

STORY

#GAMBIAHASDECIDED

After almost a decade of building momentum, Gambians seized a crucial window of opportunity in 2016 to overthrow a notorious dictator.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Muhammed Lamin Saidykhan

Muhammed Lamin Saidykhan played a prominent role in the Gambian revolution of 2016, and for many years served as coordinator of Activista The Gambia youth movement. He currently is co-coordinator of Africans Rising, a Pan-African movement for peace, justice, and dignity.

“UNDER AN IRON-FIST RULE, THE USE OF TRAINING WAS A STRATEGIC PREDECESSOR TO ACTION.”

There is a widespread misconception that the 2016 Gambian revolution started with the #GambiaHasDecided mobilizations. But, as is the case with many struggles, a great deal of behind-the-scenes organizing took place in preceding years, making this transformation possible.

For over seven years, many activist groups — including Activista The Gambia, a national youth network — trained thousands of youth on movement building, strategic campaigning, and good governance. Under an iron-fist rule, the use of training was a strategic predecessor to action, as it enabled youth activists to organize small-scale campaigns on land rights, women’s rights, and education that slowly challenged existing power structures. These efforts built momentum and prepared organizers to seize the moment when the opportunity would arise for a more significant transformation (see: PRINCIPLE: Praxis makes perfect). And so it did. In April 2016, a street protest demanding electoral reform was declared illegal and brutally dispersed by the regime. The regime’s brutality sparked anger, leading a major political party, and masses of people, to take to the streets to demand reforms (see: THEORY: Al faza’a [a surge of solidarity]). One of many significant actions that showed the creativity of the post-April mobilizations was the *calabash* (aka *kalama*) revolution, where women from rural areas protested with calabashes — traditional bowls that symbolise sharing. The calabashes signified that leadership too should be shared, and that then President Yahya Jammeh should not be the only person drinking from the leadership calabash. Such actions drew heavily on local culture, tradition, and history, linking the

KEY TACTIC

Training

It is not uncommon among activist groups to think that trainings are a “nice addition” to the core frontline organizing when possible. However, training is a critical component of a campaign’s success. The hundreds of training sessions in which thousands of youth were trained in The Gambia gave activists the chance to build trust and strong connections with one another, and to acquire strategic planning knowledge prior to tackling a major reform.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use your cultural assets

As activists, we often are not as well resourced financially or institutionally as our opponents. Thus, we lean back on the resources in which we are rich: people and culture

protests to symbols in which Gambians took pride (see: PRINCIPLE: Use your cultural assets). During the December 2016 elections, the opposition and activist groups rallied registered voters to vote out Jammeh, as well as mobilized online under the #GambiaDecides (see: TACTIC: Hashtag campaign). Jammeh lost the elections and accepted defeat declaring that “Gambia had decided,” only to make a surprise turnaround a few days later attempting to extend his dictatorship. This is when the slogan of the pro-reform mobilizations changed from #GambiaDecides to #GambiaHasDecided. In the post-elections period, fear and intimidation among people were widespread, making it difficult for the national coalition defending the elections to mobilize in large numbers. To enable Gambians to overcome their fear, activists organized photo and short video actions asserting that #GambiaHasDecided. The courageousness of the activists in openly demanding their constitutional rights, despite the risk involved, encouraged fellow citizens to follow suit. The widespread support for political reform had been invisible, until people-powered actions exposed how massive it truly was (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible). One important takeaway from this journey is around international solidarity. Africans Rising — a Pan-African movement for justice, peace, and dignity — sent in a solidarity mission at the height of the political impasse. Most movement and civil society leaders gathered and conducted an analysis of who the main enablers of Jammeh’s regime were (see: METHODOLOGY: Pillars of power). They determined that Jammeh could not hold his ground without the support of his ministerial cabinet, because a convened government gave him legitimacy. The mission ran an intense phone banking tactic demanding the ministers resign. The callers also told the ministers that they had a choice to make: Join the revolution, and remain safe and at home, or side with Jammeh against the revolution, and be forced into exile when Jammeh loses. The tides turned, and 90% of Jammeh’s ministers chose to resign. Jammeh capitulated power a few days later and fled into exile in January, 2017.

LEARN MORE

How to Topple a Dictator: The Rebel Plot that Freed the Gambia
The Guardian, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/may/22/how-to-topple-a-dictator-the-rebel-plot-that-freed-the-gambia-yahya-jammeh>

The Gambia: ECOWAS Preparing Military Intervention to Crush Revolutionary Masses.

