the mighty Amazon River. Gathering in the Amazon, Indigenous and environmental issues were a central focus in the Belém forum. Indigenous peoples had a very large tent where they held a series of discussions on the environment, territory, development, and other concerns. The sessions ended with a broad-ranging conversation on the "crisis of civilization," environmental collapse, postdevelopment strategies, and how to build a better life. Miguel Palacín from the Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígena (CAOI, Andean Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations) proclaimed, "for Indigenous peoples, our participation in the forum was very important." The principle themes that they discussed—specifically the crisis of civilization, decolonization, collective rights, self-determination, climatic justice, and defense of the Amazon—helped set the agenda for future gatherings, both of Indigenous organizations as well as the WSF. Indigenous contributions also helped shape discussions in broader social justice movements.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SUMMITS

Even while struggling to retain a presence in the social forum process, Indigenous activists continued with their efforts to strengthen their own transnational movements. In March 2007, thousands of Indigenous peoples gathered for the Third Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala at Iximché, a sacred Mayan site

located in the Guatemalan highlands two hours from the capital city. The summit concluded with a rally in Guatemala City's main plaza and the reading of the "Declaration of Iximché" that called for a continued struggle for social justice and opposition to neoliberalism and all forms of oppression. The energy at the closing rally reflected the summit's success in building on previous organizing efforts to converge a strong continental Indigenous movement.

The summit's slogan, "from resistance to power," captured the spirit of the event. It was not enough to resist oppression, delegates argued, but Indigenous peoples needed to present concrete and positive alternatives to make a better and more inclusive world. Ecuadorian Indigenous activist and Continental Council member Blanca Chancoso called for Indigenous peoples to be treated as citizens and members of a democracy. She rejected war making, militarization, and free trade pacts. "Our world is not for sale," she declared. "Bush is not welcome here. We want, instead, people who support life. Yes to life. Imperialism and capitalism have left us with a historic debt, and they owe us for this debt." She emphasized the importance of people creating alternatives to the current system.

The most visible and immediate outcome of the summit was the "Declaration of Iximché" (III Cumbre Continental de Pueblos y Nacionalidades Indígenas de Abya Yala 2007), a strong statement that condemned Bush's militaristic and imperialistic policies and called for respect for human rights, territory, and self-determination. It ratified an ancestral right to territory and a protection of resources from the mother earth, rejected free trade pacts, condemned the construction of a wall between Mexico and the United States, and called for the legalization of coca leaves. For an Indigenous summit, the declaration was perhaps notable for its lack of explicit ethnic discourse. Instead, it spoke of struggles against neoliberalism and for food sovereignty. On one hand, this pointed to the Indigenous movement's alignment with broader popular struggles in the Americas. On the other, it demonstrated a maturation of Indigenous ideologies that permeate throughout the human experience. Political and economic rights were focused through a lens of Indigenous identities, with an emphasis on concrete and pragmatic actions.

Indigenous summits were important not only for developing shared language and frames among native groups, but they also provided listening opportunities for non-Indigenous activists committed to helping expand cross-sectoral coalition work in places like the World Social Forums. For instance, Joel Suárez from the Americas Social Forum announced at

the summit that the Third ASF meeting would be held in Guatemala in October 2008. "For it to be successful," Suárez emphasized, "the Forum must have an Indigenous and female face." With Guatemala's majority Mayan population, the ASF did have a dominant Indigenous feel and presence. The Forum ran from October 7 through 12, culminating with a march on the highly symbolic anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas that Indigenous activists have claimed as a day of resistance against exploitation and oppression. During the Forum, Indigenous peoples discussed issues of land, water, food sovereignty, and plurinationalism. Humberto Cholango, president of Ecuarrunari, the movement of highland Kichwas in Ecuador, emphasized the broad nature of Indigenous struggles. "From a position of unity, we bring together other social forces, not only Indigenous peoples who have been excluded and abused," he said. "A large majority of *compañeros* and *compañeras*, young people, women, students, and workers are also victims of the neoliberal model." This theme of unity and of linking struggles and bridging divides ran throughout the forum.

