

The Work of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Colombia

A Case Study of Nonviolence Principles in Practice

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Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) provides an organized, faith-based, nonviolent response to injustice in areas of acute conflict around the globe. One of the current program sites is Colombia. Colombia is torn by a fifty-year long civil war, drug trafficking, and the U.S.-led war on drugs. CPT began its work in Colombia in 2001 by invitation of the Colombian Mennonite Church. The team currently accompanies ten communities termed “Humanitarian Spaces” and multiple civil society organizations in order to reduce the violence against these groups. This case study evaluates the work of CPT in relation to nine principles of nonviolent direct action synthesized from nonviolent leaders and literature. The study involves participant observation of the Colombia project, interviews with team members, interviews with Colombian nationals, interviews with individuals in the broader nonviolence community in North America, and examination of team documents from 2004 to 2008. In general, CPT Colombia uses the nine nonviolence principles well, especially the principles of “seizing moral initiative” and “confronting and exposing injustice.” There is significant room for improvement in four areas: “mental preparation,” “training oppressed communities,” “withdrawing consent from injustice,” and “asserting one’s humanity.”

It is challenging to evaluate the work of peace teams around the globe. How does one measure the number of deaths prevented and the number of communities liberated from fear due to this type of work? Some teams, such as Peace Brigades International, International Solidarity Movement, Witness for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and Christian

Peacemaker Teams (CPT) use annual program evaluations to analyze effectiveness. While annual evaluations are an excellent tool to maintain focus and measure planned outcomes, this research seeks to evaluate the work of CPT in Colombia on a more philosophical basis, judging its congruence with nine principles of nonviolent direct action found in nonviolence literature.

One of the contributions of case study research is its assessment of the influence of academic work on field work and its ability to enrich academic literature with examples from real life. Though academics often articulate a desire for a fluid exchange between research, theory, and practice, it is not clear that this always happens. Practitioners are not always aware of the latest research in a field and day-to-day demands of fieldwork often preclude staying current with the literature or examining practical applications of theory and research. But academics may also be disconnected. The rigors of day-to-day teaching, research, and committee work often leave short the academic's connection to practice. Thus, both academics and practitioners benefit from case study analysis.

What's more, the work of academic activists is often suspect. How does an academic maintain objectivity and avoid bias when immersed in field research? Is participant observation legitimate as an evaluation methodology? How does the researcher reduce the role of personal bias in field research? Does participant observation enrich our knowledge base in a way that nonparticipant observation cannot?

I believe that participant observation offers unique and valuable insights in case study research. Immersion in the culture and organization under evaluation opens new levels of understanding and depth of questioning that are not available to the nonparticipant observer. Established relationships with organizational actors create trust that allows for more direct and honest disclosure. Further, participant observers can reduce bias and subjectivity by triangulation of data. In this case, I examine the findings of participant observation in light of organizational documents and interviews with team members and outsiders who know the work of CPT Colombia.

Thus this research examines the nonviolent direct action work of CPT Colombia from 2004-2008 using participant observation, content analysis of organizational documents, and interviews with organizational team members and Colombian and North American outsiders who know the work of nonviolence and the organization. These three methods are used to

answer the research question, how well does CPT Colombia adhere to basic principles of nonviolent direct action? In addition, how might CPT Colombia improve its work based on standard principles of nonviolent direct action taken from the literature?

Nonviolent direct action, for the purposes of this study, is defined as “a general technique of conducting protest, resistance, and intervention without physical violence. The technique includes a multitude of specific methods that are grouped into three main classes: nonviolent protest and persuasion, non-cooperation, and nonviolent intervention.”^[1]

CPT, working in the field of nonviolent direct action since 1994, describes itself as follows:

Christian Peacemaker Teams offers an organized, nonviolent alternative to war and other forms of lethal inter-group conflict. CPT provides organizational support to persons committed to faith-based nonviolent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy. CPT seeks to enlist the response of the whole church in conscientious objection to war, and in the development of nonviolent institutions, skills and training for intervention in conflict situations. CPT projects connect intimately with the spiritual lives of constituent congregations. Gifts of prayer, money and time from these churches under gird CPT’s peacemaking ministries.^[2]

Since its inception in 1986, CPT has provided teams of trained volunteers in Iraq, Haiti, Israel and the West Bank, the State of Chiapas in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Kenora in Canada, the Arizona/Mexico border, South Dakota, and Washington, DC. The peacemaker volunteers, following an intensive one-month residential training, are sent to areas of acute violence. “CPT embraces the vision of unarmed intervention waged by committed peacemakers ready to risk injury and death in bold attempts to transform lethal conflict through the nonviolent power of God’s truth and love.”^[3] Teams locate only to areas where they are invited by a legitimate social institution, such as a government official, community leaders, or a religious body. They work closely with local grassroots advisors to provide human rights documentation, public witness to injustice, and accompaniment and empowerment of groups threatened by armed actors of all types. Unlike soldiers, they work through Jesus’ principle of love of enemy and strict nonviolence and non-retaliation to provide creative responses to injustice and violence in all of its forms.

Fourteen years have now passed since the first full-time CPT project, which was in Haiti.

Semi-annual evaluations of CPT work exist for each project site, but this research seeks to evaluate the work of CPT Colombia based not on effectiveness in reaching annual goals but on adherence to well-understood principles of nonviolence in performing this work.

To anchor this case study, I look at nine common principles of nonviolence synthesized from the literature of nonviolent activists and researchers who drew on biblical and ethical principles. These include writings by or about Martin Luther King, Jr. (Baptist tradition), Mahatma Gandhi (Hindu and Muslim tradition), David Cortright (Catholic tradition), Walter Wink (Protestant tradition), and Gene Sharp (secular tradition). These principles include:

1. Mental preparation, self purification, and empowerment of the nonviolent practitioner, such as “dying to one’s fear,” studying and practicing nonviolent strategies, and centering spiritually on a strength greater than oneself.^[4]
2. Building a clear vision, goals, and long-term strategy to change power relationships. This necessarily includes identifying and preparing leaders, raising funds, and working with the media.^[5]
3. Organizing, educating, training, empowering and mobilizing the oppressed community and its sympathizers to work for change.^[6]
4. Seizing the moral initiative. This involves seeking truth, justice, openness, honesty, and order in the face of injustice and thus challenging the sources of power that maintain the unjust system.^[7]
5. Choosing congruence between the means used and the ends envisioned. This requires acting out of love and positive regard instead of hate while attempting to win over opponents peacefully, or at least persuading them to accommodate one’s goals rather than destroy opponents.^[8]
6. Withdrawing one’s consent and cooperation from systems of injustice. This withdrawal increases the cost of oppression for the oppressor and shifts power to the nonviolent campaign. This includes withdrawal of consent to unjust public policies, noncompliance with authorities or organizations that are abusing power, and challenging inaccurate information.^[9]
7. Confronting and exposing injustice through nonviolent actions to win over an oppressor or the public. This requires some type of public action and some vehicle of

mass communication to expose the injustice.

8. Being willing to suffer rather than cause suffering. This includes a willingness to suffer the consequences of one's (sometimes illegal) actions as opposed to retaliating or fleeing. This willingness to suffer at times serves to awaken the conscience of bystanders and oppressors to the injustice and their part in it.^[11]
9. Asserting one's own humanity through the extension of friendship, openness, respect, and active listening to transform the opponent and deny the opponent's ability to polarize and marginalize others. The idea is to transform the relationship between the nonviolent activist and the opponent or, at least, to change the perspective of the opponent.^[12]

Research Methodology

To evaluate the CPT Colombia project from 2004 to 2008 in relation to these nine principles of nonviolent practice, this research draws on three primary data sources: interviews, participant observation, and content analysis of documents. First, I used face-to-face interviews with four full-time members of the Colombia CPT team while I was in Colombia during the summers of 2006, 2007, and 2008. I also interviewed three Colombians, who know the work of CPT but who are outside the organization, and two academics in North America who have worked with the team for short periods of one to three months since 2006. Both academics teach at U.S. universities in the field of education. Team interviews lasted one to two hours and focused on the members' responses to the nine principles of nonviolence in relation to CPT work. Team members were asked to give examples of each of the use or non-use of the principles by the team. Interviewed were one Colombian, one Canadian, one U.S. Citizen, and the Canadian coordinator for the Colombian team.

