

CHAPTER II: CASE STUDIES

A society is essentially a reflection of the cumulative values and beliefs of those who live there. For the civil society in Nigeria to move ahead, those who have imbibed certain values, who consider those values are right, need to stand up, and champion those good values.

Odigha Odigha, Executive Director, NGO Coalition for Environment, Calabar, Nigeria

We are fighting for life, not only for the lives of humans, of people, but for the lives of all living beings: animals, plants, rivers, the environment. So we have a global vision. That means we can't use the same weapons that they use.

Miguel Lluco, Coordinator, Patchakutik indigenous movement, Quito, Ecuador

If I were to sum up our view here at Jubilee Plus: it is that unity is vital. Unity is a tough discipline, but it yields great results. And given the power of the institutions we are challenging, it is the only way we can hope to achieve change.

Ann Pettifor, Founder and Director, Jubilee 2000 Coalition and Jubilee Plus

The following case studies take us further into the key themes outlined so far. The first, on Cross River, Nigeria, is drawn from an interview I conducted in March, 2001. It describes a community putting empowerment values to work through a very active civil society – but severely challenged in its task by exploitative external relations. The second, on Ecuador, is based on interviews conducted and translated by a colleague of mine, Nicholas Hedgecoe, in the spring of 2000. The interviews were contributions to an episode of the National Radio Project's public affairs radio program, *Making Contact*, that I produced. The program aired on May 17, 2000. It shows the difficulty of the struggle for a particular community, indigenous Ecuadorians, to attain and embody right-relatedness while embedded in a system shot through with corruption and abusive power. Their actions provoke the questions, is the civil society warranted in ignoring the law? Can it avoid its own politicization? The third case, based on an interview conducted in October, 2000, concerns the movement to cancel the debts of the most impoverished nations, known as Jubilee 2000. It examines a new formation of relational civil society and its central intent to empower the poor by bringing them into national decision-making processes. In all three cases, the combined values of right-relatedness and

empowerment help to build a civil society oriented in locally appropriate ways to tackling the problems of poverty and wealth.

II-1 CROSS RIVER, NIGERIA

We...sense that most models, top-down approaches, have failed, so we (use) participatory behavior, participatory culture among the people, within the existing structure that we have among the people, to build them up, let them take responsibility for what they want to do with their environment and with their lives.¹

These are the words of Odigha Odigha, executive director of the NGO Coalition for the Environment (NGOCE) in Nigeria's southeastern state of Cross River. Odigha is running a campaign to save Cross River's rainforest – the largest intact forest in west Africa – from logging and protect the livelihoods of the nearby inhabitants. In Cross River, the struggle of the poor to defend their own resources is trench warfare against an unobtrusive stripping of assets. If poverty reduction is meant to begin with a building up of local social capital, Cross River residents are merely trying to secure the stable conditions that could allow such a process to begin. By observing their struggle, we can get a ground-level view of how the empowerment of poor and marginalized communities, through the strength of civil society's collaborative efforts, can play out in practice.

The forest is under threat of clear-cut logging by Western Metal Product Company Ltd. (WEMPCO), a multinational firm from Hong Kong. Odigha describes the project from his perspective: "WEMPCO has more than 50% of the forest concession of Cross River state, which is a large area. To do what with it? To log it, turn it into wood chips, and export it. And what are the benefits left for the people? *Absolutely nothing.*" He points to "the economic injustice of it: how can you go and cut a big tree, and the only thing that the people get for [it] is 200 naira [less than two dollars]? They destroy the environment and they impoverish the people. We do not want that kind of development."

But to achieve its own vision of development, this local civil society, for all its self-generated vitality, must contend with greater powers which do not share its vision. The belligerent militarization of the Nigerian government has in the recent past made it a threat to its citizens; but more often, it seems, its ineffectuality and corruption reduces government to the level of an organizing principle only. Local business, starved of investment, is also weak, and is heavily penetrated by the long tentacles of multinational corporations. And the powers of government and business at times combine their efforts to work at cross-purposes to local needs. One of the challenges to empowerment through civil society in Cross River is the region's relationships with the world outside of Nigeria. The presence of multinational corporations can be a boon, or it can be highly destructive. In this case, collusions between government officials and international capital take place

¹ This and all subsequent quotes by Odigha Odigha are from an interview conducted by the author in Berkeley, California, on February 16, 2001.

in hidden power relationships and private negotiations lacking in transparency. Odigha describes this process:

No multinational comes in without help from people in government. They exploit the ignorance of those in government. [Somebody is] in an elected position, and a logging concern comes in and tells him, “This is what I’m going to do to transform your area and transform your people, just give me the papers.” Even if there’s no corruption, no backhand transactions, [the official] may help the company, in absolute good faith, because it looks plausible, he will invite the company in without knowing the implications. But on the other hand, there are some people who are absolutely corrupt.... [The businessmen] know how to entice these people... ‘You’ll have a fat bank account in San Francisco, we’ll put it here for you, if only you give us the permit....’ They negotiate the people’s future and the people’s benefit away.

By contrast, in a number of ways, the values of right-relatedness can be found embodied in the practices of Odigha’s organization, the NGOCE: the way the people are networked; an espousal of the value of harmony; and a goal of fostering multi-stakeholder cooperation between the powers of civil society, business and government. Alan Fowler says that in the new civil society model, “it is the poor and marginalized who produce their own development, not NGOs or other aid agencies.”² Odigha concurs: “To protect the environment or bring about poverty alleviation is first and foremost, the people coming together, using the existing structures, and saying, look, this is *our* problem, [here’s] the starting point how we can best solve our problem. [Achieving] that consciousness is very important.”

As Odigha describes it, the coalition itself is an expression of unity-in-diversity:

The NGO Coalition is a network, a coming-together of many NGOs who are interested in the protection...of the last tropical rainforest in Nigeria.... We’re made up of [a variety of groups]: women, who are working on gender-related issues as they affect the environment... those [involved] with microcredit, microenterprise development, and sustainable livelihood means, and [others] working on the mangrove ecosystem. We decided to come together to pool our efforts and interests and form the critical mass to protect the rainforest.

