



The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution

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Is protest broken? Micah White, co-creator of Occupy Wall Street, thinks so. Disruptive tactics have failed to halt the rise of Donald Trump in the upcoming US presidential election. Movements ranging from Black Lives Matter to environmentalism are leaving activists frustrated. Meanwhile, recent years have witnessed the largest protests in human history. Yet these mass mobilizations no longer change society. Now activism is at a crossroads: innovation or irrelevance.

In *The End of Protest* Micah White heralds the future of activism. Drawing on his unique experience with Occupy Wall Street, a contagious protest that spread to eighty-two countries, White articulates a unified theory of revolution and eight principles of tactical innovation that are destined to catalyze the next generation of social movements.

Despite global challenges—catastrophic climate change, economic collapse and the decline of democracy—White finds reason for optimism: the end of protest inaugurates a new era of social change. On the horizon are increasingly sophisticated movements that will emerge in a bid to challenge elections, govern cities and reorient the way we live. Activists will reshape society by forming a global political party capable of winning elections worldwide.

In this provocative playbook, White offers three bold, revolutionary scenarios for harnessing the creativity of people from across the political spectrum. He also shows how social movements are created and how they spread, how materialism limits contemporary activism, and why we must re-conceive protest in timelines of centuries, not days.

Rigorous, original and compelling, *The End of Protest* is an exhilarating vision of an all-encompassing revolution of revolution.

The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution Details

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From Reader Review The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution for online ebook

Billie Pritchett says

The End of Protest is authored by Micah White, one of the founders of the historic Occupy Movement. One of the high marks of this book is the critique of the general drive toward protest that most contemporary activists engage in. White is absolutely correct that try as ordinary people might, the United States government is largely non-responsive to the protests of average people. This means, therefore, that new tactics and strategies are in order so that the United States could be more democratic, more reflective of the desires of ordinary citizens. It is this latter part that I find wanting.

Part of the problem is a point that White makes, namely that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy that people can use to achieve their social, political, and economic ends. As White writes, social movements might need to resort to old tactics and strategies or generate new ones altogether. This realism belies the subtitle of the book: "a new playbook for revolution." I don't think it is. White's own confession to not having any definite plans for future tactics and strategies is a testament to the fact that this is no playbook.

Another problem as I see it is the theory advocated in the book. Minimally, I agree with White that any revolution requires more than a concern with material changes. It requires changes of heart, spiritual changes, creating old systems within new ones, and reforming oneself as much as advocating external reform. But beyond this, not much more is to be said. We do not need more theory that would go beyond what the ordinary person could reason to.

Nevertheless, I am grateful for having read the book, and I hope that at the very least the book will help foster a desire for deep personal and institutional change.

Bruce Reiter says

Written by one of the promoters of Occupy Wall Street. The book gives the reader an opportunity to determine the the type of activist ideology the individual portrays. Protest must continue to evolve to present the message. Protests are living entities that succeed and fail regularly . Revolutions happen only occasionally and everybody has to be pretty pissed off for one to succeed. Protests must mutate in order to survive. The Seattle May Day of 2017 demonstrates why street tactics must continue to evolve. Well worth the read and it sent me to the dictionary several times.I am a structuralist because of age and education. Find out who and what you are and what you are willing to risk.

Leanne says

It's difficult to pinpoint the worst thing about this book, since there are so many things competing for the title. The author basically spirals into madness after the first 100 pages.

If you don't consider theurgy (the action of requesting divine intervention) a valid type of activism, prepare yourself: the author spends a lot of time peppering the text with references to divinely-inspired revolutions. If you find the philosophical and moral implications of that problematic (e.g. we could all be praying for

mutually-opposed goals, what then?) and the scenario itself improbable (to be kind), this is not for you.

There are many smaller pieces of nonsense thrown in, quotes like “I can feel that women are on the brink of rising up against a male culture that has been fatally poisoned by pornography and video games.” Video games? Really? Or: “I see the return of slavery on a global scale after industrial scientists demonstrate that human labour is the most sustainable source of energy.” Or: “Perhaps three hundred years from now a leader will be swayed to embrace our people’s movement by a long-prophesied event – an earthquake – that strikes on her inauguration day.” Many of the most random statements, like the one about a global return to slavery, are mere asides with very little given in the way of explanation. Even when he’s actually saying something reasonable, White takes too many assumptions for granted; he doesn’t give his statements context or adequately explain them.

