

# WE'LL DO IT AGAIN

When injustice  
is the law,  
civil disobedience  
is a right

# JORDI CUIXART

With a Prologue by Jamila Raqib



# We'll Do It Again

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Dear Reader,

Life is meaningless, you give meaning to life. And after 850 days locked in a cell I've learned that even in prison you can somehow find happiness, and fighting for freedom is a privilege.

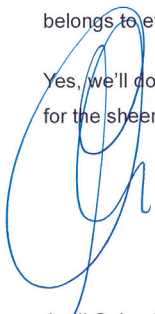
My name is Jordi Cuixart and I am a Catalan political prisoner in Spain. The Supreme Court sentenced me to nine years for leading a peaceful demonstration and urging participation in a referendum, i.e. for exercising the right to protest and freedom of expression as Amnesty International has made clear.

Being in prison has only strengthened my democratic convictions. I haven't been aiming to get out of prison fast but, more than anything else, to leave with dignity. And, in reality, I am in prison for being the president of Òmnium Cultural, one of the largest civil society organisations in Europe with 185,000 members.

In these dark days, when our planet is crumbling from the climate emergency, and thousands drown in the Mediterranean seeking better lives, while hate speech spreads and strengthens, and women are still fighting for equality, we must never forget our responsibility to defend human rights. We can't afford despair. Let's leave pessimism for better times. Prison has given me an opportunity to fully understand the real power of culture, and to love all that we have as human beings.

*We'll Do It Again* aims to be a cry for hope, to clamour against resignation and frustration, a call for nonviolent action and freedom, but far from giving lessons or establishing dogmas. It is a tribute to all those who struggle for a world that truly belongs to everyone.

Yes, we'll do it again, we'll exercise those human rights that led to my imprisonment, for the sheer love of life.



Best regards

Jordi Cuixart  
President of Òmnium Cultural

Udeleres prison, February 2020

# Prologue

## Jamila Raqib

**Executive director of the Albert Einstein Institute in the United States which, founded by Gene Sharp in 1983, promotes the study and use of nonviolence.**

In the midst of enormous political challenges faced by communities around the world, there are grounds for realistic hope. Nonviolent resistance movements are growing in strength and experience—carrying out successful struggles for human rights, women’s rights, against climate change and protecting civil liberties from creeping authoritarianism.

Nonviolent struggle has a long and rich history. Since the plebian withdrawal of Rome in 494 BC (one of the earliest cases of nonviolent struggle), there have been more than a thousand recorded cases, across cultures and religions, when people have chosen to fight, not with violence, but with noncooperation and defiance. The political theorist Gene Sharp, with whom I worked for 16 years, studied these cases in order to distill lessons that could be useful to people conducting struggles. Thanks to his work, we now understand that **nonviolent action isn’t just a rejection of violence. It is a field of study and practice that has dynamics, methods, skills, and requirements for effectiveness. There is a system to**

**making social and political change, one that has been distilled from what brave people have been doing for thousands of years.**

Using nonviolent struggle, people can rise up and fight successfully for the kind of society and political system that they want. Through nonviolent action, and the popular empowerment on which its use depends, previously vulnerable people can strengthen the democratic fiber of a society, contribute to political stability, and foster an active, engaged citizenry. As the Indian sociologist, Krishnalal Shridharani states, “the tyrant has the power to inflict only that which we lack the strength to resist.” Knowledge of both the potential and operation of nonviolent action needs to be diffused as widely as possible among populations in order to empower and enable people to both defend and protect their freedoms, and help them fight for needed change.

When the U.S. Civil Rights Movement was successful in ending racial segregation, some people said that the time was ripe for change. But it is not because those conditions magically materialized people had to create them. They took deliberate efforts to plan, train, and calculate a course of action that would make their success possible.

At the root of nonviolent struggle is an understanding of power, the idea that each of us, whether we live in a dictatorship or democracy, holds enormous power though our own actions what we do or what we refuse to

do. It is the capacity and willingness to refuse to cooperate with injustice even when that refusal carries enormous costs. When that is done with careful planning, in accordance with a wise strategy together with other people in your society and allies outside of it, it becomes a powerful tool.

Gandhi said that the refusal to cooperate with injustice is the best way to defeat it. Defiance of oppressive laws can play a role in challenging them and reshaping them. We must not forget that when breakdowns of democracy have been prevented, it's been because ordinary people have acted courageously and powerfully.

Democratic societies must value and support people's nonviolent dissent and understand that this is not a threat to democratic systems, but actually helps to maintain them. Conflict is a necessary feature in a democratic system that allows for diversity of thought, freedom of expression and assembly. But what is needed is not to avoid conflict, which is sometimes necessary and often inevitable, but to substitute violence as a means of achieving political objectives with powerful nonviolent alternatives.

We're witnessing a resurgence of political engagement around the world as people are increasingly realizing that they have a role in defending the democratic values and institutions that they see as under threat. Albert Einstein said that our rights are only secure if every single citizen recognizes their duty to do their share. In

correspondence with Gene Sharp, he expressed his belief that the “Gandhian method” of revolution without the use of violence offered humanity the best hope for bringing peace to the world.

In cases where nonviolent movements gain strength and support, they are rightly seen as threatening to the status quo. The criminalization and silencing of nonviolent resistance movements is evidence of their effectiveness, and the main reason that many of their opponents use legal and other means to suppress them. Even in Western democracies politicians have proposed laws to criminalize and increase penalties against various types of protest and disobedience. **At the root of this legislation is actually an insight an understanding of the power of defiance to disrupt the normal operation of society and the status quo. Opponents of civil resistance fear these means because they understand well that a mobilized citizenry, willing to act to defend their communities and their values, makes it difficult to carry out those abuses.**

Today, there is unprecedented attention to nonviolent struggle. People around the world are exploring the potential of nonviolent means as a realistic and powerful way to struggle for greater freedom. The knowledge that this technique exists, that it’s been used for centuries, not perfectly, but often with great effectiveness, by people who were not saints, or martyrs, but ordinary people is empowering.

Civil disobedience is not “anything goes”—it has a definition and framework—one that has been estab-

lished by political thinkers and practitioners going back to Aristotle, John Locke, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Albert Einstein, Habermas, John Rawls, and Gene Sharp, my colleague and mentor.

And even though its full potential has yet to be fully realised, nonviolent resistance has played a central role in our history, achieving some of the most important rights and freedoms we value. **The institutions that make up our democracy, the rights that we value, the very foundation of our societies itself were only possible because people at times decided to follow their conscience rather than established laws.**

Rosa Parks' well-known refusal to give her seat up to a white man and go to the back of the bus was just one act of civil disobedience in the Civil Rights movement that ultimately ended segregation in the United States. Labor unions engaged in sit-down strikes that eventually led to vast improvements such as the 40-hour work week, elimination of child labor, and improvements in health and safety of working conditions. These actions have been woven into our national narrative and are now largely viewed as having been extremely important for the defense of our nation and attainment of our democratic rights. **But at the time they were taken, they were not always celebrated. The people who committed them acted at great risk to themselves—they were vilified, attacked, prosecuted, and sometimes imprisoned as a result.**



And these are just a few examples our history is filled them. Many of these stories have been lost to our history, which has contributed to the perception that freedom democracy, and the rights we value were won because they were either handed to us by elites unilaterally out of the goodness of their hearts, or because they were won by people who fought for them through war and violence. The message is therefore clear: **we must not give up our own agency in favor of trusting our leaders to deliver to us the societies we want.**

For many people around the world, ‘business as usual’ is no longer an option. As we continue to see further democratic breakdown and crises everywhere, the debate about the role of civil disobedience will only intensify. **The future of our societies and political systems depends on how we answer that question—whether we decide that it is blind obedience that is best for the preservation of our democratic institutions and norms, or thoughtful questioning and, when necessary, disobedience and nonviolent action that is in the best interest of our democratic systems and societies.** As someone who has studied and promoted strategic nonviolent action in diverse conflict situations around the world, I’m very interested in how we as a global community view the role of civil disobedience in our societies.