Indigenous delegates declared in a summary of their debates, "We have arrived at the consensus that the primary enemy of all of the species that inhabit the planet and the cosmos is capitalism." Neocolonial governments were responsible for underdevelopment that leads to unemployment and out-migration. For this reason, they were fighting to "refund our states and develop a path toward plurinational states." Indigenous peoples also discussed their participation in broader Social Forums. Roberto Espinoza from CAOI insisted that Indigenous peoples not be relegated to a folkloric presence, but be integrally involved with debates on substantive issues. The International Council that organizes the WSF has faced a problem of a lack of Indigenous representation. Espinoza acknowledged that CAOI has been invited to sit on the council, but with other pressing and more local issues it is often difficult to commit the resources necessary to attend these meetings. A lack of Indigenous representation reflects a broader problem with the Social Forum process: Only those with the time, resources, and visas necessary to travel are able to organize and participate in them.

During the ASF, Indigenous organizations solidified their plans to hold the Fourth Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala in Puno, Peru, in 2009. Under the twin topics of plurinationalism and the *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir* ("to live well, not better"), delegates debated a wide range of issues including opposition

to the privatization of natural resources, extractive enterprises, and the criminalization of social movements. Panels also focused on issues such as food sovereignty, climatic justice, and migration. At the Guatemala summit, women decided to overcome their marginalization by holding their own meeting. On the eve of the Puno summit 2,000 women gathered into plenary sessions and workshops on a range of topics such as collective rights, the construction of power and democracy, alternative development models, violence and discrimination, communication, and identity. Indigenous children and youth also held parallel forums to build movements to defend their interests.

Tupac Enrique Acosta of the Indigenous advocacy group Tonatierra, who has long participated in these transnational meetings, commented, "There are ebbs and flows in the process of the continental Indigenous movements. The summits are highlights, high points, you could say, in the process." Activists had developed strategies of working on two tracks. While organizing their own Indigenous summits, Indigenous organizations also continued to attend the large social forums, leveraging the increased coherence that they gained in their separate meetings into a more visible presence in the larger forums, thereby addressing some of the problems of marginalization that they had previously faced.

UNITED STATES SOCIAL FORUMS

Held in Atlanta, Georgia, in June 2007, the first United States Social Forum (USSF) provided an excellent opportunity for Indigenous peoples in North America to mobilize and express their concerns. Organizers intentionally sought to bring native issues to the forefront to provide an opportunity to advance their struggles. Tom Goldtooth from the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) moderated a plenary "Indigenous Voices: From the Heart of Mother Earth." The goal was to share models of organizing strategies, and to examine how they facilitate movement building and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous efforts. Goldtooth framed the discussion with an emphasis on the importance of environmental issues to Indigenous struggles. Underscoring this theme, Patty Grant-Long from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians began the plenary with an analysis of the Cherokee's loss of land. Carrie Dann from the Western Shoshone continued along the same theme with a discussion of their long struggle for land rights. She noted that there are no documents that record their land being taken away, and therefore it

still rightfully belongs to them. "Indigenous rights are the foundation of human rights in this country and we have to come to terms with that," said Julie Fishel of the Western Shoshone Defense Project.

Ikaiki Hussey from the Aloha Anina Society spoke about the militarization of Hawaii, and made a passionate call for support for Indigenous and demilitarization struggles as part of a larger struggle against imperialism. Demilitarizing Hawaii is important, Hussey said, "because it helps the people of Hawaii and because it is part of taking apart the U.S. empire." He pointed to how the United States used its military bases in the Pacific as a launching pad for attacks on Iraq. "It is an amazing testament to resilience that Indigenous people are still here," Hussey said. "That says a lot about strength and the ability to withstand in the face of all those struggles." His comments placed Indigenous issues at the heart of the Social Forum process.