Second, for one month each summer, 2004-2008, I engaged in participant observation of the work of CPT Colombia. At the time, I served as a Reserve Corps member with CPT in Colombia. A Reserve Corps member participates in the same one-month nonviolence training as do full-time workers and serves in similar capacities as full-time workers during the periods they are on site. This includes accompaniment of villagers and organizations, networking with area organizations doing peace and justice work, leading delegations of North Americans in Colombia, educating others on the observations and work of the team

and the ongoing community life of the team.

Finally, I examined themes, plans and actions outlined in dozens of documents produced by CPT Colombia, 2004-2008, such as press releases, monthly updates, semi-annual reports, human rights reports, and strategic plans. Many of these documents are available on the CPT website.^[13] Other documents (strategic plans) are only available to those within the organization.

Background on the Colombia CPT Project

The CPT Colombia Project began in 2001 with an invitation from the Colombian Mennonite Church. The church, headquartered in Bogotá, ministered to thousands of refugees fleeing the violence of low-intensity conflict in the Colombian countryside for the safety of the capital as a result of the fifty-year-long civil war. Caught in battle between guerillas (seeking to restore land to peasants) and paramilitary troops (seeking to protect the wealthier sectors of the population from guerilla activities) for territory and access to petroleum and cocaine, the mostly poor rural peasants suffer. The Colombia Mennonite Church, invited CPT to open a project in Colombia and CPT exploratory team decided to locate in Barrancabermeja (Barranca for short), hoping their presence in the Opon River region would facilitate the partial return and reestablishment of war-displaced rural civilian communities as well as prevent a further exodus from the countryside around Barranca.^[14]

A Christian Peacemaker Team currently accompanies two rural villages along the Opon River system outside the town of Barrancabermeja. In addition, CPT has more recently offered accompaniment to seven communities north of Barranca in the gold mining region of Southern Bolivar and to one community in southwestern Colombia where the indigenous Awa peoples live. These three primary areas or groups meet the criteria for “Humanitarian Spaces” as defined by the Program for Development and Peace in the Magdalena Medio website.^[15] In the gold mining region, CPT offers accompaniment one week out of every six. Accompaniment of the Awa people, however, is currently provided two months out of

every six. Traveling by motorized canoe, CPT workers have accompanied families in villages along the Opon River year round, though this work is being phased out due to the reduction in violence over time. Initially, the CPT presence in villages was constant, but as the return refugee communities stabilized, accompaniment has been gradually reduced while increasing in the northern mining areas and in southwestern Colombia with the Awa people.

Team members, full-time and part time, are fluent in Spanish and interact with both leaders and families in each of the areas of accompaniment. They provide emotional and spiritual support, serving as a visible presence in villages as a deterrent to abuses of power by armed actors. They advocate for villagers and leaders with governmental officials and nongovernmental agencies in Colombia and North America, educate the media and North Americans about human rights conditions and the activities of armed groups in Colombia, and empower communities and their leaders to organize and advocate for themselves. The Colombia team ranges from four to ten full-time members and is assisted by fifteen to twenty reserve corps members who agree to serve three weeks to three months each year.

Evaluation of Nonviolence Principles in Practice

Nine principles that define nonviolent direct action in common nonviolence literature form the basis for evaluation of CPT Colombia in this study. This paper examines each principle in relation to the three sources of data mentioned: interviews, participant observation, and CPT documents over the period 2004-2008. The relationship of each principle to each source of data is rated on a five point scale where 1 is excellent and 5 represents a “failure of adherence to this principle.”

1=Excellent adherence to this principle of nonviolence

2=Good adherence with slight room for improvement

3=Adequate adherence with significant need for improvement

4=Poor adherence; major changes necessary

5=Failure of adherence to this principle

1. Mental preparation, self purification, and empowerment of the nonviolent

practitioner. To prepare oneself for nonviolent action, the practitioner studies and practices nonviolent strategies and centers herself spiritually, drawing on a strength greater than herself. Mental preparation includes “dying to one’s fear” in relation to confronting oppressive powers and self purification to remove personal attributes that might interfere with clearness of mind and centeredness. The great challenge of nonviolence is, of course, is avoiding the urge to become the evil and oppression the activist is working against.

Evidence of Principle 1 in CPT Colombia. All CPT volunteer workers, whether full or part-time, must be professing Christians and must successfully complete twenty-five days of residential nonviolence training in the United States or Canada. Those accepted for training must first participate in a two-week delegation to a CPT site somewhere in the world.

Following a positive evaluation by the delegation leader and onsite CPT members, volunteer candidates complete an extensive written application outlining their motives and suitability for this work. The CPT personnel coordinator then interviews each applicant by phone and reviews three personal references. Once the CPT applicant successfully completes these screens, a selection committee invites the applicant for residential training.

Training includes a study of the biblical basis of peacemaking; skills for active listening; negotiation and mediation skills to resolve conflicts cooperatively; human rights monitoring and reporting; team building and group process; planning, implementing and evaluating nonviolent direct actions; the spirituality of peacemaking; working with technology; public speaking and writing skills, anti discrimination work, and leadership development.

Following successful completion of the training and signing a three-year commitment, CPT sends volunteers to international projects based on CPT need and the candidate’s personal interest.

Once on-site, CPT members study the local language and receive orientation from full time workers. Teams usually live communally in one house, so CPT leadership pays attention to conflict and leadership styles in building well-balanced teams. Teams congregate each morning for thirty minutes of prayer and reflection to stay spiritually focused and to build community. Members take turns leading worship. Although worship is voluntary, normally all are in attendance and share in the singing, prayer, and reflection on a daily theme.

Among several appointed roles in the team is leader of spiritual support. This member convenes daily worship and makes sure that the spiritual well-being of the team is discussed and problems addressed if needed. Typically, each team includes at least one member with fairly extensive theological training or interest, such as a master's degree in divinity. A person with such training often volunteers for the spiritual support role. Every other month, teams meet for a weekend retreat with an outside resource person to build team cohesion, nurture spiritual growth, and cope with the stress and secondary trauma of working with oppressed communities.

Weekly calls from the North American Colombia support coordinator to the on site coordinator(s) include a check of individual and team health. This includes questions on the spiritual, emotional, physical, and social well-being of each team member. A pastoral support person is available via email and phone for team members; and this pastor visits once a year for more thorough checks. Based on team interviews, this resource person does not seem to be used regularly, except during times of acute conflict or personal crisis.

The Colombia team also makes use of a "buddy system" in which pairs of volunteers meet for bi-weekly check-ins on physical, spiritual, emotional, and work issues. The buddy system appears to be used widely and provides an important source of support and accountability for team members.

The team gathers twice a year to evaluate team goals and to assess the spiritual needs of the group and its members. At the end of each semi-annual report, the team lists specific prayer requests to be lifted up by the North American CPT Steering Committee at its regular annual retreat.

Since the CPT Colombia office is located in the house where the team lives, workers find it difficult to separate work time from non-work time. The team attempts to protect downtime by limiting work tasks to the daytime hours, relaxing in the evenings, taking one to two days off each week, and developing a local social life.

There is an extensive library of books in the CPT house. These include texts dealing with spiritual, social, and political aspects of the team's work. There is an extensive library of hymnals, worship resources, and inspirational readings that are used in daily worship. Many, but not all, of the team members participate in weekly worship at a local parish or church.

The five interviewees from outside the team all agreed that daily worship and spirituality are an important focus of the team.

Evidence against Principle 1 in CPT Colombia. Although many team members participate at local churches on Sunday, their attendance seems to be as much about networking and coalition building as worship. All team members note the difficulty in finding a local church where they feel comfortable and are fed spiritually. Worship services in Barrancabermeja where the team resides tend to be more emotional and praise-based than most CPT members are comfortable with. Catholic and Evangelical churches dominate in Barranca, while a majority of Colombia team members come from an Anabaptist (Mennonite, Brethren or Quaker) or mainline church backgrounds. This difference in worship preference is a challenge to many CPT volunteers for maintaining spiritual growth and nurture.