In Defence of Marxism, 2017

<https://www.marxist.com/gambia-ecowas-preparing-military-intervention-to-crush-revolutionary-masses.htm>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle of the Camel
- Disrupting Obama’s town hall in Myanmar
- Honk at Parliament
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Kubatana’s yellow poster campaign
- Manich Msamah
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Phone banking

Principles

- Make the invisible visible
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Palace Coup

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Community building, Campaign strategy, Dictatorship, Elections, Movement building, Nonviolence, State violence, , Social media

STORY

#THISFLAG

One individual's outcry for a better future inspired the citizens of Zimbabwe to find their courage and overthrow a ruthless dictator.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Evan Mawarire

Evan Mawarire is a Zimbabwean clergyman who founded #ThisFlag citizen's movement to challenge corruption, injustice, and poverty in Zimbabwe. The movement empowers citizens to hold government to account, and through the use of viral videos, the movement has organised multiple successful non-violent protests in response to unjust government policy.

"#THISFLAG'S "MOVEMENT MOMENT" ARRIVED WHEN PEOPLE WERE READY TO TAKE THIS BATTLE OFF OF THE INTERNET AND INTO THE STREETS."

"If we can't inspire politicians to change, then we must inspire citizens to be bold."

—Evan Mawarire

Monday, April 19, 2016 seemed a day like any other. Until it wasn't. I was sitting in my office at church after work wondering how I was going to cover my daughters' school fees. The Bible and the Zimbabwean flag on my desk were staring at me. I thought back across the history of Zimbabwe.

A few months earlier, the Zimbabwean bank reserve had suffered a liquidity crisis. It had run out of US dollars and began printing bond notes. Zimbabweans had been disgruntled with the regime for decades due to entrenched corruption, expensive basic commodities, and a 90 percent unemployment rate (see: PRINCIPLE: Focus on basic needs). Reacting to the crisis, the government announced plans to introduce a new local currency, which would only further harm an economically strained population that had lost the value of its savings in a similar currency shuffle less than a decade earlier.

In light of this crisis, not only could I not afford to pay my daughters' school fees, but I was also facing the real possibility of not being able to put food on the table for them. I could no longer tolerate what our country had become and I wanted to let everyone know that I had enough! (see: PRINCIPLE: Anger works best when you have the moral high ground) I propped my phone on the Bible,

KEY TACTIC

Hashtag campaign

The political positioning of the campaign was strategically embedded in its main hashtags. The hashtag #ThisFlag reclaimed Zimbabweans' national pride by revisiting the meaning of their flag and their history of liberation. The secondary hashtags #Hatichada and #Hatichatya created a sense of belonging to a community that was ready to act collectively.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Seek safety in support networks

When I was first arrested, hundreds of people gathered at the jail (see: TACTIC: Jail solidarity) to demand my release, which along with videotaping the arrest incident and live-streaming

I embraced the flag, and began recording a video that I later uploaded to my Twitter account, reminiscing about the meaning of the colours of the Zimbabwean flag.

As kids we were taught that our flag represented a promise of prosperity through agricultural production (green), the wealth of minerals (yellow), the struggle for independence (red), the dignity of the black population (black), and peace (white). Yet, the state was compromising literally everything that this flag represented.

Thousands of people began sharing the video and re-posting it on other social media platforms like YouTube and Facebook. It resonated with Zimbabweans' pains and hopes, and with ordinary citizen's frustrations and aspirations. People were not only engaging with the video because it spoke to their truth, but more so because they wanted to reclaim their history. Over decades, the original meaning of the Zimbabwean flag had been lost, turned into a symbol used and abused by a ruling elite to accuse dissidents of betrayal or disloyalty. But people wanted to reclaim the promise of the flag and make prosperity in Zimbabwe a reality (see: PRINCIPLE: Recapture the flag).

Even though we knew that everyone who'd previously tried to oppose the regime had either gone missing or gotten hurt, two friends and I put together a plan to turn the viral excitement around the video into action. Fear was widespread due to state repression, so our first mission was to slowly yet steadily break the silence. We first asked people to take selfies with the Zimbabwean flag and post it on their social media accounts with the words "*Hatichada, Hatichatya*" (meaning, "we've had enough; we're not afraid" in Shona) using the #ThisFlag hashtag. We ourselves then pledged to post a video every day (see: PRINCIPLE: Build strength through repetition), until Africa Day. We wanted to encourage people to imagine the impossible, and to think of challenging the regime as their individual moral duty (see: PRINCIPLE: We are all leaders).

