The pillars of power

Time: Minimum 30 minutes

Goal or purpose:
■ To identify the pillars holding up the power structures we want to knock down.
■ To analyse the pillars with the goal of developing strategies to weaken them.
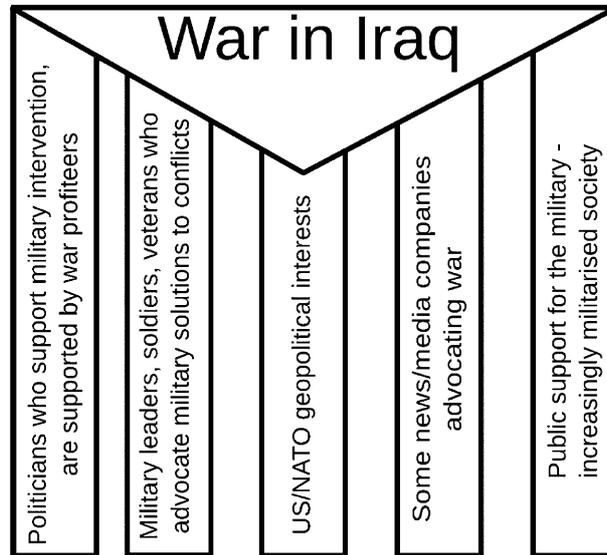■ To identify the vulnerability of power structures.

How it's done/facilitator's notes:
Describe the Pillars

Draw an upside down triangle, with pillars holding it up. Write the name of the problem in the triangle. It can be an institution or an injustice ('war'), or a more specific problem ('lack of access to water supply in our village').

Ask the group to identify the pillars that represent the institutions and factors that support the problem (the military, corporations, patriotic citizens...) Be specific about elements of the support structures ('the military' includes the leadership, soldiers, veterans, military families). This will help as we analyse how to weaken the structure.

Identify the underlying principles that are the foundation of the pillars (i.e. sexism, greed, lies).

Nonviolence
Nonviolence and power

Strategies
Mobilising for change: building power in Nepal
Theories of change

Training
Imagine the future: setting goals
Power flower
The healthy tree/the problem tree

Training

War in Iraq

Politicians who support military intervention, are supported by war profiteers

Military leaders, soldiers, veterans who advocate military solutions to conflicts

US/NATO geopolitical interests

Some news/media companies advocating war

Public support for the military - increasingly militarised society

Analyse a Pillar

Choose a pillar that your group wants to knock down. Consider your group's mission as you make your decision. Draw another set of pillars, writing the name of the institution from your chosen pillar in the triangle, and analyse what powers hold it up. The questions in 'analyse why this problem exists' in the 'planning nonviolent campaigns' section of this handbook (p46) are helpful analysis tools.

■ Do we understand the context and the root causes of the problem?
■ Who benefits and who suffers from it, and how?
■ Who holds the power, and who has the power to create change? (Who forms part of the structures underpinning the problem? Who opposes it?)
■ Does the problem affect people differently depending on their position in society, based on their gender, age, race, class, etc.? (See 'gender and nonviolence', p22.)
■ What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for a campaign to change this?
■ How does our commitment to nonviolence affect our analysis?

Explain to the group that while the problem seems hard to shake, the inverted triangle symbolises its weakness. Whole pillars do not need to be knocked down to weaken the power, weakening the pillars can have a great effect.

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Training