Colombians from outside CPT who were interviewed for this study find the area of local church participation a weakness, stating, “I perceive a lack of a solid and significant ecclesiology among (some or most) CPT participants. With few exceptions, the church appears to be unimportant to them.”

While many CPT members practice a variety of spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, scripture reading, consulting with a spiritual director, journaling, fasting and confession, participation is uneven. Perhaps the “spiritual and political diversity of the team and the desire to create space for diversity” (Team member S. R.) are at fault, or perhaps the absence of a prominent spiritual leader in the larger organization or on each team makes self-purification weaker than it could be, or at least weaker than we have seen modeled by Gandhi’s ashrams in India. In the ashrams, the primary goal appeared to be self purification and mental preparation for major campaigns, while within CPT the primary goal appears to be the daily work. Unlike the ashram, self purification in CPT is a means to a goal rather than an end in itself.

Evaluation of Principle 1: 3 (Adequate adherence with significant room for improvement). Overall, CPT Colombia is doing well in mental preparation and empowering the nonviolent practitioner through training, daily worship, and multiple spiritual support systems. The team is weak on involvement with local congregations that could serve the spiritual and fellowship needs of the team more fully. The team also errs on the side of tolerance of

varying levels of spiritual commitment and practice; thus, for some team members, the practice of self purification is not a priority.

2. Building a clear vision, goals, and long-term strategy to change power relationships.

This strategy involves long-term thinking about creative, nonviolent ways to balance power between oppressed people and armed actors in Colombia. As in the work of King and Gandhi, long-term thinking takes into account power dynamics, networks, and third parties to the conflict as well as creative ways to reduce the power or resource base of those who are abusing their power.^[16]

In the case of a fifty-year civil war in Colombia, financial, political, and human resources required by armed actors (guerillas and paramilitaries, and government troops) must be reduced in order to change the power relationship with rural peasants who are suffering in the crossfire of this war. The power of armed actors might be minimized if any of the following could be reduced:

- Funds and resources from cocaine protection money for the group's illegal operations; ransoms for kidnapping victims; black-market oil sales.
- Access to new recruits, weapons, uniforms, food, shelter, training and leadership.
- Intimidation of rural peasants who either turn a blind eye to an armed group's illegal actions or provide resources (food and shelter) and staffing for their armies.

For their operations in cocaine eradication (which also destroys food crops and thus displaces villagers), the Colombian military receives 1.3 billion U.S. dollars each year for Plan Colombia. Reducing U.S. dollars for crop eradication might also alter long-term power relationships between peasants and the government.

Evidence of Principle 2 in CPT Colombia. Since 2005, CPT Colombia has evaluated its work semi-annually, using a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and projecting four or five long-term goals. The report evaluates strategies to reach past goals and progress toward them. The March 2007 report challenges CPT Colombia to:

- Understand structures of domination and oppression with attention to grassroots initiatives for justice and peace.
- Work together on grassroots initiatives for justice and peace by further developing

relationships with progressive grassroots initiatives, including communities, social organizations, human rights organizations, and churches in the Magdalena Medio, in Colombia, and globally.

- Make visible grassroots initiatives for justice and peace and the structures of domination and oppression as they relate to Colombia.
- Transform structures of domination and oppression as they relate to Colombia.

In addition to CPT goals, the team meets regularly with villagers in the Opon, Gold Mining, and Awa regions to evaluate past efforts, identify new goals, and outline strategies to reach those goals. These meetings also serve to deal with community tensions and anxieties. The meetings have resulted in a number of published documents, such as “Process for Life, Liberty and Dignity” in 2004 that includes a vision for the future of Opon communities. Through these meetings, the villages initiated an effort to get the region to join a network of “Humanitarian Spaces” throughout Colombia. Humanitarian spaces or “zones of peace” restrict the use of weapons in a particular area and the activities of armed actors. They are based on international human rights norms and so have some level of legitimacy.

CPT meets weekly with Colombian program advisors from outside the organization and grassroots coalition partners to coordinate efforts, check on projects, avoid duplication of efforts, share resources, and plan for the future. This is a time-consuming but strategic activity, especially since the majority of the team members are North American and not Colombian. In 2008, only two full-time members are Colombian.

In 2006, CPT Colombia created a new role in the team for a “political support coordinator” who focuses on political issues and strategy. This new role acknowledges the need for more and better political strategizing and coordination.

The team holds weekly meetings to process activities, coordinate projects, plan for the future, and determine if activities are supporting long-term goals. This weekly evaluation of long-range goals has become more intentional since 2005. As retiring reservists leave and new reservists join the team for one to three months of service each year, the frequently changing team reviews the long-range goals and strategies to ensure consistency in the long-range perspective.

Evidence against Principle 2 in CPT Colombia. Although the team has been much more strategic in its thinking and goals since 2005, an absence of language persists in the semi-annual program report to support the goal of creating change in power relationships. The goals are more process-oriented than outcome-oriented. The final goal in the 2007 planning document calls for “transforming structures of domination and oppression” but falls short of calling for a reduction in power for armed actors. This may be a conscious effort on the part of a primarily privileged North American team to avoid “becoming part of the problem” of oppression. In the end, the goals seek to accompany and empower communities and organizations for peace and justice; they do not explicitly seek to remove the power and resources that help maintain unjust systems and groups. To do so would presume a different, more authoritarian and inappropriate role for CPT.

At the very least, CPT Colombia mobilizes its listserv supporters in the United States to write to their representatives when funding bills for Plan Colombia come up in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Plan Colombia was weak and ineffective for many years when U.S. funds were used to supply Colombian government forces with military hardware and pesticides for crop eradication efforts. In June 2007, after years of lobbying for change in the U.S. funding of Plan Colombia (aimed at cocaine eradication), congress finally voted to transfer funds from plant eradication (which was also killing food crops on a large scale) to humanitarian aid and alternative legal crops for rural farmers. Putting more effort into shifting this funding earlier could have removed a major source of oppression for Colombia’s rural peasants.

One way that CPT has sought to increase the power of Opon peasant farmers is to provide accompaniment so that villagers feel safe to speak out about human rights abuses. According to CPT team member S. R., “CPT also seeks to connect villagers with other Colombian groups who are working against injustice in order to increase their power and help them make connections beyond their community.” This is very positive.

One external Colombian evaluator finds fault with the team having “no CPT representative in Bogotá, the capitol.” Another Colombian notes that “ongoing communication with human rights organizations in the area, ... including information of a political and economic nature, are told from a preferential option for the poor” perspective.

Evaluation of Principle 2: 2 (Good with some room for improvement). Explicit attention

to altering power relationships between rural peasants and armed groups needs improvement, but the current emphasis on semi-annual project reports, specific goals and strategies, and weekly check-ins on progress toward goals is excellent. Initially, the Colombia team was focused primarily on the logistics of accompaniment with the Opon community of returned refugees. Team documents demonstrate a significant change since 2005 from more short-term, micro level projects to long-term, macro level projects. Thus, this is an area where CPT is currently improving its strategic planning, although explicit goals about altering power relationships are lacking.

In terms of strategic planning, CPT needs to be asking, what are the resources that maintain armed actors (funds, arms, recruits, legitimacy) and other agents of injustice? The team must continually ask how they can work long term to reduce those resources so that armed actors will be unable to continue their violence. Networking with groups that provide alternative employment to potential military recruits, that reduce funding to purchase weapons, food and shelter for armed actors, and that permit villagers to report abuses without being targeted themselves are examples of strategies that can reduce the power and resources that enable illegal armed actors to continue their violence.

3. Organizing, educating, training, empowering, and mobilizing the oppressed community and its sympathizers to work for change. The oppressed communities served by CPT Colombia include civilian populations in the Opon River Region, the gold mining region of Southern Bolivar, the Awa Nation in southwestern Colombia, and Barrancabermeja. Organizing, educating, and training for empowerment and mobilization look different depending upon the population, the setting, and the strategic goals for each group.

