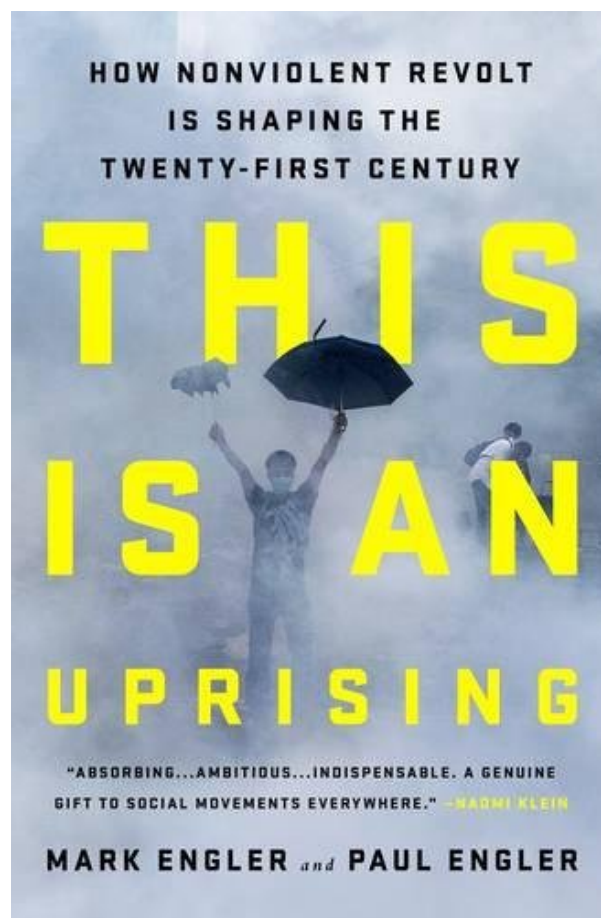


# **THIS IS AN UPRISING: HOW NONVIOLENT REVOLT IS SHAPING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BY MARK ENGLER, PAUL ENGLER**



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## Review

"Mark Engler and Paul Engler haven't written a predictable book. The brothers have spent considerable time studying—and participating in—social movements, and their deep curiosity lends a propulsive feel to *This Is An Uprising*... The world is already messy and chaotic; social movements make it more so. And so a book like *This Is an Uprising*—crisply written, rigorous, blessedly free of clichés—is long overdue." —Gabriel Thompson, Truthdig

"A very important book.... Indeed, anyone who is working with a group of people, no matter how small or large, which is serious about defending their rights, changing oppressive conditions, achieving justice or saving our seriously endangered environment would benefit from studying this well-researched book." —Ted Glick, Z Magazine

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“Engler and Engler have distilled decades of complex and often discordant theories into an accessible guide to effective lasting civil resistance and organization building. This is a book that is likely to be read and reread for years to come.” —Shelf Awareness, *Starred Review*

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"I love this book. The Englers have written fresh and exciting addition to the literature of social movements, a page-turner that is both hopeful and practical. A diversity of readers will recognize moments from their own experience in the stories, which powerfully show what is effective and what isn't in making major change. We all need to read this now." —George Lakey, author, activist, and founder of *Training for Change*

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#### From the Inside Flap

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There is a craft to uprising—and this craft can change the world

From protests around climate change and immigrant rights, to Occupy, the Arab Spring, and #BlackLivesMatter, a new generation is unleashing strategic nonviolent action to shape public debate and force political change. When mass movements erupt onto our television screens, the media consistently portrays them as being spontaneous and unpredictable. Yet, in this book, Mark and Paul Engler look at the hidden art behind such outbursts of protest, examining core principles that have been used to spark and guide moments of transformative unrest.

With incisive insights from contemporary activists, as well as fresh revelations about the work of groundbreaking figures such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Gene Sharp, and Frances Fox Piven, the Englers show how people with few resources and little conventional influence are engineering the upheavals that are reshaping contemporary politics.

Nonviolence is usually seen simply as a philosophy or moral code. *This Is an Uprising* shows how it can instead be deployed as a method of political conflict, disruption, and escalation. It argues that if we are always taken by surprise by dramatic outbreaks of revolt, we pass up the chance to truly understand how social transformation happens.