**Political systems around the world, including democracies, are increasingly restricting the freedoms and rights of their citizens. In response, citi-**

**zens and institutions are mobilizing to defend their democratic rights and freedoms, understanding that those rights and freedoms are only as effective as our, the people's, capacity to defend them.** People are increasingly recognizing that democratic constitutions and procedures are ultimately only pieces of paper that are vulnerable to degradation. What's needed is an engaged citizenry that knows its rights, and has the willingness and knowledge of how to protect those rights from degradation and attack.

**Civil disobedience doesn't undermine democracy. As the scholar Howard Zinn wrote, it is absolutely essential to it.** Healthy societies and healthy systems can withstand civil disobedience that falls within this criterion. We must celebrate nonviolent action, and in doing that, we can have a real chance of creating the kind of society we envision, a society that values justice, equality, sustainability, and freedom.

While the Albert Einstein Institution remains politically neutral **we applaud the pro-independence activists of Catalonia for choosing a disciplined non-violent strategy.** In doing so they have chosen a means of struggle in which all members of society, the young and the old, the weak and strong can contribute to their cause. Not only will this approach avoid the tragedy of political violence which has blighted ordinary people in countries across the world, but it will ultimately prove to be more effective.

# From Prison

*Under a government which imprisons any unjustly,  
the true place for a just man is also a prison.*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I think that one is never prepared to go to prison. In fact, even today I'm surprised that getting out of it isn't my priority. But it isn't. And I can assure you that this isn't because of any desire for martyrdom or because prison's a good place to be.

I agree with what Nadya of Pussy Riot said: "Jail is not the worst place for a person who thinks." This is an admirable declaration and even more so when you know she's referring to a Russian prison.

I've been in prison for more than 600 days, accused of rebellion against the Spanish State.<sup>1</sup> I was imprisoned on 16 October 2017, together with the then-

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*1 The Spanish Constitution doesn't establish any official name for Spain, and uses the terms España (Spain), Estado español (Spanish State), and Nación española (Spanish Nation) throughout the document. In 1984, an ordinance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established that the denominations España (Spain) and Reino de España (Kingdom of Spain) are equally valid to designate Spain in international treaties. However, the author tends to refer to the Spanish State (l'Estat Espanyol in Catalan), which was the official name for Francoist Spain from 1936 to 1947 [translator's note].*

president of the Catalan National Assembly (ANC), Jordi Sánchez. I'm writing these lines shortly after our trial in the Supreme Court ended.

The Public Prosecutor accuses me of taking part in a “coup d'état” or, in other words, an armed uprising against the constituent power.

If it weren't for the spiral of repression deriving from it, we could say that the charge is laughable.

I wasn't immediately aware of what it means to be a political prisoner. The second time I appeared before the Supreme Court I had already been in Soto del Real prison for several months. My hopes of being released pending trial were scant, although it seemed that if we said what the judge wanted to hear we'd be set free. I recall that, weeping with shame, I told him what we had agreed with the lawyer.

Once I'd made my statement, I was left for many hours in a cell, or a tiny space which was smaller than a prison cell, alone, with no natural light, and a horrific sensation of dankness. It was cold and I felt dirty, beaten, demoralised... And, all of a sudden, I remembered a mantra a yoga teacher had given me many years earlier.

I started meditating. I don't know how long I did this but it paraded before me thousands of men and women who, throughout history, had struggled to defend democracy and freedom in circumstances

infinitely worse than my own. That day, which supposed to be a defeat, turned into the start of my personal victory.

To begin with, you have to assume that lineal time has disappeared from your life. This, at first, seems impossible to achieve but, as the days, weeks, and months go by, you understand it more. The present is the only thing you take pleasure in, and this is how life takes on a whole new dimension.

Second, you need to be clear about what you're fighting for, the reason why they jailed you and, above all, you need to know where the limits are. And, unfortunately, it's highly probable that these thoughts are the same as those which thousands of freedom fighters had before you.

It's at this point where you accept the fact that part of your destiny no longer belongs to you and the only thing you can do is to follow the dictates of your own conscience, the voice of conscience of which Gandhi spoke before the court that was trying him for the peasant uprising in Champaran. This is the most important law of our lives.

In my second week in Soto del Real, my partner Txell managed to get to me Henry David Thoreau's book of autobiographical adventures, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. From then on, all the rest has been a matter of always choosing the least frequented path.

I'm not an imprisoned politician but a political prisoner. And I want to denounce the fact that, in the Spanish State today, prison is still being used as an instrument for hounding and punishing political dissidence.

I'm not moaning about it. I want to use my imprisonment as a loudspeaker to condemn a state that criminalises the exercise of basic rights and that seeks to hobble and restrict inalienable human rights.

I am not the only political prisoner in Spanish jails and neither am I the only person being persecuted for exercising basic rights. This state has a long history of violating human rights, even since it became a democracy, as several sentences of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) testify.

The highest body in the Spanish judicial system has asked for a 214-year prison sentence for us Catalan political prisoners, for voting and because of a referendum.

Now, well into the twenty-first century, fighting for freedom might seem to be an anachronism although, the bottom line is that it's a privilege. I know that it's difficult to believe that someone can be happy in prison, but it wouldn't be right to deny it. Once the weakness of body, spirit, and mind is under control, the political prisoner can be freer than people walking around in the streets.

The cell means that you stop suffering because of the humdrum problems of others. It also allows you to have a different perspective for capturing future scenarios and reflecting on facts of the past, free from everyday obligations. Essentially, life *per se* makes no sense. You yourself have to give sense to life.

If I've learnt one thing in prison it's that, without civil disobedience, it would have been impossible to change and improve society.

"We are here, not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers", said the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst in 1908 after being accused in a political trial of disturbing the peace when championing the cause of women's voting rights.

More than a century later, on 1 October 2017, in this corner of the Mediterranean known as the Països Catalans (Catalan Countries), more than two million Catalans engaged in Europe's greatest exercise of civil disobedience in the last thirty years. It really was a point of no return. This is a social conquest of democrats who, whether they voted or not, clearly understand that rights are only defended by exercising them.

And 1 October was an exercise in dignity and hope. It must constitute the best stimulus for being better, of course but, also and especially, for being more decisive, and for remaining coherent in the shared challenges we have set ourselves.

The sovereignist movement can come out strengthened from this last clash with the state. We can turn a seemingly adverse situation into a great opportunity. It is our *kairos*. Repression and incarceration must reveal the injustice but, in no case, can they constrain our yearnings.

The political trial we have undergone is no historical incongruity. Forty years of dictatorship led to an anomalous, incomplete political transition. The unity of Spain can't override human rights. Hence, the construction of the Catalan Republic also becomes an opportunity of democratic radicalness for Spain as a whole.

Ours is no isolated case because the deterioration of democratic systems is alarming. There is no more global cause than the ultra-local one. And in this space-time in which we live, civil disobedience is not only legitimate but it becomes a universal civic duty.

As the widely admired Jamila Raqib stresses in her Prologue, there are hundreds of examples that attest to the fact that we mustn't forsake the project of changing unjust laws by means of nonviolent resistance.

