

The power of violence in war and peace Post-Cold War lessons from El Salvador

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ABSTRACT ■ The Cold War sanitized the author's analysis of political violence among revolutionary peasants in El Salvador during the 1980s. A 20-year retrospective analysis of his fieldnote(s) documents the ways political terror and repression become embedded in daily interactions that normalize interpersonal brutality in a dynamic of everyday violence. Furthermore, the structural, symbolic and interpersonal violence that accompanies both revolutionary mobilization and also labor migration to the US inner city follows gendered fault lines. The snares of symbolic violence in counter-insurgency war spawn mutual recrimination and shame, obfuscating the role of an oppressive power structure. Similarly, everyday violence in a neo-liberal version of peacetime facilitates the administration of the subordination of the poor who blame themselves for character failings. Ethnography's challenge is to elucidate the causal chains and gendered linkages in the continuum of violence that buttresses inequality in the post-Cold War era.

KEY WORDS ■ structural violence, symbolic violence, peasants, El Salvador, FMLN guerillas, counter-insurgency warfare, Cold War, gender, US inner city

When the bombardments and strafing began, I was told to crouch beside a tree trunk and, whatever I did, not to move. They shot at anything that moved.

During the first four days about fifteen women and children were wounded, shrapnel was removed and amputations were performed with absolutely no pain medicine. The government troops encircling us were pressing in on foot, killing whoever they encountered.

On the fourth night we found ourselves running along a rocky path when we reached the government's line of fire. The babies the women were carrying began shrieking at the noise of the shooting and as soon as we got within earshot of the government soldiers they turned their fire on us.

It was pandemonium, grenades were landing all around; machine guns were firing; we were running; stumbling; falling; trying to make it through the barrage of bullets and shrapnel. A little boy about 20 yards ahead of me was blown in half when a grenade landed on him. His body lay in the middle of the narrow path. I had to run right over him to escape.

(Bourgeois, 1982a)

In the first 13 months I spent in Spanish Harlem I witnessed:

- *A deadly shooting, outside my window, of the mother of a 3-year-old child, by an assailant wielding a sawed-off shotgun.*
- *A bombing and a machine-gunning of a numbers joint, once again within view of my apartment window.*
- *A shoot-out and a police-car chase scene in front of a pizza parlor where I happened to be eating a snack.*
- *The aftermath of the firebombing of a heroin house.*
- *A dozen screaming, clothes-ripping fights.*
- *Almost daily exposure to broken-down human beings, some of them in fits of crack-induced paranoia, some suffering from delirium tremens, and others in unidentifiable pathological fits screaming and shouting insults to all around them.*

Perhaps the most poignant expression of the pervasiveness of the culture of terror was the comment made to me by a 13-year-old boy in the course of an otherwise innocuous conversation about how his mother's pregnancy was going. He told me he hoped his mother would give birth to a boy 'because girls are too easy to rape'.

(Bourgeois, 1989)

These paragraphs are excerpted from newspaper pieces that I wrote in the 1980s to call attention to violence in two very different settings where I was then conducting fieldnote(s): the first is among revolutionary peasants in rural El Salvador and the second among second-generation Puerto Rican

crack dealers in East Harlem, New York City. Moving from one site to the next, I became interested in differentiating the forms and meanings assumed by violence in war and peace in order to document the ways in which it either challenges or buttresses inequalities of power. In the revolutionary setting of El Salvador, I was eager to document the effective capacity of the dominated to resist state repression while, in the United States, I struggled to explain the politically demobilizing effect of interpersonal conflict and self-destruction that suffuses life in the inner city. Over a decade later, spurred by the spread of deregulated capitalism across the globe, I return to these 1980s accounts of violence with additional ethnographic observations in both El Salvador and the US inner city to suggest that the political context in which I was operating then deeply affected what I was able to document empirically and analyze theoretically. In Central America, I labored under an unconscious Cold War imperative that led me to sanitize my depictions of political violence and repression among revolutionary peasants. On a theoretical level, this obscured the multi-sided character of violence and the commonalities among its various subtypes across historical, cultural and political settings. Most importantly, my Cold War lenses led me to under-report and misrecognize the power of violence to buttress patterns of social inequality and to de-politicize attempts to oppose oppression in war-time El Salvador. By contrast, in the racialized urban core of the United States, I was able to critique the demobilizing effects of everyday violence by showing how it resulted from the internalization of historically entrenched structural violence as expressed in a banalized maelstrom of interpersonal and delinquent aggression.

To unravel the interrelated strands of violence that complicated my understanding of revolutionary El Salvador as compared to the declining US inner city, I have found it useful to distinguish between four types of violence, namely political, structural, symbolic, and everyday violence (see Chart 1). I am limiting the term *political violence* to violence directly and purposefully administered in the name of a political ideology, movement, or state such as the physical repression of dissent by the army or the police as well as its converse, popular armed struggle against a repressive regime. *Structural violence* refers to the political-economic organization of society that imposes conditions of physical and emotional distress, from high morbidity and mortality rates to poverty and abusive working conditions. It is rooted, at the macro-level, in structures such as unequal international terms of trade and it is expressed locally in exploitative labor markets, marketing arrangements and the monopolization of services. The term was first defined in academic circles by the founder of the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, Johan Galtung (1969), to highlight a social-democratic commitment to universal human rights¹ and to rebuff the anti-communist hysteria propagated by US-style capitalism during the Cold War that resulted in the political repression of popular dissent throughout the non-industrialized world. Structural

violence also has radical roots in anti-colonial resistance movements (Fanon, 1963) and in Catholic liberation theology's advocacy for a 'preferential option for the poor' (Camara, 1971; CELAM, 1973; Martin-Baro, 1994). Most recently, the concept has been used by medical anthropologists to highlight the ways extreme economic inequalities promote disease and social suffering (Farmer, 1999, 2000). The concept of *symbolic violence* was developed by Pierre Bourdieu to uncover how domination operates on an intimate level via the misrecognition of power structures on the part of the dominated who collude in their own oppression to the extent that every time they perceive and judge the social order through categories that make it appear natural and self-evident (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 162–73, 200–5).

The concept of *everyday violence* has been most eloquently developed by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1996, 1997) to call attention on a more phenomenological level to the 'peace-time crimes,' the 'small wars and invisible genocides' that plague the poor around the world. Her usage of the term, however, tends to conflate everyday violence with structural and institutional violence. I find it more useful to limit the notion to the routine practices and expressions of interpersonal aggression that serve to normalize violence at

Chart 1 Differentiating forms and expressions of violence

Direct Political: Targeted physical violence and terror administered by official authorities and those opposing it, such as military repression, police torture and armed resistance.

Structural: Chronic, historically-entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality, ranging from exploitative international terms of trade to abusive local working conditions and high infant mortality rates. Term brought into academic debates by Galtung (1969, 1975).