There are some interesting bits in here, references to specific activist activities that I didn’t know about before (like the Rolling Jubilee) and lots of material about the Occupy movement. And the book is pretty readable, despite being full of nonsense. If you are someone who is amused by nonsense and only expects a few useful tidbits from this book – go ahead. But don’t buy it, borrow it from the library.

Kevan says

I pre-ordered this book, having been following the author online for the better part of a year. I read it in a single day. It was stunning.

The author is one of the co-founders of the Occupy movement, and in this book, he brings his incredible grasp of history, philosophy and activism to bear in order to unpack the past, present and future of social revolution. I loved hearing his retellings of historical revolutions, and his visions for revolution to come. In the final few pages, as he prophesies of his personal vision for a changed world and summons future revolutionaries, I literally had tears rolling down my cheeks. There is a better world out there that is possible, and this careful study and reflection on what could unfold through a compassionate, global, people's revolution is an incredible contribution to that movement.

Pia Mogollon says

The most pressing topic today, how do we proceed as agents for change in this day and age of drone technology and a seemingly mounting disregard for human rights and human life in general. Micah White gives a brilliant account of the history of protest and struggle and a critical thinkers guide as to how to address the mounting injustices society is throwing at us. The gist of which reminds me of the Urban Dictionaries definition of insanity: "The definition of insanity, is, doing the exact same fucking thing over and over again, expecting shit to change. That. Is. Crazy." I think this is a book, I will want to re-read and a topic that I will want to hear more and more about. I am not entirely clear what steps, White is advocating to take as an activist, but possibly he isn't either, still he presents some intriguing ideas.

rabble.ca says

<http://rabble.ca/books/reviews/2016/0...>

Review by Dru Oja Jay

Don't protest the same way twice. If there's a single message to be gleaned from Occupy Wall Street co-initiator Micah White's idea-packed polemic against conventional protest, *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*, that's probably it.

Luckily, the author is not short on ideas for how activists can mix things up as we attempt to change the world.

White, who mostly watched Occupy Wall Street (which he initiated with Adbusters editor Kalle Lasn) from his desk in San Francisco, is an ideas person. He draws many lessons from the Occupy experience, of which the main one is the importance of not getting attached to a tactic that works.

Instead, he argues, we need to anticipate that any given tactic will have a limited shelf life -- for example, occupying public spaces and setting up prefigurative democratic structures as a launchpad for protests.

Read more here: <http://rabble.ca/books/reviews/2016/0...>

Brandon Will says

Sure he's riding off the rails a bit at times but I think that's what happens when you're a high-speed train of thought that's taking a wide span of past and future into account with its premise about our very precarious present.

This book is a treasure for anyone interested in social movements, and accessible for anyone new to them or skeptical. I think it'll be changing and sparking many conversations in the near future.

Rami Shamir says

Micah White's "*The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*" is easily one of the most important books of the decade. Contemporaries, who after a 40-year-stasis are feeling the flux of our current historical and political shift, should look to this book for its steadying and sobering effects. Whether or not you'll agree with the author's overall thesis, you will be comforted by your positioning within the ongoing saga of humanity: the seismic cultural and political shifts that are now happening in the world are not new—your grandparents, theirs, and theirs, have all borne witness to something similar.

If you invest in one book this year, I would make it "*The End of Protest*." It's the enchiridion of contemporary global protest; a sort of encyclopedic reference to contemporary global turmoil, sprinkled with the soothing effects of Biblical parable.

Carlos says

Micah writes strongly with the confidence only garnered from having experienced protest first hand. The innovative ideas in this book might thoughtfully inspire the new generation of activists and citizens whom want to contribute to a world that badly needs healing. A pleasure to read.