Faith Gemmill from the Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL) network spoke to the history of exploitation of petroleum resources in Alaska. The United States wants to terminate 229 tribes in Alaska, and she cautioned that the government plans to come south to the continental United States and do the same. Gemmill finished with a call to speak out against the Bush administration and its energy regime that opened 95 percent of Indigenous land to oil and gas exploitation. "It is my hope that in my lifetime I will see our land returned to its rightful owners," she said. "People must change the way they are living. We must give Mother Earth time to repair and heal itself." Finally, Enei Begaye from the Black Mesa Water Coalition condemned a history of resource mining. Her organization is a coalition of Navajo and Hopi activists fighting to keep corporations from destroying their land and polluting the water. "Water is a sacred element," Begaye emphasized, "water is life." Begaye called for people to stand together to battle climate change. "Our Mother Earth is not for sale," Begaye said, echoing a common theme throughout the plenary. Many Indigenous activists took advantage of the spaces the Forum provided to present demands for which they had long struggled.

The opportunity at the USSF to communicate the importance of Indigenous issues, however, did not meet the expectations of all Indigenous peoples. Acosta (2007) sent a message to USSF organizers highlighting several principles that he contended the USSF should adopt in regards to Indigenous peoples. He maintained that the USSF must demand that the United States government desist from violating the territorial

rights of Indigenous nations and stop blocking adoption of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the absence of government action, the USSF itself must implement the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that the U.N. Human Rights Council had adopted. While Acosta demanded that the USSF take stances on Indigenous issues, this ignores that Social Forums normally do not take positions but rather create spaces for social movements and organizations to gather and strategize. Nevertheless, Tonatierra has long played a key role in organizing transnational Indigenous movements, and Acosta's comments and criticisms cannot be easily dismissed or taken lightly. Competing ideas of how best to exploit the spaces that Social Forums present, of course, are not limited to Indigenous movements. Along with other activists, Indigenous rights activists debated the value of participating in a process that speaks but does not act.

The USSF closed with a People's Movement Assembly, a final plenary that provided groups with opportunities to present their resolutions. Because so many people wanted to speak and time was limited, organizers instructed speakers to make short, focused, and inspirational speeches. Almost everyone complied, limiting themselves to brief snippets of much longer proposals and declarations. When Nicolas "Miguel" Chango, an Indigenous delegate from Ecuador, exceeded his strict two-minute time limit, the moderator took the microphone. Indigenous delegates strenuously objected, protesting that they had been disrespected. The audience shouted, "Let him speak!" The entire plenary came to a standstill as organizers debated how to proceed. A large Indigenous contingent took the stage with drums to conduct a healing ceremony to restore dignity, and to foster understanding and trust. Finally, Chango was allowed to finish his lengthy speech.

Observers came away with different impressions of this event. Many people were upset, because it symbolized five centuries of marginalization and the silencing of Indigenous voices. Was this an example of a different Indigenous sense of time that values broad spaces to discuss and debate issues before reaching consensus, or was it just an example of an egotistical individual who sought to monopolize spaces to his own benefit? Indigenous delegates leveled charges of racism against the moderator, pointing to continuing and underlying tensions between historically excluded and marginalized peoples. George Friday, the African American woman who had been moderating the assembly, apologized and acknowledged that she had made a mistake. In a sense,

the outcome was positive because participants immediately identified and addressed the issue. "We're trying to build unity, but there are going to be differences," said Cindy Wiesner, a member of the National Planning Committee. "We have to learn to navigate conflict and listen, but also stand for what we each believe in and for what's good for the whole" (van Gelder 2007). These are delicate balancing acts. In any case, what this conflict revealed was how Social Forums too often replicate exclusionary structures and decision-making processes of the broader society. Not only did this conflict raise issues of who has the right to speak, but how one speaks and for how long. Needless to say, these tensions are not unique to Social Forums, but can be found in any organizational meeting of civil society—including summits run by and for Indigenous peoples.

Perhaps as a result of the conflicts in Atlanta, Indigenous peoples had a heightened presence at the second USSF in Detroit in 2010. As at the 2007 Forum in Atlanta, Indigenous leaders were at the front of the opening march, but this time native singers and dancers also welcomed delegates as they were ushered into the massive Cobo Hall at the end of the march for the opening ceremonies. Jihan Gearon from the IEN participated on an evening plenary that presented alternatives and solutions to problems social movements faced. Gearon situated her comments in a global context, including the Cochabamba People's Climate Change Accord that had met in Bolivia several months earlier. The IEN took a lead role in organizing the Indigenous Peoples Movement Assembly where Goldtooth emphasized an urgent need to develop political connections with the global south to solve common problems. At the closing National People's Movement Assembly, the Indigenous sovereignty group was the first one to present their resolutions to the Forum. Placing Indigenous peoples at the front of the marches and ceremonies served to acknowledge symbolically that they were the first inhabitants of the Americas.