Symbolic: Defined in Bourdieu's (1997) work as the internalized humiliations and legitimations of inequality and hierarchy ranging from sexism and racism to intimate expressions of class power. It is 'exercised through cognition and misrecognition, knowledge and sentiment, with the unwitting consent of the dominated' (Bourdieu, 2001).

Everyday: Daily practices and expressions of violence on a micro-interactional level: interpersonal, domestic and delinquent. Concept adapted from Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1996) to focus on the individual lived experience that normalizes petty brutalities and terror at the community level and creates a common-sense or ethos of violence.

the micro-level such as domestic, delinquent and sexual conflict, and even substance abuse. The analytic import of the term is to prevent explaining away individual-level confrontations by psychological or individualistic approaches that blame the victims. My narrower definition is also geared to depicting how everyday violence can grow and coalesce into a 'culture of terror' – to invoke Taussig (1987) – that establishes a commonsense normalizing violence in the public and private spheres alike. The reinterpretation of my ethnographic data that follows will show how, in revolutionary El Salvador, I was unable to recognize the distinctiveness of everyday violence and therefore to discern it as a product of political and structural violence, even though I had understood it at the interface of structural and symbolic violence in the US inner city.

The Cold War politics of representation in El Salvador

The opening vignette depicting the military suppression of revolutionary peasants in El Salvador was written in 1981 during the final escalation of the Cold War. El Salvador was then in the midst of a civil war pitting a right-wing military government against a coalition of socialist guerilla organizations known as the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). For most of the 20th century the United States had invoked a rhetoric of defending the free world from communism to justify supporting a succession of military regimes in the country. These governments promoted the economic and political interests of a small coffee-producing oligarchy known popularly as the '14 families' and notorious for their systematic human rights violations. Over 75,000 Salvadorans, primarily civilians, died during the 1980s as a result of state repression of the FMLN guerilla(s) and their sympathizers. At the time of my fieldnote(s), an average of almost 800 people were being killed every month by the Salvadoran military and its affiliated death squads (Americas Watch, 1985; United Nations, 1993). During this period, the government depended upon US military, political and economic support for its survival, receiving a total of over \$4 billion during the 1980s, more than any other nation except Egypt and Israel (Wallace, 2000).²

This Salvadoran vignette was based on an aborted dissertation project proposing to examine the mobilization of Salvadoran peasants on both sides of the civil war. To conduct this research, I had entered a conflict-ridden rural region where most of the population actively supported the FMLN guerilla fighters. Two days after arrival, I found myself caught with the local residents in the middle of a government scorched-earth campaign. Army troops surrounded and carried out aerial bombardment of a 40-square-mile region that was home to a dozen pro-FMLN small-farmer

villages. They followed up with infantry destroying as much as possible – crops, livestock, houses – and killing and sometimes torturing the people they captured. Alongside the civilian population of approximately 1000 peasants, I ran for my life for 14 days before finally reaching safety as a refugee in neighboring Honduras. Accompanied by no more than a hundred armed FMLN fighters, we hid during the day and fled at night. The guerilla(s), most of whom were born and raised in the area, moved along our flanks in an attempt to protect us, but we were continually strafed, bombed and pursued by the Salvadoran military's airplanes, helicopters and ground troops. Government soldiers were guided by especially brutal paramilitary fighters recruited from among the neighboring villagers.³

At the time, it appeared to me that state repression of the civilian population was backfiring. I thought that the pain, fear and anguish caused by the military campaign was strengthening the ideological and emotional commitment of the civilian population to rebellion, in short, that repression was radicalizing the marginalized small farmers. I interpreted the latter's mobilization into armed struggle to be socially as well as individually liberating – much as Franz Fanon (1963) and Sartre (1963) had celebrated the anti-colonial war of the Algerians against France. The Salvadoran peasants were then organizing around an ideology that syncretized catholic liberation theology, Marxist class struggle, romantic socialist populism and, finally, social vengeance and personal dignity (Bourgois, 1982b). Most significant to me at the time was the quasi-messianic quality of their rejection of humiliation and exploitation by landlords and the rural paramilitaries. It seemed to me then that they were inverting a symbolic violence that, for generations, had naturalized the abuse of dark-skinned, illiterate *campesinos*. I described the Salvadoran peasants as metamorphosing:

. . . from being the most despised creatures on earth (i.e., landless or land-poor laborers, giving obligatory days worth of labor to overbearing landowners) to becoming the leaders of history: the people the Bible prophesizes about. They felt honored to die for their cause because before its advent they had been half dead – and it hurt. (Bourgois, 1982b: 24)

My fieldnote(s) notes from the days just prior to the military invasion in 1981 report that a surprisingly high number of the Salvadoran guerilla fighters had repented past histories of alcoholism and domestic violence.⁴ In a politically engaged article published at the height of the war, I quoted the emblematic words of one guerilla fighter: 'We used to be *machista*. We used to put away a lotta drink and cut each other up. But then the Organization showed us the way, and we've channeled that violence for the benefit of the people' (Bourgois, 1982b: 24–5).

The neoliberal politics of representation in El Barrio, USA

In contrast to what I took to be the liberating dynamic of political violence in El Salvador, I understood the everyday violence that pervades the US inner city, described in the second opening vignette, as strictly oppressive and demobilizing. In the late 1980s, I spent nearly five years living in a tenement with my family next to a crackhouse in East Harlem, New York City. There, I befriended a group of Puerto Rican street-level crack dealers, reconstructed their life stories and observed their daily struggles for sustenance and self-respect. The frequent beatings and periodic shootings and stabbings between the young men I spent most of my time with, and the ongoing fracas within their families, was more challenging for me to analyze theoretically and politically than the violence of wartime El Salvador. The crack commerce scene offered a window onto the mechanisms whereby structural and symbolic violence fuse to translate into everyday violence: extreme segregation, social inequality and material misery are expressed at ground level in interpersonal conflicts that the socially vulnerable inflict mainly onto themselves (via substance abuse), onto their kin and friends (through domestic violence and adolescent gang rape), and onto their neighbors and community (with burglaries, robberies, assaults, drive-by shootings, etc.). The result is a localized 'culture of terror' (Taussig, 1987) or a heightened level of everyday violence that enforces the boundaries of what I call US urban apartheid (Bourgois, 1995).

As a member of the dominant culture and class in the United States, I worried about the political as well as scholarly implications of my ethnographic depiction of Puerto Rican crack dealers. I feared contributing to a 'pornography of violence' that submerges the structural causes of urban destitution under lurid details of blood, aggression and gore. As noted long ago by Laura Nader (1972), anthropological accounts based on participant observation among the powerless risk publicly humiliating them. This is especially true in the context of the hegemonic US neo-liberal ideology which, by definition, considers the poor as morally suspect. Yet I was theoretically and politically committed to fully documenting the ramifying social suffering caused by extreme social and economic marginality in East Harlem. This quandary encouraged me to focus on structural violence and later symbolic violence, which by definition shift attention onto the broader, macro-level, power inequalities that condition everyday violence.