Katherine says

Y'all, this is a generous score, but as a previous reviewer noted, this is a difficult book to score numerically because parts of it are brilliant while the majority of it is a letdown. Here and there are flourishes of beautiful writing and keen insight, but for the most part the ideas are half-baked and unsatisfying. The author grapples with complex, philosophical ideas, which would be great if they were explored in ways that led to new insights. Instead, the exploration was pedantic yet inconclusive. The book abounded with critiques yet offered only vague, poorly-defined solutions. I think the author has unique experiences and ideas to bring to the table but wrote this book before he knew exactly what he wanted to say (or how to say it).

Melissa Luna says

One of the major gems I received from this book was the ability to conceptualize that activism can be evaluated along a subjective/objective and spiritual/material continuum that results in four main branches: Subjectivism (changing oneself changes the world), Theurgism (Magic, rituals, prayer for Divine intervention), Voluntarism (dominant exoteric branch of activism), and Structuralism (forces and structures outside of human control cause revolutions, specific tactics unimportant). This mental framework was very life affirming for me as an activist. My engagement in the revolution continues to evolve.

Sol says

Very, very good. Mostly practical and useful information, and a compelling vision for an egalitarian future. Sometimes Micah resorts to some kind of religious fervor, but it can be forgiven due to the sheer force of thought output by the rest of this title! I recommend anyone interested in questioning our world!

Shawn Birss says

This book was so disappointing. I was taken in by the many names who offered promising sounding book blurbs, and intrigued by Micah White's claim that he had "co-created" Occupy Wall Street, though I had personally participated in the movement and still never heard of him.

(That Roseanne Barr's promotion of the book is so prominently used on the jacket, and so profusely thanked in the credits, is probably a misstep that White now regrets, since she has come out as a public supporter of Donald Trump. Oops.)

The title, endorsements, and Table of Contents made me hopeful for a 21st Century Rules for Radicals (an important book by Saul Alinsky about community organizing still read by activists today). Instead, I was wearied by an introduction and lengthy first five chapters that had little more to say other than to promote the author's activist credentials and describe every tiny detail of his involvement in the Occupy movement. In short, White has indeed been involved in activism since his teens, and has had a lot of good success with certain actions and movements with which he has been involved. However, his list of accomplishments is much shorter than many activists that I know personally, and those friends of mine would blush and hide

should they ever be lauded publicly as highly as White praises himself. Actually, more than that, most activists I know who have been at least as involved in actions equally "impressive" or "successful" to White's would actually consider such individual credit harmful to the movement. No true movement is made from or sustained by an individual, and to tell the false story that any people's movement has individual heroes does not enable activism, but rather discourages it. We can't all be rock stars, and we can't sustain a movement with figureheads.

As for White's involvement in Occupy, he was part of some of the actions that were a catalyst to its inception. He wrote some articles in Adbusters magazine - a Canadian activist magazine based in Vancouver for which he was co-editor at the time - that suggested some of the actions that became Occupy. He helped successfully launch a Twitter hashtag that helped create a hub for movement communication. He wrote a few articles during the occupation that were of some influence to the movement, but to what degree we cannot know, as articles, zines, and manifestos were being daily written and disseminated during this time without the help of a nationally distributed magazine. Really, though we all had an idea that Adbusters had something to do with our origins, within days they had already become one of many voices. This was the strength of Occupy at its best - we were all co-creators. Furthermore, by elevating his involvement in these first moments just before the movement began, White ignores all of the years of work done by the organizers that already lived in New York and had been preparing for all manner of revolutionary action long before his magazine brought the old idea of a new occupation to a park in New York. The idea of specifically targeting Wall Street in this way wasn't even new. Michael Moore had suggested something similar at the end of his most recent documentary.

Basically, White uses a lot of words over five chapters to describe his life and influence as an activist as pretty much the same as any activist who has done hard work organizing for about a decade. This may impress a lot of his more naive readers, maybe enough to sell books, but to me the whole thing just reeked of empty self promotion.

Chapter Six - The Point of Protest - was one of three good ones in the book. If you can get the book at your library, it isn't a bad read. It could have been more helpful as a blog post on its own, however. It didn't need the fifty pages of convincing us we were about to be told something profound that preceded it.