At the time street protest was illegal, so the selfie action became a way for protestors to gather online and build their courage. Now, it was time to bring this virtual euphoria into the real world. Beginning with subtle acts of disobedience (see: PRINCIPLE: If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest), people started carrying the Zimbabwean flag with them everywhere — to schools, streets, even to supermarkets. #ThisFlag's "movement moment" arrived when people were ready to take this battle off of the Internet and into the streets (see: PRINCIPLE: Create online-offline synergy).

On May 25, the last day of the video pledge and Africa Day, the movement began taking on the regime's institutions (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically). We challenged the President of the Reserve Bank to a public debate, and to our utmost surprise he accepted the challenge. More than a thousand people showed up at the debate, marking the first large-scale physical gathering of the

the gathering outside the Court, created a high level of exposure that protected activists from a brutal response by the regime.

Timing is everything

The popular upheaval that powered #ThisFlag to victory was a time bomb of extreme economic conditions. The movement timed its strategic escalations to coincide with special days like the Zimbabwean Independence Day. Additionally, the general strike was called just as the government had effectively run out of money, and had stopped paying civil servants and teachers their wages and increased their harassment of minibus and taxi drivers.

KEY THEORY

Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)

After 37 years under Mugabe, most Zimbabweans had normalized their anger towards the regime and adapted to their unbearable economic circumstances. But the amalgamation of brave acts in confronting the regime

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle of the Camel
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign
- Manich Msamah
- Standing Man
- Street Graduation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

movement. Since the people were technically invited by a government official, the police could not crack down on the gathering (see: PRINCIPLE: Use the law, don't be afraid of it). After that, one action led to another until our movement called for a general strike on July 6, 2016. Street protest was still illegal, but nine million people across Zimbabwe remained at home, causing a total national shutdown.

In November 2017, widespread action and protests led by multiple youth groups and movements that had erupted in the wake of #ThisFlag brought an end to Robert Mugabe's 37 years of iron-fist rule.

THISFLAG IS NOT ME, EVAN MAWARIRE; IT IS EVERY PERSON WHO TOOK ON THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT IN THEIR INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY. #THISFLAG IS A MOVEMENT BY AND FOR EVERY ZIMBABWEAN INDIVIDUAL, EVERY ZIMBABWEAN ORGANIZATION, AND EVERY ZIMBABWEAN PARTY AND UNION THAT IS FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM AND A DIGNIFIED LIFE. WE WON AN IMPORTANT VICTORY IN NOVEMBER 2017, BUT OUR BROADER GOALS ARE YET TO BE ACHIEVED (SEE: THEORY: PALACE COUP) AND OUR STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

LEARN MORE

#ThisFlag E Mawarire official Twitter account
<https://twitter.com/pastorevanlive>

Our challenges are bigger than Robert Mugabe — a conversation with 'protest pastor' Evan Mawarire
Waging Nonviolence, 2017
<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2017/02/conversation-zimbabwe-protest-pastor-evan-mawarire/>

National shutdown architect speaks out
The Zimbabwe Independent, 2016
<https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2016/07/08/national-shutdown-architect-speaks/>

- Distributed action
- General strike
- Hashtag campaign
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Storytelling

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Build strength through repetition
- Create online-offline synergy
- Focus on basic needs
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Recapture the flag
- Seek safety in support networks
- Timing is everything
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Decolonization
- Ethical spectacle
- Framing
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Palace Coup

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Theory of change

TAGS

Austerity, Corruption, State violence, Street protest, Digital organizing, Dictatorship, Wealth inequality, Nonviolence

STORY

#YOUSTINK

In 2015, in Lebanon, more than 100,000 protesters took to the streets in response to a garbage crisis, triggering a resistance movement that told the corrupt government “You Stink.”

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hassan Chamoun

Hassan Chamoun is a freelance filmmaker, videographer, and photographer who has worked and participated, with his very dear camera, in environmental projects and political movements across Lebanon. He also writes at Global Voices.

“THE NAME #YOUSTINK SYMBOLISES BOTH THE LITERAL STINK OF THE GARBAGE PILING UP ON THE STREETS AS WELL AS HOW THE RULING ELITE STINK OF CORRUPTION AND INJUSTICE.”

