

# State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State College

---

From the SelectedWorks of Michael I Niman Ph.D.

---

2010

## You Can't Be Nonviolent Without Violence: The Rainbow Family's Nonkilling Nomadic Utopia and its Survival of Persistent State Violence

Michael I Niman, Ph.D., *Buffalo State College*



SELECTEDWORKS™

Available at: <http://works.bepress.com/niman/1/>

# Nonkilling Societies

Edited by  
Joám Evans Pim



Center *for* Global Nonkilling



You are free to share, copy, distribute and transmit this work\*

Under the following conditions:

- ① **Attribution.** You must attribute this work in the manner specified by the author/licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- ② **Noncommercial.** You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- ③ **No Derivative Works.** You may not alter, transform or build upon this work.

\* For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.

\* Any of the above conditions can be waived if you gain permission from the copyright holders.

Nothing in this license impairs or restricts the Authors' moral and legal rights.

Parts of this volume have been released under GFDL and Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 as part of Wikiversity's School of Nonkilling Studies ([http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/School:Nonkilling\\_studies](http://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/School:Nonkilling_studies)).

The Center for Global Nonkilling does not necessarily endorse the views expressed by the authors.

Also available for free download at: <http://www.nonkilling.org>

© The Authors, 2010

© Center for Global Nonkilling, 2010 (this edition)

First Edition: September 2010

ISBN-13 978-0-9822983-4-3

ISBN-10 0-9822983-4-X

---

Cataloging in Publication Data (CIP)

Nonkilling Societies / Edited by Joám Evans Pim

ISBN 978-0-9822983-4-3

1. Nonkilling 2. Peace. 3. Pacifism – Nonviolence.

I. Title. II. Evans Pim, Joám, ed. lit.

CDU - 172.4 : 327.36

---

A catalogue record is also available from the Library of Congress.



Center *for* Global **Nonkilling**

Post Office Box 12232

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96828

United States of America

Email: [info@nonkilling.org](mailto:info@nonkilling.org)

<http://www.nonkilling.org>

# You Can't Be Nonviolent Without Violence

The Rainbow Family's Nonkilling Nomadic Utopia  
and its Survival of Persistent State Violence

Michael I. Niman  
*Buffalo State College*

Since 1972, the Rainbow Family has been holding large noncommercial Gatherings forming spontaneous temporary cities of up to 30,000 people in remote public forests. Originally an American phenomenon, Rainbow Gatherings are now globally dispersed, regularly occurring across Eastern and Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. Despite this growth, the Family, wherever on earth it gestates, adheres to its founding values: it's an acephalous group committed to nonviolence; members make policy decisions by consensus with all Gathering attendees welcome to participate in consensus councils; everyone is welcome at Gatherings and anyone who attends a Gathering is a Rainbow Family member, and hence, can participate in these councils; Gatherings are noncommercial—members share all necessities and there is no admission or participation charge. In short, Gatherings are nonviolent, nonhierarchical and noncommercial. These are the Family's three core defining principles—remove any one of them and an event is not a Rainbow Gathering. Include them all, and you have a gateway into the world of nonkilling.

Gathering participants form an "intentional group," purposefully coming together to actualize a supposedly shared ideology (Erasmus, 1981) demonstrating the viability of a cooperative utopian community whose participants live, albeit temporarily, in harmony both with each other and with the environment. Hence, from the onset, Gatherings modeled environmental sustainability (e.g., initiating source separation recycling in 1972), nonviolent conflict resolution, and an all-inclusive egalitarianism that extended beyond social class to embrace divergent gender, religious and ethnic identities. Gatherings also welcome people recovering, or wanting to recover, from a plethora of illnesses, both mental and physical. Hence,

Rainbows describe the Gatherings as “healing” spaces—places to heal both individuals and societies. In constructing and maintaining both a utopian model and a healing space, the Family has established itself as a “revitalization movement,” a “deliberate organized, conscious effort by members of society to establish a more satisfying culture” (Wallace, 1956: 265, 279). Ultimately, Rainbows seek to reform the mainstream societies that birthed them—what they term “Babylon,” a phrase from the Book of Revelation. The Rainbows gleaned this phrase from Rastafarianism.