Chapter Seven is the book's thesis. It has some good ideas in it, some good history, and gives a good idea of pretty much what the entire book is about. If you've read this chapter, you've pretty much read the book. I suspect that the book may have started with this chapter and then expanded outward, and also suspect that the extra padding on either side - especially the six chapters before - were partially created to help prepare the reader for, and then insulate the reader from, the absolute insanity contained within. This is the chapter where the author first indicates to the reader how invested he is in the idea of theurgism, activism that actively seeks the will and action of divine powers. If this idea frustrates or surprises you, then frustrated and surprised you will be by this book, because it permeates everything White says after surprising us with it 100 pages deep.

To be clear, I think that promoting diversity of tactics, and diversity of spiritual belief and non-belief in activist community is a very good idea. As a former Christian pastor who has been involved in leftist organizing for over a decade with First Nations Canadians who expressed their spirituality, with Muslim Palestinian Solidarity Activists who expressed theirs, and with atheist union organizers, I think it is extremely important for us to recognize that people come to leftist movements from all different backgrounds. Furthermore, any true movement of the people is going to bring all of the beautiful and messy differences with the myriad individuals that form that movement. To expect humanity to conform to a single expression before gathering together for a united goal is foolish, exclusionary, and arrogant.

However, White is not proposing a diverse and living expression of human spirituality that respects different traditions. Instead, in Chapter Seven, he tells the reader that a truly "mature" activist who has "ascended" to

the "highest level" is one that recognizes and seeks the divine will, and expects divine action. White has no room for unbelievers among his most elite of the enlightened lefties.

Also, I don't have a problem with White having a spirituality, or religious belief, generally speaking. However, what he proposes in this book is so vague, so theologically sloppy, that to suggest that it is any example of how a "mature activist" who has achieved the "highest level" believes is incredibly irresponsible. If I were to make a guess at how White identifies religiously from this book, I would suggest that he might be Christian. Of all the traditions he speaks of in the book, it is Christianity which he speaks about the most clearly, the most often, and with the greatest depth. Meanwhile, the rest of his spirituality, his religious quotations, and his religious-historical examples are like a grab-bag of hip, new-agey samples from a range of (mostly eastern) traditions and voices, without showing he has much depth of knowledge beyond the pieces he shares. The most notable example is his description of the ensō, a hand-drawn circle that appears on the cover. This he borrows from the Zen tradition. His use of the image is incredibly clunky and broad, and feels inappropriately wedged into his text for his own uses in ways that minimize the full meaning of the image and practice. Furthermore, his use of it in the book is intimately tied to his dualistic and moralistic proclamation that the mature activist must also be a believer in the divine. Whatever his understanding of the ensō, Christianity, or any other tradition of which he makes mention, each is used for his own end, not necessarily with respect to the belief about these symbols by the religious faithful for which they have real meaning. I would have more respect for White's position if he were to give a solid argument for his belief in a specific theology, and all the consequences of following its ancient rituals, than this hippy co-optation in this book.

From here, the book just continues to tumble into weirdness. Not much new is said before Chapter Fourteen. White basically repeats himself over and over again with self-promotion, examples of how broken modern protest is, and why his "unified theory" (the theory that includes expecting divine intervention) is so essential. It's all written in a very elevated prose, almost prophetic, and occasionally becomes so strange as to force one to read twice. It is in this section of the book that he suggests that perhaps a divine earthquake will one day spark a people's revolution in 300 years, that global slavery is a likely response by the powers-that-be to the consequences of climate change, that future activists will organize by real-time algorithms predicting police patterns communicated to them via smart glasses (no word as to whether they will also be vaping legalized marijuana), we will see a rise of sophisticated AI Protest Bots that will help recruit new members to the People's Revolution, and that women will soon "wake up" and take positions of power (in an unprecedented 50-50 ratio of gender power with men), taking back global power from men who have been poisoned by "pornography and video games".

Even if that all sounds intriguing, I still recommend skipping it. Not worth it.

Chapter Fourteen, the Eight Principles of Revolution, is a great read. Had White expanded this one chapter into an eight or sixteen chapter book, it would have been a very valuable book, worth reading. As it is, it is, like Chapter Six, like a really good blog entry or single article. Still, it's worth getting the book from the library or an unfortunate friend who bought it to consider some of what White has to say here.