Life imitates art, they say, but life can also imitate corrupt politics, and when it does, you have a great opportunity to point out the truth and strike a blow for justice. The Lebanese people were handed such an opportunity on the July 17, 2015 when the country’s privatized waste management monopoly closed the Naameh landfill (aka the “Landfill of Death”) and suspended its waste collection operations. Garbage piled up in the streets of the capital, Beirut, and other cities, and began to stink. Meanwhile, the corrupt and dysfunctional government had no alternative plan.

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war (1975 - 1991), the government had been riven by sectarianism, corruption, and favouritism, which had led to endless infrastructural crises, including electricity blackouts, potable water shortages, air pollution, inadequate public health care, and poor public transport. But the garbage crisis of 2015 was the straw that broke the camel’s back for the country’s many frustrated citizens — and they jumped on it to denounce the incompetence of the government, as well as raise more deep-seated concerns.

With the summer heat, life in the garbage-filled streets of Beirut became unbearable and posed a very serious health hazard, leading to protests that kept mounting to eventually reach more than 100,000 protesters in August (see: TACTIC: Mass street action). The initial goal of the then forming “YouStink” movement was the removal of garbage from the streets and finding a proper environmental solution for this crisis. But when the government

KEY PRINCIPLE

Change a name to change the game

No one in Lebanon is unaware of the corruption in which the country is submerged, but by linking the garbage occupying the streets to the garbage occupying official governmental seats, “YouStink” activated that awareness and turned into a movement. It got people to relate their hourly misery directly to political corruption. The obvious, common-sense simplicity of the link helped counter the government’s attempt to delegitimize the movement and its demands.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel

cracked down on protesters, the movement was thrust to the next level. People were outraged that the government would arrest and use violence against citizens that simply wanted to live in a country where they could breathe the air (see: PRINCIPLE: Anger works best when you have the moral high ground). The movement grew and attracted people of different sects, backgrounds, and political orientations.

People joined not only to protest the ever-present garbage filling the cities, but to protest the entire corrupt political class and the broken political system. The name "YouStink" was a stroke of genius that linked the two together. It symbolises both the literal stink of the garbage piling up on the streets as well as how the ruling elite stink of corruption and injustice (see: PRINCIPLE: Change a name to change the game).

YouStink became a widespread, popular, and independent movement, and as it grew the demands expanded to include: an end to the garbage crisis, an end to police brutality, an end to the majoritarian electoral law, and the enactment of a proportional representation electoral system.

While the surge of mobilization (see: THEORY: Al faza'a [a surge of solidarity]) eventually faded out over time, "YouStink" continues to move forward on multiple fronts: exposing corruption; boosting the chances of independent, social justice-oriented candidates for parliament; and building awareness around the need for effective environmental solutions for the garbage crisis that erupted in 2015.

LEARN MORE

YouStink Facebook page

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/tol3etre7etkom>

Naameh Landfill Lebanon

Environmental Justice Atlas, 2016

<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/naameh-landfill-lebanon>

Beirut's Mounting Trash Reflects Crisis of Government

Reuters, 2015

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-government/beirut-mounting-trash-reflects-crisis-of-government-idUSKCN0PX16320150723>

- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Earth First!
- Honk at Parliament
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Manich Msamah
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Blockade
- Creative disruption
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Occupation
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Brand or be branded
- Build strength through repetition
- Change a name to change the game
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Focus on basic needs
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Show, don't tell
- Turn the tables
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Direct action
- Neoliberalism
- Poverty
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Pillars of power

TAGS

Corruption, Environment, Humour, Democracy, Direct

action, Health, Privatization,
State violence, Land use

STORY

99% BAT SIGNAL

As 20,000 people marched across the Brooklyn Bridge at the height of the Occupy Wall Street uprising in 2011, guerrilla-projectionists lit up the skyline with a huge “99% bat signal” light projection.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mark Read

Mark Read is a filmmaker and professor of Media Studies at NYU, with a focus on video as a tactical tool in community organizing. In other incarnations he has also been a community gardens activist; a Union Square Park defender; a Critical Mass rider and organizer; a coordinator of large spectacles in public spaces such as subway train parties; and a core organizer and propagandist for Reclaim the Streets NYC.

“IT SEEMED TOO PERFECT A PLAN, SO WE GOT TO WORK MAKING IT A REALITY.”