Rainbows maintain their separation from Babylon by retreating deep into the woods and liberating an autonomous zone of existence. What Rainbows liberate is not so much physical terrain, since they always dissolve within a few weeks and volunteers strive to remove their trace footprints from the environment, but time. And they liberate the imagination, so for a week or a month, Rainbows imagine utopia, and they live in it, ultimately liberating what anarchist theorist Hakim Bey terms a Temporary Autonomous Zone, or TAZ (Bey, 1991: 100-101). When the Gathering is over, Rainbows dissolve their TAZ and disperse into Babylon, only to reappear in another place and time, essentially unchanged and continuing where they left off. Demographers refer to this practice as a “fission-fusion” (cf. Dentan, 1992, 1994, 2008: 116; Fix, 1975; Neel et al., 1964). Unlike conventional revolutionaries or land-based utopian communities, the Rainbow Family purposefully avoids the threats and strains associated with controlling territory, hence avoiding prolonged external conflict with the state and internal conflict with each other—things that can lead to violent clashes. Ultimately the Rainbow Family’s longevity is tied to its strategy of regularly moving “the entire tribe” (Bey, 1991: 102).

The Rainbow Family is a nonkilling society (Paige, 2009 [2002]). The Family is committed to both practicing nonviolence at its own Gatherings, and to proactively advance the practice in Babylon. Hence, Gatherings serve as models and refuges of peaceful coexistence, and as laboratories for testing and advancing nonviolent conflict resolution strategies. While Councils regularly reaffirm the Family’s commitment to nonviolence against humans, the Family is split, however, on the subject of violence against animals perpetrated through an omnivorous diet. Most Rainbows are either vegetarian or vegan, and Councils almost always prohibit the use of common (“Magic Hat”) funds for the purchase of meat; however, Rainbow libertarianism toward humans prohibits the Family from banning meat entirely from the Gatherings. Hence Rainbows often have the individual option of eating at meat, vegetarian or vegan kitchens, with meat usually eschewed from larger communal meals served at central circles. While

some Rainbows voraciously argue that such meat-eating constitutes violence, the persistence of the argument and the careful consideration both sides pay to it is indicative of the central role nonviolence plays in Rainbow identity. Today's international Rainbow Family has a four-decade long history as a "peaceable people" (cf. Niman, 1991, 1997, 2011, in press; Dentan, 1992, 1994; Amster, 2003: 17; Solnit, 2009: 295-299).

Being a peaceable people, however, doesn't mean that Rainbow Gatherings are always peaceful. Violence, usually in the form of state sanctioned police violence, or violence among bickering drunks segregated away from the general Gatherings in Alcohol Camp (A-Camp) often mar Rainbow Gatherings. Such violence distinguishes the Rainbow Family from other contemporary and historic "nonviolent" utopian communities who achieve or have achieved their tranquility through restrictive membership policies that excluded people who the groups thought might have a proclivity toward violence. Rainbows, by contrast, not only accept violent individuals in accordance with their open membership policies, but sometimes seek such individuals out, recognizing that they need the healing environment that the Gatherings offer. Rainbows feel that banishing such individuals would be an admission that violence can't be overcome, and that "pacifist ideals that appeal only to those already safe from violence are not going to transform society" (Dentan, 1994: 95).

In this respect, the Rainbow Family is akin to the "family" that Anarchist theorist Peter Kropotkin envisioned when he argued in 1877 that anti-social behavior could best be treated with immersion into a loving supporting community or "family." He proposed "a new family, based on community of aspirations":

In this family people will be obliged to know one another, to aid one another and lean on one another for moral support on every occasion. And this mutual prop will prevent the great number of anti-social acts which we see today (Kropotkin, 2002[1877]: 233-234).

The Rainbow Gatherings, intentionally or otherwise, have served as a laboratory where, over the course of four decades, and with hundreds of thousands of participants, Kropotkin's theories have withstood testing.

Violent or potentially violent members provide the opportunity for the Rainbows to transcend simple tranquility and, with the successful engagement and pacification of violence, put their nonviolent principles and strategies into practice. Such practice both field-tests nonviolent conflict

resolution tactics for efficacy while, in the best cases, demonstrating their effectiveness. Rainbows argue for both the efficacy of nonviolent strategies in mitigating both immediate and long-term violent threats, and the moral imperative associated with the preference of violence over nonviolence. It's a double-edged argument that nonviolence not only works better, but that it's the right thing to do. The former line of reasoning might appeal to government bean counters fretting over the monetized costs associated with violent compliance regimes, while the latter argument would appeal to human cultural and hard-wired aversions to violence (cf. Dentan, this volume)—what we often call human decency.