By the end of my sojourn in East Harlem, just as the Cold War was coming to a close, I presented a paper at a session of the American Anthropological Association in which I attempted to compare patterns and experiences of violence in war-torn rural El Salvador and the peacetime US inner city (Bourgois, 1992). In highlighting the difference between direct political violence and invisible structural violence in that paper, I thought I was transcending

Cold War ideology, but instead I merely mimicked it. For, throughout my analysis, I maintained a moral opposition between ‘worthy’ political violence that rallies the subordinate in the face of repression by an authoritarian state versus ‘unworthy’ violence that confuses and demobilizes the socially vulnerable in neo-liberal democratic societies. My concern with differentiating good from bad violence, and for separating out politically progressive from self-destructive and irresponsible violence, blinded me to the profoundly disabling nature of political violence in Central America. Specifically, I failed to see how political repression and resistance in wartime reverberate in a dynamic of everyday violence akin to that produced by the fusing of structural and symbolic violence during peacetime.

Instead, I constructed a Gramscian-inspired explanation for why the guerilla experience of repressive political violence in El Salvador could be interpreted as humanly uplifting and politically liberating through the physical pain and anger it generated. I opposed that dynamic to the everyday acts of violence that I had witnessed in East Harlem, which I interpreted as the expression of false consciousness in a structurally and symbolically oppressive society that no longer needs to wield political violence to buttress structures of inequality. Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is a valuable tool, but the ways in which I categorized violence as worthy versus unworthy in that paper directly shaped what I was able to see, hear and believe; what I interpreted as ‘data’ and what I took fieldnote(s) notes on; and which debates I viewed as pertinent and sought to engage. On an empirical level, whereas I amply documented the range of suffering caused by structural and symbolic violence in a socially polarized society during peacetime, I oversimplified and understated the ramifications of terror in a repressive society torn by civil war.

Rewriting fieldnotes from the Salvadoran Civil War

Referring back to the opening vignette, I can still vividly remember that night of 14 November 1981, when I found myself running through the military’s line of fire with about a thousand terrified men, women and children. I have a different vocabulary to describe the victims, however. For example, I might now refer to the mutilated ‘little boy’ writhing in front of me with his torso severed as a ‘teenage fighter’, since he was carrying an automatic weapon even though he was no more than 14 years old. The political strictures of the Cold War, however, made it important, indeed imperative, to label him ‘little boy’ rather than ‘teenage fighter’, because, in the martial vision of that conflict prevalent in the early 1980s, adolescents carrying automatic weapons deserved to be killed. The human pathos of a child dying in face-to-face combat while defending his family from marauding government soldiers would have been missed.

More subtly, and perhaps more importantly, I have different memories of the moments before I ran over the body of that boy fighter. I rewrote an *ex-post-facto* fieldnote(s) excerpt 18 years after the fact, emphasizing what I now remember. When I prepared the original newspaper piece in 1981, I had not been able to fully remember or analyze these events. Perhaps I thought these details were unimportant. Once again, in the context of the Cold War, my primary concern was to spotlight the more objectionable power vectors aimed at small farmers in El Salvador, namely, the repressive military regime maintained by US foreign policy. I may also have omitted these memories from my fieldnotes because I sensed that they might reveal a personal character flaw on my part:

When the grenade landed on the teenage fighter up ahead, I dove into the dirt behind some bushes. I accidentally jostled a young mother who was already crouching behind the bushes where I landed. I startled her six-month-old baby and it began to cry. With me panting next to them, huge, foreign, and stinking of strange sweat and panic, the baby's cries spiraled into wailing shrieks.

The mother hissed in my ear, 'Vete! Vete de aqui! Rapido!' [Get out of here! Scram!]. At first, shocked, I thought she was angry at me and was being cruel, pushing me off into the hail of bullets. Suddenly, it dawned on me that she was trying to save my life: her baby's cries were beginning to cut through the sound of the gunfire. I jumped to my feet and sprinted forward, just as another barrage of machine guns fired into the shrieks of mothers and babies behind me.

This was my first participant-observation exposure to the kind of human betrayal that survivors commit in counter-insurgency warfare. Making a baby cry and then running from it when one realizes that those cries will attract gunfire forced me to fail my own sense of human dignity and masculinity, and to question my self-esteem. It also bordered on symbolic violence by causing me to be angry at both myself and the FMLN for making the civilians the target of government repression.

I do not know for sure if the mother and baby died in the bullets directed at the infant's cries. I suspect that they were both killed. Had I not startled that baby, it would have turned 20 as this article goes to press. Maybe if I had been smarter and sprinted away sooner when the baby's mother begged me to, then the infant's wailing would not have escalated into shrieking and the government soldiers may not have heard it. A decade later, conversations with guerilla fighters and their families demonstrate that those kinds of blames and feelings of betrayal over human failures abound in counter-insurgency warfare. They are an inevitable part of surviving military repression and they contribute to a form of symbolic violence whereby survivors focus their recriminations on their fellow victims' as well as their own character flaws, rather than on the agents who actually perpetrated terror. The



Figure 1 A teenager takes a break from the fighting to play with his baby brother hiding in the thicket.

result is often a traumatized silencing of the brutal events by witnesses who blame themselves for what they had to do to survive.

During that same night when we ran through the government troops encircling us, I passed parents and older siblings stumbling under the weight of terrified children or wounded family members. I wondered as I fled if I was supposed to stop and do something to help them. Convinced that we were all going to die, I ran for my life feeling that I was betraying those left behind. As dawn rose, most of us managed to reassemble at the bottom of a ravine to hide together. We hoped that the guerilla fighters might be able to offer us some protection and we prayed that the government helicopters and ground troops combing the area would not find us. As my photograph from that moment illustrates, a few well-aimed grenades or rounds of automatic fire directed into our hiding place would have sufficed to kill several hundred of us (Figure 2). Luckily, when a helicopter did fly over the ravine, only a couple dozen feet immediately above us, it strafed the fighters who had stationed themselves on the hillside and it failed to detect us. The guerilla(s) above us dispersed rapidly and successfully drew the enemy fire away from us.

After the close encounter with the helicopter, I found myself next to a family trying to calm a 19-day-old baby whose mother had been killed by a grenade as she ran through the gunfire a few hours earlier. They asked me to



Figure 2 Camouflaged on the bottom of a ravine at daybreak following our escape through the line of fire.

photograph them to document their story. The newborn had been thrown from her mother's arms unharmed by the explosion and picked up amidst the chaos by her aunt. The surviving family members had nothing to feed the crying newborn and could only rock her (Figure 3). For the next eight days almost a thousand of us stayed close together, striving to minimize our noise at night as we moved to new hiding places and scavenged for food in the underbrush. On several occasions, we were spotted by Salvadoran troops and strafed by US-supplied gunships or chased by ground patrols. Each time we ran as fast as possible to hide behind trees or boulders, hoping that those carrying weapons were decoying the enemy away from us.