“99% / MIC CHECK! / LOOK AROUND / YOU ARE A PART / OF A GLOBAL UPRISING / WE ARE A CRY / FROM THE HEART / OF THE WORLD / WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE / ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE / HAPPY BIRTHDAY / #OCCUPY MOVEMENT / OCCUPY WALL STREET / [list of cities, states and countries] / OCCUPY EARTH / WE ARE WINNING / IT IS THE BEGINNING OF THE BEGINNING / DO NOT BE AFRAID / LOVE.”

—Projection text by Mark Read

At the height of the Occupy Wall Street uprising that took the US by storm in 2011, a coalition of labour unions called for a national day of action on November 17 to push back against austerity and demand infrastructure improvements and jobs. Actions were planned for 17 bridges in 17 cities. In New York City, a permit was obtained for a large rally in the Wall Street area, with a march over the Brooklyn Bridge to follow. November 17 also happened to be the two-month birthday celebration for Occupy Wall Street. People wanted something spectacular to happen, something beautiful.

The November 17 action coordination working group planned to purchase 10,000 small LED lights to hand out to the crowd as they encircled City Hall and streamed over the pedestrian walkway of the bridge, creating a river of light. The metaphor of light was important, as we were celebrating Occupy Wall Street’s commitment to shining a light on a corrupt and broken political and economic system. But we needed something bigger. We started talking about

KEY TACTIC

Guerrilla projection

Guerrilla projection is a visually powerful and often very beautiful method for delivering a political message. It can be used as an action in and of itself, or to enhance existing actions; to rebrand an existing structure, or to frame an action. It’s versatile, carries little risk, can be done inexpensively, and requires surprisingly less technical savvy than you might think. The success or failure of the tactic will always depend on the quality of the content: Make sure that you balance the desire to do something artful with the need for clarity.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use the power of ritual

The human microphone had

projections, and Hero (yes, his name is Hero) suggested a “bat signal.” A big circle with “99%” in the middle. (Like the one the city of Gotham shines up into the sky when they need Batman’s help in the fight against crime and corruption). It seemed too perfect, so we got to work making that a reality.

Within spitting distance of the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian walkway stands a 32-story gray concrete slab of a building commonly known as “the Verizon building.” A flat windowless expanse approximately 75 feet in width extends up the face, with low ambient light. We had our projection screen. We also had secured the loan of a powerful projector, and we had ideas for content. What we needed was a projection room.

Specifically, we needed to project from an apartment in one of the public housing projects across the way from the Verizon building. I put up signs offering \$250 for the use of an apartment for an art and film project. There were few calls at first, but eventually a call came in from one Denise Vega — a single mother of two, born and raised in those housing projects and working to keep her family fed. She had the window we needed, and more importantly a supportive and enthusiastic attitude. In the end she refused to take any money for the use of her home, declaring, “I can’t charge you money, this is for the people.”

In the days before the action we began to realize that we would be able to project not just the 99% symbol, but also words large enough and bright enough for people to read from the bridge. This opened up many possibilities. What if we could get the crowd to interact with the projections? We would need to project chants in the proper cadence, to get people started. After that, we imagined that we might be able to get people to use the “human microphone” to “mic check” a brief statement.

Amazingly, all went as planned, and the action was even more successful than we could have hoped for. The 20,000-strong crowd on the bridge went crazy. We could hear them shouting, cheering, and, yes, “mic-checking” from the window of Denise’s bedroom. We were interacting with the crowd, mixing the projections on the fly in response to the crowd’s reactions. It was the galvanizing, unifying moment of joy and celebration that we’d hoped to provide this burgeoning global movement for a more just and democratic world.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

#Occupy Bat Signal for the 99% | Occupy Wall Street Video
OccupyTVNY, 2011

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2-T6ox_tgM

Interview with Creator of Occupy Wall Street ‘Bat-Signal’ Projections

become the central ritual of the Occupy movement. It is itself a repeatedly performed act of solidarity and unity. With the right message and setting, it can have a powerful emotional effect on crowds. By working it into our light projection, we hit on a new incarnation of this powerful ritual.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Occupy Wall Street

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Culture jamming
- Guerrilla projection
- Light Brigade
- Mass street action
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves
- Hope is a muscle
- Keep it positive
- Know your cultural terrain
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Seize the means of communication
- Stay on message
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Activism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics

During Brooklyn Bridge #N17 March

<https://boingboing.net/2011/11/17/interview-with-the-occupy-wall.html>

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Capitalism,
Communications, Community
building, Corruption, Language,
Media, Movement building,
Wealth inequality

STORY

ANGOLA 15+2

The story of how 17 young activists risked their lives in hunger strikes and “surprise protests” to force out Angola’s brutal dictator and bring an end to over 30 years of oppression.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Laurinda Goveia

Laurinda Goveia is an Angolan activist who participated in the movement that fought against the dictatorship of José Eduardo dos Santos. She now fights for the rights of vulnerable women through the platform “Ondjango Feminista.”