Organizers in Detroit remained very aware of the importance of connecting with the local Indigenous community. Bineshi Albert from the IEN noted that this was hard to do in Atlanta because most Indigenous communities had long since been forcibly removed. Detroit, however, has a larger urban Indigenous presence, which helped to create a different space. Nevertheless, Will Copeland from the Detroit Local Organizing Committee commented that it took time and effort to develop communication between African American and Indigenous communities because of large cultural gaps. Events such as a welcoming dinner hosted by the local community helped to bridge these divides and build solidarity

among participants. In Atlanta, Indigenous peoples had their own tent and it was easy to connect with each other in their own spaces, but, as Albert observed, they had not connected with others on common issues such as militarization, the environment, and the criminal justice system. In Detroit, Indigenous activists worked hard to make their presence felt on a wide variety of issues that concerned them.

Few Indigenous peoples from the global South made it to the USSFs, much as few people from North America attended the Indigenous summits in Central and South America. In a way, this was to be expected because as a country-based forum, the USSF was not framed as a venue to build transnational solidarity networks. On the other hand, it does highlight challenges that building a continental movement faces. Many Indigenous rights activists in the global South are highly politicized and grounded in a class analysis of society, whereas those from the North are more likely to frame their identity and activism around cultural issues.

CAOI leader Miguel Palacín was one of the few representatives from the South at the Detroit forum. He spoke about the move in the South from resisting oppression to making concrete actions and proposals. He described their two key proposals for the establishment of plurinational states and embracing the *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir* (living well). The demand for plurinational states, Palacín explained, is to recognize the diversity that is in their countries, to make democracy more horizontal, and to develop more equilibrium in relations. Living well means harmony, being in equilibrium with our own selves, and realizing a full life with other beings in nature. The point is not just to accumulate riches, but to redistribute these resources for the betterment of humanity. His overtly political demands failed to gain much resonance in an audience focused more directly on cultural concerns. Such differences create challenges to making use of the Social Forum process to build a strong transnational movement.

MOVING FORWARD: STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCEMENT

As history illustrates, transnational social movements potentially can heighten awareness of Indigenous issues, thereby broadening appeal for their concerns. This could aid in the development of more social networks and increase access to political resources. By becoming part of transnational social movements, Indigenous organizations can gain recognition in the eyes of the United Nations, as well as garner attention of other

social movement leaders and activists. Alison Brysk (1996) documents how transnationalism positively affected Indigenous groups, especially in South America where they have forged relationships with intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). With recognition from IGOs and NGOs, transnational movements could expand the political opportunities for Indigenous peoples. Moreover, the internationalization of Indigenous issues provides a challenge to romanticized images of Indigenous peoples as accommodating, generous, and content with their living and working conditions. The breakdown of these kinds of stereotypes aids in increasing international support for Indigenous rights both among policymakers and the broader public. Nevertheless, entering the global arena does not necessarily mean that Indigenous peoples will garner support from other organizations for their causes.

Social Forums, though self-proclaimed as inclusive spaces, are exclusionary in various ways, hindering their capacity to advance Indigenous causes. In general, whites have been overrepresented in global justice movements including at WSF meetings. Álvarez et al. (2008: 394) found that of those surveyed at the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre, whites consisted of 51 percent of their sample, while only 2 percent reported to be Indigenous. Moreover, Indigenous issues were addressed less frequently than other issues such as war, human rights, and democracy. A content analysis of WSF events and workshops found that the percentage of events that focused on Indigenous issues ranged between 2 and 3 percent. By contrast, other issues such as agriculture, peace, democracy, and human rights each made up around 6 percent of events (Glasius and Timms 2006). These figures cast doubt upon the extent to which the WSF meetings are really as inclusive as they purport to be. Rosa Alvarado, an Ecuadorian Indigenous leader, noted that "only a limited amount of Indigenous people have taken part so far in the World Social Forum, and their debates have not reached the grassroots level" (Cevallos 2006). Social forums have provided limited useful spaces for Indigenous peoples.