The involvement of the local people is crucial to Odigha’s vision. But he does not see such a civil society as just another interest group seeking to influence political and economic processes. Rather, Odigha seeks arrangements whereby all parties are at the table, working together.

We wanted to create a forestry commission – a multi-stakeholder approach. The people in the community, they have a stake. Government has a stake. The private sector, they have a stake. So the Cross River State

² Fowler, 9.

Forestry Commission has been created. Two NGOs are on the board, working with the people. Myself, I'm on the board, ... so we can relay the people's interests, ... so that there's the voice from the people...

Odigha has sharp views about the way business has been conducted in Cross River to date, and a distinct vision of a better future.

There's nothing wrong with doing business. But the motive in doing business is what we question. If you're coming to exploit, without putting anything back, without equitable distribution of the gains of the business, that is wrong. Ethically, it is wrong. And, to me, it's criminal, and it's evil to do that.

The [local] people who own these resources, they must be made aware. They must organize and sensitize, to say, 'You're coming for logging, you're coming to do business, you're coming for a large farm plantation; what are you willing to concede for doing business here? How are we going to relate?' This is the empowerment that people require: that they'll be able to negotiate....What awareness creates in people [is that] now they have a voice. If the people are aware, they can come forward and negotiate and be part of the transaction. Some communities are resisting [the offers of] the logging companies.... They're looking for ways to sustainably develop their forest....If you go in there for logs, no transaction. But if you want to help assist them to bring out the non-timber forest products, develop them, help them with micro-enterprise development, they are willing to transact with you. That is what awareness creates.

What we want [with outside companies], what would be better for everybody, [is] a *relationship*. It would be better for the company, it would be better for the people, and it would be better for the environment.... The approach that WEMCO is following now, if they cut the forest, within 20-25 years the whole place will turn into a desert, and they will take off. They've gone away with the trees, they've gone away with the profit, and left what behind?....They will have gotten the big money...whereas they have impoverished a lot of generations. They have [made it] difficult to even come out from their poverty level.... Business is motivated by profit, there's nothing wrong with that, but your profit should wear a human face....Some part of it should go back into society, to develop the area where you derived the resources; you should help to sustain the environment, so that your business will continue. There should be a continuity, in fact, your business should be projected over a hundred years and above.

Part of the task of civil society involves forging the accountability and transparency of power and promoting the ideals of service and unity. In a country that has long lacked basic democratic mechanisms, Odigha does not put much hope in

government to change of its own accord; he looks to civil society to build gradual momentum toward such change.

To empower civil society, to give the NGOs what it takes, in terms of knowledge, ability to communicate, and in terms of skills, [it requires] building institutions so that their voice can become very audible and appreciated. I feel this will even usher in democracy. To say, let's go and build a legislature, well, it could work, but the best thing is this: empowering the people, so that they can come out and speak. Then people will be not only getting more involved in governance, but will be getting better results, and decisions will be better, for everybody.

It is worth noting the consistency with which Odigha applies the principles of empowerment, even in conversations with global NGOs and agencies which share his goals. He is not interested in outside interventions, no matter how beneficent, if outside "helpers" do not accept that they are merely in the role of supporting a home-grown process.

[It] means calling for help from those who have the skills to help us to develop our resources. People should come and assist [our people], and support them, and not dictate to them what is good for them. They should be guided, not told what to do...Other people, please do come and support us. But we want... a bottom-up approach. If the help comes top-down, it will not be effective. [Our people] should be assisted to become more aware of what the issues are, and let them take decisions for themselves.

Odigha speaks here of his relationship with outsiders who are there to help. But the more challenging relationship to ponder is with those who benefit from Cross River's resources without, in the view of locals, giving back – for example, WEMPCO shareholders. Here is a pool of wealth that exists in a direct relationship to the poverty, deprivation, and environmental destruction of Cross River: the outflow of profits along with the region's resources is indicative that wealth is not serving. Even if the poor must take the lead in conducting their own empowerment, they need productive external conditions. When external interests create structural impediments to empowerment, then any genuine agenda of poverty reduction ought to implicate the conduct of those who take the wealth out. The distant communities of wealth cannot forever hold themselves separate. Empowerment enlarges the sense in which the wealth of the world is the endowment of all humanity, and as such, it represents the beginnings of a determined process to make wealth serve.

In my interview with Odigha, I found that his efforts in Cross River are tangibly related to values of ethical relatedness and harmony:

A better approach would be, get all the interests [together], everything should be integrated – the environment, people... the animals and the

plants should be integrated into the model so that there'll be harmony. That's the kind of model we're looking for.

Values of relational harmony give Odigha a distinctive perspective into the relationship of external forces of wealth and power to the living conditions in the Cross River forest area. This is the basis of his critique of relations with the outside world that are often more exploitative than productive. Odigha's underlying values of harmony and unity – within the human world, between the powers of civil society, government and business; and between humanity and non-human nature – also enliven his approach to negotiating the relationships between multiple stakeholders.

In the last chapter, I introduced the idea of the distinctive generative role of cultural power in civil society: as the *source* of humanistic and spiritual values, cultural power has the power to “humanize” an exploitative and ecologically harmful world, one otherwise dominated and determined by the powers of business and government. It is the challenge of civil society to translate this potential value into transformative action. In Cross River the background of spirituality as a primal force underwriting these cultural values is crucial. Odigha elaborates:

Man (sic) seeks to worship. And what he believes in, he tries to bring into his day-to-day life.... In Nigeria, particularly in the area where I come from, there is a call for more spiritual organizations, particularly the churches, to get involved in the whole process of developing society.

In the Cross River region, the local spiritual history gives an essential grounding to the defense of the environment, both as a source or principle of harmony and as a location or presence that is related to the lifeway of the people.