Thus it was the young, healthy and fleet-footed who had the best chance of surviving. At sunset, on the eighth day of our flight (twelfth day after the start of the attack), under particularly heavy bombardment, I found myself chasing after a small group of men who appeared to know their way. Most of them were fighters who had thrown away the guns with which they were supposed to be protecting their families. Instead, we ran fast all night in what felt like selfish terror. Further and further behind us, we could hear the sounds of crying children drawing the bulk of the fire. We escaped alive as refugees into neighboring Honduras before the sun rose and listened for the rest of the day as government helicopters blasted the slower moving, noisy



Figure 3 The mother of this baby had just been killed by grenade shrapnel. The surviving family members did not have a bottle to feed the 19-day-old infant and we were scared the noise of the baby's cries would reveal our location to the government troops.

mass of civilians we had left behind. If my companions from that final night of flight survived until the end of the war, they likely still feel survivor guilt today.⁵

Throughout the civil war, US and Salvadoran government propaganda denounced the guerilla(s) for hiding amidst the civilians and thereby causing them to be killed in the crossfire. The FMLN leadership itself was divided over its policy of encouraging – and at times demanding – civilians and family members of fighters to remain in the war zones. Spouses were often in bitter disagreement over this issue. In retrospect, mothers sometimes hold husbands responsible for the death of their children because the latter insisted on remaining in their home village to support the FMLN. By 1983, a little over a year after this scorched-earth campaign, the guerilla(s) changed their tactics and evacuated the majority of non-fighters from the most actively contested war zones. The point here is that the boundary between protector and coward is often ambiguous and inconsistent in counter-insurgency warfare. Once again, such a 'liminal space of death' (Taussig, 1987) or 'gray zone' (Levi, 1986) obfuscates responsibility from those primarily responsible for the terror – in this case the US-trained and supported Salvadoran military.

Instead, the snares of symbolic violence – in the form of confusing feelings of inadequacy, guilt and mutual recriminations – divert attention away from the repressive political violence that created the conditions of terror which imposed a bitter choice between survival and betrayal.

Violence in war and peace

During the summer of 1994, with the Cold War over, I revisited the same resettled villages of guerilla fighters and supporters where I had been trapped during the military attack of 1981. Most immediately tangible was the silent brutality of economic oppression. My first set of field notes from that visit describe the intersection of the scars of structural and political violence on the local ecology and the bodies of residents:

July 1994

Due to land scarcity the villagers are forced to farm steep, rocky terrain. As if to add insult to injury, badly healed wounds from the war make it difficult for many of the young men to hobble up to their awkwardly pitched milpas [plots]. Even the earth appears disabled and angry: carved by rivulets of runoff from exposure to the heavy rain and pockmarked by sharp protruding stones.

Tito, the son of the woman whose house we are staying in, fought for almost ten years with the FMLN. Now, he limps up the incline to the eroded hillside where he tries to scrape together a crop of corn and sorghum with only his machete and a digging stick. He uses his digging stick as a cane to keep from falling in his field, and he occasionally grimaces from the shrapnel still lodged in his calf and knee.

No one is particularly sympathetic to Tito, however, because he now has an alcohol problem. It is whispered that he was not a particularly brave fighter during the war.

I had hoped that this return visit would be a cathartic reunion with the people I had bonded with during the 14-day military raid of 1981. It turned out to be an awkward and at times disillusioning experience of tip-toeing around minefields of misdeeds, deception and disloyalty. My friends insisted upon telling me about what military mistakes had been made; which wounded person had been abandoned and left to the enemy; that a particular undersized and cognitively challenged child had been permanently damaged by the five-pill valium overdose given to him by his mother to quiet his crying during the flight; which fighters had deserted; how it felt to shoot a friend in the head when he was wounded so that the enemy would not capture and torture him into revealing the identity and location of guerilla(s); how it felt to be a father who forced his scared 14-year-old son to join the

guerilla(s) only to have him killed by airborne gattling guns in his very first sortie. Thirteen years after the armistice, my closest friend, José, was troubled by the fact that he has planted over 150 homemade land mines on the hillside paths leading to his guerilla encampment. He was convinced that most of these mines had mutilated a soldier's foot, and that his former enemies were now hobbling up and down a steep hillside in a neighboring village, trying to eke out a harvest of corn to keep their families alive, just as he and his father were.

The notes from my first day of fieldnote(s) also include a description of the infected cut on the foot of Tito's 10-year-old brother. Ridden with fever, he moaned listlessly in a hammock in the house of the family sheltering me. There was no access to medical care in the entire region. I feared that this little boy was going to die from blood poisoning due to this simple cut. But he survived and five years later, in 1999, I learned that he killed Tito, whose alcoholism had escalated. At the murder trial of her 15-year-old, the mother, who had lost her husband during the civil war to military repression, begged the judge – unsuccessfully – not to incarcerate the only surviving male of her household: she beseeched mercy on the grounds that the teenager had only tried to protect her from her oldest son, who beat her savagely when he drank too much.

One of the most disturbing stories I collected during this return visit was that of a mother who suffocated two of her infants while hiding in a cave with a dozen other villagers. They had not followed us during the night when we broke through the government troops surrounding us. Fearing that the Salvadoran military would otherwise detect their presence, her companions gave her the choice of either leaving the cave or stuffing rags into the mouths of her hysterically crying children. Over a decade later, there was disagreement over whether the father was justified in subsequently abandoning the mother for killing their two offspring. Some hailed the mother as a hero for having chosen to sacrifice her babies in an attempt to safeguard the lives of her companions in the cave. It was taken for granted that she would have been captured, had she left the cave with her crying children, and under torture she likely would have revealed the location of her hidden companions. Nevertheless, years later, doubts persist over the moral worth of the hapless mother, yet again blurring the boundary between hero and villain in counter-insurgency war.

The question, too painful to ask, that was raised implicitly in most of my conversations during this visit revolved around whether all the suffering and violence of the guerilla struggle had been in vain.⁶ Merely posing the question in the context of the continuing structural violence endured by the former fighters and their families felt like an insult. Their uncertain, often ambiguous, retrospective responses concerning the validity of their struggle implied a self-critique: the irresponsibility and naiveté of subjecting themselves and their families to political violence in support of the FMLN. This

questioning of the utility of past sacrifices fostered apolitical isolation and mutual distrust. Nonetheless, most of the ex-guerilla(s) and their kin in this region still upheld many of the core ideals of what they now called 'the War' rather than 'the Revolution'. Through the remainder of the 1990s, they have consistently voted for former FMLN candidates in both local and national elections.⁷ In contrast to what I had thought I observed in 1981, however, they did not consider their mobilization into armed struggle to be empowering or liberating. Although they were generally proud at having supported the guerilla struggle, at the same time they felt betrayed by the leadership. This frequently slid into a self-deprecating sense of having been duped. Hence, my final fieldnote(s) note from that 1994 sojourn:

Yet once again, a bunch of petty-bourgeois intellectuals on a power-trip fantasy of revolution mobilized thousands of peasants to kill and betray one another, only to drop them later like hot potatoes when the going got tough and boring.

