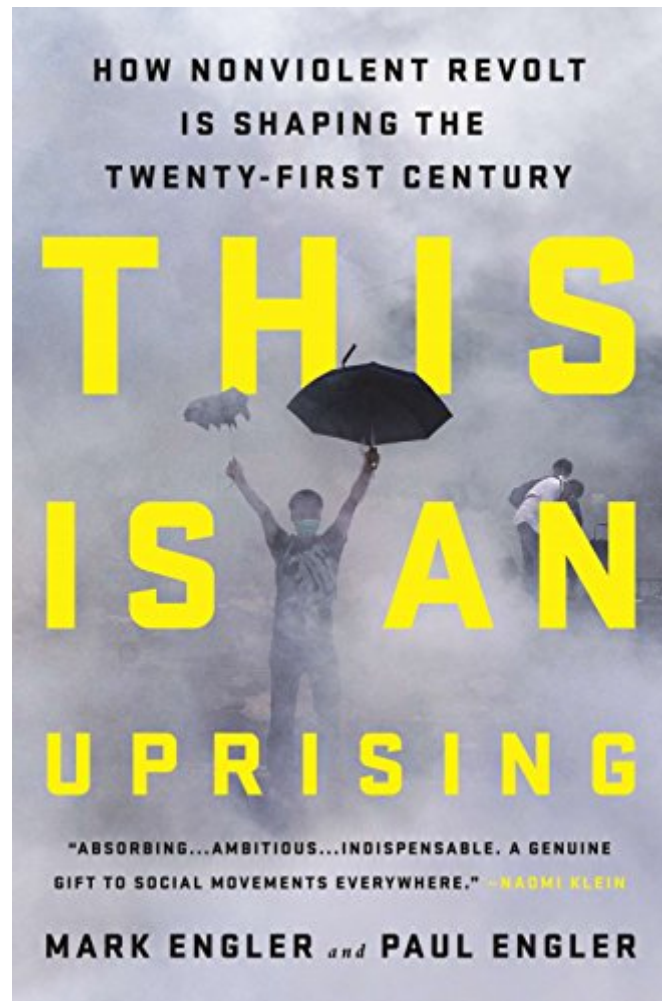


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# This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping The Twenty-First Century



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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.

In *This is an Uprising* Mark and Paul Engler discuss how nonviolent opposition is impacting our

lives. Mark is a writer and Paul is the founding director of the Center for the Working Poor. The authors begin by saying that the book is concerned with momentum driven mass mobilization and strategic non-violent action as opposed to individual action. They mention early advocates such as Gene Sharp, who they credit as the founder of this approach, Saul Alinsky and Frances Fox Piven. Establishment organizations have been reluctant to use this approach. The authors cite a number of examples and people involved in various actions, including such international efforts as opposition to Milosevic in Serbia, Gandhi's efforts in India and student uprisings in Egypt that led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. In the United States they cite Dr. King and Civil Rights, environmental efforts by groups such as Earth First! and the recent Occupy efforts. Judi Bari and some of the leaders of various student and revolutionary movements are also mentioned. The authors say that a society is built on various pillars such as education, media and government. They describe the Social Theory of Power as the effort to pull down these pillars one at a time. They define transactional politics as consisting of small changes, whereas transformational change involves dramatic, punctuated changes. They add that to be successful a movement must have three characteristics: 1. It should have a high level of disruption. 2. Participants must be willing to make sacrifices to show their level of commitment. 3. There must be escalation to larger and larger acts. In addition, advocates must create a whirlwind of action, have discipline and be able to institutionalize change if they are successful.

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