I see very clearly that we're all related.... Way back when our people... worshipped in their traditional way, before the advent of Christianity, they had what they called a food forest. When the visitors, like the missionaries, came, they called those places evil forest. But what did the people do? Their strategy was to conserve those areas. They believed that anybody who went into that particular forest area would get powers there, would derive things that are useful....Everybody knew that – you were not to go there...essentially, to preserve it. They understood the harmony [there].... But to come in and destroy that harmony, you are creating disequilibrium, you're bringing destruction to species, you're bringing disorder in society...because you want to have it your own way, you don't care to maintain harmony in the process.

Odigha feels that all religions have resources for reverence of nature, resources that especially need to be nurtured now if civil society is to fulfill its capacity for protecting and properly developing local nature's unique capital for the long-term sustainability of the community:

You have activists who have deep religious, Christian backgrounds, who... can cite scriptures, like Genesis 2:15, that we have a mandate from God to keep and tend the garden, which is the Earth. We are a predominantly Christian area, and so we are taking that angle – that we have a mandate to care for the earth. And that we should replenish it so that the earth will in turn continue to sustain our existence.... Whether Muslim, [or] the traditional religions, whatever you believe, [no] belief or any religion tells you you should go and destroy nature.... There are some people who worship trees. They revere [nature]. They are preserving it! They are willing to die if you cut those trees down. No religion favors destruction of the forest. Man decides to interpret [religion] to serve his own wicked intentions.

The relatedness that the people feel to their place and its richly grown ecosphere provides a kind of dictate for how to be in the world:

We feel that for healthy living, for harmonious living, we need to bring an integrated environment into our day-to-day life. We need to live in harmony with the plants, with the animals, so that they continue to sustain our life.... These are the kinds of motivations that prepare us to get involved in the world.

The dilemmas of Cross River are a window onto issues and challenges that we see repeated in other cases across other continents. I believe that, if emergent global civil society is to project an influential progressive agenda concerning problems of wealth-and-poverty – or other similar agendas – it will benefit from a value and ethic of relatedness such as Odigha describes: a foundation of ecological relatedness can strengthen our sense of inter-human relatedness and its ethical imperatives. To the extent that people understand themselves as radically related and relational beings, civil society as a field of being – the coming-together of people around collective beliefs and desires – may take on the fruits of that understanding. As the worldview and ethic of relatedness takes concrete form in some arenas of civil society, the promotion of this ethic can build upon itself to help global civil society achieve its integrated transformative goals. Civil society, in this account, is both the institutional expression of the relatedness ethic and the right vehicle to bring the thirst for right-relatedness into the public domain so as to advance sustainability, poverty reduction, or other similar ends.

II-2 INDIGENOUS ECUADOR

I can speak most particularly to the demands of the indigenous movement here in Ecuador. The commitment with us has been to create spaces where the indigenous people can participate directly in the decision making process in order to end the national crisis we are living. – *Indigenous Federation leader Carmen Yamberla*³

On January 21, 2000, Ecuador became the stage of the first Latin American coup-d'état in over a decade. Many called the dramatic events of that January a “*levantamiento popular*” – a popular uprising – rather than a “coup.” The revolt was non-violent and was led by an indigenous movement with widespread support throughout the country and key backing from some sectors of the military. The uprising followed a year of disastrous bank failures, out-of-control inflation, and austere economic policies imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The ousted president, Jamil Mahuad, was saddled with accusations of corruption. When fourteen banks collapsed in March 1999, the Ecuadorian government outraged the public by freezing bank accounts to raise money for a bailout of the banks – while government officials and bankers whisked their own funds out of the country. Shortly after the coup, Miguel Lluco, coordinator for Pachakutik, an indigenous political movement which is a member of the umbrella coalition Indigenous Nationalities Confederation of Ecuador, known as CONAIE, described the sense of outrage that his community felt:

The authorities have been breaking the constitution and breaking the rules whenever they have wanted to. They froze and stole the funds of thousands of Ecuadorians in the banks that had their accounts – when people are not treated in hospitals, when there aren't resources so that our children can go to school to be educated.

60 percent of Ecuador's population lives in poverty, including the great majority of the country's over 4 million indigenous citizens, nearly half of the country's inhabitants. During President Mahuad's term, the value of the national currency dropped by 80 percent, while prices for food and fuel skyrocketed, in part because of the implementation of IMF/World Bank-prescribed structural adjustment economic policies, which demanded an end to subsidized prices. Combined with the country's economic downturn, Ecuador's poor were hit particularly hard.

Throughout the 1990s, CONAIE repeatedly mobilized thousands of Indians from the countryside to stage mass protests in the capitol Quito that effectively shut the city down. But the January 21st popular uprising was different. The president had proposed to

³ This and all other quotes of Ecuadorians in this chapter are from interviews conducted for the National Radio Project's radio program Making Contact, episode #20-00 “A Popular Uprising: A Look at Ecuador's Coup,” May 17, 2000, written and produced by the author. The interview with CONAIE's Carmen Yamberla was conducted by Nilo Cayuqueyo; interviews of Congresswoman Nina Picari, Colonel Lucio Gutierrez, and Pachakutik leader Miguel Lluco were conducted in Quito by Nicholas Hedgecoe, who also translated them. All interviews were conducted in March-April, 2000.

replace the national currency with the U.S. dollar, provoking a firestorm of protest. CONAIE said the plan would “dollarize poverty and privatize wealth.” As upwards of 20,000 indigenous protesters crowded into Quito, some 500 military personnel and a group of rogue colonels allowed the protestors to occupy the Congress building. Soon a three-man junta – CONAIE’s indigenous president Antonio Vargas, army colonel Lucio Gutierrez, and a retired Supreme Court justice – was greeting crowds from the balcony of the presidential palace.

The coup was short-lived. Stern warnings by the United States State Department and the Organization of American States, threatening international isolation and an end to all bilateral aid and World Bank lending, proved effective. The next morning, the reins were turned over to the vice president, Gustavo Noboa, who has remained in charge since then. Nonetheless, a powerful point had been made.