“WE WERE NOW POLITICAL PRISONERS, BUT OUR STRUGGLE CONTINUED. WE SWITCHED TO TACTICS LIKE NUDITY AND HUNGER STRIKES.”

On March 7, 2011, a group of young Angolans organized the first non-partisan protest in the country in 35 years. They decided to confront decades of oppression in pursuit of political rights, freedom of expression, social justice, and access to public services. This protest birthed the “7311 collective,” named after the date of that initial protest.

LEARN MORE

Central Angola 7311

<https://www.facebook.com/centralangola7311/>

How an Underground Hip Hop Artist and His Book Club Threaten Angola’s Regime

Phil Wilmot, *Waging Nonviolence*, 2016

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/how-an-underground-hip-hop-artist-and-his-book-club-threaten-angolas-regime/>

KEY TACTICS

Hunger strike

The 7311 activists strategically used hunger strikes as a pressure tactic to draw global attention, significantly increasing pressure on the ruling regime. A hunger strike is a dramatic moral individual act, an “asymmetric” tactic that can be very effective even in the face of an extreme disparity in power (like 17 individuals against an entire regime). It proved very effective in garnering public sympathy and building political momentum for the 15+2 prisoners case and the broader demand for political rights and freedoms in Angola.

Surprise protest

How can we instill a widespread feeling of revolt amongst the public without exposing anyone to vicious police attacks? By staging a string of light-speed actions, publicizing them on the

spot, and disappearing just before the police arrive! The “surprise protest” was 7311’s most brilliant tactical innovation and is similar to other underground tactics such as clandestine leafleting, [noise-making protest or Cacerolazo] (Noise-making protest (Cacelarazo)), and guerrilla theatre, that are designed to work well even under circumstances of extreme repression.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Maintain nonviolent discipline

We knew that winning a battle over a repressive regime that has a monopoly on violence and a near-monopoly on the media necessitated maintaining nonviolent discipline. Our strict commitment to nonviolent action made it difficult for the regime to accuse us of terrorism or treason, classic pretexts which a regime’s propaganda apparatus uses against the popular opposition.

Focus on basic needs

Our larger political demands are absolutely crucial for achieving a truly just Angola. However, the harsh realities of people’s daily lives (such as poor sanitation services, police harassment, or lack of access to adequate health care) often take precedence over broader political goals and ideals. Focusing on images and stories that spoke to people’s everyday struggles and needs was vital in making our movement and its demands relevant to the public.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel

- #GambiaHasDecided
- Standing Man
- #ThisFlag
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Hunger strike
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Nudity
- Storytelling
- Surprise protest

Principles

- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Focus on basic needs
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Seek safety in support networks

Theories

- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Dictatorship, Corruption, Action design, Direct action, Human rights, Movement building, Nonviolence, Social media, State violence, Street protest

STORY

BARBIE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

Switching the voice boxes of Barbie and GI Joe dolls generated hilarious results and a much-needed conversation about gender stereotypes in America.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mike Bonanno

Mike Bonanno (né Igor Vamos) is a guy from Troy, New York, who started the “Barbie Liberation Front” and co-founded the Yes Men. When not involved in tomfoolery, Bonanno is also a professor of media art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

“ARMED WITH SOLDERING IRONS, SCREWDRIVERS, EPOXY, AND SWEAT, THE BARBIE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION WENT TO WORK.”

On Christmas day in 1993, kids were finding more than they bargained for under their trees: Mattel’s new talking Barbie dolls growled “Dead men tell no lies,” while Hasbro’s macho GI Joe’s chirped “I love to shop with you.”

Who was behind this surreal switcheroo? Enter the Barbie Liberation Organization, a self-described group of “veterans against war toys” and “concerned parents” who claimed responsibility for switching the voice boxes on hundreds of the toys nationwide. A full week of news and talk radio ensued, sparking widespread discussion about gender stereotypes.