These oppressed populations are caught in the crossfire of a civil war, and those suffering in the mining regions due to corporate mining interests share a number of common characteristics. They are largely undereducated, the majority of whom have only a sixth to eighth grade education. They have limited access to news reporting, academic literature, or training for social change. The majority of rural peasants live below the poverty line and struggle daily to grow crops for consumption or sale and to cover the cost of education and health care for their families. Access to education and training is limited by technology and

infrastructure, funding for transportation, and time available after eking out a subsistence living, not to mention limited access to information about the availability of educational opportunities. All of these factors limit CPT's ability to educate, train, empower, and mobilize oppressed populations for strategies of nonviolent direct action in order to confront and remove oppressive forces.

Evidence of Principle 3 in CPT Colombia. From the beginning of its accompaniment of return refugee villages in the Opon River region, CPT has sought to educate, organize, empower, and mobilize these communities to meet their goals. They do this through their presence in villages and homes, through sharing information, organizing and accompanying community meetings, identifying and supporting community leaders, assisting the community with identifying and publicizing their goals, and connecting the communities with Colombian organizations that focus on organizing. But, this is not CPT Colombia's primary focus.

According to Robin Buyers, in terms of organizing and educating oppressed communities, CPT works "primarily from the position of an ally" with, for instance, the local Program for Development and Peace in the Magdalena Medio and the Popular Women's Organization. These local organizations focus on education and empowerment while CPT focuses on accompaniment and human rights reporting.

For years, the team visited most Opon village families every two weeks and shared meals with many. The team knows each family member by name and listens to their joys and concerns. When appropriate, they pray with families. Most of the families identify with the Catholic Church, but due to the absence of a church in the villages, they are rarely able to attend mass.

The team encourages regular community meetings among the villages it accompanies and works closely with community leaders to plan meetings and actions. Some meetings include educational materials or resource persons, but CPT's actual role is to network with other nonprofits to provide needed resources and to consult on troubling issues rather than to provide training for the community. CPT does provide some peace education programs for children of the Opon River communities.

CPT semi-annual goals for 2006-2007 included improving relationships with progressive grassroots organizations and communities for peace and justice, and building coalitions with

groups such as the Popular Women's Organization, the National Organization of Indigenous People, the Conscientious Objectors Movement, the Program for Development and Peace in the Magdalena Medio, and the National Victims Movement. All of these organizations share CPT and community goals of empowering and educating local communities. Some of these programs speak explicitly of education and empowerment in their mission statements. Thus, when CPT puts villages in touch with these organizations, they are in fact facilitating an educational opportunity.

CPT Colombia facilitates face to face contact between several communities for change in Colombian public policy and the communities it accompanies. They are now organizing two Colombian delegations (from around Bogotá) each year to visit villages and network with them. CPT also facilitates the participation of village leaders in workshops and trainings with the local Popular Women's Organization in Bogotá. However, according to CPT team member S. C., CPT "wants to avoid colonization and indoctrination of the farmers that they work with" and consequently are careful not to impose CPT goals and projects on villagers.^[17] Team member, J. K. stated in 2006 that,

Despite our best efforts, it is difficult to organize the Opon community due to the ongoing violence. Leaders are threatened and displaced, leaving the community at low ebb. Despite this, we are constantly encouraging local leadership. This has happened individually and collectively over the past five years.^[18]

In 2006, the Popular Women's Organization invited CPT to provide weekly television spots highlighting nonviolent principles. CPT designed, scripted, and delivered twenty 5-minute segments on various principles of empowerment, peacemaking, justice, conflict resolution, injustice, violence reduction, discrimination, and nonviolence. CPT also invites and enables community leaders to attend various trainings and conferences in Barranca and Bogotá where networking occurs.

Evidence against Principle 3 in CPT Colombia. CPT member J. K. observed,

We don't organize and don't know how to organize well. With few exceptions, no one comes from a strong organizing background. But for five years we've been encouraging communities to organize—it's important. There are gifts within the communities to organize. When there is a common problem, we

encourage and offer moral support in a situation where organizing was dangerous.

One North American evaluator noted,

I don't think CPT-Colombia sees its job as mobilizing the oppressed community, but I do think empowering is part of their work. Training and educating do happen, but are not the main focus of CPT work.

CPT involvement in training villagers in nonviolent tactics could be encouraged in light of CPT's intention to provide a temporary as opposed to a long-term presence in areas of acute violence and injustice. The only way an outside group can leave a violent or unjust situation in good conscience is to reduce the violence permanently or to train local people to do the work of nonviolence. Since many of the international projects chosen by CPT involve deep, intractable conflicts (e.g., Colombia and Israel and the West Bank) that are decades old, the violence is not likely to end anytime soon. The dilemma, though, in training Colombians to take over this work is clear. Armed actors are motivated to avoid human rights abuses when they have international monitors documenting their behavior. Colombian human rights observers or accompaniment teams working without internationals do not seem as effective in deterring violence by the armed groups. Thus, the goal should probably be for the creation of mixed international and Colombian Peacemaker Teams, which would require additional training of Colombians.

Evaluation of Principle 3: 3 (Adequate with significant room for improvement). CPT Colombia is doing only an adequate job of empowering, organizing and mobilizing local communities. In part this work is constrained by structural factors such as poverty, lack of technology and infrastructure, and limited transportation. In addition, CPT does not see organizing as its focus or gift and instead makes attempts to ally with and make referrals to local organizations that have organizing and educating as their focus. If CPT is not equipped to provide this training, they should strengthen efforts to connect local leaders with local nonprofits providing nonviolence training and community organizing. There is also a need for training more Colombians to join the team as full-time workers. Perhaps making Spanish language texts on nonviolence principles and strategies available to local leaders could help overcome some of the structural limitations.

4. Seizing the moral initiative by seeking truth, justice, openness, honesty, and order in the face of injustice, thereby challenging the sources of power that maintain an unjust system. This principle suggests that nonviolent practitioners must always seek the moral high ground in choosing goals and tactics to transform unjust systems. They must be above reproach and without fault. Nonviolent practitioners must follow just laws and demonstrate respect for civil order and the authority figures elected or appointed to help maintain that order. They must be meticulous in their human rights investigation and reporting. Despite the danger inherent in open communication and transparency, CPT must maintain high standards of conduct in order to win the respect of the people, including oppressive actors.

Evidence of Principle 4 in CPT Colombia. In order for CPT Colombia to obtain visas for volunteers to work in rural areas on a long-term basis, they must work through Colombian government offices. On a weekly basis, CPT submits a letter to the Regional Security Agency (DAS), notifying them of current team members in Barranca. This often involves meetings with the Director of DAS to discuss CPT activities and plans for action. A CPT representative makes a special visit when a new person takes charge of the Agency. CPT also holds regular meetings with the mayor of Barranca and the human rights defensoria to update them on team goals, activities, observations and concerns.

Since 2005, CPT has sought to increase its investigative work so that information it publishes and disseminates in reports is accurate and well contextualized. The team publicizes the truth concerning justice and injustice they have witnessed in accompaniment areas of the Opon, the Mining Region, and the Awa Region, or recorded from eye witnesses. Each published CPT document must be reviewed for accuracy and clarity by three team members prior to release. CPT-Net is circulated weekly to thousands of subscribers in North America and throughout the world. CPT Colombia contributes articles and updates to CPT-Net several times each month.

The team takes seriously its commitment to share honestly and openly the truth of what it witnesses. There are regular meetings and check-ins with Barranca advisors, community members, and the head of the Colombian Mennonite Church to discern appropriate activities, priorities, and content of published documents. The team disseminates published reports to the local and national media, church bodies, human rights groups, and U.S. and Canadian Embassies.