Let us consider further the circumstances that led the indigenous movement to take their drastic action. From a short-term perspective, the majority of the population of Ecuador suffered from deepening conditions of poverty during President Mahuad’s term. By January, 2000, the currency on which the poor depend had slipped to one-fifth of the value it had when Mahuad had taken office; average per capita income is \$1,600, but among Indians it is \$250, making them, at that bare subsistence level, the group most vulnerable to such a loss in the value of money. The public perception was that the president was overly enthusiastic in embracing the International Monetary Fund-dictated economic austerity policies which exact the greatest pain from the poorest of Ecuadorians. The IMF economists’ recipe for debt problems and economic modernization, known as structural adjustment programs, include such elements as devaluing local currency to increase exports (by making them cheaper); raising local interest rates to depress consumption; lifting trade barriers; cutting government spending to curb inflation; privatizing national assets to make them more efficient; and generally encouraging internal enterprise within free markets rather than dependence on state activity.⁴ Those who can least afford it suffer most from these policies in the short run, as wages are devalued and buying power is reduced; and vital human services like healthcare and education are cut or changed to a fee basis. Carmen Yamberla describes the deprivations of ordinary people:

Our country counts 100,000 sucres [per month] as a living wage. That would be \$4 a month. How can we talk about meeting the needs of a family, which has been established at more that \$200 per month? If we talk about Indi people, we don’t have anything. We don’t have a salary. We live off our harvest, our craftwork, different types of labor that our people do.... There are no guarantees [in] agriculture about the increases in the cost of fertilizers, seeds.... Talking about electricity, basic services, the rates are already over \$20 per month. How can we pay this if we don’t even have a salary? How will we survive, how will we continue as a community, as an economy?

⁴ Normon Solomon, “Economics of the Jubilee” in Ucko, Hans, ed., *The Jubilee Challenge: Utopia or Possibility? Jewish and Christian Insights*. Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1997.

Miguel Llucu concurs:

It's very clear what the neoliberal economic policies that have been used here have meant that for the majority of Ecuadorians - that it's harder and harder to find the funds to cover basic necessities, for food, for education, health, for housing. They have also meant that rural production has not been improved, nor has know-how to increase production improved, there hasn't been stability in the market in terms of buying and selling.... So these were the elements that caused the Ecuadorian people, led by the CONAIE and social unions, to act.

It is intriguing, though hardly surprising, that the voice of the United States State Department, speaking for the multilateral financial institutions, was the final word in this crisis. It points to Ecuador's relationship in the global context. From the perspective of indigenous analysts, the most destructive relationships are the collaborations between Ecuador's elites and various international actors, including investors (through private banks and investment firms in the U.S. and Europe), sponsors (such as the U.S. government), and multilateral creditors (the World Bank and IMF). When these outside entities justify such links, they saying that they are working with that sector of the society that has the competence and authority to effect change; in doing so, they are promoting the cause of economic development by working to stabilize and strengthen the financial institutions within Ecuador, shoring up the financial order necessary to allow positive growth and change. The indigenous thinking, though, is that these international actors do not listen to the inhabitants of the land and do not respect their locally appropriate proposals. From their perspective, the outsiders avoid relationships with the poor whom they are claiming to serve. Indigenous leaders see an increasingly exploitative globalization system orchestrated through these intentional links. Miguel Llucu explains:

[The new \$2 billion IMF loan] will go first of all to the bankers. The international organizations shouldn't continue supporting the same thieves who have stolen so much. The solution is in listening to the Ecuadorian people and implementing a plan that represents the majority view.

A similar process has been reproduced in many, perhaps most, poor nations in the past decade; but in Ecuador in January, 2000, it seems that the leaders' willingness to exact that kind of suffering finally pushed things too far. More than any other factor, high-level *corruption* seems to have soured Ecuadorians on the taste of these imposed economic reforms. In Ecuador, prominent bankers have occasionally been charged with theft and fraud but are rarely prosecuted. During the crisis period of 1999-2000, insider information led to large-scale capital flight by elites (sending their money out of the country), protecting them from both the freezing of bank accounts and losses from hyperinflation. There is evidence of (possibly fraudulent) waste of those funds that came directly from multilateral loans.

Marginalization is more than just voicelessness for those on the outside. The lack of relationship between global finance and local civil society undermines the accountability of government and business elites. By working with and extending credit

to those who are in power in spite of their flaws, multilateral agencies and the wealthy governments that dictate their policies are colluding in the crimes of systematic theft and graft. Miguel Llucó believes that Ecuador's creditors are blind to their own complicity in supporting Ecuador's internal corruption:

...Those funds will go first of all to the private sector and that means the bankers. We don't trust them at all because they've caused the country's crisis. Ex-president Jamil Mahuad gave these people billions of sucres. Now dollars are going to arrive and they will be given to the same people, so there won't be any solution. We have proposed to the international organizations that they shouldn't continue supporting the same thieves who have stolen so much. Giving funds to thieves is not a solution...

It was in this context, where it appeared that no legal mechanism was holding those in power accountable, that the case for direct action grew. The basic injustice of Ecuador's economic arrangements was the stimulus. Such a systemic concentration of power and wealth, combined with a consistent pattern of corruption, is seen as effectively antidemocratic. The Indians, on the outside, see the situation as an oppressive stealing of opportunity from those least able to endure it. The highly visible coup leader, Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez, submitted himself to be arrested some weeks after the coup, and spoke from prison about a month later. Gutiérrez indicates how opposition grew in direct response to these perceptions of an oppressive system:

One of the forms of neo-slavery and oppression is corruption.... Our civic battle was against that corrupt system. Corruption is the main enemy.... I want to emphasize that we're not against democracy. Our declarations stated that we wanted to bring about a more active democracy, a democracy in which the people have an active participation in the country's important decisions. A democracy that seeks to provide well-being for all Ecuadorians, not simply a badly-understood model of a democracy where the benefits are sought for only a small group.... There is a big difference between some Ecuadorians, a tiny, tiny, tiny group of families that have 80 or 90 percent of the national wealth and the great majority, 98 percent – which is poor.