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Features

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##### Sound Introductory Book

By DoctorDoctor

This had been recommended by the UU's for a webinar and I got it early to review. There are some choice nuggets of experiential insight worth slogging through the book to find. As university professor of group dynamics, I found the apostle-like reverence to a couple of strategizers in the 1960s somewhat disturbing from an academic perspective. On the other hand, I deeply appreciated the section reflecting on quantitative research that supports the effectiveness of civil disobedience. It was never right to have called it something else. The magic of this strategy is that it completely disarms the enemy because the rules of the game have been changed. And only the opposer knows the new rules.

I endorse this book as a nice introduction to the how-to literature on social disobedience and revolution, for those who do not know the history.

42 of 45 people found the following review helpful.

##### Is This An Uprising?

By David Swanson

The new book *This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* by Mark Engler and Paul Engler is a terrific survey of direct action strategies, bringing out many of the strengths and weaknesses of activist efforts to effect major change in the United States and around the world since well before the twenty-first century. It should be taught in every level of our schools.

This book makes the case that disruptive mass movements are responsible for more positive social change than is the ordinary legislative "endgame" that follows. The authors examine the problem of well-meaning activist institutions becoming too well established and shying away from the most effective tools available. Picking apart an ideological dispute between institution-building campaigns of slow progress and unpredictable, immeasurable mass protest, the Englers find value in both and advocate for a hybrid approach exemplified by Otpor, the movement that overthrew Milosevic.

When I worked for ACORN, I saw our members achieve numerous substantive victories, but I also saw the tide moving against them. City legislation was overturned at the state level. Federal legislation was blocked by war madness, financial corruption, and a broken communications system. Leaving ACORN, as I did, to work for the doomed presidential campaign of Dennis Kucinich might look like a reckless, non-strategic choice -- and maybe it was. But bringing prominence to one of the very few voices in Congress saying what

was needed on numerous issues has a value that may be impossible to measure with precision, yet some have been able to quantify.

This Is An Uprising looks at a number of activist efforts that may at first have appeared defeats and were not. I've listed previously some examples of efforts that people thought were failures for many years. The Englers' examples involve more rapid revelation of success, for those willing and able to see it. Gandhi's salt march produced little in the way of solid commitments from the British. Martin Luther King's campaign in Birmingham failed to win its demands from the city. But the salt march had an international impact, and the Birmingham campaign a national impact far greater than the immediate results. Both inspired widespread activism, changed many minds, and won concrete policy changes well beyond the immediate demands. The Occupy movement didn't last in the spaces occupied, but it altered public discourse, inspired huge amounts of activism, and won many concrete changes. Dramatic mass action has a power that legislation or one-on-one communication does not. I made a similar case recently in arguing against the idea that peace rallies fail where counter-recruitment succeeds.

The authors point to disruption, sacrifice, and escalation as key components of a successful momentum-building action, while readily admitting that not everything can be predicted. A plan of escalated disruption that involves sympathetic sacrifice by nonviolent actors, if adjusted as circumstances call for, has a chance. Occupy could have been Athens, instead of Birmingham or Selma, if the New York police had known how to control themselves. Or perhaps it was the skill of the Occupy organizers that provoked the police. In any case, it was the brutality of the police, and the willingness of the media to cover it, that produced Occupy. The authors note Occupy's many ongoing victories but also that it shrank when its public places were taken away. In fact, even as Occupiers continued to hold public space in numerous towns, its announced death in the media was accepted by those still engaged in it, and they gave up their occupations quite obediently. The momentum was gone.

An action that gains momentum, as Occupy did, taps into the energy of many people who, as the Englers write, are newly outraged by what they learn about injustice. It also, I think, taps into the energy of many people long outraged and waiting for a chance to act. When I helped organize "Camp Democracy" in Washington, D.C., in 2006, we were a bunch of radicals ready to occupy D.C. for peace and justice, but we were thinking like organizations with major resources. We were thinking about rallies with crowds bussed in by labor unions. So, we planned a wonderful lineup of speakers, arranged permits and tents, and brought together a tiny crowd of those already in agreement. We did a few disruptive actions, but that wasn't the focus. It should have been. We should have disrupted business as usual in a way carefully designed to make the cause sympathetic rather than resented or feared.