CPT Colombia Support Coordinator, Robin Buyers, spoke to a Canadian Parliamentary Information Session about Colombia on February 27, 2007, in Ottawa, Canada. The session included a “focus on Canada’s role with respect to militarized commerce in Colombia” in the context of Canadian investment and trade policies. The report, a joint effort between CPT and other Canadian NGO’s concerned with justice issues, calls the Canadian government to account for having a “hand in the development of the mega-projects that cause displacement” of indigenous groups from their “constitutionally protected” territories.

The report also calls attention to the growing number of “Canadian mining companies operating in Colombia.” Some of these large-scale mining operations are displacing thousands of local gold miners in the southern Bolivar region. The report states that although some miners are employed by the companies, wealth does not trickle down and many mining families must leave the area to seek employment. The report documents the September 18, 2006, extrajudicial killing of a Mining Federation leader. Colombian “soldiers have openly told [CPT] members that they are preparing the way for Anglo Gold Ashanti who has connections to the Canadian corporation, Bema.” The report concludes with a recommendation that Canada “commission an independent review ... on the impact of Colombian mining code reform and Canada’s role in the reform, on the environment and on the health and human rights of people.” It calls for Canadian companies to ensure the application of the principle of “free, prior, and informed consent” with local communities concerning mining in the region and asks Canada to establish an accountability system for environmental and human rights violations associated with Canadian companies abroad. Robin Buyers of CPT Colombia reported that this document represents years of research from dozens of nonprofit organizations in Canada and Colombia.^[19]

In 2006, CPT documented the truth about the impact of aerial spraying of crops under Plan Colombia. The United States contributes 1.3 billion dollars annually to this effort through the U.S. War on Drugs, a “war” that emphasizes eradication of cocaine at its source. CPT collects photos and testimonies from farmers who have lost food crops, suffered degraded health, and have been forced to leave their lands due to indiscriminate aerial spraying. The team shares these reports on CPT-Net and with U.S. congressional representatives.

CPT acknowledges the authority of and works within the guidelines of relevant Colombian governmental offices. When CPT actions promise to disrupt traffic, attract crowds, or affect

activities of daily living, the team always notifies police and works within the law, thus demonstrating respect for legitimate authority.

One North American evaluator said, “Here is where CPT-Colombia shines. CPT and its partners place primary emphasis on seizing the moral initiative. Speaking truth to power is CPT’s modus operandi.”^[20]

Evidence against Principle 4 in CPT Colombia. When the team works in the countryside, members often communicate by walkie-talkie to save money on cell phone calls. But because walkie-talkie communication can be monitored by others, the team often uses codes to communicate their location and activities. They also communicate with care in public spaces knowing that sensitive information CPT holds could be used to harm certain people, especially community leaders. This restriction on openness in these settings seems appropriate.

CPT collects eye-witness reports from those who suffer abuse at the hands of Colombian guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, and Colombian military personnel. Team member S. C. notes that, “Team members meet with Canadian and U.S. Embassy officials monthly when in Bogotá [to share these reports], but one place we don’t follow the openness guideline is with regular contact with armed groups [in the countryside].”^[21]

Colombian military policy prohibits civilians from talking with illegal armed groups, but team member S. C. observes that, “When we run into them [armed actors] in the villages, we often remind them that the law also does not allow them to be in the village.” These counter examples appear to be justified, and so adherence to the principle of seizing the moral initiative remains strong.

Evaluation of Principle 4: 1 (Excellent adherence to this principle). CPT Colombia is excellent in respecting the need for openness and order within a society but has compromised this principle when it feels it must seize the moral initiative by speaking the truth to armed groups in the countryside. In addition, they are doing an excellent job of seeking truth and justice within the communities they accompany through the collection of first hand reports and photos documenting facts on the ground. Through CPT-Net, the team speaks truth as members observe it openly and with great care for accuracy. They are wisely working within the system of laws and government agencies in order to maintain order while continuing to hold armed actors responsible for human rights abuses.

5. Choosing congruence between the means used and the ends envisioned. This method requires acting out of love and positive regard versus hate and revenge. It means attempting to win over opponents peacefully instead of destroying them. While the myth of “redemptive violence” suggests that violence and destruction are justified and necessary to destroy evil enemies, congruence between the ends and means requires that nonviolent practitioners seek first to transform the opponent.^[22] When this is not possible, interventions and disruption may be used. In intractable situations, when all else has been attempted and failed, nonviolent coercion may be used to stop oppression but never the violence of assassination or war. Wink suggests that those who resort to violence in response to violence and oppression may become what they hate.

Evidence of Principle 5 in CPT Colombia. CPT semi-annual plans since 2006 include the explicit goal of “Transform[ing] Structures of Domination and Oppression.” This is important language that reflects the desire to win over opponents rather than destroy them. Another goal in a 2007 semi-annual plan calls for “identifying and working on ways team members internalize and perpetuate structures of domination and oppression (racism, sexism, classicism, heterosexism, cultural imperialism etc.”^[23] The team is trained to regularly examine its own, often unconscious patterns of discrimination and white privilege. CPT International and the Colombia team appoint an anti-racism committee that monitors these behaviors. In 2007, the CPT board approved a new part-time position called the Anti-Racism Coordinator to monitor the work of the organization and provide ongoing training for team members.

Team members have shared during morning reflections that they struggle with the desire to demonize various armed actors based on the actors’ unjust and sometimes brutal actions against civilian populations. Team members use these times to vent and process such feelings. Then, leaving vindictive feelings behind in the confines of the CPT house, team members are able to meet armed actors publicly and treat them with respect. CPT members attempt to engage armed actors as individuals, face to face, to discuss their actions and the consequences of their actions on local farmers, miners, and indigenous populations. When I have observed these meetings of CPT members and armed actors, I have seen respectful discussions about the human rights of villagers. These discussions often prevent soldiers

from entering homes, taking food and animals, or kidnapping and harming people.

Team members hold weekly meetings, using consensus decision-making to determine the congruence between the actions they plan to take and their desire to demonstrate respect for others. The team carefully examines objectives, possible consequences, and logistics for planned actions. Though some actions of the team will likely cause embarrassment or distress for public officials or other perpetrators of violence, the team considers the actions to be truth-bearing rather than psychologically violent or disrespectful. S. R., a full-time Colombia team member, comments on this principle:

We choose nonviolent methods very consciously, knowing that they are difficult. This is especially hard when we feel anger or fear or want to change things quickly. One way that we're pretty intentional is meeting regularly with Colombian government and Army officials before we speak truth about them publicly [to the media]. We often role play meeting scenarios before difficult conversations.^[24]

S. C., another full-time volunteer, suggests, "We also choose nonviolent methods to be models for others."^[25] S. C. also reports that following an event, the team almost always debriefs to discuss what could be done differently (in relation to actions chosen). The team deprograms the feeling that members want to be angry and reprograms for creative nonviolent options that could be used in the future.

All three Colombian external evaluators agree that the team demonstrates this principle. Observer P. S. feels that the team demonstrates "a clear commitment and message of nonviolence. The team establishes relationships and communication with those that may be perpetrators, while confronting them with the truth they have been witness to."^[26]

A North American evaluator affirms that CPT Colombia, with the close cooperation of the Colombian Mennonite Church, has a particularly strong focus on "enemy-loving" (one of long-time Director Gene Stoltzfus's favorite terms in describing what it is that CPT does).^[27]

Evidence against Principle 5 in CPT Colombia. Over the course of five summers with CPT Colombia in a variety of settings, I found no evidence that the team is failing to observe this principle.

Evaluation of Principle 5: 1 (Excellent). Despite the fact that the team appears to be observing this principle in planning and in practice, congruence is a constant challenge. Maintaining love for unjust actors and avoiding hatred of the enemy is difficult personal work. History has demonstrated how easy it is to become what one hates. With this caveat in mind, a more conscious daily effort in team meetings, reflection and prayer would help to address the human tendency to seek revenge on those who commit grave injustice. And though enemy-loving is a constant challenge, the team is doing very well and dealing with it proactively.