The indigenous alliance with the military is quite unusual and potentially ominous. But Pachakutik's Miguel Llucó puts a positive face on the interaction:

The events of January signify something not seen before in our country, in which a large number of colonels and other officers from the Ecuadorian army participated, together with the general populace and the Indians. They participated because they saw that our demands were fair and that what we were proposing was right.

One intrinsic commonality of interests between indigenous activists and military personnel may have made such an alliance inevitable – that is, that a majority of the military’s personnel *is* indigenous. When the troops in Quito decided where their allegiances lay, they saw an opportunity to contribute decisively to indigenous civil society’s ability to influence events – to gain a new kind of empowerment. Coup leader Gutierrez explained his rationale:

We couldn’t remain inactive when confronted with the waste of the country’s funds, and people’s money.... A series of blatantly corrupt acts were committed. The state constitution was violated systematically. Given such constant criminal acts to satisfy the demands of a small group of shameless bankers and some business leaders, the military...must defend the people. It was a persuasive protest against corruption to get the people to react, so that they would stop being passive, so that they would stop being witnesses to the debacle of our country. We did it to raise the people’s self-esteem, to make them the protagonists of their own destiny. We believe that the armed forces are justified in taking measures to defend the people. So what we did was simply to spontaneously, voluntarily and decisively join the protest that the people, Ecuadorian people, poor people, marginalized people, exploited people were carrying out, and which was being led by our indigenous people.

Following the *levantamiento*, indigenous groups insisted that they are determined to remain an independent force; this alliance with the military was joined for the purpose that that particular moment afforded only, with no promises for the future, as Congress member Nina Picari, also of the Pachakutik movement, explains.

We have carried out uprisings with and without the military.... These are two different groups which can’t be lumped together.... the indigenous movement is autonomous and has its own structure and perspective and so it will decide alone when is the best moment to carry out another protest.... What we have here is an indigenous movement that is solid, structured and organized, with its own standpoint, [though] it does count on support from social groups – depending on their standpoints.

One has to wonder, though, whether the particular tactic of using military help carried with it implicit violence or a hint of oppression from within. Nonetheless, a commitment to nonviolence is widespread among the indigenous leadership and movement. While highly effective at mobilizing demonstrations, protests and strikes, the indigenous movement has also long been distinguished by its peaceful means. Carmen Yamberla describes their tactics and the reasons they have for using them:

Really, to get to that point, there ought to be other mechanisms, other forms of struggle. Maybe through the lives and blood of other *compañeros* we can get to this point, [but] this time we have not done that. We have done the entire mobilization peacefully. We have not thrown even one

bomb in this struggle. Our arms have been our musical instruments, the flutes, the drums, the guitars, songs, dances, this is how it has been. In this fashion we believe we have made people reflect, both nationally and internationally. When we struggle for justice, we do not have to use weapons. There are other ways of struggling that reflect our cultural identity.

Now let us look more closely at this indigenous community that is railing against domination by a small society of insiders. In Ecuador the unfinished 500-year history of oppression of indigenous peoples is a rallying point, and so the movement against ingrained privilege alongside chronic deprivation is completely intertwined with the cause of ethnic identity and assertion. The indigenous communities in Ecuador are the locus of political ferment and considerable moral authority. The twelve indigenous nations are politically organized under the aforementioned CONAIE. Formed in 1986, CONAIE grew, in part, as a response to the impact of globalization policies in Ecuador. CONAIE has developed an economic and political plan that calls for the creation of a multi-nation state that recognizes the autonomy and rights of the twelve indigenous nations.

Ultimately, the indigenous groups began to ask what democracy really means within a system suffused with radical inequality, permanent indebtedness, and high-level corruption. They began to articulate a new, more inclusive set of democratic ideals, calling for a more active civic participation than merely voting on election day. These ideals are largely a response to the perception that the government of Ecuador has long been a feeding trough for insiders.

One of CONAIE's objectives has been to implement, internally, more inclusive forms of democracy. CONAIE's political reach is substantial, influencing decisions at the local, regional, and national levels. CONAIE has pursued a strategy of participatory democracy, implementing what are called "popular parliaments." These are extra-governmental forums for indigenous nation members to submit proposals to solve specific community problems.

CONAIE's empowerment strategy is distinguished by women's leadership and participation, and this has greatly strengthened its mobility and effectiveness, as Carmen Yamberla explains:

Here in Ecuador, especially if you are talking about the indigenous movement, the participation [of women] is integral. We are carrying out the struggle, both men and women. The participation has been very active on the part of the women – more than anything, [taking] a high level of responsibility. This is to applaud many compañeras who have left all their regular responsibilities and put themselves at the disposition of the struggle. Giving their time, dedicating themselves to this. This has been one of the tools of the struggle, within the strategy. It is always the women that are at the forefront of any mobilization.

I have placed great stock in the role of civil society, and it must be noted that CONAIE is probably better seen as a political entity than a civil society organization, although it is more densely intertwined with civil society, in the form of indigenous identity, lifeways, traditions, and spirituality, than a typical political organization. Perhaps CONAIE ought to be seen as a crossover organization, with feet in both the political and the cultural. This would be problematic for what Perlas call the “habitats” of government and of civil society: CONAIE cannot keep these arenas separate. I would suggest that this merger is driven by the conditions of disempowerment and marginalization under which the indigenous people of Ecuador suffer: with the proper relatedness between these spheres broken, the organizing forces of indigenous Ecuador must fill the breach with their own protective and assertive amalgamation.

It is a good sign, therefore, that an ethic of right-relatedness appears throughout the indigenous approach to generating social change in Ecuador. An unwillingness to use violence against foes, even when fighting a reasoned battle against injustice; a respect for all life forms and a desire to place human development within this context; recognition that the acquisitive conduct of Ecuador’s wealthy is connected to the fates of its poor; attention to global neighbors and to opportunities for solidarity with them; all of these elements demonstrate an attempt to develop a collective public identity that affirms the participation of all people and lifeforms and interests, so that all parties can feel a bit of the power of having a place at the table.