The Family's nonkilling ethos sometimes mandates noncooperation with Babylonian authorities whom they see as inherently violent, either directly engaging in on-the-spot violence, threatening the use of such violence, or threatening delayed violence, usually in the form of incarceration. Contracting out violence to such a force stands in conflict to nonviolent principles, hence Rainbows avoid asking for support from traditional armed police agencies, instead preferring to confront violence and violent provocations themselves—usually with success.

Conflict between the Rainbow Family and government authorities began with the first Gathering in 1972. That year, over 20,000 would-be Rainbows converged on the Roosevelt National Forest in Colorado, all responding to a well spread rumor of a sort of wilderness Woodstock festival without bands or promoters. Colorado's ironically named governor, John Love, responded by declaring the Gathering illegal and ordering up police roadblocks to bar participants from attending. Rainbows, probably inspired by Gandhi's historic march on India's salt mines and the then-recent nonviolent civil rights actions in the southern United States, nonviolently marched on the barriers. The police arrested them by the hundreds. Finally, when four thousand people advanced toward the roadblock prepared to be arrested, the authorities backed off, removed the barriers, and let the Gathering, now gestated in an act of civil disobedience, proceed (Niman, 1997: 32).

This commitment to nonviolent civil disobedience, buoyed by thousands of participants who showed up each year prepared either to gather in the woods, or gather in jail, allowed the Gatherings to develop and grow relatively unhindered well into the era of the Reagan presidency. With U.S. Rainbow Gatherings occurring exclusively on National Forest Service land, the Forest Service became the lead government agency responsible for interfacing with the Rainbows. Early on in this relationship, it seems, these officials also bought into their own sort of nonviolence, essentially leaving

well enough alone, knowing that eventually the Rainbow TAZ, like the weather, would pass. The challenge for the bureaucrats was to see the Gathering pass with as little damage as possible to any law enforcement official's career. Their own relative nonviolence provided them with the best strategy to effectuate that result, also in the process proving the Rainbow nonviolence to be contagious.

By 1983, the Forest Service institutionalized their own nonviolence as a strategy, developing what one official called a "Hands-Off" approach to the Gathering. That year, officials in Michigan's Ottawa National Forest spent a relatively scant eight thousand dollars to monitor the event and provide interpretation rangers to answer questions about the logistics and the unique attributes of their forest. The Hands-Off approach proved to be a watershed event in Rainbow-U.S. relations, resulting in a smooth running Gathering unmarred by police violence—followed up by an effective Rainbow land restoration effort. It also, unfortunately, proved to be an anomaly.

During the years following the 1983 Gathering, the Forest Service ignored its own success and reversed course, not only using its own law enforcement personnel to harass the Rainbow Family, but also to encourage, and finally, pay local law enforcement agencies to do the same. The budget for the 1986 Gathering in Pennsylvania, for example, contained a thirteen thousand dollar line item paying the Pennsylvania State Police for services rendered setting up roadblocks to search Rainbow vehicles en route to the Gathering in a constitutionally shaky exercise of selective enforcement and profiling. The Forest Service justified these stop and search operations as a sort of War on Drugs battlefield despite the fact that after decades of such searches, the quantity of drugs confiscated at and near Rainbow Gatherings appears statistically normal for the number of vehicles searched (Niman, 1997: 189, 190). Notwithstanding the roadblocks, many local Forest Service officials all but went native at the 1986 Gathering, with one ranger seeking massage treatment at the Family's medical unit and with others bringing their families to the event on their days off.

This amity, and the persistently contagious nonviolence that it evidenced, might have struck fear into the hearts of the Forest Service leadership. The following year, at the 1987 Gathering in North Carolina, the Forest Service went to war against the family, spending \$270,156, mostly on harassing the Family and disrupting the Gathering, adding an Orwellian twist by calling the new strategy "The Good Host Approach." The Good Hosts blocked deliveries of water pipes and barrels, latrine covers and potable water, leading to a diarrhea outbreak that affected,



according to the Centers for Disease Control, 61.7 percent of Gathering participants (*ibid*, 185, 186). Forest Service officials subsequently petitioned a Federal Court in Texas the following year to grant them a legal right to finally move in and use overwhelming force (violence) to stop the next year's Gathering on the grounds that it posed a health threat. An aptly named Chief Federal Judge William Wayne Justice ruled:

"Indeed, the evidence record developed at the three sets of hearings lends substantial credence to one of the arguments advanced by the defendants [Rainbows], that the health and other problems seen at the 1987 Summer Gathering in North Carolina were exceptional and traceable—at least in part—to a hostile and adversarial relationship between the government and the Rainbow Family ... Indeed, the government did not offer any evidence of major health, safety, or environmental problems from other past Rainbow Family gatherings, except for the 1987 gathering in North Carolina" (*ibid*, 186, 187).