Team member S. R. admits that “when we see destruction and hate and they can touch everyone, you can lose hope. So, we listen carefully to each other without judging. We try to create a safe space to share these difficult feelings.”^[28]

6. Withdrawing one’s consent from the systems of injustice. The withdrawal of one’s consent and support for systems of injustice increases the cost of oppression for the oppressor and shifts power to the nonviolent campaign. Typical actions of this sort include protests and civil disobedience as a way to withdraw consent for unjust public policies. Actions such as boycotts and strikes are common methods of noncompliance with authorities or organizations that are abusing power. Even challenging inaccurate information in the press and public sector and providing more accurate information are ways of withdrawing consent from unjust systems. Withdrawal of consent is an active rather than passive nonviolent method that sends a message to both the oppressive actors and to public bystanders that business as usual will not be tolerated.

Evidence of Principle 6 in CPT Colombia. Since the inception of the CPT Colombia project in 2001, the team has planned and engaged in a wide variety of activities that communicate withdrawal of consent to systems of injustice. The team participates in twenty to thirty nonviolent public witness activities each year, often in conjunction with its partner organizations in Barranca. These include prayer vigils, marches through town, public forums, letter writing campaigns, advocacy among government officials, symbolic actions calling attention to an injustice, and confronting armed actors.^[29]

Reviewing CPT’s monthly updates, which are available on the CPT website, reveals a

regular pattern of CPT intervention in cases where armed actors threaten violence against unarmed civilians. When such interventions occur, CPT reports these incidents directly to the Army Commander at DAS (Regional Security Agency) headquarters in Barranca.^[30]

A 2005 CPT report details efforts to enlist North American churches and civil society organizations (CSO) in pressing for Colombian and U.S. public policy changes that would reduce the use of violence and encourage the use of diplomacy in Plan Colombia and the U.S. War on Drugs.^[31] In 2005, CPT also protested the outcome of the recent paramilitary demobilization process as it provided immunity to paramilitary members and employed them in positions of power where this power could easily be abused against innocent civilians.

In 2006, CPT accompanied a large group of gold miners marching to protest the September 2006 assassination of a community leader in the Southern Bolivar Mining Region. CPT reported that multinational corporations wished to establish large open pit gold mines and were using intimidation and assassination to push small miners off the land.^[32]

In July 2007, President Uribe called on all Colombians to protest the kidnapping of hundreds of innocent civilians by guerilla groups. While naming these kidnappings as an act of violence against civilians, CPT, in a widely broadcast public action in central Barranca organized by the Catholic Church, also named threats and assassinations by paramilitaries, poverty, domestic violence, and lack of public services as additional sources of violence against the people.^[33] One North American external evaluator added that CPT involvement in a counter march on July 19, 2008, served to withdraw consent from the primary attraction, a military dominated parade.^[34]

CPT Canada and Colombia Support Coordinators are actively involved in changing Canadian policy on corporate involvement in Colombian gold mining areas. Through careful research, coalition work, and advocacy, CPT is playing an active role in calling Canadian Mining interests to account for their role in pushing small Colombian gold miners off their traditional lands. This is an excellent example of going to the source of the problem to remove consent for corporate bullying of small miners in Colombia.^[35]

Evidence against Principle 6 in CPT Colombia. Despite CPT's extensive involvement with groups who seek to withdraw their consent for systems of injustice, a September 2006

CPT report notes that CPT work to decrease collaboration of villagers in the Opon Region with illegal armed groups “remains weak.”^[36] There are a number of reasons for this, ranging from fear to friendship.

One of the major ways to withdraw support for violence against civilians in Colombia is to reduce U.S. funding for Plan Colombia. The US currently contributes 1.3 billion dollars (U.S.) annually. This money is used to purchase weapons to fight the guerilla insurgency involved in cocaine trafficking and for aerial spraying of illicit crops. Internal sources claim that this funding fuels the fifty-year-old civil war, and without U.S. funding fewer weapons would be available to armed actors and Colombians would experience less damage to legal food crops. When peasant farmers’ food crops are sprayed, farmers often leave the area for a year waiting for the land to recover. CPT has been involved in some U.S. legislative work to challenge Plan Colombia, but it has been limited. In June 2007, due to the advocacy of a coalition of U.S. groups, funding for Plan Colombia was shifted from crop eradication to humanitarian funding. CPT has been a minor player in demanding this change.

Another way in which to withhold consent from systems of injustice in Colombia is to oppose the US funded Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly the School of the Americas (SOA). Six hundred former students, or approximately one percent of the total number of graduates of the school, have been found guilty of human rights abuses in their countries of origin.^[37] Of countries represented at the school, Colombia sends the greatest number of military personnel to WHINSEC for training.^[38] Colombia leads the world in the total number of documented human rights violations,^[39] a rate that SOA Watch connects to participation in WHINSEC training. CPT sends representatives to the annual SOA Vigil at Fort Benning in Georgia, but has not promoted the dismantling of WHINSEC on its website or in its updates. This is an untapped opportunity for CPT to use its on-the-ground experience to expose the work of WHINSEC and its Latin American graduates in Colombia and encourage Colombians and U.S. citizens to withdraw their approval of the program.

Evaluation of Principle 6: 3 (Adequate with significant room for improvement). Four of the five external evaluators affirm CPT’s work on this principle especially through regular reporting and press releases. But CPT is doing only an adequate job in its protest and coalition work to challenge and remove consent for illegal actions of the Colombian military, guerilla, and paramilitary groups. While CPT is actively involved in discouraging

consent for unjust systems within Colombia and particularly in the areas of its accompaniment, there is significant room for improvement in its work to alter U.S. funding of Plan Colombia and WHINSEC through political pressure on legislators in the United States. This will probably remain a weakness until CPT includes visits to U.S. and Canadian legislators in the work schedules of its volunteers. Regular lobbying in Washington DC and Canada by CPT workers is a largely untapped source of removing consent.

7. Confronting and exposing injustice. The end goal for CPT Colombia and the communities they serve is for peasants to remain on their land with adequate resources for living and to be free from violence. The question is, how well is CPT confronting and exposing the injustices of groups that push peasants from their land, harm them, and keep them in poverty? Do CPT actions confront injustice in a way that reaches the oppressor or the public? Is the public dissemination of information about the work of CPT as broad and effective as it could be?

Evidence of Principle 7 in CPT Colombia. CPT confronts and exposes injustice nonviolently using a number of strategies. First, it confronts injustice in the course of accompanying villages and groups throughout Colombia. Accompaniment brings CPT face to face with armed actors who are abusing their power. Team logs, monthly updates, and stories document the various ways that team members confront and then expose these injustices. Team members frequently approach armed actors in the field and remind them of human rights law that does not allow them in civilian homes or spaces. CPT takes photos to document illegal actions of the gasoline cartel, guerillas and paramilitaries. They then share these photos and observations with the military and in their online publications. At times, they have written major exposés of illegal actions that have been printed in the Barranca newspaper.

CPT also confronts and exposes illegal actions through its lobbying work in the United States, Canada, and Colombia. Through regular contacts with U.S. and Canadian Embassies in Colombia and through Colombian government offices, CPT shares first hand observations of infractions and abuses. It has also served as a support system for peasants who are victims of illegal actions and wish to expose these actions to the government or the public. One U.S. Embassy human rights officer stated that she “appreciated calls from

groups such as CPT who work in the field, as this helps me to know what is happening on the ground.” According to this Embassy official, a CPT member called her at the embassy in 2005 while two CPT members in the Opon region were receiving small arms fire from a circling government helicopter. The Embassy official was able to immediately contact a Colombian military authority who called the helicopter pilot and insisted he stop firing on innocent civilians.^[40]

CPT joins with various civil society organizations in Colombia in public actions, demonstrations, vigils, marches, symbolic displays, forums, and protests to confront perpetrators of violence and to call them to accountability. CPT participates in some twenty or thirty such actions each year. At times CPT initiates these actions, at times it participates by invitation of others, and when requested, members are present to accompany an action and provide safety to participants.