Of course, the wisdom of hindsight allows one to see clearly how the revolutionary movement in El Salvador was traumatized and distorted by the very violence it was organizing against. Through an almost mimetic process, the government's brutality was transposed into the guerillas' organizational structures and internal relations, as violence became a banal instrumental necessity. There are several well-known prominent examples of internecine killings within the FMLN leadership. Most famously, Roque Dalton, El Salvador's most famous poet, was killed by the guerilla organization he belonged to in the 1970s for being a 'revisionist', a disagreement in political strategy with respect to the utility and timing of engaging in armed struggle.⁸ In the mid 1980s, the woman who was the second-in-command of one of the largest guerilla factions within the FMLN coalition was killed in a leadership dispute over a strategy of continued armed struggle versus negotiation. She was reportedly stabbed 68 times by the bodyguard of Cayetano Carpio, the head of her faction, who himself is believed to have committed suicide in Nicaragua a few months later, after the assassination was finally made public. The normalization of internecine violence in the broader context of political violence makes sense if the extent of the pain and terror that political repression causes is fully appreciated as a 'pressure cooker' generating everyday violence through the systematic distortion of social relations and sensibilities. It also helps explain why El Salvador had the highest per capita homicide rate in the western hemisphere during the 1990s *after* the end of the Civil War. In point of fact, more Salvadorans have been killed by criminal violence during the decade following the peace accords on New Year's Eve of 1991, than died during the last 10 years of the war: 6250 per year perished during the 1980s as against 8700 to 11,000 killed every year during the 1990s (DeCesare, 1998: 23–4; Wallace, 2000).

Gendering the mesh of violence

During the 1981 military operation a 17-year-old woman named Carmen asked me to photograph her in one of our hiding places. She smiled for the benefit of my camera, belying the fact that the Salvadoran military had been bombing the hills of the canyon where we were hiding only a few hours earlier. Carmen had been hit by shrapnel in her lower back while defending one of the trenches blocking the entrance to her village on the third day of fighting and she was in a great deal of pain. Incapable of walking, her family carried her in a hammock during our night flights. That is why she is alive today (Figure 4). In the two decades since this picture was taken Carmen has had five children and despite – or because of – several surgeries to remove the shrapnel in her lower spine, she suffers from chronic back pain, migraines and ulcers. In 1997, she entered California overland from Mexico as an undocumented migrant.

Carmen's first job in the United States was as a salesperson in a discount shop in San Francisco's Latino Mission District at a pay of \$2.38 an hour for 10-hour-long days. Despite her back pain, she was periodically rebuked by her employer for sitting down or taking a lunch break. Initially, Carmen was not granted political asylum in the United States and her 'illegal alien' status facilitated her economic exploitation. Subsequently, she obtained temporary political status and found a job ironing for \$6 an hour in a garment sweatshop established by new immigrants. Within a year, she was diagnosed with repetitive strain injury in her shoulder from the ironing and was fired. I helped her threaten the employer with a lawsuit and she was rehired in a different position, sewing in the same factory, but her new task still hurts her tendons whose inside sheaths have been permanently scarred – a medical condition known as tenosynovitis. Carmen also owes over \$1000 in bills to the county hospital. She is paying these bills on an installment plan because she fears that defaulting might jeopardize her application for permanent residency. She cannot petition for legal visas for her five children to immigrate until the United States grants her a 'green card'. In other words, she is enmeshed in the structural violence of a global sweatshop economy that is accentuated by her gendered vulnerability as a mother separated from her children.

Carmen was an M-16-carrying fighter for almost two years during the war, as well as a civilian supporter of the FMLN for over a decade. Yet, unlike most other male fighters in her village, despite being the single mother of five children, she was not granted any land after the signing of the peace treaty. I had thought that Carmen was excluded from land redistribution because she was a woman and had been in a minority political faction of the guerilla organization in her village. Indeed, that is what Carmen had told me at first, to be polite. Later, in private, she presented a more complex and disturbing picture of why she was landless. Her story adds a crucial gender dynamic to



Figure 4 Carmen, wounded in her lower spine, hides in a dry streambed and jokes with the medical technician next to her about eating the land crab he has just caught.

the way political, structural and symbolic violence mesh and become expressed as everyday violence at the interpersonal level. Carmen revealed that her problem revolved around a love affair of her oldest brother which had turned sour. He was a *jefe de escuadra* (leader of a squad of six guerilla fighters) and his girlfriend had jilted him in favor of the local FMLN commander. The latter feared her brother might kill him or betray the guerilla encampment where he was based to spite him. Consequently he ordered the murder of Carmen's brother. Carmen's nephew, who witnessed the execution, reports:

He was sleeping. They came and woke him up. He told them, '*Compañeros*, no, no, don't kill me. I've fought and I have defended many *compañeros*.' He told them, 'And I have recuperated lots of weapons.' You see he was the head of a squad. He was a valiant man, very respected in the zone. But they assassinated him.

Stories of internal killings over sexual jealousy were not run-of-the-mill in the FMLN but they would not surprise anyone close to the everyday reality of guerilla struggles. A veteran fighter can excuse the commander for having killed Carmen's brother because it is plausible that, in his heartbreak over

losing his love, Carmen's brother might indeed have murdered his commander or denounced the location of the guerilla encampment to the military authorities and endangered dozens of fighters. Romantic jealousy results in comrades-in-arms killing one another over mere suspicions. The normalization of violence during wartime El Salvador made it appear necessary to kill Carmen's brother. Fifteen years later, Carmen was still pondering whether or not her brother had been a risk to the guerilla(s). Note the defensiveness with which she describes her family's right to mourn and condemn his murder. Note also how the killing is ultimately blamed on the promiscuity and machinations of the girlfriend, rather than an abuse of power by the local FMLN commander:

People are sad about his death. Even today when people remember him, they tell my father: 'That death was unjust. He never would have had anything to do with the enemy.'

My brother fought for years. The struggle was his heart and soul. He would never have had anything to do with the other side.

And you know the girl who got my brother killed. . . . She is still around. She's one of those women who like to play her men dirty and then pit them against each other.