After White's eight principles, the book rises to a religious fever pitch, praying for a miracle (Chapter Fifteen), giving a literal prophecy (Chapter Sixteen), delivered as from the voice of an activist Messiah, and ending with a letter to future generations who find the book amid the rubble of a collapsed world to endure beyond us.

That was exhausting.

My final thought is this: as strange and ridiculous and head scratching as this book may be, I would not go so far as to discount Micah White as an activist. Yes, this book strikes me as narcissistic, oddly esoteric, and even offensive at times. However, I would not be at all surprised to find that the psychological makeup and

personal graces of many impactful activists and revolutionaries may often be those exact things. I may not agree with a lot of this book. I may find its tone grating. I may not even like Micah White as a person. But I do believe, at the end of this book, that he is still a comrade, and we are on the same side. So, I wish for him the best in the struggle, and every success as he grows.

To readers of this book who are new to organized activism - there are more voices than this one, and a rich history of action and struggle beyond the pages of this book, and far, far beyond the tactics and philosophy of Occupy. If you find this book inspiring, then I am glad. Please, find some like minded people around you with experience and learn from them. White's on a journey, so are they, and we all have a lot to learn. Whether White's future of smart glasses wearing AI Robot recruited activists rising up at the call of a prophesied earthquake is yet to be seen. But White's insistence that the people's revolution is real, is growing, and will succeed is something with which I absolutely agree. Let's tell the story of that revolution together.

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To readers interested in this book, I recommend Saul Alinsky's Rules For Radicals and/or We Are Many, published by AK Press.

Rossdavidh says

This is a difficult book to rate on a 1 to 5 star scale. There are parts of it which are not only excellent, but surprisingly excellent, and that seems to call for a high rating. There are also parts of it which are, for me, a bit of a letdown, especially once you let the excellent parts get your hopes up a bit. Overall, it rates a solid 3 stars, which from me is pretty good. But let me tell you what that really means.

First of all, the basic premise is contained in the title. It is the author's contention that at least since the 2003 anti-war protests, if not before, it has been apparent that turning out on the street, even in the millions, is no longer an effective strategy. If the size of the protests in 2003 are not sufficient to prevent George W. Bush from deciding to send the U.S. military machine into Iraq, then it is not credible that there is a case when it will work in a modern democracy. The number of people protesting was larger than most previous protests, including those in the 1960's (for racial equality before the law) that most people remember as the ideal of civil disobedience and non-violent protest. The demands of the 2003 protests were specific, easily deliverable by the government if they chose to, hard for them to pretend to do without really doing it, and in many other ways the ideal choice for a mass protest. There are many other issues which are difficult for the government to address even if they wanted to, and easy to fake concern for without really doing anything; if mass protest cannot prevent the war in Iraq it cannot deliver women's pay equity or end racism or end poverty, etc.

This, is a Hard Truth. There are probably some progressives who Micah White loses right with the opening premise. The archetype of the popular protest leading to victory in the struggle for justice, is such a strong one in the progressive imagination, that to admit that this tactic no longer works might seem tantamount to apostasy. For me, though, this is no more than stating what has been plainly obvious for decades. The marches led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and others during the 1960's were brilliant and admirable successes, but it is hard to think of many others since then that have brought about measurable and meaningful change (in a democracy). It is high time that someone points this out in a way that makes the Left take notice.

Micah White does not give the impression of being one who is comfortable with the idea of violence, but he does know how to use military metaphors when they are appropriate. His point here is that using the same tactic after your opponent has adapted to it, is not a path to victory. The problem, he says, in the anti-

globalization protests of 2000, or the anti-Iraq war protests of 2003, or the Occupy Wall Street protests he was associated with a few years back, was not that the cause wasn't right, or the protesters were not trying hard enough, but rather that the protest was eventually predictable. There were initial, tactical victories early on in each case, but once the protest became large, it became also set in its path and its actions. White proposes a number of guidelines for revolution, and one of them is that no tactic should be used longer than a lunar month. Longer than this, and the Establishment will of course adapt.

So far, so good, and I'm with him. I'm on board with his assertion that we should look at rural bases for resistance to the Status Quo, as he rightly points out that a lot of historical successful revolutions spent literal periods in the wilderness, or at least the countryside, since the city is inherently more easily controlled.