Acting as if we were free also makes us a little freer every day. May we have courage and may we always keep moving forward!



# I Accuse

*We are not here to defend ourselves but  
to accuse the state.*

KARL LIEBKNECHT

The fortitude (and happiness) of political prisoners inescapably depends on the strengthening of their convictions. Núria Cadenas showed us that, “the important thing is not to let them put the prison inside you”. Before her, Gramsci emphasised that imprisonment is one more “episode in the political struggle that was being fought and that will continue to be fought” for a long time.

After fifty-two sessions of Democracy on Trial in the Supreme Court, the threat of a sentence of seventeen years won’t not make me repudiate anything I have done.

For a long time now, I haven’t been aiming to get out of prison fast but, more than anything else, to leave it with dignity. As I said in my final statement before the Supreme Court, at no point have I sought a reduced sentence, but I have reaffirmed my stance regarding every kind of exercise of the basic rights that are on

trial because they belong to a realm of concern that is both superior and personal, which is to say the voice of my own conscience, from a position of coherence and social, ethical, and political commitment.

Consequently, far from any kind of repentance, I declare that everything I did, I would do again, and I have therefore always accepted the consequences of my actions.

I am in prison for being the tenth president of Òmnium Cultural. Speaking in first person plural means taking responsibility for the collective dimension of my incarceration because I, together with my colleagues on the board of directors, represent the more than 170,000 members of Catalonia's main civic and cultural organisation, which was founded in 1961 at the height of the Franco dictatorship in order to defend Catalan culture and language as essential elements of cohesion. We were born to save words and today we are also struggling to save rights and freedoms.

In the Supreme Court we have insisted on the fact that we are very proud of the permanent mobilisation of Catalan society for the right to freely decide our political future.

We recognise perseverance as a collective virtue. As Salvatore Napoli wrote, "The faithful person perseveres. Only the person who perseveres has a sense of reality and is therefore in a position to cultivate reasonable hopes."

By means of the Òmnium Cultural campaign “Crida per la Democràcia” (Call for Democracy), we did everything possible to ensure maximum participation in the referendum on self-determination of 1 October. Those of us in favour of Catalan sovereignty have always moved heaven and earth to ensure that the demonstrations, from the autonomy protest of 10 July 2010 through to the present day, have been massive and peaceful.

The political trial of the president of Òmnium Cultural, of the former president of the Catalan National Assembly, Jordi Sánchez, the former president of the Catalan parliament, Carme Forcadell, Catalonia’s former vice-president, Oriol Junqueras, and eight former ministers of the Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia, Dolors Bassa, Meritxell Borràs, Quim Forn, Carles Mundó, Raül Romeva, Josep Rull, Jordi Turull, and Santi Vila, has been orchestrated as a means of putting an end to the sovereignist movement. It is a trial carried out with and driven by the aim of persecuting an ideological and political option that is totally legitimate, peaceful, and democratic.

This was so obviously a political trial that the right to self-determination was all-pervading in the Supreme Court chamber from the very first day.

And this is why, also from the very first day of the trial, our wish has not been to defend ourselves but to accuse the state. We have condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the abuse of basic civil and political rights which is affecting thousands of citizens.

The exile of President Carles Puigdemont, of the former ministers of the Catalan government, Meritxel Serret, Toni Comín, Lluís Puig, Clara Ponsatí, and of the former members of parliament Marta Rovira and Anna Gabriel, and also the charges against hundreds of people who have defended the right to self-determination, are all part of this collective cause.

Yet another example of this democratic aberration in twenty-first-century Europe is that the state prosecution, which comes under the jurisdiction of the Spanish Ministry of Justice, has openly been acting in concert with the far-right party Vox. In all the sessions of the trial we have had to put up with the fact that, going beyond a simple matter of courtesy, they have shamelessly been flaunting their complicity in the prosecution strategy.

The Supreme Court has thus become the best electoral platform for a once marginal, neo-fascist Franco-inspired political party which, taking advantage of the media coverage of the trial, has now gained entry to Spanish institutions in Andalusia and even the Spanish parliament. Our attempts to get them recused have always come up against the state whose public whitewashing of the situation is reprehensible and inconceivable in any country of democratic traditions.

Being confronted with the far right in the trial is also another way of facing the threat entailed by its worldwide resurgence. We are prisoners because we are

standing up for the rights and freedoms that fascism is persecuting all around the globe.

Most members of Òmnium Cultural are in favour of independence but, in particular, we uphold the right to self-determination as an inalienable right in our social and national reality.

In the Supreme Court, in the selfsame chamber where President Companys was tried in May 1935, the former court martials of the Franco dictatorship have now turned into trials held in a court of democratic exception where basic rights and democratic pluralism have been prosecuted as criminal by law-wielding judges who are militant in their support for the unity of Spain. For us this is a democratic battle, but in no way is it a legal one.

The authoritarian stance of the Chairman of the Chamber, Manuel Marchena, with his numerous unilateral decisions, far from trying to ensure a just trial, has ended up taking control through the front door of what the right-wing People's Party was trying to manage through the back door.

Our right of defence has been violated several times, as has been confirmed by the group of observers from the platform International Trial Watch. Some examples of this are the Supreme Court Chairman's exclamation of "Much better" when the lawyer Bernat Salellas ceded after the judge refused to allow him to ask prosecution witnesses uncomfortable questions, or when Marchena also went to the extreme of scolding witnesses like the philosopher

Marina Garcés who was not permitted to testify about her experiences on 1 October. Yet, some of the 200 Civil Guard and National Police testifying for the prosecution were allowed to give full vent to their feelings and emotions, without sparing any details about the “horror” of seeing the “hate-filled faces” of voters on 1 October.

With this trial, the regime of ’78 has used strong-arm tactics in its attempt at an orchestrated show of strength against the sovereignist movement which, however, has been able to turn the trial into an exercise of emancipation, maturity, and humaneness. Today we are more aware of our limits, our weaknesses, and our strengths, and more aware, too, of what the regime is capable of doing in order to safeguard its privileges.

The positions of Amnesty International, World Organisation Against Torture, PEN International, and Front Line Defenders had already shown, even before the strongly worded United Nations resolution calling for our immediate release, that the decline in democratic freedoms in the Spanish State cannot be considered an internal affair.

We take as our own the words of Hannah Arendt who was referring to the United States: “To think of disobedient minorities as rebels and traitors is against the letter and spirit of a Constitution whose framers were especially sensitive to the dangers of unbridled majority rule.”

Persecuting people who question laws means going against the spirit of any democratic constitution,

since protection of expression of dissent and minority rights is a basic constitutional principle of any democratic system.

Yes, I accuse the State of applying the criminal law of the enemy, complete with police violence and instruments of the sewers of the State *well-honed* by practising public prosecutors. The *lawfare* that was denounced when waged against the former president Lula da Silva in Brazil is now being resorted to in the south of Europe, where the legal system is being used to eliminate from the public sphere social and political activists of a nonviolent democratic movement that is supported by hundreds of thousands of citizens.

European society cannot tolerate, not even for one more minute, the institutional cynicism of recognising the existence of political prisoners in Russia while flagrant violations of human rights are being condoned in Hungary, Poland, and Spain. Indeed, the European Parliament, which is precluding its own elected members from carrying out their duties,<sup>2</sup> awarded last year's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Oleg Sentsov, the Ukrainian filmmaker who was imprisoned by Putin.