The action was a response to a very foolish PR move Mattel had made nearly a year earlier, when it released a new talking Barbie that said “Math is hard.” Outraged feminists thrashed them in the press, and behind closed doors a small group of folks began plotting revenge. What else could Barbie say? One participant in the informal brainstorm sessions — an octogenarian Hungarian Holocaust survivor who went by the nickname “Gyongi” — didn’t care about Barbie: The problem for her was GI Joe. A quick trip to the toy store confirmed that GI Joe talked too, and a plot was hatched. All that was required to make these toys into gender-bending Trojan horses was a voice-box organ-transplant. Armed with soldering irons, screwdrivers, epoxy, and sweat, the Barbie Liberation Organization went to work.

The next step was to recruit other BLO members, who purchased the toys in different cities, and sent them in for surgery. Each toy was carefully removed from its packaging, “fixed,” and returned.

KEY TACTIC

Shop-dropping

The surreptitious introduction of poetically enhanced products to store shelves is a sure-fire way of delivering subversive content to even the peskiest demographic. In the BLO’s case, the shop-dropping was just the foundation upon which a major media spectacle was built.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Do the media’s work for them

The BLO’s success relied not just on a “sticky” prank, but on thoughtfully crafted press releases, video news releases, and having people ready to be interviewed. It was an artful marriage of creative storytelling and do-it-yourself publicity.

Make your own myths

Exaggerate. Don’t be afraid to make it sound bigger than it is.

“Shop droppers” then put them right back on the store shelves they came from (without getting a refund, so nobody could call it stealing).

But this wasn't to be a simple spectacle, it was to be a media spectacle, so an elaborate press plan was hatched. Along with each repackaged toy they included a doctored instruction sheet, complete with the phone numbers of local and national press, and a voicemail number for the BLO. The idea was that kids would open their toys, parents would call the numbers, and the media would cover it.

The day before Christmas, the BLO sent out a press release claiming responsibility for the action. The hope was that on Christmas day, when the media started getting phone calls from real people who'd gotten the toys, they'd put two and two together.

In case even that didn't do the trick, the BLO built additional layers of redundancy into the media plan. They recruited two kids — one in San Diego, California, and one in Albany, New York — who were willing to put on a little show for the news cameras, thereby “proving” that the action was really happening. Lastly, the BLO kept a stash of extra dolls on hand and stood ready to scramble to the toy stores nearest to any media who called their voicemail. When the media called, the BLO located the nearest store to the caller, got there as fast as they could, and put an altered toy on the shelf. On at least one occasion, BLO members were still in the store when the journalist arrived. They watched him find the toy, test it, and triumphantly purchase it — proof-positive of the power and reach of the Barbie Liberation Organization.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Barbie Liberation Organization

Yes Men, YouTube, 2008

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzTWF1jVwH4>

While Barbie Talks Tough, G.I. Joe Goes Shopping

David Firestone, New York Times, 1993

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/31/us/while-barbie-talks-tough-g-i-joe-goes-shopping.html>

There were only about fifty dolls that made it to store shelves in three states, but the BLO said 300 in fifty states. No problem. The next Christmas, when the media came knocking, the BLO had done “thousands more” with no effort whatsoever.

Make it funny

A video news release showing Barbie dolls with soldering irons operating on GI Joes had TV anchors giggling like kids in between segments. With smiles like that, even conservative commentators were embracing the content.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Santa Claus Army
- Walk a mile in her shoes
- Yomango

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Identity correction
- Shop-dropping

Principles

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny
- Make the invisible visible
- Make your own myths
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the materials at hand

Theories

- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony
- Feminism
- Hacking
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle

Methodologies

- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Communications,
Gender and sexuality, Humour,
Media, Pranks, Women's rights

STORY

BATTLE IN SEATTLE

In 1999, in a carnival of creative nonviolence, 70,000 protesters shut down the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, scoring a victory against neoliberalism and launching the global justice movement.

CONTRIBUTED BY

John Sellers

John Sellers is co-founder of The Other 98%, a founding partner of Agit-Pop Communications, and president of the Ruckus Society. Before leaving to help start Ruckus, John worked for Greenpeace in the early '90s where he had the great fortune to be integrally involved in powerful peaceful actions all over the world: from the high seas with the Rainbow Warrior to the streets of Seattle in the uprising against the WTO.

"OUR THEME WAS "ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE" AND WE WERE LIVING IT OUT."