Now that the dust has settled, though, the question remains, have these dramatic events actually *changed* the other institutional powers in any fundamental way? Have they empowered the indigenous people and improved relationships?

The indigenous people of Ecuador bring legitimate grievances to their relationship with their nation. They have followed peaceful strategies of empowerment for years, quite effectively. But they eventually butted up against the crucial challenge of empowerment: that those already in power probably do not want to give up some share of that power. In 2000, the indigenous leadership chose a precipitous course to bring those concerns to the forefront. With that battle behind them, though, the Indians must work to put the spotlight on the more intractable relationships that condemn them to their plight. They will have to engage further in the kind of constructive engagement and moral suasion that they pursued before the *levantamiento*, and try to bring the powerful to the point of change by less dramatic means. They have perhaps achieved a greater sensitivity on the part of political leaders to the agenda and needs of the poor. But to deliver the resources to poor communities and enable them to function and flourish, they will need to focus further on the agenda that has brought them this far – not the seizure of power, but the valid criticism of an economic system that crushes them. And they will need to bring that message onto the global stage in clever and effective ways.

In that respect, Carmen Yamberla maintains a hopeful stance, for, regardless of institutional obstacles, she is conscious of growing links in a web of global civil society. The indigenous leaders are eager to increase their direct relationships with, as she explains, United States citizens and civil society:

[My] message for those listening to me in the U.S. – I think we don’t have any problem with sharing together our experiences and the problems that we have. What worries us are the interests of the political powers, which

differentiate us from each other by national boundaries. I hope that we can have a nexus of communication among people, among fraternal people. When we talk about and reject U.S. intervention, we are not referring to the people [in the U.S.], but the political system that is established and the people who are exercising this power both in the U.S. and in the world.

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Much of the developing world is submerged under permanent, unpayable government debt which arose out of loans to long-gone dictators in the 1970s and 1980s. Some countries have paid over one-and-a-half times their debt principal in interest payments alone, without reducing the principal at all. Between 40 and 50 countries are in this crisis condition and have been for up to two decades – the great majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa. Often these loans were made in the context of Cold War objectives and were not particularly rational on other terms. Much of the money was stolen or wasted, and very little direct benefit accrued from them to the most impoverished people the indebted nations. Few citizens had any say in the decisions to take on the original loans.

Partly as a result of this onerous debt, impoverished nations are continuing to fall behind the wealthy nations in absolute terms: a report on behalf of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan in February, 2001 noted that “[a]n estimated \$7.5 trillion was saved or invested worldwide last year, of which \$1.7 trillion went to developing countries. But the net transfer to wealthy countries amounted to \$450 billion, three-fourths of which was absorbed by the United States.”⁵

The results of this “reverse development”⁶ are catastrophic within the poor countries. A 1999 paper by UNICEF and Oxfam International noted that in most of the 41 so-called highly indebted poor countries (HIPCs),

more than one fifth of the limited public revenue is being diverted to debt repayments.... [B]y restricting the ‘fiscal space’ available to government, debt repayments have limited the resources available for investment in basic services essential to the poor.... [S]ix HIPCs in Africa spent more than one third of the national budget on debt servicing but on average less than 10 percent on basic social services....

Countries such as Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Niger and Tanzania are spending \$3-\$6 per capita a year on their health systems, which is insufficient to finance a package of basic health interventions. Yet each of these countries spends more than double on debt financing what is spent

⁵ Christopher S. Wren, “The U.N. Offers 87 Remedies to Help Poor Nations,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2001, 2.

⁶ Duchrow, 77-78.

on primary health care. In Zambia – where infant mortality rates are increasing, over half a million children are out of school, and illiteracy is rising – debt servicing claims more of the national budget than health and education combined.⁷

The 2001 UN report said that “in some cases debt burdens represent insurmountable obstacles and need to be addressed urgently.”⁸ It is in this context that one of the most formidable civil society organizations that has ever existed arose in the late 1990s. A coalition of affiliated but independent groups in over 50 nations, organized under the name Jubilee 2000, began to call for the widespread cancellation of impoverished nations’ debts in the “Jubilee year” of 2000. Jubilee 2000 has collected more signatures than any other cause in history, over four million worldwide. This is a civil society organization worthy of our close attention for a number of reasons.

The international Jubilee movement takes as its reason for being the alleviation of the suffering caused by global poverty, characterizing debt cancellation as the essential precursor to any genuine program of empowerment and poverty reduction. This goal is grounded in a widely accessible religious tradition of liberation and compassion, drawing both religious and secular social justice organizations into its fold. It has been influential – gaining face-to-face contact at the highest levels of power. It has clearly “gotten” the dynamic of inter-relatedness and mutuality between communities in nations poor and rich. This is true both externally, in its call for the wealthy to be engaged in changing their relationship as creditors, and internally, in the working relationships it embodies between its members in the debtor and creditor nations. In short, Jubilee 2000 and its successor organizations formed after the year 2000 ended – the Jubilee Movement International, the Jubilee/USA Network, Jubilee Plus, and others – in many ways perfectly embody the values of right-relatedness and empowerment in its struggle to tackle global poverty.

The founder of the movement, Ann Pettifor, also headed the most active and influential Jubilee group, Jubilee 2000 UK, in the United Kingdom, through to the end of the year 2000. In the past two years, Pettifor met with many heads of state, including then-president Bill Clinton, and financial leaders such as the heads of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Now she is the head of Jubilee Plus, a debt research group in the United Kingdom. I interviewed Pettifor in October, 2000 in Berkeley, California.

Pettifor and the few others who initially organized together to tackle the debt crisis quickly realized its parallel with the biblical Jubilee, and the power that that connection could have in building the mission of the debt cancellation movement. Jubilee is an empowerment code of the Old Testament, proceeding from the Sabbath commandment’s admonishment to Israel: “[r]emember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out...” As Pettifor describes it, “The whole Jubilee principle was established because the people of Israel had escaped from the

⁷ UNICEF/Oxfam International, “Debt Relief and Poverty Reduction: Meeting the Challenge,” International Position Paper, August, 1999; available from www.oxfaminternational.org/advocacy/papers/debtchallenge.htm; Internet; 5.