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2. Carles Puigdemont, Catalonia's former president who is now in exile, and his former deputy Oriol Junqueras, who is in prison, were elected to the European parliament in May 2019 but they have been unable to take their seats owing to obstruction by Madrid and the parliament itself [translator's note].

Being aware of the dimension and scope of this injustice must be the best stimulus for reversing it. Repression is a psychological siege that must be overcome every day at both individual and collective levels.

They have sought to restrict, limit, and even destroy our legitimate democratic aspirations but repression has not, and will not make

us give up exercising our right to self-determination. This right is recognised in Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, which states, “All peoples have the right of self-determination”.

The trial has become one more expression of this universal struggle for the defence of gravely challenged democracy and human rights.



# Tomorrow It Could Be You

*Those who do not move do not notice their chains.*

ROSA LUXEMBOURG

The quality of democracy in the Spanish State depends on the result of this trial. Not only in Barcelona but also in Vallecas, Pamplona, Seville, and Vigo. When democracy is in danger in one place, it's in danger everywhere. There has never been a battle for freedoms that was only local. What will end up happening here will affect the quality of democracy in Europe and, by extension, around the world.

We need to be acutely aware that the basic rights and freedoms now being found guilty in the Supreme Court can be violated again in any other context. This is precisely what the campaign “Tomorrow it could be you” is protesting about.

The sentences they pass on us and on the sovereignist movement will also weigh on any social movement or political dissent that questions the status quo.

The Supreme Court case 20907/2017 not only aims to punish but also to intimidate and propagate the

sensation—improper in a democracy—that citizens' rights can be restricted or suspended if the powers-that-be should so decide.

Hence, we are convinced that, faced with this persistent threat, the democrats of the Països Catalans, the Spanish State, and Europe must not waver now, when it is time to defend the democratic conquests that have taken us so many, many years to achieve.

Human rights activists and defenders around the world understand that this is not any old trial, but that criminal convictions for protesting or holding a referendum also affect the European Union and will have serious repercussions on the international scale.

This view has been expressed by Noam Chomsky, Angela Davis, Jody Williams, and Ai Weiwei, among other intellectuals, as well as by internationally renowned cultural figures like Ken Loach, Cher, Viggo Mortensen, and Peter Gabriel.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, with the most prestigious possible institutional statement on the matter, has ruled that our being held in preventive detention clearly violates the right to freedom of expression, association, assembly, and political participation. This is the most explicit judgement at the highest international level, and a ruling of obligatory observance. Nevertheless, in spite of everything, the Spanish State has not only declined to comply with it but, contravening the international agreements to

which it is a signatory, questions its legitimacy. Instead of pondering the reasons for the United Nations position, it is attempting to fight against it.

The collective organisation of citizens for non-violent social transformation must be upheld in any democratic society. Political repression of dissidence aims to incapacitate thought and action.

We have very clear examples of this. Investigations, charges, trials, and convictions for legitimate opinions and actions in a democracy are now affecting hundreds of journalists, humourists, tweeters, artists, teachers, IT workers, activists, rappers, and mechanics. The more than 20,000 citizens penalised in 2017 by the Law on Citizen Security, otherwise known as the Gag Law, demonstrate an escalation in this use of legal instruments to criminalise and try to silence criticism and activism. The aim is to repress people who, in reality, make societies better and more plural.

To give just a few examples, the journalist Helena Maleno has been accused of encouraging human trafficking when she is upholding the right to life of immigrants in the Strait of Gibraltar. The rapper Valtònyc is in exile in Belgium after being condemned to three and a half years in prison over the lyrics of his songs. The artist Abel Azcona is exiled in Portugal. The free expression of Willy Toledo and Dani Mateo has been prosecuted. The right of assembly of demonstrators in Murcia and of the journalist Cristina Fallarás has been

violated. Exhibitions like that of Santiago Sierra have been banned. Yet, today, the cry “We won’t be quiet!” defies censorship and self-censorship.

The nature of the real events has been distorted in order to dress them up as crimes of hate, sedition, rebellion, and terrorism. Those affected range from puppeteers in Madrid through to eight youths from the Basque town of Altsasu who, accused of terrorism because of a bar fight involving members of Guardia Civil, are now serving prison sentences of more than ten years.

Tamara Carrasco, a CDR (Committee for the Defence of the Republic) activist, accused of terrorism and imprisoned in Viladecans for more than a year—on the basis of no other proof than some masks and posters—has also been scapegoated by this strategy, as has another activist Adri Carrasco, who is presently in exile in Belgium.

Without this background, it would be difficult to explain the large-scale repression unleashed on us in Catalonia in the summer and autumn of 2017. In the case of Òmnium Cultural, several websites were shut down without any court order whatsoever, the national headquarters was searched by the Guardia Civil on two occasions, and its magazine was seized by the Post Office without any explanation being given.

The turning point of the repressive punitive assault—using the legal system—on the sovereignist

movement was 20 September, yet the public behaviour of everyone who came out onto the streets to defend the Catalan institutions was exemplary. We were proud of it then, and are proud of it now, despite all the lies told and distortions presented in the Supreme Court chamber about that day of mass mobilisation, which gave rise to the Taula per la Democràcia (Table for Democracy).

That day, there were 42 entry-and-search operations in private homes and in the offices of political appointees, as well as 17 detentions. Catalonia's financial autonomy was suspended and the National Police attempted to enter the headquarters of a political party without a court order. Thirty of the more than 700 mayors being investigated by the Public Prosecutor's office received a court summons.

Criminalising the peaceful demonstration in Barcelona on 20 September is equivalent to outlawing the right to protest against state powers. And we are obliged to keep protesting in order to protect this right because judicial power cannot be immune to the objections of citizens, and it must be possible to question its conduct if we don't want judges to wield unrestricted power.

We're protesting today in order to guarantee that our children will also be able to demonstrate in future.

The trade unionist Marcelino Camacho put it like this: "The right to strike is won by striking; the right to demonstrate is won by demonstrating". And we added,

in the Supreme Court, “The right to vote in Catalonia is won by voting.”

More than 40 years ago, Spain’s biggest trade union, the *Comisiones Obreras* (Workers’ Commissions), was subjected to political trials, among them Trial 1001,<sup>3</sup> which aimed to defang the workers’ movement. And, in the post-Franco years of democracy, with its summary procedure 18/98 against the Basque independence movement, the state fabricated a story of unarmed terrorism or peaceful terrorism.

In the Supreme Court, the charges have sought to construct a tale of nonviolent insurrection. Proof of this supposed uprising, which has been called a *coup d’état*, has consisted of nothing more than items pertaining to social mobilisation: demonstrations, ballot boxes, and posters.

Given this generalised violation of basic civil rights, and the retrograde step that a Supreme Court sentence would represent, we continue to uphold permanent, peaceful, and democratic mobilisation, not

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3. On 24 June 1972, ten of the union’s leaders were detained at a meeting in Madrid and held until the trial (1001) in the Public Order Court in December 1973, the week in which the president of the Spanish government Carrero Blanco was assassinated. They were accused of illegal association with the Communist Party although the severity of the sentences, from twenty to twelve years, was deemed to be related with the death of Carrero Blanco. They were pardoned by King Juan Carlos a few days after Franco’s death in November 1975 [translator’s note].

only to express dissent and protest, but also as a form of resistance and defiance in the face of a totally unjust situation.

On 3 October 2017 an undeniable majority of Catalonia's citizens, determined to show they would not tolerate this abuse of power, came out onto the streets. This prodigious social response is still, today, the best example of principled defence of rights and freedoms.