The Forest Service also based their legal argument on the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), arguing that the Family failed to complete site restoration in the wake of the 1987 Gathering—after federal agents arrested the site restoration crew. Justice ruled:

While it is commendable that the F.S. is concerned about possible adverse environmental effects, there is reason to question the government's good faith in raising this argument at this time ...

Although NEPA is unquestionably constitutional, even an otherwise valid statute cannot be applied in a manner designed to suppress First Amendment activity, or out of hostility to a particular group" (*ibid*, 187).

By all appearances, as the Reagan presidency morphed the national Zeitgeist, the Forest Service changed course from a cost-effective nonviolent policy in 1983, to a costly violent strategy in 1987, or put more succinctly in the terms of primitive nonkilling societies, from smart to stupid. The Rainbows prevailed, and in surviving, essentially gained victory over their adversary by strictly adhering to their core nonkilling ethos. Longtime Rainbow Oral Hipstorian Garrick Beck wrote later that year:

Of all the lessons of the 1987 Gathering, the one that tells me the most is that despite all the harassment and provocation on the part of the agents of government, 16,000 Rainbows kept the peace.

When they (U.S. Forest Service) ticketed without notice or warning our early on-site vehicles—and demanded immediate payment of fines—no one lost their cool heads.

When they (N.C. State Troopers) prevented a disabled live-in vehicle from being towed up the hill to where we could fix it, no one boiled over,  
When they shut our main gate and forced everyone into a hi-pressured and foolish walk across the bridge, no one cursed them out.

When live-in vehicles were arbitrarily detained and forced to encamp on the U.S. highway, no one went home anyway.

When they (state of N.C.) reached an agreement with us, and began a "pass" system for our service vehicles, and when the very next morning they (U.S.F.S.) refused access to vehicles bearing "passes," no one blew up.

When a trailer load of watermelons had to be unloaded, carried across the bridge, and reloaded, no one threw a watermelon through a government windshield.

When a 9-car brigade of officers (U.S.F.S., state troopers, S.B.I., etc.) rode up the hill military-style, stopping to load shotguns in full daylight in front of children, no one reacted violently.

When our medical vehicles (with so-called "passes") were detained at the bridge, no one called for an armed revolution.

When a vehicle with 200 gallons of distilled water for Kid Village was denied access, not one of us overreacted.

When people were indiscriminately I.D. checked on the highway in a threatening and abrasive manner, no one panicked.

When people and vehicles were searched without cause or warrant, no one slugged the illegal searchers.

When people were photoed [*sic*] and videoed (by law enforcement agents) after requesting not to be, no one busted their camera.

When people's license plate #'s were recorded by government surveillance agents, no one attacked them.

When a brother who requested the license #'s not be recorded was brutally seized on-site, without warrant, and driven out, no one blockaded or stormed the arresting officers or vehicles.

When flashlights were shone repeatedly into people's eyes while loading and unloading at the bridge, no one grabbed and smashed the flashlights.

When officers made obnoxious comments about women's bodies and our children, no one fired a shot.

When our cleanup crew was likewise harassed, no one ignited the ranger station.

The truth is we were provoked, goaded, button-pushed, aggravated purposely. They were waiting for us—any one of us—to take a swing—then let the violence really begin. But we didn't give it to them. 16,000 Rainbows, all 16,000 Rainbows, kept the peace. After all, that's what we're supposed to do, that's what—really—we possess, that's what we can share, and that's what, of course, those who are ruled by violence are so very afraid of (Beck, 1987).

Despite proving to be a massive failure in 1987, resulting in a diarrheal epidemic that seeded micro-epidemics in at least three cities, the Forest Service pushed ahead with the Good Host Approach at the 1988 Rainbow Gathering in Texas. Toward that end, they reassigned the agent in charge of their 1987 anti-Rainbow campaign, a former Dallas narcotics agent, Billy Ball, who served with the Armed Forces Police during their 1965 occupation of Watts, California, to be Incident Commander in charge of the 1988 Gathering. The Forest Service also armed Ball with a fresh new regulation outlawing Rainbow Gatherings—which Justice Justice subsequently termed “constitutionally repugnant,” citing the Forest Service’s “hostility to the Rainbow Family” (Niman, 1997: 189).