He has clearly been doing a lot of serious thinking about the topic of revolution, and has looked well beyond the immediate modern progressive American bubble. He introduces us to William Gamson, who compiled a database of all revolutions between 1800 and 1945, and then looked for what traits were more common of successful ones than unsuccessful ones. He takes us through a bit of the history of the Ghost Dance movement of Native Americans in the late 1800's, the progression of early Christianity from repressed cult to official religion of the Roman Empire, and the Nika Revolt in Constantinople.

But, throughout the book, I was struck again and again by how little was said about what the Revolution he wants, is to be for. He is clearly quite excited about the idea, but he also seems to be quite excited about the idea of One World Democracy. So what about after we get a single, world-wide government, and then it does something that people in one part of the world don't want to go along with? He is quite insightful in his analysis of how Lenin and Trotsky turned on many of the early supporters of the Russian Revolution, and rightly condemns their hypocrisy in using force to suppress any opposition. He doesn't seem to have thought through the likelihood of such a scenario repeating, should he ever get what he says he wants.

Of course, one could say in his defense that this is just a book on revolution, not on what comes after it, and every book has to limit its scope somehow. But it seems like a critical problem with his philosophy, since every revolution needs to be in favor of something, as well as opposed to something. Otherwise, it will end up like the French or Russian Revolutions, and reinstitute a new version of what it overthrew. It's not like there will be a lot of time after a successful revolution, to work out how society should order its affairs.

Early in the book, he mentions one tactic of the police to use against the Occupy Wall Street movement was to tell any homeless person they were evicting from anywhere else in New York City, to go to the Occupy encampment. This resulted in a larger and larger percentage of drunk and/or mentally ill people, who tended to make the activists who were sober and/or sane uncomfortable staying there. Also, he acknowledges that there may have been some issues with sexual assault later on in the encampment's life. Also, he points out in several places that the Establishment is not above sending agents provocateur to encourage them to more and more extreme actions, in order to provide an excuse for a violent crackdown. All of these point to the fact that there are reasons we have rules of behavior, and police forces to enforce them, and any large-scale association of people is going to have to deal with those issues. If you're not in favor of the current setup, well I'm with you man, but you'd better have a plan ready for how to do it differently that involves dealing with issues like these.

To his credit, he does mention going to speak with members of the 5M movement in Italy, and points out that they had numerous tactical differences from the Occupy movement. These included a process for vetting new members, to keep out anyone who will bring discredit on the movement or undermine them from the inside. It would have been good to hear more about what he learned about 5M, since thus far they seem to have a lot more staying power and success than Occupy.

Mostly, though, what put me off at times was White's belief that Revolutions happen when a miracle intercedes to make them succeed. Now I grant that religion can be a powerful revolutionary force, in China

or Japan or Arabia or the British Isles or anywhere else. I'll even grant that beyond good strategy and passionate activists, you also need a bit of plain old luck to overthrow the existing order. I don't think that the best way to describe "plain old luck" is "miracle" (and he uses the word not once, in a flight of linguistic fancy, but several times, and he makes it clear that he really means it). I also believe in physical laws, even ones to describe human society (mostly not discovered yet), and I don't think divine intervention causes exceptions to those laws.

If you can get past these problems, though, and I admit they are big ones, there's a lot of food for thought in White's book, and a lot of good points about the progressive status quo. I don't know how the American Left will receive White's thesis, if they notice it at all. The truest test of a book for me, though, is whether or not it helps me to think more clearly or more deeply about a topic or field than I did before. White's book is eminently readable, on a highly relevant topic, and makes a number of good points, in addition to introducing me to a lot of history and research I wasn't previously aware of. It is the sort of book that makes you just a bit smarter for having read it.

Michaela says

While I encountered many of the difficulties others have noted with this book's style and organization, I still found it valuable. It was the first I learned of some strategies and, indeed, recent hopeful events (like the rise of the Five Star Movement in Europe). White attempts to address a nebulous topic and envision a future where meaningful protest is still possible. He gave me, and may give others, a much-needed dose of optimism right now.