# Civil Disobedience

*One has a moral responsibility to disobey  
unjust laws.*

MARTIN LUTHER KING

Every time a citizen or group engages in civil disobedience the rights and freedoms of the whole society are strengthened. This is a consistent, responsible act, for it is heeding the voice of conscience that speaks in all humans.

There is no justification, no excuse for compromising or remaining neutral when rights and freedoms are being violated. One can't be indifferent when faced with backsliding in the aspiration for a freer and more just society. Moreover, as we know, a law isn't just simply because it's a law, which is why civil disobedience is a perfectly legitimate way of denouncing laws and court rulings that are considered to be unjust.

The philosopher John Rawls offered a canonical definition of civil disobedience as “a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government”.



Civil disobedience is one of society's instruments for evolving. Now, well into the twenty-first century, when individualism is the order of the day, this social commitment should be recognised, and a cause for self-esteem.

October 1, 2017 was the biggest exercise of civil disobedience in the recent history of Europe. A day that will last for years. An act of collective dignity shown by 2.3 million citizens who, expressing solidarity with each other, organised transversally and from the grass-roots upwards.

Yes, given the stark choice between abiding by a Constitutional Court ban that was considered to be unjust or exercising our basic rights, on 1 October we decided to exercise our basic rights: the right of freedom of expression, the right of assembly, the right of political participation and, naturally, the right of self-determination.

All of us who took part in 1 October, whatever way it was—organising activities in schools that weekend, spending the night in the polling stations, overseeing the voting, sitting at polling station tables, or simply voting—took full responsibility for our actions, even if only implicitly. And, despite the police brutality, we observed the discipline of nonviolence.

Thousands of citizens protected the ballot boxes with their own bodies. Seventy-six police charges in the polling stations wounded a thousand peaceful, defenceless voters but the state couldn't stop the referendum.

Nobody has apologised for the lamentable aggression that was broadcast in the international media with images that indignantly documented the disproportional use of violence against peaceful, defenceless citizens. The whole world could also see that nowhere was this police violence met with violence from the citizens.

Even Pedro Sánchez, Spain's present prime minister, responded, condemning the police brutality and demanding an explanation from the then prime minister Mariano Rajoy. Not long afterwards, however, hiding behind the state mantra of "whatever it takes to save the unity of Spain", he washed his hands of the matter.

At the Ramon Llull School, Roger Español lost an eye after being shot by a rubber bullet (prohibited in Catalonia). Today, more than forty police are under investigation in the courts, although the Public Prosecutor's stance is total inaction.

The sovereignist strategy has always been based on the pacifist tradition, as is demonstrated by the present social response to the prevailing repression. We are the country of Muriel Casals, Lluís Maria Xirinacs, Father Botam, Gabriela Serra, Arcadi Oliveres, Felix Martí, Pepe Beúnza, Martí Olivella, and Jaume Botey, among many other references of the culture of peace in Catalonia.

As Ramin Jahanbegloo, Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Peace Studies, points out, 1 October

was a Gandhi moment for Catalonia. The subversive sweetness and radical tenderness of nonviolence constitute not only a revitalisation of public life all around the country but they also represent a fundamental transformation in Spanish and European ways of thinking about and experiencing democracy.

Becoming aware and taking responsibility for disobeying is a gigantic step, a lesson that is never forgotten.

In democratic societies, citizen pressure, too, is capable of changing the tendency to immobilism of legality and rule of law. A democracy is more than the realm of the laws of the day. Totalitarian regimes have always sheltered behind legality. And in the United States or South Africa, the racial segregation laws were totally legal.

History teaches us that, without a struggle, there will be no collective conquests. The feminist struggle and neighbourhood movements are clear examples of this. So, too, were the conscientious objection and anti-conscription movements which put an end to compulsory military service in the Spanish State.

I recall a mural by Mili KK that read “*La mili no mola, ni catalana ni espanyola*” (Conscription’s a pain, in both Catalonia and Spain). I, too, refused to do military service. I’m proud of it. It’s one of the best decisions of my life. As many as 50,000 young people refused to answer the call-up. A thousand of them were

imprisoned, more than 600 went underground, and another thousand were tried.

I didn't want to do military service because I've always detested weapons. Imagine what would happen if the powers-that-be declared war one day and there were no soldiers and no bureaucrats to obey their orders.

Civil disobedience is no historic anomaly and neither is it foreign to Catalonia. Despite being banned from 1963 to 1967, Òmnium Cultural disobeyed by clandestinely training Catalan language teachers in order to safeguard the right to be educated in one's own language. Right in the midst of the Franco regime, thousands of Catalans fought for their national and social rights, and also their cultural and linguistic rights. Rights that can be lost if they're not defended.

If we want to live in a society where dissidence isn't punished, we can't dodge the permanent predicament of defying unjust laws. In his essay *Désobéir*, the philosopher Frédéric Gros is also speaking to Catalans when he says, "Why disobey? You only need eyes in your face. Disobedience is so justified, so reasonable that the shocking thing is lack of reaction, passivity."

# The Problem Is Civil Obedience

*Your power depends on my fear. If I am not afraid,  
you no longer have power.*

SENECA TO NERO

Democratic or social conquests are not gifts. They are won by taking a stand, by confronting the powers-that-be, and by questioning the prevailing laws.

As Howard Zinn said in 1970, civil disobedience is not the problem. “Our problem is the numbers of people all over the world who have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience. [...] Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world, in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war and cruelty.”

In the Spanish State, civil obedience has enabled more than 600,000 evictions since 2008, even while the banking system was rescued with 60 billion euros from public coffers. It has led to the fact that, in Catalonia, one of Europe’s most prosperous regions, one in every four people is at risk of social exclusion. With this back-

ground, then, nonviolent actions like those of the anti-eviction movement PAH (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages) and the Alliance against Energy Poverty are instruments for creating a more just society.

Also in 1970, Hannah Arendt said that, “the laws seem to have lost their power” when those who are supposedly ruled by them cease to recognise their legitimacy.

A community can’t function with laws it doesn’t recognise. They’ve been telling us again and again, for years, that “the principle of democracy is obedience to the laws” but, no matter who says it, this isn’t true. Authoritarian or dictatorial regimes try to make sure that their laws are obeyed but obedience doesn’t endow them with legitimacy. What defines a democratic system is recognition by the citizens.

Hence, when the law doesn’t allow channelling of the legitimate, democratic, and peaceful aspirations of the citizens, people want to change the law and civil disobedience then becomes a moral duty. This was the case with the struggle against racial segregation led by Martin Luther King, and with that for social and national emancipation in India, led by Gandhi.

Commitment to a better world sometimes obliges one to take on responsibilities in confrontations with the law and the status quo. More than anything else, civil disobedience is a gesture of opposing a law that is deemed unjust. And a legal system that fails to comprehend the legitimate demands of society is not just but authoritarian.

The disobedience is civil because of its commitment to the civic spirit of society. We aren't moved by personal or corporate selfishness but by the desire to universalise improvements in the law that should permit social progress. This is not a negative stance but, rather, a proposition: we disobey the system because we respect Human Rights.

And it's a constant learning process. In times marked by immediateness, thinking and working in the medium and long term isn't easy. If the goals of civil disobedience aren't instantly achieved, it's very important not to fall into the trap of frustration.

Today, we see how rights and freedoms that seemed to have been won are at risk and we know that the situation is grave in many spheres, from the climate crisis through to worsening economic and social inequality. The feeling of vulnerability is spreading dangerously.