The Rainbows held firm to their commitment to nonviolence through another season of provocations. This time, Forest Service LEOs, under Ball’s command, both blocked one open supply road, prohibiting Rainbows from driving on it, while forcing open a closed Jeep trail to general traffic, allowing a drunk to drive into the middle of the Gathering, hitting and nearly killing a Rainbow woman named Noguns. Though incapacitated for almost a year, Noguns, in sticking to the Family’s stated nonviolence, chose not to press charges against the driver, but to instead forgive the man. As the days wore on, with Rainbows responding nonviolently to daily provocations, the dignity of their response began to draw sympathy from the local, mostly conservative gun-owning East Texas population, much as nonviolent civil rights protesters won the respect of the nation two decades earlier. When Ball made his “checkmate” move, blocking the only road leading into the Gathering area just as crowds began to arrive, locals converged on the Forest with a flotilla of small fishing boats, ferrying Rainbows and their supplies across Sam Houston Lake to the Gathering site.

In 1989 the “Good Host” approach at that year’s Gathering in Nevada involved setting up “informational checkpoints” equipped with drug-sniffing dogs. When Rainbows stopped to get directions, according to law enforcement documents, “general information was provided to those individuals interested in the Gathering. Also at this time, if probably [*sic*] cause developed, individuals were arrested,” presumably for possession of illegal drugs. Despite stopping and searching a large number of vehicles, few Rainbows were actually arrested, however. This should have come as no surprise to the Forest Service since their own reports that year conceded that “the Family does not advocate the use of hard core drugs or alcohol and supports the rehabilitation of anyone addicted” (ibid, 190).

Rather than admit that the rationale for violent repression of the Rainbows was flawed, officials instead spun their failure to find any significant quantity of drugs as proof of what sly and professional drug traffickers the Rainbows must actually be. Agents theorized that Rainbows must have set up [invisible] "information stations" up the road to warn travelers about the Forest Service's own ersatz information stations. Policing efforts at the 1989 Gathering grew to encompass the Nevada Division of Forestry, the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Defense, the Nevada Brand Inspector, the office of the Governor of Nevada, the Department of Human Resources Health Division, the Nevada Department of Emergency Services, the Nevada Highway Patrol, the Idaho Highway Patrol, the Nevada Department of Wildlife and an undetermined number of local Sheriffs' agencies and police departments from Nevada and Idaho (*ibid*, 190, 191). Despite this heavily armed presence, Rainbows again kept their cool.

Over the next two decades, the Forest Service continued with a bi-polar approach to the Rainbow Family, ranging from nonviolent and cooperative strategies usually implemented on the local level, to violent and confrontational strategies, usually dictated by the agency's Washington DC administration. There are now clear and enduring patterns of a struggling nonviolent subculture within the Forest Service, buoyed by the Rainbow Family's contagious nonviolence—feds gone native. These nonviolent tendencies are often overwhelmed by a larger violence-prone Forest Service bureaucracy, however.

It appears that the very existence of Rainbow anarchists who mitigate violence without the assistance of a traditional (violent) police force, constitutes a threat. Ultimately, by maintaining the tranquility of city-sized Gatherings without such assistance, Rainbows force such agencies to confront their own obsolescence, or at least the obsolescence of their tactics, whose efficacy is bested by the nonviolent model. Bureaucrats are also threatened by the absence of bureaucracy in such a nonhierarchical society. Ultimately, governments, in a cross-culturally common pattern, construe nonviolent anarchist communities as so severe a challenge to the legitimacy of rule by force as to require violent repression (*cf.* Edo; Williams-Hunt; Dentan, 2009). Hence, just the existence of the Rainbow TAZ, in the eyes of Forest Service bureaucrats, requires repression even before any regulation is violated. Such repression, based on either direct violence or the threat of violence, however, has proven historically ineffectual in gaining compliance from Rainbows to whatever demands the bureaucrats may have. Ultimately, the pattern that has developed over the four decade existence of the

Rainbow Family shows that the Forest Service usually rudders toward violence, but later abandons such violence because of its lack of efficacy in contrast to their own more successful experiments with nonviolence.

