

Towards strategic rioting?

Brian Martin¹

Benjamin Case (2021) argues that the framework of strategic nonviolence is limited by its assumption that violent protest necessarily demobilises movements, and that rioting can be empowering for participants. However, Case's statistical analysis of US riots and peaceful demonstrations may not be a comparison of rioting and nonviolent action because it is questionable whether, in the US, peaceful demonstrations should be classified as methods of nonviolent action. Rioting can be empowering, but there is also considerable evidence that participation in nonviolent action can be empowering. Much research remains to be done to determine whether rioting can be a leading or major part of strategic action for social change. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2022 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

KEYWORDS: Violence, Nonviolence, Social Movements, Rioting.

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Case in "Molotov cocktails to mass marches" (2021) argues that, in the US, riots are beneficial for social movements in two ways. First, they mobilise greater support, including promoting more nonviolent activism. Second, they are emotionally invigorating for participants.

My aim here is to examine Case's arguments with an eye for insights about nonviolent action. Case's analysis raises questions about what

¹ **Brian Martin**, Ph.D., is emeritus professor of social sciences at the University of Wollongong, Australia. He is the author of 21 books and hundreds of articles on nonviolence, dissent, scientific controversies, education, tactics against injustice, and other topics. Address correspondence to: Brian Martin, e-mail: bmartin@uow.edu.au.

Acknowledgements: I thank Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Andrew Rigby and Tom Weber for valuable comments.