When many of us planned an occupation of Freedom Plaza in Washington, D.C., in 2011 we had somewhat bigger plans for disruption, sacrifice, and escalation, but in the days just before we set up camp, those New York police put Occupy in the news at a 1,000-year flood level. An occupy camp appeared nearby us in D.C., and when we marched through the streets, people joined us, because of what they'd seen from New York on their televisions. I'd never witnessed that before. A lot of the actions we engaged in were disruptive, but we may have had too much of a focus on the occupation. We celebrated the police backing down on efforts to remove us. But we needed a way to escalate.

We also, I think, refused to accept that where the public sympathy had been created was for victims of Wall Street. Our original plan had involved what we saw as an appropriately large focus on war, in fact on the interlocking evils that King identified as militarism, racism, and extreme materialism. The dumbest action I was part of was probably our attempt to protest a pro-war exhibit at the Air and Space Museum. It was dumb because I sent people straight into pepper spray and should have scouted ahead to avoid that. But it was also

dumb because even relatively progressive people were, in that moment, unable to hear the idea of opposing war, much less opposing the glorification of militarism by museums. They couldn't even hear the idea of opposing the "puppets" in Congress. One had to take on the puppet masters to be understood at all, and the puppet masters were the banks. "You switched from banks to the Smithsonian!?" In fact, we'd never focused on banks, but explanations weren't going to work. What was needed was to accept the moment.

What made that moment still looks, in large part, like luck. But unless smart strategic efforts are made to create such moments, they don't happen on their own. I'm not sure we can announce on day 1 of anything "This is an uprising!" but we can at least continually ask ourselves "Is this an uprising?" and keep ourselves aimed toward that goal.

This book's subtitle is "How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century." But nonviolent revolt as opposed to what? Virtually nobody is proposing violent revolt in the United States. Mostly this book is proposing nonviolent revolt rather than nonviolent compliance with the existing system, nonviolent tweaking of it within its own rules. But cases are also examined of nonviolent overthrows of dictators in various countries. The principles of success seem to be identical regardless of the type of government a group is up against.

But there is, of course, advocacy for violence in the United States -- advocacy so enormous that no one can see it. I've been teaching a course on war abolition, and the most intractable argument for the massive U.S. investment in violence is "What if we have to defend ourselves from a genocidal invasion?"

So it would have been nice had the authors of *This Is An Uprising* addressed the question of violent invasions. If we were to remove from our culture the fear of the "genocidal invasion," we could remove from our society trillion-dollar-a-year militarism, and with it the primary promotion of the idea that violence can succeed. The Englers note the damage that straying into violence does to nonviolent movements. Such straying would end in a culture that ceased believing violence can succeed.

I have a hard time getting students to go into much detail about their feared "genocidal invasion," or to name examples of such invasions. In part this may be because I preemptively go into great length about how World War II might have been avoided, what a radically different world from today's it occurred in, and how successful nonviolent actions were against the Nazis when attempted. Because, of course, "genocidal invasion" is mostly just a fancy phrase for "Hitler." I asked one student to name some genocidal invasions not engaged in or contributed to by either the U.S. military or Hitler. I reasoned that genocidal invasions produced by the U.S. military couldn't fairly be used to justify the U.S. military's existence.

I tried to produce my own list. Erica Chenoweth cites the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, where armed resistance failed for years but nonviolent resistance succeeded. A Syrian invasion of Lebanon was ended by nonviolence in 2005. Israel's genocidal invasions of Palestinian lands, while fueled by U.S. weapons, have been resisted more successfully thus far by nonviolence than violence. Going back in time, we could look at the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia 1968 or the German invasion of the Ruhr in 1923. But most of these, I was told, are not proper genocidal invasions. Well, what are?