Forest Service proponents of using force to overwhelm and control the Rainbow anarchists appear to have effected their strategy through law enforcement training protocols that focus on violence while fostering fear among law enforcement officers, ultimately increasing the likelihood of them initiating violence. In 2008, for example, the Forest Service spent roughly one million dollars “to patrol” the Rainbow Gathering in Wyoming. Federal law enforcement officers working at the Gathering received training in the use of pepper-ball buns, Taser guns, police dogs and crowd control techniques (Niman, 2011, in press). The curriculum covered “Striking and Close Quarter Defensive Tactics, Pressure Points, Weapon Retention, Takedowns, Ground Defense, Arrest Techniques, Baton Control Techniques, Edged Weapon Awareness, Oleoresin Capsicum Spray [and] Use of Force” (FLETC, 2009).

Absent from this training regimen was any documented mention of the nonviolent compliance techniques that Rainbows and government officers historically implemented with success at Gatherings. It also appears that many officers patrolling the 2008 Gathering were unaware that the Rainbows were a peaceable people. To the contrary, the government admonished law enforcement officers to “keep alert and tactically be prepared for potential threats,” and “look out for each other and dangerous situations,” while making baseless claims that “family members carried hunting knives and have assaulted Law Enforcement Officials,” and “...reports of large numbers of firearms [at previous Gatherings] were received and firearms have been seen and confiscated at past [G]atherings” (Niman, 2011, in press).

That year, at the Gathering in Wyoming, Forest Service law enforcement officers rioted in the Rainbow daycare camp, Kiddie Village. Witness statements, an American Civil Liberties investigation (ACLU, 2009), a Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General investigation (OIG, 2009) and photographic evidence included in the documentary film, “We Love You” (Kalafer, 2009), document that officers entered Kiddie Village in a “5-10 minute fast walking pursuit” of a man they suspected of sharing marijuana. They entered the camp with weapons drawn, at which time a woman approached the officers and spoke to them—witnesses say she asked them to holster their weapons. Officers immediately threw her to the ground, according to the government’s report, after she “moved quickly past [an officer’s] security position.” Rainbow peacekeepers moved into position placing themselves between the aggressive officers and the Rainbow Family

members in Kiddie Village—then joined hands, with their backs to the officers, some chanting the harmonizing syllable “Om.” Officers, apparently lacking the training to recognize this traditional peacekeeping technique, opened fire and began shooting people at random with “non lethal” pepperballs, while pointing Taser guns at other’s chests and faces. A government informant reported that the officers acted as if they were in Vietnam or Iraq, rather than a peaceful Gathering of Americans (*ibid*).

Video documentation (Kalafer, 2009) of the event shows obviously frightened and confused officers shooting at peacekeepers and random Rainbow Family members whom they encountered on the trail during their 30 minute hike out of the Gathering. The official story, dutifully reported verbatim by the Associated Press (Neary, 2008) and thoroughly debunked by the ACLU investigation (ACLU, 2008), claims that officers were violently attacked by a riotous mob of 400 rock-and-stick-wielding Rainbows. Forest Service records document that no law enforcement officers were injured during this supposed 30 minute attack (Niman, 2011, in press).

This last fact is a tribute to the effectiveness of the nonviolent conflict resolution strategies that Rainbow peacekeepers—who tasked themselves with the job of keeping their fellow Rainbows nonviolent, even when confronted with the provocation of watching their children’s camp come under attack—had employed. The Forest Service subsequently released documents that the Forest Service law enforcement officers involved in the Kiddie Village incident were outfitted for, and prepared to use, “deadly force.” Their training-based proclivity toward violence almost, we now know, turned a routine marijuana arrest into a massacre.

The Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations Division mission reads in its entirety: “To serve people, protect natural resources and property within the authority and jurisdiction of the Forest Service” (USDA, 2010). Their violent conflict resolution strategy failed this mission, ultimately endangering both the public and their own employees. The nonkilling Rainbow Family’s commitment to nonviolence and its implementation of a nonviolent conflict resolution strategy in the face of violent provocation, in retrospect, proved more effective in attaining the Forest Service’s own mission, in the process modeling a more viable alternative to the government’s violent policies.