To this day, the grief that Carmen's kin carry with them is sullied by public suspicion that the murder may have been justified. Her family was marginalized by the guerilla organization and was still distrusted six years after the signing of the armistice when I made my last visit to the former war zone. Nonetheless, Carmen's family continued to support the revolution. Indeed, four of Carmen's other brothers and one of her sisters remained guerilla fighters even after the assassination of their oldest brother. Three of these brothers subsequently died in combat and the fourth now suffers from convulsions, partial paralysis and severe psychological disorders due to shrapnel lodged in his skull.

There is yet another explanation for why Carmen received no land from the guerilla organizations at the end of the civil war, even though she was a former guerilla fighter and should have been given land according to the local terms of the peace agreement. It illuminates the way gender power relations under rural patriarchy fuel the coalescence of political, structural and symbolic violence to render even more natural the personal aggression that constitutes everyday violence. This third version for Carmen's landlessness is more of an accusation which is repeated shamefully by Carmen's friends and aggressively by Carmen's detractors: 'The commanders did not like her because she is a woman who liked to go with a lot of men.' In other words, Carmen was believed to have had too many boyfriends during the armed struggle. Unfortunately for her, two of the fathers of her five children died in combat and cannot defend her sexual honor during peacetime.

The accusation that Carmen did not deserve land because she was promiscuous resulted in her being unable to support five children in her home village after the war ended. She was thus forced to migrate illegally to the United States, hiking through the southwest US desert – at one point chased by police dogs – in search of the livelihood denied to her in El Salvador. She now sends checks of \$50 to \$100 each month to the two different families back home to whom she entrusted her five children before leaving for the United States. Carmen's deepest pain, far worse than the physical pain she still feels from the shrapnel embedded in her spine and from her other bodily ailments (migraines, ulcer and repetitive strain injury), is the shame and sorrow of having 'abandoned' her children, and of 'dividing them up' for safekeeping. Carmen's sorrow is also patterned by patriarchal preference of motherly love:

My son was four when I left, and you should see how smart he is. He's got the sharpest mind.

I used to put him up on the table to try to make him aware little by little about my leaving. I would bathe him and then I would wrap him on a towel and sit him on the edge of the table and I would say to him, 'Papa, I'm gonna be going to the States' – because I used to call him 'Papa'. And I would tell him, 'From over there I'm gonna send you a bicycle.' I would tell him that to make him feel better. But he would tell me, 'No mommy, don't go. You, I really love you.'

And then . . . and this is what hurts me most, these words of my son: He would tell me, 'Don't go, mommy. I really love you. If you go I'm gonna go deep into the mountains and cry for you.' That's what he would tell me.

And then, Felipe, when I gave him to Marcos's mother [putting her hand on Marcos, her husband's shoulder], and this is something that I always tell Marcos, that I can't forget this – that moment when I gave away my son. Felipe, I had to *rip him* off me with force. . . . You see he was grabbing me right here. [Patting her thighs.] Grabbing my skirt. And he was telling me, pleading, 'Mama, don't leave me. Mama!' And so what I did was, I pushed him away with force and I gave him to Marcos's mother, right there. Right there in the central park.

I'm telling you, that boy! I'm hurting for him in my soul too much. I can't talk about this any more because then afterwards, I can't bear it. I start crying.

Marcos tells me, 'Carmen, don't feel sad.' 'But how am I supposed to not feel sad?' I tell him back. My nerves are out of control because of the loss of my children. Marcos tells me, 'Look Carmen, think clearly. One day, God willing, you'll get your papers' – that's my immigration papers. And he tells me, 'I'll do everything I can to help you get those papers.'

I got these pictures of my son and you can see that he's sad. Just standing there alone in a tree. He's very sad there and I look at it and I think that he looks just like a little adult person. And that's what hurts me most – seeing

him alone, a tiny little creature, so smart. Here, [handing me an envelope full of photographs] let me show you. My poor creature. Look at the poor little boy. [Waving one of the photos] Look at him Felipe, there he is – all alone – look at him Felipe: look how sad he is.

Carmen burst into tears on another one of my visits to her boarding house in San Francisco. She had just received a letter from the family to whom she had entrusted her eldest daughter informing her that the 13-year-old girl had run away to Honduras. Her middle daughter who is 11 had also run away, but to the capital of El Salvador where she was now staying with cousins. Once again, Carmen follows patriarchal logic in favoring her eldest son while resigning herself to suffer for all of them, ‘as only a mother can’.

Aie Felipe, what can I do? Now my children are scattered all over and I’m here. Courage in war was easy. I’m talking now about the pain a mother feels for her children. A mother pains *for her son*, Felipe.

You can’t do anything about a mother’s pain. No one can do anything about a mother’s pain. I won’t forget my son – never, ever.

And he’s such a little boy. That boy I’m telling you that he hurts my soul – *too much*. Damn the day I came to this damn country. Damn this country which sent so many bullets and bombs against us!

But Carmen also likes to dance and her partner does not, so she goes out on Saturday nights by herself. The result is physical fights between Carmen and her companion. Luckily, her 17-year-old younger sister moved up from El Salvador to live with them in their 7½-square-meter boarding-house room. She called the police during their last confrontation. Marcos had knocked Carmen down and she had picked up a machete and was chasing him around the small, cluttered space with the hard-practiced swings of one who has worked for years as an agricultural laborer in El Salvador. Carmen cannot escape everyday violence in her attempt to recreate a new conjugal household in the United States.

My fieldnotes over the years contain numerous references to the ways violence follows gendered fault lines and becomes an accepted way to solve community anxieties in wartime. These notes were written during the summer of 1995, four years after the signing of the peace treaty in El Salvador:

August 1994

I invited two families of former guerilla fighters over to my home in San Francisco to look through the photos I had taken of them in 1981 during the military invasion while we were all fleeing for our lives. They now live in Oakland. The men work cleaning offices in San Francisco’s financial district and the women clean houses in Oakland. When I showed them a photograph

of a mutual friend taken in a refugee camp in Honduras in 1983 two years after the invasion they fell silent.

The woman in the photograph had been active in the guerilla-sponsored women's mass organization and had composed songs in the refugee camps in Honduras during the early 1980s denouncing the Salvadoran military repression and celebrating the participation of women in the ongoing revolutionary struggle. She had either lost her husband in the fighting or had separated from him. In any case, she was a single mother supporting several children independently. Towards the end of the war in approximately 1987, she had returned from the Honduran refugee camps to her village in El Salvador. It was a resettlement sponsored by the guerilla organizations which in defiance of the Salvadoran military were attempting to repopulate deserted war zones with their families to create a base of civilian supporters.

I innocently asked my friends how this mutual friend of ours was doing, and where she now lived. There were a few nervous giggles. Max attempted to crack a bitter joke that I did not understand and no one else seemed to appreciate: 'Mala yerba hay que cortarla [Weeds must be cut].' He tried to laugh, but merely croaked. His wife's eyes welled with tears. 'That's what they used to tell us: weeds must be cut,' he repeated somewhat defensively. I mumbled awkwardly that I was sorry to hear that our friend was dead. We changed the subject.