My student gave me this list: "The Great Sioux War of 1868, The Holocaust, Israel's genocidal invasions of Palestinian lands." I objected that one was U.S.-armed in recent years, one was Hitler, and one was many many years ago. He then produced the alleged example of Bosnia. Why not the even more common case of Rwanda, I don't know. But neither was an invasion exactly. Both were completely avoidable horrors, one used as an excuse for war, one allowed to continue for the purpose of a desired regime change.

This is the book that I think we still need, the book that asks what works best when your nation is invaded. How can the people of Okinawa remove the U.S. bases? Why couldn't the people of the Philippines keep them out after they did remove them? What would it take for the people of the United States to remove from their minds the fear of "genocidal invasion" that dumps their resources into war preparations that produce war after war, risking nuclear apocalypse?

Do we dare tell the Iraqis they must not fight back while our bombs are falling? Well, no, because we ought to be engaged 24-7 in trying to stop the bombing. But the supposed impossibility of advising Iraqis of a more strategic response than fighting back, oddly enough, constitutes a central defense of the policy of building more and more bombs with which to bomb the Iraqis. That has to be ended.

For that we'll need a *This Is An Uprising* that objects to U.S. empire.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Everyone who marched in the Women's Marches should read this ...

By Robyn J. Morrison

Everyone who marched in the Women's Marches should read this! It is important to educate the uprising about the various strategies needed to bring about social transformation.

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# **THIS IS AN UPRISING: HOW NONVIOLENT REVOLT IS SHAPING THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BY MARK ENGLER, PAUL ENGLER PDF**

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## Review

"Mark Engler and Paul Engler haven't written a predictable book. The brothers have spent considerable time studying—and participating in—social movements, and their deep curiosity lends a propulsive feel to This Is An Uprising... The world is already messy and chaotic; social movements make it more so. And so a book like This Is an Uprising—crisply written, rigorous, blessedly free of clichés—is long overdue." —Gabriel Thompson, Truthdig

"A very important book.... Indeed, anyone who is working with a group of people, no matter how small or large, which is serious about defending their rights, changing oppressive conditions, achieving justice or saving our seriously endangered environment would benefit from studying this well-researched book." —Ted Glick, Z Magazine

"Engler & Engler carefully arrange the complex pieces of the puzzle that comprise a nonviolent movement... The authors touch on a range of issues that are certain to be of value to those most in need of such a timely work of scholarship – activists throughout the globe. In their impressive analysis and practically step-by-step account of what it takes for movements to instill change, the authors highlight the critical strategic undertones of otherwise seemingly spontaneous uprisings." —Pauline Moore, Journal of Peace Research

"Thorough and authoritative... Both as a primer on the theory of nonviolent protest and as a practical guide to positive action, [This Is An Uprising] is an invaluable resource." —Peter Whittaker, New Internationalist

"A terrific survey of direct action strategies, bringing out many of the strengths and weaknesses of activist efforts to effect major change in the United States and around the world since well before the twenty-first century. It should be taught in every level of our schools." —David Swanson, Let's Try Democracy

"An ambitious, sweeping analysis of how uprisings do and do not bring progressive change... On issue after issue—immigrant rights, gay marriage, police shootings, protests against nuclear power to name but a few—the Englers show how and why mass protest prevailed over electoral politics. This is one of the many reasons why This is an Uprising is a worthwhile read for all activists." —Randy Shaw, Beyond Chron

“Engler and Engler have distilled decades of complex and often discordant theories into an accessible guide to effective lasting civil resistance and organization building. This is a book that is likely to be read and reread for years to come.” —Shelf Awareness, Starred Review

"This book tells the stories of the mass movements that have made our world and continue to change it, and it tells them with excitement, insight, and hope like few have told them before." —Maria Elena Durazo, international union vice president for civil rights, diversity, and immigration, UNITE HERE!