While the ACLU investigation condemned the Forest Service and called for a congressional investigation into their pattern of mistreating the Rainbow Family, the government’s own investigation exonerates the officers involved since, the report reads, the “Investigation determined that

actions taken by the FS LEOs, including their use of nonlethal force against the crowd, followed FS procedures, and were consistent with their training and FS policy" (OIG, 2009: 4). A letter sent by John Twiss, the Director of the Forest Service's Law Enforcement and Investigations Division, to the officers involved in the incident commends them for "backing each other up and implementing the crowd control training you had been given" (Twiss, 2008). These statements get to the root of the problem. The Rainbow Gathering participants weren't the only victims. The law enforcement officers assigned to the Gathering were also victims of their own training, which positioned violence as their default behavior and fear as their blinding mindset. The end result was that Forest Service law enforcement administrators successfully effected a policy of violence against the Rainbow anarchists without actually stating such an indefensible policy.

This becomes increasingly clear when contrasting the behavior of federal government trained officers with local law enforcement officers who also come in contact with the Rainbow Family. At the 2008 Gathering, local Wyoming Sheriff's deputies also patrolled the Gathering area, separately from the Forest Service officers. Without suffering the heightened fear level that federal law enforcement leaders instilled in their troops, the locals were much better equipped, emotionally, to interface with the Rainbows on a rational level. Hence, for example, the day before terrified federal officers shot up Kiddie Village, local Sheriff's deputies joined hands with Rainbows in a Kiddie Village prayer circle. The local officers engaged in normal human to human interactions with the Rainbows, and when the need arose, successfully enrolled the assistance of Rainbow Family members in a search for a missing person. Stereotypically, many Americans tend not to expect Sheriff's deputies in one of the most remote and conservative regions of one of the most sparsely populated and conservative states to demonstrate more liberal and open-minded behavior than their better paid and presumably better educated and more professional federal compatriots. In practice, however, that was the case at the Gathering in Wyoming. It appears that the lack of training that the local sheriff's deputies received, better positioned them to effectively carry out their duties than the actual training that the federal officers received. Using the local law enforcement officers as a control group illuminates the negative impact of training on the federal officers.

While the Forest Service, with the cooperation of collaborators at the Associated Press, was successful in controlling the initial spin after the July 2008 Wyoming melee, they lost control of the story after the ACLU

released their report in October condemning Forest Service actions. Around the same time, various streams of raw footage of the Forest Service LEOs shooting up Kiddie Village were going viral on the Internet. A month later, the Forest Service's Law Enforcement Director, John Twiss, who was on the ground in Wyoming personally overseeing law enforcement operations at the 2008 Rainbow Gathering, unexpectedly and unceremoniously resigned from the Forest Service, making no statement as to why he was leaving. His successor, David Ferrell, issued a legally questionable policy declaring that information pertaining to his agency's "type and frequency of training of law enforcement personnel," such as the information documenting his predecessor's training policies for officers serving at Rainbow Gatherings, should no longer be released to scholars or journalists in compliance with the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) since release of such information "would interfere with the agency's accomplishment of mission" (Niman, 2011, in press). Or put another way, research like that presented in this chapter seem to be interfering with the agency's mission—at least with regard to the Rainbow Family.

The Forest Service's 38 year history with the Rainbow Family is essentially the repetition of the same experiment repeated with the same results proving the superior efficacy of nonviolent conflict resolution strategies over violent ones. In each cycle, the Forest Service escalates its violence until it finally results in some sort of humiliating episode where the agency fails to attain its compliance goals, creates some degree of chaos, and is ultimately exposed for systematically abusing a public it is chartered to serve. This failure is often followed by personnel reassignments and new less abusive, less violent and more effective strategies, which eventually devolve back into abusive, violent ineffective strategies as the cycle repeats itself yet again.

While academics schooled in a culture of experimentation might see these cycles as repetitive experiments, I suspect the actual bureaucrats repeatedly implementing these strategies don't see them as experiments at all. They, I argue, are simply acting out what they consciously or unconsciously see as the mandates of the civilized state model. The Rainbows, by contrast, are consciously replicating an egalitarian primitive nonkilling band society. The clash between these two cultures is inevitable, with the "civilized" society arrogantly seeing itself as the natural evolution of the "inferior" pre-pastoral society, which, as a state, they must control with their force/violence-backed laws. Hence, no matter how many times experimentation proves their violent tactics ineffective in gaining their officially stated goals, they persist with the same tactics. This, I believe, is because as I mention earlier, the very presence



of the Rainbows constitutes a threat to the bureaucrats' very understanding of society, which they equate with the state model of civilization. And states have historically, since their creation, maintained their existence through the force of violence.

