

nous communities and in the sense that it coercively plunders resources from Indigenous lands.” Despite the heaps of documentation provided in this volume that show the tar sands’ violation of Indigenous rights, there is an optimistic thread throughout the volume that accompanies the sobering reality of petro-colonialism.

For example, Clayton Thomas-Muller, the prominent environmental activist and member of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation, guides the reader toward what he calls “the Native rights-based strategic framework.” Building on his first-hand experience organizing in opposition to fossil fuel development, Thomas-Muller asserts, “there ha[s] not been a major environmental victory won in Canada in the last thirty years without First Nations at the helm asserting their Aboriginal rights and title.” This optimism—the belief that we can stop the tar sands with a broad Indigenous-led social movement—permeates the book, and is perhaps this book’s greatest gift. The book encourages us to develop solidarity between our various groups (e.g., between trade unions and environmentalists, and between anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist movements) and to ally ourselves with those nations, like the Unist’ot’en, who are moving “beyond token recognition [of their rights]” (McCreary, Chapter 14) such as that offered by the Canadian state, and are instead asserting their land title through direct action. It is this powerful through-line which stresses the importance of solidarity and anti-colonial alliances that, I think, makes this book the finest to date on the tar sands.

Hoping that this review of such an activist-oriented book might contain some of the usefulness of its subject, I have included below an abridged version of the book’s list of websites belonging to organizations battling the tar sands:

- Defenders of the Land  
[www.defendersoftheland.org](http://www.defendersoftheland.org)
- Healing Walk  
[www.healingwalk.org](http://www.healingwalk.org)
- Honor the Earth  
[www.honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org)

- Indigenous Environmental Network  
[www.ienearth.org](http://www.ienearth.org)
- Keepers of the Athabasca  
[www.keepersofthewater.ca](http://www.keepersofthewater.ca)
- MI CATS  
[www.michigancats.org](http://www.michigancats.org)
- NRDC Pipeline and Tanker Trouble  
[www.nrdc.org/international/pipelinetrouble.asp](http://www.nrdc.org/international/pipelinetrouble.asp)
- Oil Sands Truth  
[www.oilsandstruth.org](http://www.oilsandstruth.org)
- Pipe Up Against Enbridge  
[www.pipeupagainstenbridge.ca](http://www.pipeupagainstenbridge.ca)
- Rising Tide North America  
[www.risingtidenorthamerica.org](http://www.risingtidenorthamerica.org)
- Tar Sands Solutions Network  
[www.tarsandssolutions.org](http://www.tarsandssolutions.org)

- UK Tar Sands Network  
[www.no-tar-sands.org](http://www.no-tar-sands.org)
- Unist’ot’en Camp  
[www.unistotencamp.com](http://www.unistotencamp.com)
- Utah Tar Sands Resistance  
[www.tarsandsresist.org](http://www.tarsandsresist.org)
- Yinka Dene Alliance  
[www.yinkadene.ca](http://www.yinkadene.ca)

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## Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution.

*Edited by ANDREW BOYD and DAVE OSWALD MITCHELL.  
Between the Lines, 2014. \$25.00 CAD*

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### REVIEWED BY ROMANDA SIMPSON

Climate change. Systemic racism. Poverty and homelessness. What can society do to navigate these intense and challenging situations in a way that moves us towards the ultimate ideal of a just and healthy world? For those new to the ‘cause’, the answer may just be found in *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*, which sets out to identify “the core tactics, principles, and theoretical concepts that drive creative activism, providing analytical tools for changemakers to learn from their own successes and failures.”

*Beautiful Trouble* is formatted in a similar fashion to popular travel guidebooks, with side columns highlighting key points, case studies, and further insights. This easy-to-read layout makes it comfortably familiar and easy to navigate, offering bite-sized, accessible tidbits that are relevant and relatable to the fast-paced ‘I want information now’ generation of today. Readers can pick the book up, open to any page, and have an immediate takeaway. However, this means it’s not a great read front to back; it’s a slow digestion text that might best be used for reference or inspiration. Unfortunately, desiring to be hip and mod-

ern, the font selected for in-text sections is too light, making it distracting at best, or impossible to read at worst.

Acknowledging the tech-age, the clever editors have addressed the limitations of the traditional paperback book by creating a collaborative website where community organizers can add modules of their own. This not only keeps *Beautiful Trouble* relevant and updated, but ensures new ideas, principles, and lessons from activists on the ground can be shared, in recognition that our world and context is ever-changing.