"This book is the Rules for Radicals for a new generation. Mark and Paul Engler have written a defining work on the science of popular movements... A must-read for everyone fighting the battle for justice in this world." —Carlos Saavedra, lead trainer, Ayni Institute and former National Coordinator of United We Dream

"I love this book. The Englers have written fresh and exciting addition to the literature of social movements, a page-turner that is both hopeful and practical. A diversity of readers will recognize moments from their own experience in the stories, which powerfully show what is effective and what isn't in making major change. We all need to read this now." —George Lakey, author, activist, and founder of Training for Change

“Compellingly readable and quite timely...[The authors] deftly argue that organizers can define the terms of their own victory.” —Matt Wasserman, *The Independent*

“I picked up [This Is An Uprising], and within minutes I was engrossed... [The Englers] argue, persuasively, that... uprisings that use nonviolent confrontation have changed the world. And they have done it with such passion, intensity, and page-turning storytelling, that I had barely been able to put the book down.” —Ellen Michaud, *QuakerBooks*

“Anyone who doubts that community organizing is a significant part of the social fabric will find such assumptions dispelled by this intriguing and illuminating overview.” —*Booklist*

"Especially timely in the wake of protests across the United States, this book offers insight into how far we've come as a country and how much further we have to go." —*Library Journal*

“A usefully organized, concise history of social movements that will appeal to newer generations of activists.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Absorbing... Ambitious... Indispensable. A genuine gift to social movements everywhere." —Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything* and *The Shock Doctrine*

"If you want to understand the social movements that are erupting all around us, you should be reading the Englers. Their writing is a revelation." —Andy Bichlbaum, *The Yes Men*

"Simply outstanding. The success or failure of future campaigns for peace and justice could depend on how many people read this book. Yes, it's that good." —Stephen Zunes, *University of San Francisco*

"This is truly an important work. The moments and movements that drive societal change have remained

elusive and misunderstood by most, whether pundits, activists, or everyday people consuming the news. In *This is an Uprising*, Mark and Paul Engler brilliantly unearth, explain, and contextualize the dynamics of breakout mobilizations--both dispelling the popular notion that transformational progress simply arises from historical circumstance, and pushing back on long-held dogma that hinders more successful engineering of people-driven campaigns. For all those who seek to play an effective role in creating social or political change in the modern era, the Englers' book is a must read." —James Rucker, cofounder of ColorOfChange.org and Citizen Engagement Lab

#### From the Inside Flap

Strategic nonviolent action has reasserted itself as a potent force in shaping public debate and forcing political change. Whether it is an explosive surge of protest calling for racial justice in the United States, a demand for democratic reform in Hong Kong or Mexico, a wave of uprisings against dictatorship in the Middle East, or a tent city on Wall Street that spreads throughout the country, when mass movements erupt onto our television screens, the media portrays them as being as spontaneous and unpredictable. In *This is an Uprising*, political analysts Mark and Paul Engler uncover the organization and well-planned strategies behind such outbursts of protest, examining core principles that have been used to spark and guide moments of transformative unrest. *This is an Uprising* traces the evolution of civil resistance, providing new insights into the contributions of early experimenters such as Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., groundbreaking theorists such as Gene Sharp and Frances Fox Piven, and contemporary practitioners who have toppled repressive regimes in countries such as South Africa, Serbia, and Egypt. Drawing from discussions with activists now working to defend human rights, challenge corporate corruption, and combat climate change, the Englers show how people with few resources and little influence in conventional politics can nevertheless engineer momentous upheavals. Although it continues to prove its importance in political life, the strategic use of nonviolent action is poorly understood. Nonviolence is usually studied as a philosophy or moral code, rather than as a method of political conflict, disruption, and escalation. *This is an Uprising* corrects this oversight. It argues that if we are always taken by surprise by dramatic outbreaks of revolt, and if we decline to incorporate them into our view of how societies progress, then we pass up the chance to fully grasp a critical phenomenon and to harness its power to create lasting change.

#### About the Author

Mark Engler, a writer based in Philadelphia, is an editorial board member at *Dissent*, a contributing editor at *Yes! Magazine*, and author of *How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy* (Nation Books).

Paul Engler is founding director of the Center for the Working Poor, based in Los Angeles. He worked for more than a decade as an organizer in the immigrant rights, global justice, and labor movements.

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