This history predicts that the state will continue its cycles of violent repression against the Rainbows. The Family's TAZ strategy, coupled with their commitment to nonkilling, allow the Family to persist in the face of these attacks. This cycle is likely to replicate itself until the state eventually collapses, as states have historically always done. The reason for this collapse will likely have no direct connection with the Rainbow Family. The Rainbows, in the end, will be left standing simply because their model of organization is more durable than the state model. If we accept the Rainbow Family's claim to have inherited the heritage of a long lineage of previous band societies, then these nonkilling anarchists may have already outlived the violent state.

## References

- ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] (2008) "Rainbow Family Gathering in Wyoming," *ACLU Wyoming Chapter*, Available at (consulted January 18, 2010): <[http://www.aclu-wy.org/NewsEvents/PressReleases/10\\_8\\_08.pdf](http://www.aclu-wy.org/NewsEvents/PressReleases/10_8_08.pdf)>.
- Amster, Randall (2003). "Restoring (Dis)Order: Sanctions, Resolutions, and 'Social Control' in Anarchist Communities," *Contemporary Justice Review*, 6(1): 9-24
- Beck, Garrick (1987). "Keeping the Peace," *All Most Broke*. Chicago: All Ways Free.
- Bey, Hakim (1991). *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.
- Dentan, Robert Knox (1992). "The Rise, Maintenance and Destruction of Peaceable Polity; A Preliminary Essay in Political Ecology," in Silverberg, James; Gray, J. Patrick, Ed., *Aggression and Peacefulness in Humans and Other Primates*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 214-270.
- Dentan, Robert Knox (1994). "'Surrendered Men': Peaceable Enclaves in the Post-Enlightenment West," in Sponsel, Leslie; Gregor, Thomas, Ed., *The Anthropology of Peace and Nonviolence*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, pp. 69-108.
- Dentan, Robert Knox (2008). *Overwhelming Terror: Love, Fear, Peace, And Violence Among Semai of Malaysia*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Edo, Juli; Williams-Hunt, Anthony; Dentan, Robert Knox (2009). "'Surrender,' Peacekeeping, and Internal Colonialism: A Neglected Episode in Malaysian History," *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde*, 165 (2-3): 216-240.
- Fix, Alan G. (1975). "Fission-Fusion and Lineal Effect: Aspects of the Population Structure of the Semai Senoi of Malaysia," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 43: 295-302.

- FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center] (2009). "Law Enforcement Control Tactics Refresher Training Program," Available at (consulted January 9, 2010): <<http://www.fletc.gov/training/programs>>.
- Erasmus, Charles J. (1981). "Anarchy, Enslavement, and Syntropy in International and Traditional Communities," in Castile, George Pierre; Kushner, Gilbert, Eds., *Persistent Peoples: Cultural Enclaves in Perspective*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, pp. 192-211.
- Kalafer, Jonathan (2009). *We Love You* [DVD]. Mendham: New Jersey Pictures.
- Kropotkin, Peter (2002 [1877]). "Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners," in Baldwin, Roger N., Ed., *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*. Mineola: Dover, pp. 230-235.
- Neary, Ben. (2008). "Five Arrested in Rainbow Family Clash With Feds," *Associated Press* (Lexis-Nexis Universe), July 4.
- Neel, J. V.; Salzano, F. M.; Junquerira, P. C.; Keiter, F.; Maybury, Lewis D. (1964). "Studies on the Xavante Indians of the Brazilian Mato Grosso," *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 16: 52-140.
- Niman, Michael I. (1991). *The Rainbow Family: An Ethnography From Within* [PhD dissertation]. University at Buffalo.
- Niman, Michael I. (1997). *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Niman, Michael I. (2011, in press). *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*, Volume 2. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- OIG [U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General] (2009). *Use of Force Report*. February 27. Available at (consulted January 20, 2010): <<http://www.buffalostate.edu/peopleoftherainbow/x520.xml>>.
- Paige, Glenn D. (2009 [2002]). *Nonkilling Global Political Science*. Honolulu: Center for Global Nonkilling.
- Solnit, Rebecca (2009). *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*. New York: Viking.
- Twiss, John C. (2008). "Letter," July 21. Available at (consulted January 20, 2010): <<http://www.buffalostate.edu/peopleoftherainbow/x520.xml>>.
- USDA [United States Department of Agriculture Law Enforcement and Investigations] (2010). "Our Mission," Available at (April 17, 2010): <<http://www.fs.fed.us/lei/>>.
- Wallace, Anthony (1956). *Revitalization Movements*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. .