CPT plans and coordinates between three and five North American or Colombian Delegations each year. Delegations, made up of six to fifteen individuals, are asked to plan and implement a public action or witness to expose some injustice they have observed. In addition, delegations visit with local governmental, human rights, development, and peace organizations to better understand the current situation. CPT then asks delegation members to share the situation in Colombia with political representatives upon their return home and advocate with politicians, congregations, and communities for change. This has proven to be an excellent vehicle for dissemination of information from grassroots Colombia to the grassroots of the United States and Canada.

In the United States, CPT has both co-sponsored and participated in conferences on Colombia. One such conference was entitled “Partnering for Peace in Colombia 2005.” These conferences bring together a variety of people working on Colombian issues, including political leaders, social change leaders, representatives from industry, and religious volunteers. They network, build coalitions, and coordinate efforts for education and action in Colombia that address the international nature of Colombian justice. These conferences are an excellent vehicle for confrontation and exposure of human rights violations and other illegal activities.

One such confrontation occurred in February 2007 when the CPT Colombia Project Support Coordinator played an organizing role in a Toronto roundtable on corporate responsibility

for Canadian Extractive Industries Overseas. CPT's report to the roundtable outlined human rights abuses, environmental concerns, and fears that Canadian corporations were complicit in practices that were pushing peasants off their land in gold mining areas.^[41] CPT is currently involved in a process to document historical memory among people who have suffered from or witnessed human rights abuses during the protracted civil war in Colombia. These documents are then used to build a record that is presented to organizations such as the Organization of American States and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights for their investigations of human rights abuses.^[42]

CPT Colombia put out an action alert in February 2007 calling for U.S. and Canadian citizens to contact various Colombian officials about the disappearance of Catherine Gonzalez Torres, the daughter of a leader of the Barranca Popular Women's Organization. Within a month Katherine was released in good health. According to a spring 2007 "Colombia Update," Katherine reported hearing her captors talk during her detention about the international outcry her captivity had caused. She believes she was spared because of this international mobilization.^[43]

Team members consistently choose actions that confront those involved with violence and oppression and keep justice issues in front of whole communities. At times these actions cause negative press and the embarrassment or anger of those targeted. For example, demonstrations to stop the extrajudicial killing of peasants, symbolic actions to call attention to human rights abuses, and newspaper articles or editorials exposing the violence of armed actors are a humiliation for some. CPT's intent is to expose an injustice, not to embarrass, though embarrassment is the inevitable outcome. A gray area exists between exposure of injustice and emotional harm. Much of CPT's work draws its effectiveness from its ability to capture the attention of armed groups through the threat of negative press, which it painstakingly ensures is true, not just a smear. All three Colombian evaluators and two North American evaluators affirm the effectiveness of CPT's regular public witness and accompaniment work in confronting injustice. Public witness also draws the attention of the wider community, including the U.S., which is funding some of the military effort to target guerilla groups and those involved with cocaine production.

Evidence against Principle 7 in CPT Colombia. Due to the small size of the Colombia team (5-10 members) it is necessary to choose battles carefully, so at time the team makes a conscious decision not to confront or be involved in an action of confrontation by the

broader peace and justice community in order to do a more thorough job on actions more closely focused on group priorities. This seems both realistic and wise.

In addition, the team does not have a well developed system to disseminate updates and human rights reports beyond the CPT listserv, so many of the carefully documented human rights abuses and conditions on the ground never reach the desks of power brokers in Colombia, the United States, or Canada who have the ability to change public policy.

Evaluation of Principle 7: 1 (Excellent). CPT is doing an excellent job in confronting and exposing injustice through nonviolent action on the ground in Colombia. This is perhaps its strongest asset and most consistent practice. The only improvement might be to increase the size of the team to allow for more staff time to confront additional issues.

8. A willingness to suffer rather than cause suffering and a willingness to experience the consequences of one's actions. Nonviolence works in part because practitioners are willing to suffer in the line of duty while not inflicting suffering. Besides its moral efficacy, suffering is instrumental in two ways: it elicits the sympathies of the public and often taps the sympathies of the oppressor. Sympathies of ordinary people often help shift public support to a nonviolent campaign and away from perpetrators of violence. Suffering because of injustice is also a call upon the humanity of the oppressor and serves to awaken his or her conscience. Finally, this willingness to suffer as a testament of the strength of truth also reinforces the commitment of the nonviolent practitioner to avoid becoming what she is working against—violence.

Evidence of Principle 8 in CPT Colombia. In a CPT press release on March 10, 2006, following the death of Iraqi CPT member Tom Fox at the hands of his Iraqi captors, CPT Chicago issued this statement that represents the views of many CPT members:

In response to Tom's passing, we ask that everyone set aside inclinations to vilify or demonize others, no matter what they have done. In Tom's own words: "We reject violence to punish anyone. We ask that there be no retaliation on relatives or property. We forgive those who consider us their enemies. We hope that in loving both friends and enemies and by intervening nonviolently to aid those who are systematically oppressed, we can contribute in some small way

to transforming this volatile situation.”^[44]

The self-discipline required to accept suffering without revenge is foremost on the minds of the CPT Colombia team as well. Working conditions for the team in Barranca and in the countryside are difficult. The weather is hot and humid. Water is contaminated, causing frequent intestinal problems. Dengue Fever incapacitated five team members for months during 2006. It is not safe to be outside at night in many areas. A neighbor was assassinated in his home across the street from the CPT house in 2006 and another neighbor in 2008. Paramilitary groups patrol the CPT neighborhood at night. While in the villages doing accompaniment work, team members often sleep on mats on the ground and make do without running water or electricity. They travel by boat or on foot. They are exposed to armies of mosquitoes at night hours. They live with the stress of contact with armed actors and the stress of dealing day in and day out with the urgent needs of very poor families. CPT members knowingly serve in these conditions and do it with grace. Team member S. C. confirms that “accompaniment is often difficult work as is living in Barrancabermeja.”^[45]

In a CPT article entitled “They’re Going to Kill My Daddy,” a CPT member reconstructs an incident that occurred in one of the Opon Villages. Paramilitaries were threatening to kill one of the men in front of his family. He was accused of being a guerilla collaborator. One of his children was able to escape from the scene and contact CPT members who were working downstream from the situation. They were able reach the family home quickly by boat and were able to intervene in such a way that the paramilitary group left without further harm to the father.^[46] CPT members could have been harmed themselves in such a situation, but chose to risk suffering.

The Colombia team members have not experienced direct violence as have team members in Iraq and Israel and the West Bank. CPT Colombia, though, has responded to death threats against individual members of the team. In one case, they used public statements to announce they would not stop working and would remain in the area even if it meant suffering.^[47] CPT categorically opposes the use of violence, even in self-defense. At most they may decide to leave an area where they face great risk, unless their presence would offer protection to innocent bystanders.

One Colombian evaluator notes that, “CPT willingly goes to regions and areas that are ...

risky, in the fulfillment of their nonviolent mission. At the same time, they take the precautions necessary to diminish risk as much as possible.”^[48]

Evidence against Principle 8 in CPT Colombia. The team has not yet experienced direct violence or been tested on its commitment to suffering rather than retaliation, making evaluation of this principle difficult. It is clear though that the willingness to suffer is not generally used by the team in calculating its strategic impact on the public as Gandhi or King may have done. Gandhi often exploited his suffering for maximum social effect. CPT Colombia has no examples of this type of strategic use of suffering. One North American evaluator stated, “I think that rhetorically this is part of CPT’s mission and work, although I think this has been more real a factor at certain moments in CPT Colombia’s work. I have the impression that the direct risk taken by CPT Colombia workers is perhaps lower than it was six years ago, not necessarily because of lower willingness, but because of changed circumstances.”^[49]

Evaluation of Principle 8: 2 (Very good). Having joined the team with the understanding of CPT principles, members are willing to suffer the risk of violence to themselves and the discomfort involved in accompaniments to rural areas. There is some evidence, however, that the work has become more routine and office-oriented since the beginning of the project.

CPT would benefit from thinking more strategically about the use of suffering to win public sympathies. This could be done through more thoroughly publicizing the deaths and disappearances of community leaders and similar challenges faced by Colombia team members.