Later someone explained to me in private that this friend had been mistakenly accused of being a Salvadoran military spy and had been murdered in 1988. The reason she had been suspected was that, as a single mother without a husband to help support her four children, she had earned her income during those precarious years at the end of the war by traveling to the capital controlled by the Salvadoran military to sell ice cream in the central plaza. To reach the municipal capital, every day she was obliged to pass a military checkpoint. Few people in the resettled guerilla-controlled village where she lived were able to cross these checkpoints without being captured, tortured and/or killed by the government forces. It was soon rumored that she had a boyfriend in the municipal capital who was a member of a government-sponsored death squad. It was then suspected that she was providing him with information on what was occurring in her home village where everyone supported the guerilla(s) and where the army still tried to kill people in periodic military sweeps and aerial bombardments. The mere suspicion that she was a 'sapo' (spy) sufficed for the local guerilla commander in her village to order the woman killed during those volatile final years of government repression and undercover infiltration.

Ten years later everyone recognizes that her 'ajusticimiento' (justice killing) was an unfortunate error. Her death-squad boyfriend may indeed have arranged for her to be able to pass the military checkpoint during the final years of the war, but it was clear that she had never provided him with

any militarily useful information that placed her fellow villagers at risk. In point of fact, it is now rumored that she had not even liked her military death-squad boyfriend. She had merely been manipulating him for permission to enter the militarily-controlled town in order to support herself by selling ice cream.

But of course this information arrives too late. Her children were forced to grow up as orphans in the village that killed their mother. They are still there today. José tells me that the oldest girl who was twelve at the time of her mother's killing, was lucky: A 'nice man' in the village – one of the fighters in his squadron – adopted her and they now live as a couple [‘juntado’].

The Cold War in academia

Writing about repression and resistance in the Salvadoran civil war for the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1992, I would not have known how to deal with Carmen's experience or with the story of the killing of my friend the ice-cream seller, followed by the sexualized adoption of her orphaned daughter by a guerilla fighter. I am not sure that I could even have heard these accounts – much less have tape-recorded them and written them up in my fieldnotes. Even as late as 1992, Salvadorans who had been supportive of the FMLN during the 1980s may not have discussed internal killings with me. Indeed, I have hesitated publishing this account for several years after presenting it at an academic conference in Canada in 1997 (Bourgois, 1997). I was worried that this new data might fan smoldering embers of Cold War rhetoric akin to the work of the anthropologist David Stoll (1999). Stoll almost obsessively attempts to discredit the personal testimony of Rigoberta Menchú (1984), the Quiche Maya activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her powerful denunciation of the murder of her family and the destruction of her natal village by Guatemalan government troops in the 1980s (Menchú, 1984). It has spawned a voluminous but ultimately trivial ideological debate.

A decade ago, I knew very well how to deal intellectually, emotionally and politically with the fact of machine guns shooting into the sound of crying babies in the darkness of night. With special care, I documented the human rights violations of civilians by the Salvadoran government military. The killing of some 75,000 people in El Salvador during the 1980s was directly attributable to US military, economic and logistical support for the Salvadoran army. There is no pre- or post-Cold War questioning of that fact. Of the 22,000 denunciations of human rights violations investigated by the United Nations Truth Commission only 5 percent were found to have been committed by the FMLN compared to 85 percent by the army and 10 percent by army-linked death squads (Binford, 1996: 117).



Figure 5 Admiring a newly-delivered baby on the fifth day of our flight. The baby survived and was carried as a refugee into Honduras six days later.

In the 1980s, my understanding of the political violence generated by US foreign policy was further truncated by the fact that my attempts to write on it and to publicize it came up against the neo-McCarthyism that pervaded public debate. Popular unrest in Central America was widely suspected of being the result of calculated communist machinations. Expressions of partisanship were attributed to ulterior motives. When I gave a press conference in 1981 describing the killing of civilians in the counter-insurgency campaign I had witnessed, my university's anthropology department put me on formal academic trial and considered expelling me for what it called 'unethical professional behavior' (Bourgeois, 1991). After I testified before the US Congress on how military aid and US military trainers were assisting in the slaughter of civilians in El Salvador, the Central Intelligence Agency circulated a report to the members of Congress who had listened to me, depicting me as a communist propagandist for the FLMN guerilla(s) (US Congress, 1982).⁹ I was advised by a sympathetic congressional aide at my human rights briefings to cease showing my photograph of a baby born on the fifth day of our flight (Figure 5). The hand-inscribed insignia on the baseball cap of the woman cradling the newborn was the acronym for one of the factions of the FMLN guerilla coalition. The aide warned me that this reduced the credibility of my claim that the photograph depicted innocent civilians.

In this Cold War atmosphere, it was difficult for me to perceive and portray the revolutionary Salvadoran peasants as anything less than innocent victims, at worst, or as noble resisters at best. The urgency of documenting and denouncing state violence and military repression blinded me to the internecine everyday violence embroiling the guerilla(s) and undermining their internal solidarity. As a result I could not understand the depth of the trauma that political violence imposes on its targets, even those mobilized to resist it. This is not to deny, however, that the peasants also took pride in mobilizing in support of the FLMN to demand their rights (cf. Wood, 2000).

Beyond a pornography of violence

In *Pascalian Meditations*, Bourdieu (1997: 233) warns that the particularly degrading 'effects of symbolic violence, in particular that exerted against stigmatized populations, . . . makes it . . . difficult to talk about the dominated in an accurate and realistic way without seeming either to crush them or exalt them.' He identifies 'the inclination to violence that is engendered by early and constant exposure to violence' as 'one of the most tragic effects of the condition of the dominated' and notes that the 'active violence of people' is 'often [directed against] one's own companions in misfortune'. And he sketches the following causal chain:

The *violence exerted everyday* in families, factories, workshops, banks, offices, police stations, prisons, even hospitals and schools . . . is, in the last analysis, the product of the 'inert violence' of economic structures and social mechanisms relayed by the active violence of people. (Bourdieu, 1997: 233; emphasis added)

Bourdieu posits a 'law of the conservation of violence' and goes on, in his more political writings, to warn of the predictable fallout of the ongoing neoliberal assault on the European welfare state:

You cannot cheat with the *law of the conservation of violence*: all violence is paid for. . . . The structural violence exerted by the financial markets, in the form of layoffs, loss of security, etc., is matched sooner or later in the form of suicides, crime and delinquency, drug addiction, alcoholism, a whole host of minor and major everyday acts of violence. (Bourdieu, 1998: 40; original emphasis)