And immorality has broken all the bounds. I still remember the day when Òscar Camps told me in the visiting room at Lledoners that it was not enough for the Italian Public Prosecutor's Office to prevent the NGO Proactiva Open Arms from saving lives at sea but Camps, its director, was also threatened with a prison sentence of more than ten years.

What must we do when politics lags behind? Let the injustice take place or prevent what politics hasn't known how, or hasn't wanted, or hasn't been able to avoid?

Civil disobedience belongs in the framework of the tradition of nonviolence. And the variety of actions of nonviolent resistance, always arising from the exercise of basic rights, is wide-ranging and amply theorised by such international figures as Gene Sharp.

This is why it behoves us to use the learning and experience of those who have come before us, and to be very attentive to new strategies being employed around the world for putting pressure on political representatives, as happened with the anti-globalisation movement of the late 1990s, or attempts to overthrow dictatorial regimes, which is what the movement Otpor! managed to do with Milosevic in Serbia in 2000. Two very recent examples are showing us the way: the Extinction Rebellion movement in England, which is trying to counter the climate crisis for once and for all, and the momentous demonstrations in Hong Kong against a law allowing forced extraditions to mainland China.

Catalonia and the Països Catalans have a long history of nonviolent resistance, going back, for example, to the “closing of the cashboxes”—the revolt of small Catalan businesses against unfair taxes in 1899—and historic stoppages like the Canadenca Strike a century ago (which forced the government to introduce the forty-hour working week), the 1951 tram strike (a boycott by thousands of Barcelona residents to demand more reasonable fares), and the first general strike of 1976 for political amnesty and democratic freedoms.



In addition to the workers' movement, whether in the anti-Franco resistance or in this substandard democracy in which we live today, demonstrations and protests are also part of the collective heritage of social action, which includes student, feminist, neighbourhood, LG-BTI, ecologist and Catalan independence movements, the latter, for example, with activities like the March for Freedom (organised by the Assemblea de Catalunya), campaigns like "*Volem bisbes catalans!*" (We want Catalan bishops!), direct action like La Crida a la Solidaridad (Call for Solidarity in the 1980s), the Olympic campaign "Freedom for Catalonia", and the "*No vull pagar*" (I don't want to pay) movement against abusive road tolls. Not to be overlooked, either, are the hunger strikes and one-man protests of Lluís Maria Xirinacs, a Catalan reference of nonviolence who always stood his ground.

Hence, in autumn 2017, the general strike of 3 October and that of 8 November are part of a historical continuum of social mobilisation. The Spanish State has tried, and is still trying today, to criminalise the right to strike and protest of hundreds of thousands of Catalans, but anti-repressive solidarity and democratic dignity are stronger than ever.

In the tradition of nonviolent resistance dozens of imaginative formulae have been explored in the last two years in order to make visible in public space opposition to Spanish State repression, the demand that political prisoners should be freed, and the aspiration to independence.

In this sense, culture, democratic culture presents itself to us as an exceptional instrument for challenging constituent power, for underpinning a rebellious, modern, critical, and valiant culture that contributes towards defending civic, social, and political rights without fear of exploring the limits of creativity and change within the nonviolence framework. Faced with a state that is systematically opposed to this stance, we need to muster all of our collective intelligence.

Repression is a trap. In practice, it is very easy for the state to use it to crush any movement. But repression can also become the main loudspeaker of the oppressed. The state can stifle civil disobedience through fear and this is why it is so important to do our utmost not to be defeated by fear and why, too, we must always be ready to rise above the threats with which they try to mould us. When laws can only be defended and maintained through force, their days might be numbered. We only need to rid ourselves of fear or, in any case, we should always have more hope than fear.

The battle for rights and freedoms also affects social rights which, as civil and political rights, must be part of a more decent and more just world. And mobilisation, nonviolent action, and civil disobedience can be practices that apply to food consumption, energy use, and transport habits in a coherent commitment to our environment and the future of the planet. It is civil obedience that lets oceans turn into seas of plastic, and that allows global warming to become irreversible.

Our heroes will always be those who, anonymously and persistently, have given their all for those who are not yet born.

# With Total Tenderness

*Sometimes, a family can also be made  
with a blanket and a song.*

TXELL BONET

More than 70% of the citizens of Catalonia have roots in Spain or in other parts of the world. Like the rest of the peoples of the planet, those of the Spanish State are family. And though some people might try, they won't succeed in getting us to fight. We are moved by fraternity. As Antigone said, "I was born to share love, not hate".

Catalonia has been forged thanks to the efforts of a lot of very different people who, coming from thousands of shared struggles, who have created an open, inclusive, responsible, and committed society. Resisting the adversary. Of deep European convictions, looking to the Mediterranean.

We Catalans are a people who have come from many parts of the world in search of a better future. We are a people who have received the generosity of other peoples in tragic moments of our history, and a people that knows how to be hospitable. With the humanitarian crisis of the refugees, Casa Nostra, Casa Vostra organised

the biggest demonstration in Europe, not only to express the unequivocal desire to welcome refugee victims of today's bloody wars but also to show up the hypocrisy of the member states of the European Union, which haven't even met their own commitment of taking in 17,000 people fleeing violence and brutal poverty.

There are constant, irresponsible, ham-fisted efforts to divide Catalans. But the educational model that was established by the group of Spanish-speaking mothers and fathers with the Rosselló-Porcel School in Santa Coloma de Gramenet and its first programme of Catalan language immersion still represents the great consensus that must be preserved because, if we don't let them divide our children in the classroom, they won't be able to do it in the streets either. This is how we strengthen social cohesion and equality of opportunities for everyone.

Together people rarely ask about origins in this society we have shaped, yet they do ask about where it wants to take us, all together. So, we shouldn't be surprised that a person who feels Spanish, Argentine, or Japanese might also want Catalonia to be a republic within the European Union.

We are moved by the collective desire for emancipation and, together with that, the wish for social cohesion whereby we recognise ourselves as one people. We don't want to renounce diversity because this deeply enriches us, and it also enriches the collective imaginary.

Sovereignism draws strongly on European and internationalist inspiration because of the need to find ways of resolving everyday problems. Unfortunately, a lack of responses to complex challenges has brought about identity-based conflict in many European countries. In Catalonia, although identity-based groups are certainly present, highly aggressive, and linked with the sewers of the state, they haven't had any significant support.

Maybe, precisely because the exercise of freedoms unites all democrats, the state has been keen to hide the fact that the social question is one of the drivers of the process of national emancipation. It has tried to dehumanise the movement, doing its best to remove its political and social content while hatching an authoritarian strategy which is applied in general to feminism, environmentalism, and LGBTI movements. But it is a strategy that these movements have been able to transform into more arguments for their own side as well as collective empowerment.

In 1943, in a Europe overrun by fascism and with hope sinking into despair, Albert Camus refused to succumb to hatred and wrote in his "Letters to a German Friend", "[...] we fight in the name of that nuance that divides sacrifice from mysticism, energy from violence, force from cruelty, and for that even fainter nuance that divides the false from the truth".

Now and always, I shun hatred and nurture tenderness in the example of my own life. In difficult mo-

ments we put our trust to the test, and we also do so with those we love most. When I was with Txell, entering the prison, we decided that we refuse to live a life based on reproof, and that it is much more useful to devote our energy to creating opportunities, conditions for understanding, and meeting points. And, doing so, despite adversity, we haven't given up continuing to be happy and, whatever happens, neither will we stop constructing our family.

# No Fear

*I know nothing in the world that has  
as much power as a word.*

EMILY DICKINSON

Court decisions don't solve political problems—whether historic or encysted—like those we have today between Catalonia and the Spanish State. Sentences will be handed down but the conflict will endure as long as it's not tackled through democratic dialogue, on equal terms, and respecting the legitimate aspirations of the citizens.