⁸ Wren, 2.

pharaohs of Egypt and were in the desert as a slave people. God's determination for them was that they should never be enslaved again...."⁹

The Jubilee code is enshrined in the sabbath legislation of Deuteronomy and Leviticus: "And if your brother becomes poor beside you, and sells himself to you...he shall serve with you until the year of the Jubilee; then he shall go out from you...and go back to his own family, and return to the possessions of his fathers" (Leviticus 25: 39-41). The biblical Jubilee mandates the periodic cancellation of debt, remission of slavery, and return of land to its original holders. As described by Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler in *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life*, Jubilee spirituality is both an expression of the I-Thou relationship between God and humanity, and a way of establishing how God's people ought to live in relation to each other. The liberation of Israel must result in responsible, just social relationships.¹⁰

The prophetic vision is one of liberation, of God reigning in Israel's daily life, which would assure the right of access of all to "the sources of life's basic necessities and the provision for mutual aid." One is enjoined to give liberally, so as to be blessed. This points to an economy of *enough*, rather than one of wealth accumulation and centralized power. The Jubilee practices were apparently never fully implemented in biblical times, no doubt because this aspect of the Deuteronomic code is such a "radical confrontation with the principal mechanisms of marginalization and alienation."¹¹

Pettifor draws the parallels between the biblical Jubilee and the contemporary situation:

Slavery means never owning land, not having rights to property – literally [being] enslaved – and also being in debt. [The Israelites] were in debt to the pharaohs of Egypt, which is why... they had lost the right to their land... and had to give [it] up... to their creditors as a way to get out of their debts [– but] they never got out of their debts.... [T]hey in turn sacrificed themselves and were enslaved.

[Slavery, debt –] they're all very linked, I don't make a distinction between them. ...[Today] there are whole nations that are enslaved in the way that the people of Israel were enslaved.... Today there are more than 50 countries in the world that lack the potential for independent, autonomous growth and development as a community, as a nation, and are [in a sense] enslaved.

⁹ This and all subsequent quotes by Ann Pettifor, unless otherwise noted, are from an interview conducted by the author in Berkeley, California on October 6, 2000.

¹⁰ Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler, *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 9, 77-79.

¹¹ Kinsler and Kinsler, 13-14, 54. Kinsler and Kinsler argue that Jesus's opening act in Luke, quoting Isaiah concerning liberation of oppressed – the essential content of his central theme, the Reign of God – is a radicalization of Jubilee, going beyond its specific mandates to establish a "general, comprehensive response to oppression and poverty as God's intention." Kinsler and Kinsler, 16.

Debt can be seen as a violation of relatedness *par excellence*. Pettifor describes how the IMF and the World Bank – what she calls the “credit cartels” of the debt system, “Soviet-style banks, heavily protected from economic reality, and controlled by a privileged ‘nomenklatura’”¹² – are responsible neither to markets nor to taxpayers. The debt system puts all of the burden on debtors and concentrate the power of the powerful – the creditors. She brings these once-faceless creditors, those who make the rules and jiggle them at will, into the equation:

The whole international financial system is geared towards disciplining debtors and not disciplining creditors. Debtors take all the losses for bad loans. The World Bank lends to Marcos in the Philippines so that Westinghouse could build a nuclear power station on a volcanic fault. Now that was a lousy loan. The creditors have not taken the losses from that, but the debtors have, and that typifies much of international financial dealing....

This phrase, “moral hazard,” is widely abused...The Japanese are very fond of saying that it’s a moral hazard to write off debts, because people will become reckless about borrowing. But people won’t be reckless about borrowing if lenders are not reckless about lending, and they don’t seem to see that point. Equally, Japan, while on the one hand refusing to write off the debts of the poorest countries, has just written off \$600 billion of debt for its own private banking sector, so it talks with a forked tongue about moral hazard.

There is an undisciplined liberalization of capital...The debt-creating process [happens because] capital and money is not disciplined, and capital and money become dominant not just in our economy but in our social lives... and in our political and indeed spiritual lives. Money has more rights than humans have.

In a sense, though, Jubilee is not just a religious tradition of compassion and covenant, but also one of pragmatism. It announces that too much intractable indebtedness is counterproductive for all. The movement privileges relationality, asserting that good, beneficial relationships are more important than legalistic contracts. And, as such, it points to how out-of-step the global debt system is from the standards by which we in the prosperous West ourselves live. Consider, for example, how bankruptcy laws within the United States were written in recognition of the fact that legal rights can only be pressed so far before being overruled if they cause excessive suffering.

[We want to] look at the ways in which capital can be disciplined. The thing we’re most concerned about is the need for an international insolvency law, ie, the ability for poor country debtors to appeal to an independent arbitrator for some protection from their creditors and for

¹² “IMF and World Bank - Soviet-style Banks,” September 19, 2000, jubileeuk.org website

some mediation over the debt crisis. Now that would be a discipline on capital....

Debt cancellation is not only empowering because it begins to free up resources that can sustain the capabilities both of entire economies and of individual lives to grow out of poverty; it can also be a mechanism to maximize empowerment, by building new conditions such as transparency and accountability into the collaborative relationship between former creditors and debtors. Pettifor describes empowerment as gaining a place at the table by building *mutual* obligations. This is well illustrated by the efforts of the Jubilee movement to make credit decisions more accountable to grassroots oversight:

There cannot be debt cancellation without involvement of people at a local level. Fundamental to the Jubilee 2000 campaign has been this call for tough conditions. ... We were very ambivalent about conditions – we were opposed to the IMF [structural adjustment plans] that were imposed [as a condition in return for] debt cancellation. But we were also uneasy about unconditional cancellation.