At a time when we are facing what some people call the biggest crisis to ever face humankind, there is a need for a massive revolution to achieve social and environmental justice in our world. The broad range of tactics included in *Beautiful Trouble* ensures that any activist, from someone who would never want to be called an ‘activist,’ to someone willing to put their life on the line for justice, can find a place and suitable action to take in the struggle for social and environmental justice. The authors also found a reasonable balance between inspiring activists and caution-

ing about the very real consequences of actions.

The content of *Beautiful Trouble* is comprehensive, with adaptable concepts and principles woven together and demonstrated with extensive case studies. Each tactic is connected to relevant theories, principles, and case studies so that the reader can clearly see the interplay between them and draw connections. If readers want to delve further into components, insights, and resources for further reading are provided. While I enjoyed the overall layout of the book, I disagreed with the order in which the three primary sections were presented: Tactics, Principles, Theories. While tactics are fun and motivating to read, I would suggest that starting with principles or theories would have better laid a foundation.

As a compilation of numerous authors, who are all community activists, *Beautiful Trouble* treats the reader to

a multitude of voices and sectors, yet the editors do a great job of keeping a consistent tone throughout the book. Overall, *Beautiful Trouble* can offer insights to those new to social activism, or re-inspire those already in the trenches. Don't count on it as the be-all end-all, but it's worth having in any organizer's repertoire.

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the power of the people to self-govern? Can the action be defended according to democratic values of 'common decency' and 'common good'?

The book's title is drawn from a January 1968 speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. in which he stated, "a riot is the language of the unheard." In D'Arcy's view, militant protest is the attempt of marginalized people to gain a 'hearing.' This term carries both performative and legal implications. D'Arcy envisions 'natural law'—following King's "Law of God"—as a publicly negotiated practice, rather than the exclusive realm of government. This higher sense of 'natural law' suggests a greater moral authority; to disobey unjust laws, or laws that interfere with justice, is to be true to the 'natural law.' Taking instruction from King's principle that "we ought to be more devoted to justice than to order," D'Arcy argues that maintaining 'order' is worthwhile only when and if justice has been upheld. If order is unjust, the thinking follows, it should be opposed. If militant protest helps to advance grievances in the public realm, militancy can be seen as a "particularly rigorous form of fidelity" to the democratic ideal, not a rejection of it. In this sense, justice can be regarded as a discursive public process of contestation and deliberation rather than cloistered and absolute.

D'Arcy suggests that the historical importance of the riot outweighs its legal construction. The legal definition emphasizes crimes 'to person and property.' It was constructed to control crowds and discourage political and labour dissent through state violence. In D'Arcy's view, riots can be a temporary "exit" or "withdrawal from attributing authority to the legal order," through which there is hope that silenced voices will be harder to ignore. D'Arcy cites the March on Washington, Days of Rage, and Stonewall as examples of democratically significant riots that advanced the cause of justice where advocacy and debate was not enough.

In his discussion on the 1990 land defence at Kanehsatà:ke, D'Arcy gets to the heart of two of Canada's most pressing issues: environmental justice and racism. *Languages of the Unheard*

## Languages of the Unheard: Why Militant Protest is Good for Democracy.

By STEPHEN D'ARCY. *Between the Lines*, 2013. \$24.95 CAD

REVIEWED BY ERIKA HENNEBURY

When is a riot helpful to democracy? When is it dangerous? Drawing a line from civil disobedience to armed struggle, Stephen D'Arcy persuasively unpacks the historically and legally loaded concept of violence and its role in militant protest.

D'Arcy, an activist and political philosopher, specializes in normative democratic theory. In *Languages of the Unheard*, D'Arcy develops a normative theory of "what militancy is like when it is done well." His conceptualization of 'autonomous democracy' is a radical, anti-capitalist variation on deliberative democracy that preferences 'voice' over 'vote' and the capacity to constructively air grievances in the public realm. D'Arcy expands upon the shared political philosophical territory of Marx and Bakunin in developing the primacy of 'agency' or 'self-emancipation' in social movements. He advances the argument

that agency is not only the means, but also the end of the struggle for democracy.

Dismissing the commonly held belief that violence is morally unjustifiable in democratic protest, D'Arcy engages the reader with thought experiments presenting scenarios of acceptable force, such as defending a child from harm. The current discourse on protest movements against anti-Black police violence (e.g. Baltimore) exemplifies the questionable assertion that violent protest is never justifiable. D'Arcy rejects the current Western cultural fixation with pacifism, offering instead a set of four principles that can be used to assess a choice of forceful militant action against a 'democratic standard': Does violence create new opportunities to resolve grievances? Do those directly affected have the agency to respond/react meaningfully? Does the action enhance