Could Indigenous peoples realize greater benefits by departing from a Social Forum process that embraces broad themes? Rather than becoming lost as a marginal player in a much larger movement, should they create their own spaces for organizing? Alternatively, Indigenous activists perhaps need to work simultaneously on both a local and global level, as well as independently and in concert with other social

movement activists, in order to build a strong unified movement while not losing track of their own issues, concerns, and identities. Currently, most Social Forums employ a particular language and set of values as defined by the dominant culture's discourse. Indigenous peoples have a difficult time communicating their own unique beliefs in that broader environment (Wuthnow et al. 1984). As a result, Indigenous peoples too often find themselves relegated to the margins in social justice organizing efforts.

By entering a Social Forum space, Indigenous peoples risk losing control of their own movements. Nevertheless, the decision to participate with other social movements can also prove to be effective because of the opportunities for increased exposure that it provides. "Each expression of political demands can be only partial," David Meyer (2007: 74-75) notes, "by cooperating with groups that may appeal to the same funders or members, an organization may obscure its own identity in service of the larger movement, hurting its own visibility and survival." Indigenous organizations that align with larger concerns such as antiwar or antisystemic movements run the risk of having their distinct issues marginalized, or being invited to participate as mere tokens to advance someone else's agenda.

On the other hand, being marginalized might prove to have certain benefits. Marginal sites provide groups a political space to "challenge not only the dominant interpretation legitimizing one way of life or set of normative beliefs over others but also the prevailing interpretations of past events" (Wilmer 1993: 38). Marginal sites can provide Indigenous peoples with an opportunity to redefine their own histories, as opposed to embracing the perspective of the dominant discourse. Indigenous peoples can create sites that focus solely on their problems and at the same time use their own languages, worldviews, and meanings. In this manner, they can begin to address the problems of Indigenous peoples who have fallen prey to vicious stereotypes through the rewriting of colonial histories. Excluded and marginalized peoples who demand inclusion by occupying marginal sites have the opportunity to challenge and possibly change the dominant discourse (Wilmer 1993: 39).

The Social Forum process continues to hold open the possibilities of Indigenous peoples overcoming their marginalization through the formation of coalitions built upon shared values, trust, and common interests with other groups. Coalitions can increase access to resources and increase a movement's ability to reach collective goals (Wood 2005). This

is part of a well-established pattern. During the nuclear freeze movement in the 1980s, organizational expansion helped increase attention from the mass media, politicians, and other public figures (Meyer and Rochon 1998: 250). Co-optation, resource inequality, and domination, however, can hinder the coalition-building process. From a resource mobilization perspective, Zald and McCarthy (1980: 6) examine the pressures that lead to cooperation and conflict among social movement organizations. The benefits of entering coalitions are increasing the ability to secure resources, broadening bases of support, increasing public legitimacy, and improving access to important power holders. A concern with securing resources, nevertheless, leads to competition and conflict among social movement organizations to gain members, foundation grants, and credit necessary for advancing their agendas.

Understanding competition for resources helps to explain the dilemmas of coalition building that Indigenous groups face. In some respects, Indigenous peoples would benefit from forming coalitions because it would help them to garner more public exposure and increase their influence by linking with others groups for a general cause. Brysk (1995: 578) notes that if Indigenous peoples unite with others on environmental and human rights concerns, it can strengthen the chances of tying other issues such as cultural destruction, loss of land rights, underdevelopment, and lack of political representation to values that are already widely accepted. On the other hand, Indigenous peoples have difficulties aligning with other groups that tend to frame problems in terms of specific issues, such as environmentalism. Despite the positive aspects of coalition building and participation, Indigenous peoples must exercise caution with whom they choose to ally.

For those who are marginalized, the shift to participating in Social Forums at transnational levels can prove to be daunting; yet, with a strong organizational base, activists can successfully navigate these scale shifts. In discussing the importance of encounters, Sonia Alvarez (2000) expands on Elizabeth Friedman's discussion of "transnationalism reversed" that suggests that movements should strengthen themselves at the local level before participating beyond a country's borders. Taking part in local encounters enables a greater sense of the collective, while also providing a greater degree of political awareness among the locals. With a strengthened base, movements are able to enter the transnational arena with a more formalized presence. Though Indigenous peoples have gained some clout at the United Nations, solidifying support at the local

level and strengthening identity and solidarity shows that Indigenous movements have a strong organizational base that might translate to additional victories.