Political, economic and institutional forces shape micro-interpersonal and emotional interactions in all kinds of ways by supporting or suppressing modes of feeling and manifestations of love or aggression, definitions of respect and achievement, and patterns of insecurity and competition. In

post-Cold War, end-of-the-century Latin America, neoliberal actively dynamizes everyday violence. Javier Auyero (2000), for example, sees a verification of Bourdieu's law of the conservation of violence in the linkages he has unearthed between the restructuring of Argentina's deregulated economy and the rise of predatory delinquency and substance abuse in the shantytowns of Buenos Aires. In the United States, the fusing of structural and symbolic violence produces especially destructive but persistent patterns of interpersonal violence that reinforce the legitimacy of social inequality in the public eye. Racism, unemployment, economic exploitation and infra-structural decay are exacerbated by the indignity of being a poor person of color in a white, Protestant-dominated country that is the richest in the world. This nourishes among the excluded an angry sense of inferiority that results in acts of self-destructive or communal violence which in turn further fuel a cycle of humiliation and demobilizing self-blame. Out of this dynamic grows an oppositional, inner-city street culture – especially among youth – that fills the vacuum left by unemployment, underemployment and social disinvestment. This oppositional culture arises in an attempt to resist subordination but actually mimicks with classic all-American energy the most savage elements of US neoliberal ideology through its celebration of ostentatious individual material gain, masculine domination, commodity fetishism and a racialized understanding of hierarchy.¹⁰

Unlike the post-Cold War debates over political repression in Central America, however, debates about poverty and race in the United States continue to stagnate in bipolar conceptions of the worthy versus unworthy poor (Katz, 1996). In US policy discourse, inner-city residents must be constructed as moral citizens (who practice safe sex, avoid drugs, refrain from violence and toil diligently at subordinate jobs) in order to deserve shelter, food, medical care, employment and a modicum of public respect. Should they fail to abide by these behavioral dictates, they are blamed for producing their own material distress. The centrality of structural violence in this process becomes obscured by a maelstrom of everyday violence (expressed as criminal and domestic aggression) that in turn propagates a symbolic violence which convinces the dominated that they are to blame – at least partially – for the destitution and destruction visited upon them.

Everyday violence is a solvent of human integrity. Through gripping descriptions, harrowing photographs and seductive poetics, ethnographers risk contributing to a pornography of violence that reinforces negative perceptions of subordinated groups in the eyes of unsympathetic readers. But, conversely, the imperative of painting positive portraits of the inner-city poor in the United States or of revolutionary guerillas in El Salvador diminishes the real human devastation wrought by political repression in war and by political-economic inequality under neo-liberal capitalism. People do not simply 'survive' violence as if it somehow remained outside of them, and

they are rarely if ever ennobled by it. Those who confront violence with resistance – whether it be cultural or political – do not escape unscathed from the terror and oppression they rise up against. The challenge of ethnography, then, is to check the impulse to sanitize and instead to clarify the chains of causality that link structural, political, and symbolic violence in the production of an everyday violence that buttresses unequal power relations and distorts efforts at resistance. In the post-Cold War era, a better understanding of these complex linkages is especially important because it is international market forces rather than politically-driven repression or armed resistance that is waging war for the hearts and minds of populations.

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Notes

- 1 Galtung defines structural violence as 'the indirect violence built into repressive social orders creating enormous differences between potential and actual human self-realization'. He specifically differentiates structural violence from institutional violence, emphasizing the former's 'more abstract nature . . . that can[not] be traced down to a particular institution'. Structural violence is often 'seen as . . . natural as the air around us. . . . The general formula behind structural violence is inequality, above all in the distribution of power' (Galtung, 1975: 173, 175).
- 2 For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the death squads, the Salvadoran military and the US government see Arnson, 2000.
- 3 The battalion conducting this military offensive under the leadership of Colonel Sigfrido Ochoa included members of the Atlacatl Brigade trained by the United States Army. According to a United Press International Report, 'Ochoa took 15 reporters along a path covered with foul-smelling remains of cows, pigs and horses'. This would have been the day after most of us

managed to escape from the zone into Honduras. Ochoa told the reporters that he had burned the cadavers of the 250 guerilla(s) he claimed his troops killed 'to avoid an epidemic' ('Afirmar tropas del gobierno que mataron a 250 guerilla(s) y solo sufrieron 15 Bajas', *Diario de las Americas*, 20 November 1981: 1).

- 4 This resonates with Oscar Lewis's (1970: 75) findings during fieldnote(s) in Cuba just after the 1959 revolution: 'The people had a new sense of power and importance. They were armed and were given a doctrine which glorified the lower class as the hope of humanity. (I was told by one Cuban official that they had practically eliminated delinquency by giving arms to the delinquents!)'. The novels of Manlio Argueta (1983, 1987) on the Salvadoran revolutionary struggle powerfully evoke the metamorphosis of the Salvadoran peasants from victims of both physical repression and symbolic violence in the early repressive phase of political ferment into a dignified army of the poor actively fighting for their rights.
- 5 This interpretation of symbolic violence under extreme conditions sheds light on the phenomenon of survivor guilt among Nazi Holocaust victims. It might also help explain the so-called Stockholm Syndrome whereby hostages begin to identify with the cause of their captors, as in the high-profile case of Patty Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army in San Francisco in 1974.
- 6 Note the combination of both a question mark and an exclamation point in the title of the edited volume by Ana Kelly Rivera (1995) collecting the testimonies of women fighters and survivors of military repression in El Salvador: *Valió la pena?! [Was it worth it? It was worth it!]*.
- 7 In the March 2000 national elections, the FMLN won 38 percent of the congressional seats, more than any other political party (Wallace, 2000: 50 fn 3).
- 8 Joaquín Villalobos, a leading military commander of the FMLN, is said to have been responsible for Roque Dalton's killing. Following the armistice Villalobos became a member of the Salvadoran National Assembly for a brief period and, in the early 1990s, he formed occasional strategic voting alliances with ARENA, the right-wing party that represented the ruling oligarchy and had organic ties with the death squads.
- 9 A year later a group of Democratic congresspersons released a report critiquing the excesses committed by the CIA. One of the half-dozen examples they listed was the inaccurate claim by the CIA that a Stanford anthropology graduate student was 'an FMLN guerilla agent'. According to this report, the CIA had presented materials to the US Congress Committee on Intelligence Oversight that were intended to 'shoot down Bourgois' claims', including a slide that presented the newspaper op-ed piece quoted in the opening vignette to this article as an item of 'guerilla propaganda' (US Congress, 1982).

- 10 'Gangsta rap' music resonates especially well with the 'American Dream' of rugged individualism and entrepreneurship spiced by everyday violence. More generally, millenarian cultural nationalist movements among oppressed minorities in the United States can be understood as an exorcism of the symbolic violence of racialized social hierarchies. Movements such as the Ghost Dance religion on Native American reservations in the latter half of the 19th century or Farrakhan's Nation of Islam among imprisoned African Americans in the late 20th century provide symbolic catharsis by inverting the insult of internalized racism.

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