Unconditional cancellation of debts would seem to reward the thieves and dictators who long ago pocketed the money – and would do nothing to change the underlying circumstances that led to the debt crisis in the first place:

We convened a conference of organizations from... primarily Africa and Latin America. They [considered it] at length, and said, ‘We want you to call for debt cancellation with tough conditionality. But those conditions should not be set in Washington or London or Zurich, they should be set in the capital of the indebted nation itself.’ Local people should be able to get a grip on the way their governments borrow on the international financial markets, or indeed lend... We want transparency and accountability, both in borrowing nations and in lending nations.

In some countries, such mechanisms for accountability and openness have already been built into place as a result of Jubilee initiatives:

In Uganda, there are parliamentary mechanisms, and also civil society mechanisms, for checking on new loans, and rejecting those. Parliament votes for or against new loans in the context of the total budget. And, when debt relief is agreed in Uganda, the money [that is freed up in the government budget] goes into a poverty action fund, to be used for a very specific project, in that case, for primary-school education, which can be monitored by civil society.

A demand of “no closed doors” is a demand for the transparency of the transactions made in the name of development. It is more than just a matter of monitoring by civil society: it also involves civil society in the original decisions concerning whether or not to accept new loans, and the purposes to which loans are put. This is a process in

which the powerful are called to change their behavior, to open up and allow their subjective side to be in view. Pettifor describes how the quest for transparency and accountability has led the Jubilee movement to pursue a way of bringing the poor directly into the process as essential partners for governing the conduct of lending:

What we're calling for is a form of debt arbitration between the debtor and the creditor nation which takes the form of a committee of three [entities]: a judge, an arbitrator, someone independent and fair, who sits at the table; on one side, the creditors, probably represented by the IMF, and on the other side the debtor government, and *at the table*, civil society – the opposition parties, the media, the churches, the trade unions, the mothers and fathers of school children, the teachers, if there is a primary-school project, and so on. These are the people who are most likely to shine a light on the corrupt use of debt relief, and the people who are most likely therefore to challenge that corruption.

It's an idea that's supported by many people... (Then-United States Treasury Secretary) Larry Summers said to me... 'You know, sunshine is the very best detergent. If you throw light on corruption, you can challenge it.' So we're calling for transparency and accountability in the whole process of lending and borrowing. That in itself is a discipline on capital. It's much easier to sign a contract when you go to a World Bank annual conference in Washington D.C. and you're sitting in a posh hotel sipping Earl Grey tea, and you sign a quiet little contract with a banker. If you're a representative of an African or Latin American government, that's easy to do; [but] to do that in the broad glare of public accountability means you have to be very careful about signing [anything] away.

Essential to the success of the Jubilee movement has been its ability to develop an integral coalition of both poor- and wealthy-nation participants – and nothing better illustrates its embodiment of relatedness and empowerment values. A statement issued to Jubilee supporters in February, 2001 gives insight into the dialogue between these communities that has occurred within the movement. The statement describes discussions at a meeting to launch the Jubilee/USA Network, a new coalition of faith-based and activist organizations intended to replace Jubilee 2000/USA (which was formally defunct at the end of 2000).

[One] emotional theme that ran through the weekend was the ways and means to relate the Jubilee/USA Network to positions on the debt crisis that are articulated by 'The Global South,' a coalition of national movements primarily in Latin America and Africa.¹³

A spokesperson for the Global South who was invited to the organizing

¹³ The term "Global South," admittedly imprecise, is intended by its users to represent the individuals and civil society of all impoverished communities, regardless of geographical location.

session, listed four things that coalition members were asking of the movements in the north:

[1] [Act in] Solidarity, including the commitment to have representatives of the Global South present when debt strategies are discussed that effect the south;

[2] Consider, discuss, weigh and spread the demands of the Global South;

[3] Embrace the stance that Jubilee is a cry for the liberation of people from bondage and of the creation from environmental destruction; and

[4] Share in building strategies for action.

Some participants argued that the positions of the south should determine the actions of the Network. Others pointed out that, just as individual national movements in the south adapted the general positions of the Global South Coalition to the realities of their own national circumstances, so the Network had to represent the whole movement within the possibilities and limitations of the cultural and political situation [in the United States].

Overall, however, there were many expressions of the desire to build close ties between the new Network and activists in precisely those countries where the debt is ravaging every aspect of human society and nature. Voices from the south will be a part of the governing structures of the Network. Leaders and staff members are pledged to consult with the south on proposals and to report on decisions that are made. A plan to build sister relationships between regional parts of the US Network and specific debt ridden countries in the south is being studied as a strategy for the future.¹⁴

The Jubilee movement met with good but not exceptional success in the Jubilee year of 2000. A number of wealthy nations, including the United States, pledged to cancel their bilateral debts to the poorest nations (a not inconsiderable amount, but one which is dwarfed by their “multilateral” debts to the World Bank and IMF). The United States Congress passed its \$435 million portion of a four-year plan to cancel \$100 billion in debts – itself less than a third of outstanding debts. Tremendous publicity was generated, spearheaded by pop stars and Pope John Paul II. Existing debt relief packages were speeded up. Nonetheless, all but a few of the forty-plus critical countries remain at a level of debt that they will never be able to pay off. The Jubilee organizations are therefore continuing today in their new form, forging a prototype for the global relational civil society in its work of empowerment and poverty reduction.

¹⁴ From a statement issued at the launch of Jubilee/USA Network, a new coalition of faith-based and activist organizations to replace Jubilee 2000/USA at a three day meeting in Denver, Colorado February 16-18, 2001. Received by the author in an e-mail from a committee member.

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The case of Cross River, Nigeria, explored the workings of empowerment and civil society; that of indigenous Ecuador gave a rich look at destructive relationships between communities and competing interests; that of Jubilee 2000 showed how civil society is building global links between poor and wealthy communities to affect the dominant order. In the following, concluding chapter, I bring the focus onto our own communities of wealth and power, and ask, how can we be involved in the movement by which the poor and the marginalized are empowered by gaining access and participation in their own societies and in global society? How can we better recognize and act upon our relatedness by infusing our relationships to the global poor with justice and the ethics of mutuality? How can we concretely reduce poverty?