While a strong organizational base can be beneficial when venturing beyond the local level, several disadvantages still remain when Indigenous peoples join coalitions. Yet, strategies do exist to avoid complete co-optation. For example, the Women's Caucus within the feminist-friendly organization ACT UP/LA gained status, respect, and recognition within a white male-dominated organization by employing boundary-making strategies that included "formalizing women's space and reinscribing gender differences." The Women's Caucus attained control over their own agenda, and most importantly, the overwhelming support of the general body of men, by creating separate meetings with women only, and by formalizing their meetings by adopting policies and procedures that aided in gaining legitimacy from the broader organization (Roth 1998: 98, 139). Likewise, as Indigenous peoples become involved in coalitions with environmental, peace, or antiwar movements, it would be beneficial for them to retain their own organizational autonomy. Maintaining their unique identity among others would help to strengthen support for Indigenous agendas.

In light of the potential difficulties of coalition building, Jones et al. (2001: 207) contend that network evocation, or differentiating tasks among groups, can aid in cooperation within coalitions. Coalitions sometimes make the mistake of dividing tasks ineffectively. For example, individual social movement organizations in coalitions tend to take on decelerative (lobbying, organizational methods, public speaking) and accelerative (strikes and demonstrations) functions at the same time. Network evocation entails one organization taking on decelerative tasks while other organizations take on accelerative tasks to build the "critical mass." Effective division of labor within coalitions can be useful for Indigenous organizations because movement information can be disseminated quickly as opposed to what would develop if each organization in a coalition completed the same tasks as another.

Indigenous peoples around the world have been struggling to make their voices heard, including through Social Forums that attempt to call attention simultaneously to many difficult social problems. A danger to Indigenous activists is that their concerns will disappear into the broad sweeps of wider struggles. But separating Indigenous concerns from

wider movements also threatens to marginalize them. This presents a conundrum with which Indigenous activists continue to struggle. By forming thematic forums specific to their issues, Indigenous peoples have the opportunity to debate, develop strategies, and create their own political spaces. Indigenous activists need to build stronger coalitions and participate in Social Forums while still maintaining a certain level of organizational autonomy within them. At the same time, it is incumbent upon non-Indigenous global justice activists to listen, reach out, and strategize about how to engage Indigenous voices in Social Forum processes. Doing so will bring the knowledge and wisdom that Indigenous communities have gained from hundreds of years of resistance to capitalism to the WSF. Taking such steps will help Indigenous peoples enter the transnational scale without fear of being silenced.

NOTES

1. Who defines *Indigenous* quickly becomes a highly contentious issue (Martínez 2006). Generally we use the term to refer to those who trace their heritage to before the arrival of European colonial penetration and remain on the margins of modern capitalist society. This paper largely focuses on the Americas, although similar processes of capitalist penetration and social exclusion have also occurred in Africa and Asia. The use of a capital "I" in reference to Indigenous peoples is intentional and based on (and in respect for) the stated preference of the board of directors of the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC) as a strong affirmation of their ethnic identities.

CHAPTER 7

BUILDING NATIONAL LABOR SOLIDARITY:

UNIONS AND LABOR ACTIVISTS AT THE 2007 UNITED STATES SOCIAL FORUM

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From the start, Brazilian labor activists played key roles in building the World Social Forum (WSF). Interest in the Social Forum process has grown over time within the international labor movement, attracting leaders of some of the largest international trade union federations, rank-and-file union activists, representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and workers' centers. Surveys of WSF participants revealed that union affiliates made up as many as one-fifth of respondents in 2005 and about one-tenth of respondents in 2007 (Reese et al., Chapter 4). Here we examine their participation in the first United States Social Forum (USSF) in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2007, which drew 12,000 to 15,000 participants.

Our research combines information collected from surveys of USSF participants and from workshops addressing labor issues. Our survey

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