The precedents of the referendums in Quebec and Scotland, with the agreement of the governments of Canada and the United Kingdom, are good examples of how to seek political solutions for internal disputes.

In Catalonia, there is broad agreement with 80% of the people in favour of democratic dialogue and in opposition to the repression to which we are collectively subjected. A large majority of Catalans have repeatedly expressed the desire to vote on their political future. Thwarting this, then, is to go against the principles that inspire democratic societies.



Our attempts at knocking at Madrid's door with proposals for political dialogue now number about twenty. After each huge demonstration or each election in which the sovereignist vote persists, we come up against yet another rejection by the Spanish State.

With the ruling on the Catalan Statute in 2010, the state broke its constitutional covenant with Catalonia. But everyone knows that the history of friction between the Catalan and Spanish governments over the degree of Catalonia's cultural, political, and financial autonomy is a long one. The only real fracture we suffer from in Catalonia is that of extreme poverty and long-term unemployment, fruit of a crisis that has not yet ended, while the state's structural disinvestment in Catalonia is undeniable. Oddly enough, the people who speak most of divided families are frequently those who are responsible for the chronic situation of inequalities and social problems.

I have always thought that meeting people and knowing their arguments is an opportunity because nobody has the absolute truth. Hence, it's essential to get to the root of the conflict when fear is a barrier to dealing with it. If we keep acting fearfully, it will be hard for us to discover each other's points of view. Acting with empathy is essential if the aim is to find a solution for this political problem.

The problem is civil obedience, this absence of ethical standards which is presently allowing and tolerating the fact that we are being accused of crimes by

the far right in connivance with the Spanish government. Today, democrats who are upholding the values of freedom are being accused of criminal offences by the neo-Franco far right.

The responsibility accepted by Podemos, which denounced this democratic anomaly at the height of the anti-Catalanist competition, should be recognised. Its stand contrasts with that of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez and his party, the social democratic PSOE which endorses Article 155<sup>4</sup> and the suspension of Catalonia's autonomous status while openly and irresponsibly rejecting discussion and negotiation.

Instead of acting like a consolidated democracy, comparable with others in the international domain, the Kingdom of Spain has scorned the United Nations decision that calls for our release. This is an unprecedented stance in the countries of our part of the world.

What did the president of Òmnium Cultural do to merit imprisonment? He has been true to the found-

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*4. Consisting of two brief paragraphs of the Spanish Constitution, Article 155, the so-called “nuclear option”, states that if a regional government doesn't comply with the obligations of the Constitution or other laws it imposes, or acts in a way that seriously undermines the interests of Spain, the national government can ask the Senate to vote on the use of the measure, which requires an absolute majority. If this is achieved, the national government may then adopt the “necessary methods” (barely defined) to force a regional government to comply in order to protect the said interests. Constitutional lawyers note that Article 155 has limits. One is that the Catalan Statute of Autonomy can't be repealed [translator's note].*

ing principle of Òmnium Cultural, namely working for language, culture, and country, and has defended social cohesion, self-determination, and the exercise of basic rights by means of social mobilisation and emphatically non-violent action.

We must serenely explain that we won't be asking to be granted a pardon. This would make no sense, because the aim is not to be released from prison at any price but to resolve the political conflict democratically. A pardon without any intention by the Spanish State to confront the problem would only reveal its desire to perpetuate it, to the detriment of the coming generations.

By contrast, non-violent action is a democratic tool that aims to compel the other party to address the problem. Social mobilisation can force power holders to stop ignoring just, legitimate claims.

The looming threat of a long prison sentence only aims to punish, penalise, and frighten, through us, the whole sovereignist movement. But, as we have said and demonstrated, we will not be hostages of this pressure against a majority civic movement in Catalonia which, time and time again, has shown its determination and perseverance.

They still haven't understood anything. They believe that prison will make us renounce our political goals when it only strengthens them. Hence the collective priority mustn't be getting us out of prison or even attempting to ensure that no one else is jailed. The threat of repression mustn't drive our actions.

Here and now we are following Gramsci's advice: "Educate yourselves, because we'll need all our intelligence. Agitate, because we'll need all our enthusiasm. Organize, because we'll need all our strength."

For us, these principles, which inspired all those people who opposed the rise of fascism a hundred years ago, are still a compass and guide for our conduct in the present situation.

# Renouncing Nothing

*We must take a stand.*

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

I'm convinced that the lesson held out to us by the present is the best seed of the future. Now, well into the twenty-first century, we won't give up the idea of deciding our own future, with all the humility it takes but standing tall before the threat of state repression.

Our cause is noble and just: self-determination for Catalonia as an exercise of democratic legitimacy. We don't know right now if the means for achieving it will be another referendum or some other democratic way that can channel the wishes of the majority but we do know that, first and foremost, we'll uphold the exercise of basic rights and will turn to civil disobedience when necessary.

After twenty months in prison, my priority as a political prisoner has remained intact: to struggle and strive to advance in finding a solution for the political conflict, and to denounce violations of citizens' rights and freedoms in Catalonia and in Spain as a whole.

My aim, in brief, is to achieve a freer, more just country in which my children can live, the two older children, the youngest, Amat, who I see growing from behind bars, and another who, God willing, Txell and I will have around next autumn.

This aspiration of leaving a more just and equal, more democratic and free, more fraternal and solidary society for the coming generations is shared by all the citizens of Catalonia, by all humanity.

I am convinced that this country won't fall into the trap of frustration because its collective action is fuelled by the immense hope for a better future. We have come through much more adverse circumstances and have been able to hold our heads high when faced with worse problems.

As Manuel de Pedrolo once said, "You have to struggle even when it seems to be hopeless". We are children of many defeats, that's true, but doing nothing is no alternative. We've learnt that history is constructed step by step, in every corner of the country and this is how what looks like defeat today can be the key and foundation of our victory.

We're a country of immigrants, a country where the citizens decided more than forty years ago that the Catalan language would be the lingua franca in schools in order to ensure that everyone would have the same opportunities and no one would have to renounce his or her mother tongue. Proof of this tre-

mendous success, and something to be proud of, is that more than three hundred languages are spoken in Catalonia today while Catalan continues to be a language of social cohesion.

The Països Catalans are a land of shared struggles, of streets and squares asphalted with the human hands, of neighbourhood movements, and of people who have come from everywhere, humble, honest, and committed working people who have been able to bring their business projects to fruition.

We can't afford despair. Let's leave pessimism for better times.

If police brutality couldn't stop hundreds of thousands of voters on 1 October, does anyone think that the Supreme Court ruling will stop Catalans from fighting for their right to self-determination? I'm sure the answer is no and that we'll keep struggling peacefully to achieve it.

WE'LL DO IT AGAIN because we've taken the humble decision, unafraid and full of courage, not to go backwards in anything affecting the exercise of basic individual and collective rights.

Although they try us for demonstrating, for expressing ourselves, for mobilising, and for voting, I'm certain that we'll do it again. We'll demonstrate, express ourselves, mobilise, and vote as many times as it takes. And we'll do so as we have done thus far, peacefully,

serenely, and with all the determination in the world. There is no repressive power capable of stopping us. Our hopes are intact, and nothing and nobody will take them from us.

The best response will be to exercise, always and everywhere, all the rights that they might condemn. Tirelessly and with more collective intelligence than ever. The best response will always be to defy repression, to break the psychological siege, and defuse the socio-political effects that repression aims to achieve.