9. Asserting one’s own humanity through the extension of friendship, openness, respect, and active listening. This principle is, perhaps, more strategic than the last. CPT hopes that offers of friendship and respect to everyone will transform opponents and deny their ability to polarize and marginalize groups of powerless, innocent people. Such offers may also lead to a transformation in the relationship between the nonviolent activist and the opponent, or in the perspective of the opponent.

King and Gandhi, among other nonviolent activists, practiced openness and respect for

opponents in the majority of their communications, though in some cases, sharing openly would have jeopardized the security of the group or would have reduced the all-important element of surprise. The general rule, however, was openness, both to increase trust and to improve communication in hopes of transforming the opponent into a friend.

Evidence of Principle 9 in CPT Colombia. The Colombia team works diligently to build relationships of trust through regular meetings with government and military officials. The team extends a similar relationship of respect and openness to armed actors in the countryside. When invited, team members sit down with opponents to talk about Christianity, the work of CPT, and their observations. And in one case, the team talked with a military officer before making a public statement about his questionable behavior. Team member S. C. relates the difficult decision the team made “to communicate with the Colombian sergeant they caught on camera talking with a paramilitary member prior to distributing a photo of his actions to others.”^[50]

CPT works actively to build relationships with six local advisors and people in the network of peace, human rights, development, and churches working in Barrancabermeja. They also communicate very openly with the communities they accompany. Team member J. K. notes that “attitudes of openness can lead to changes, especially if you are always honest and gentle. We need to be conscious of this because it takes time.”^[51]^{[5} A relationship of trust and openness is vitally important to CPT’s work within the accompaniment community, among leaders, and in individual families. The team works actively to learn names, histories, relationships, views, and faith perspectives of villagers. When appropriate, they pray with individuals and groups and share their faith and their own stories in the process of building relationships of trust.

All three Colombian evaluators affirm this principle in the work of the team. One notes, “CPT has done this with friend and foe alike, attempting to maintain open relationships of respect.”^[52]^[52] Another Colombian observes,

They maintain communication and dialogue with government officials who may be perceived as opponents or indifferent to the rights and conditions of the communities they accompany. When the opportunity arises they approach armed actors and openly express their questions about the activities these groups are engaged in, all in a manner that is respectful of the other, calling on

their conscience and potential for change.^[53][53]

Finally, one North American evaluator reflects his experience,

I feel that CPT Colombia works well with reaching across conflict to establish common humanity. Listening is one of the most important things CPT does. But again, it is important to note that CPT's role as a third party nonviolent intervention means that the real way we relate to this is to help create space for local groups to assert their humanity through reaching out in a transformational way to their opponents.^[54][54]

Evidence against Principle 9 in CPT Colombia. In 2005, CPT organized a nonviolent demonstration in the Barrancabermeja Airport to call attention to aerial fumigation planes taking off there. Team member S. R. reports: "We did not notify the police in advance but consulted with our local partners and the media ahead of time. When the actions are nonviolent, the military and police don't seem to care."^[55]

Building long-term relationships of trust with opponents is challenging in a team of constantly rotating members. It is quite possible that some CPT members may only accompany a particular community once or twice a year. In addition, an individual CPT member may have limited contact with Colombian partners or opponents due to the myriad tasks performed by the team. Generally speaking, all members are cross-trained to accompany all groups and handle all types of tasks. While there is a team coordinator, she is not always the spokesperson or primary contact for the group. So, unlike Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr., who handled negotiations and contacts with high status opponents, CPT does not operate in this way, making relationship building quite challenging. While relationships with partners may develop into friendships, relationships with government officials and armed actors are simply polite and respectful.

Team member S. C. concluded that, "We could do better with the Army and the Police. It is so hard to love soldiers and paramilitaries, but there have been some isolated breakthroughs."^[56]

Evaluation of Principle 9: 3 (Adequate). A stronger effort to build relationships with local military officials in charge of security would further demonstrate this principle for building trust and model a new manner for dealing with each other. CPT is adequate in this area, but

is limited by its egalitarian and rotating team structure. In addition, the team must acknowledge the limitations in extending friendship in a polarized situation such as a civil war. Showing friendship with one party to the conflict, such as an armed actor, may inadvertently send the wrong message to other parties to the conflict, such as peasant farmers.

Conclusions

From 2004-2008, CPT Colombia demonstrated excellent adherence to three of nine principles of nonviolence. Adherence to two of the nine principles is very good and adherence in four of the principles is only adequate with significant room for improvement. None of the principles were rated as poor or failing.

The Colombia team is strongest in principles 4 (seizing the moral initiative), 5 (choosing congruence between means and ends), and 7 (exposing and confronting injustice). It would benefit from some improvement in areas of:

Principle 2: Building a clear vision, goals, and long-term strategy to alter power relationships. While the team has improved strategic planning since 2005, it needs to give greater attention to increasing the power of oppressed communities to reduce the ability of armed actors to gain access to power and resources.

Principle 8: Being willing to suffer rather than cause suffering. This involves adjusting the current balance of office-related work and field work as well as using suffering more strategically.

CPT Colombia is weakest in the following four areas with significant room for improvement.

Principle 1: Mental preparation, self purification, and empowerment of the nonviolent practitioner. A strong local church connection for CPT Colombia, providing a community of support and accountability, would be most helpful. In addition, the team would benefit from a stronger emphasis on practicing spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation, scripture reading, and fasting.

Principle 3: Organizing, educating, training and empowering the oppressed community to

work for change nonviolently. CPT needs more creative strategies and partnerships for providing education and nonviolence training for oppressed groups and their leaders. This is necessary so that Colombians themselves are able to assert their human rights nonviolently and independently of international actors. Some Colombians working against injustice become convinced that the only answer is violent revolution, often joining guerilla or paramilitary groups, thus increasing the spiral of violence. Better education and training might convince them to stay with nonviolent efforts.

Principle 5: Choosing congruence between the means and ends sought. Improvement in this area requires dealing more regularly and consciously with feelings of hatred toward oppressive actors.

Principle 6: Withdrawing consent and cooperation from systems of injustice. Improvement in this area requires regular visits from CPT members to legislators in the United States and Canada to report first hand experiences and to lobby against U.S. congressional support for Plan Colombia and WHINSEC that help to fund the violence in Colombia. In addition, it would require a more concerted effort to disseminate monthly updates and action alerts to key decision-makers in government and non-governmental organizations.

Principle 9: Asserting one's own humanity through the extension of friendship, openness, respect, and active listening. Building ongoing relationships of trust is difficult in organizations such as CPT with multiple members who are constantly rotating in and out. Alternative structures that permit long-term engagement of CPT workers at one site, beyond the usual three-year term, would aid this process of building relationships of trust and respect.

CPT remains a young organization that continually grows and refines its training, strategic planning, practices, team building, and community connections. It has made major strides in strategic planning and goal setting since 2005. Mental preparation and self-purification of team members has improved dramatically since the early years of CPT work in the 1990s, which, in turn, has led to stronger and more productive teams. Activities that confront and expose injustice are becoming a greater focus in CPT work in Colombia, which is positive.

Work is still needed in the development of nonviolence training and education for oppressed communities and strategic long-term planning specifically related to power relationships. CPT Colombia must also do more with North American lobbying efforts in

order to withdraw consent and funding for Plan Colombia and WHINSEC in the United States and mining interests in Canada, programs that feed injustice and violence.

In terms of one of the original questions in this case study concerning the congruence between academic work on nonviolence principles and field work, it appears there is a good adherence to nine common principles synthesized from literature on nonviolent direct action and the work of CPT Colombia.

This study also suggests further research is needed in two areas. First, there is a need to explore the appropriate role of nonviolent practitioners from an outside nation, such as North American CPTers working in Colombia, in training and organizing local groups (Principle 3). Is significant involvement in this arena a modern form of colonialism and racism, or is it appropriate? Second, does a stronger emphasis on Principle 1 (mental preparation and purification of the nonviolent practitioner) actually improve the way the project teams function? Or is a more flexible policy regarding forms of religious practice, such as CPT utilizes, more effective for team members and outcomes?

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