As long as we don't show our determination in non-violent action and civil disobedience, as long as we don't challenge the status quo that forbids us to vote on independence for Catalonia, we know that the only response we'll have is indifference and meaningless gestures from the state, which has shown all too often that it has no intention of resolving the conflict and no desire to establish any framework for sincere dialogue in order to find a democratic solution.

The sad ineptness of the powers of the Spanish State—legislative, executive, and judicial—reminds us of the lesson handed down by Rosa Parks: “The more we gave in, the more we complied with that kind of treatment, the more oppressive it became”. No, we don't want to give in to the blackmail of police violence or to the threat of legal repression. We don't want to resign ourselves to obeying unjust laws and rules that aim to strip us of our inalienable rights and freedoms.



In Cell 112 of Soto de Real prison, I'm aware that I'm fortunate to know about the struggle of so many people outside these confining walls and to feel their warmth. I've learned that feeling sorry for myself or weeping with rage at the injustice I have to bear is useless. Happiness depends on oneself. So, I'm not sad in my captivity but am, rather, aware of being part of a collective endeavour of democratic responsibility.

We're heirs of the republicans who struggled against fascism in 1936, though our struggle today isn't a fight to the death. We've often taken up their antifascist slogan *¡No pasarán!* (They shall not pass!), which is now a universal cry of resistance, and we recognise that our arms today are those of non-violent action.

On 1 October we had a taste of power when we saw what happens when thousands upon thousands of Catalans organise, impelled by the awareness and conviction that they don't want to be subjects and don't want to surrender their basic rights. We had first-hand experience of the impotence of the brute force of the state when faced with that human bulwark of dignity.

Now that this step has been taken, it's indisputable that things will never be the same again because the memory of that day, which will live on for years, will stimulate us to persevere and to be ever more determined. We know we can do it. The impotence of the state, its fear, is continuously and virulently being demonstrated because it is acutely aware of the strength, re-

solve, and empowerment achieved by Catalan society as a whole in recent years. There can be no better proof of what we are capable of.

Social change is slow and it requires a lot of work and generosity, in an unceasing process of learning, and accepting limits and failures in order to overcome them later. As Joan Salvat-Papasseit once wrote, “The price of freedom is not high because it is scarce, but freedom is scarce because it must be won”.

Starting from consensus in civil society, sovereignty must strengthen well-defined shared strategies, with each person playing his or her part, without confusion. There must be clear awareness that we have a shared cause that is more important than the individual causes of each person.

Repression has matured the democratic culture of Catalan society and in such a way that we all have the responsibility to speak to each other clearly and without subterfuge, to work silently, and to abstain from short-sighted tactical manoeuvring that doesn't go to the root of the conflict. We're obliged to act more coherently, more forthrightly than ever and to avoid any kind of imposture that glosses over the true nature of reality.

Widespread consensus over many issues in our country is a social reality. We can benefit from knowledge acquired from the anti-Franco struggle, from social and neighbourhood movements and their defeats and victories. Strengthening the unity of a big demo-

cratic bloc upholding rights and freedoms that are presently under threat is an ethico-political obligation.

Looking at the past helps us to see the present with other eyes. Hundreds of men and women have been political prisoners before us, in more adverse circumstances and with less social support, because they tried to secure a better future for us. They never allowed themselves to falter, just as freedom fighters in the prisons of Russia, Turkey and Brazil don't falter today.

Seventy years after its adoption, our destiny is bound to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us make ours the words of one of its drafters, Stéphane Hessel: “[Catalonia] always rebel and courageous, can promote this impulse towards a cultural, fraternal Europe”.

Yes, we have disobeyed, but there's no special merit in that because, for many centuries now, all around the world, societies have disobeyed the powerful and, thanks to their disobedience, we can keep disobeying today.

And, yes, we disobeyed in 2017, some of us aware of doing so and others unaware, but we all called upon the right of every human being to act always in accordance with his or her own conscience.

And, yes, we'll do it again. We'll do it for love of life. And, although it's possible that, right now, we don't

really know how or when we'll do it again, this needn't be a cause for worry. On the contrary, the first definitive step is what keeps alive the determination not to renounce doing it again.

If we do it together and without leaving anyone by the wayside, we have a far greater chance of succeeding.

We do what we must do, without fear and without giving up. With the best of our smiles. And all the tenderness in the world. As Clara Alzina says, "The really important thing is not the us we were but the us we're going to be."

**JORDI CUIXART**

**President of Òmnium Cultural**

16 June 2019, in the Soto del Real prison  
Madrid, Spain

# Acknowledgements

As I write these pages I'm very much aware of the example of so many people who, throughout human history, deprived of freedom and in conditions that were much worse than ours kept struggling. These are people who, in their personal expression of everyday dignity, never gave up. They were in Catalonia and in the Spanish State too, from anti-Franco victims of the dictatorship's reprisals, like Marcus Ana, who spent more than thirty years in prison, through to conscientious objectors, and all those people who have suffered and are still suffering from some or other kind of repression because of their artistic activity, their ideology, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation.

This book is the result of the collective, selfless effort of many people who have helped me to refine its arguments. They have my heartfelt thanks for their patience and trust in me:

Marina Roig, Àlex Solà, Bernat Salellas, and Olivier Peter for turning the defence of more than two million people in the Supreme Court into a collective *j'accuse*;

Jamila Raqib for keeping alive the legacy of the teacher Gene Sharp;

David Fernàndez for responding to an SOS by sending me to August;

August Gil Matamala for saying goodbye with a raised fist;

Adrià Font for accompanying me through the whole learning process;

The other political prisoners and exiles for the example they set, especially Carme Forcadell and Dolors Bassa;

Neus and Esther, essential accomplices in getting our parents to understand that civil disobedience is an act of love of life and a shout of hope;

The technical team and the regional boards of Òmnium Cultural for ending the isolation;

The National Board of Òmnium Cultural, and Marcel Mauri at its head, for making me feel like the most fortunate man on this planet;

Xavier Antich, Jordi Gabarró, and Jordi Còdol for shaping this book and protecting its essence;

The two Pols, Uri and Amat for being true mentors in everything;

My beloved Txell Bonet for agreeing to share, when I felt most alone, the path through Walden Woods.



**When you have been deprived of freedom by an injustice, what do you have left? There remains the option of obeying your own conscience and not giving in to resignation or frustration. Neither as a person nor as a people. Jordi Cuixart, president of Òmnium Cultural, decided to turn the grim greyness of a prison cell into the strongest mouthpiece for the shared struggle for self-determination and human rights. He calls on us not to give up, to protest, to listen... and to permanent non-violent mobilisation. Because when injustice is the law, civil disobedience is a right.**

We'll Do It Again is a personal and collective manifesto, lively and political, written after over 600 days in prison and 52 sessions of Democracy on Trial in the Spanish Supreme Court. A manifesto that is emotional but also rigorous, direct and brave, calling on us to lose our fear and to consciously exercise the basic rights that are under threat in Catalonia and elsewhere in the world.

So that our children can live in a fairer, freer country, we'll do it again.

**Jordi Cuixart**, born in Santa Perpètua de Mogoda in 1975, is the 10th president of Òmnium, the leading civic and cultural body in Catalonia, with 180,000 members. He has spent more than 900 days in prison. After two years in pre-trial detention, on 14th October 2019 the Supreme Court sentenced him to 9 years for sedition, for having appealed for participation in the peaceful demonstration of 20th September 2017 and the referendum of 1st October. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has called for his release, as have Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders and PEN International.