In 1999, the World Trade Organization decided to hold global capitalism's board meeting in Seattle, US. Most North Americans had never heard of the WTO before, but savvy organizers across a spectrum of single-issue silos, including labour, environmental, human rights and others, decided that they would team up and act like a movement for a change. Our critiques of neoliberalism varied widely and there were both reformers and abolitionists in our ranks, but we were united in the recognition that the meeting represented a potent symbolic target for anyone challenging the juggernaut of undemocratic global corporate power.

Radicals and liberals agreed early on that a healthy inside/outside strategy was called for. A critical mass of activists began organizing, recruiting, and training together to attempt a many-thousands-strong blockade of the WTO meeting. We believed that if we could achieve the tactical victory of a mass shutdown of the WTO's coming-out party, it would strengthen the hands of everyone working against corporate globalization.

Scores of affinity groups organized themselves into thirteen clusters, and through a highly functional (and democratic) spokescouncil, hammered out a plan to capture the key intersections around the Seattle Convention Center in a massive nonviolent blockade. And so, in the predawn darkness of November 30, 5000 direct actionistas marched through the streets of Seattle toward their targets. Each individual action had its own logic and

KEY TACTIC

Blockade

The shut-down of the WTO blended both soft and hard blockade technologies. Of the thousands who participated, all but a few hundred simply joined hands and stood shoulder to shoulder with their comrades to prevent delegates from getting through. However, several hundred people used lock-boxes, chains, barrels, and other hard blockade technology to hold key intersections where we knew our people power would be lightest. With art and costumes and good cheer, we made these gear-intensive technical "lockdowns" look beautiful, not scary.

KEY PRINCIPLES

One no, many yesses

Whether your YES! was the

narrative. Each would have stood on its own as extraordinary. When connected together, they became unstoppable.

The action frame we chose was carnival-protest, equal parts communicative and concrete (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action). Outside the stodgy corporate meeting, a giant dance party broke out, complete with marching bands, dancers, theatre troupes, giant puppets, radical cheerleaders, a phalanx of 300 turtles, and even Christmas carolers. Thousands of folks joined together (with hands and blockade chains) around key entrances and intersections, preventing delegates from entering, which was the instrumental part of the action. It could have looked threatening, but with all the celebratory art and solidarity, we looked beautiful and human doing it. Our theme was "Another World Is Possible" and we were living it out (see: THEORY: Ethical spectacle).

By morning, 5,000 more folks, inspired by the audacity and courage of these artful actions, had spontaneously joined the human wall around the WTO. Teamsters and turtles were literally dancing together in the streets. A few hours later, as the Seattle police unleashed a torrent of tear gas and pepper spray to crack the blockade, 50,000 labour marchers defied their own marshals and reinforced us with a sea of humanity (see: PRINCIPLE: Maintain nonviolent discipline). One of the biggest business meetings on Earth had been shut down, a tactical victory most thought impossible. And the rest, as they say, is history.

The impact of Seattle was enormous. It launched the global justice movement in the Global North. It showed that a people's victory against global capital was possible. It created a teachable moment — both for the public, on the WTO and the dark side of corporate globalization, and also for the movement, showcasing direct and mass action (Mass street action) tactics and a carnivalesque sensibility that are still influential today. Also, the new wave of actionistas who got trained in Seattle went on to play critical roles in progressive movements in the decades that followed.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

This is What Democracy Looks Like
Big Noise Films, 2000

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBUZH2vCD_k

Where Was the Color in Seattle? Looking for Reasons Why the Great Battle Was so White

Elizabeth Martinez, Colorlines Magazine, 2000

<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/where-was-color-seattlelooking-reasons-why-great-battle-was-so-white>

freedom to keep making the Roquefort cheese that your great-grandfather made or to continue living in an ancient rainforest unpoisoned by Big Oil or to keep your good union job and not have it outsourced to a sweatshop, you shared a NO! with billions of others. This "unity in diversity" was present on the streets with Teamsters and turtles linking arms, and in the "movement of movements" that organized the protest.

Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Before the WTO uprising in Seattle, relatively few people in the Global North questioned the process of corporate globalization and so-called "free" trade. Seattle jolted the entire Overton window sharply to the left. Fair trade and other alternatives moved out of the fringe. The idea that militant mass action could stop corporate globalization in its tracks became not only think-able, but popular. Every major summit for the next two years was met with a mass protest.

KEY THEORY

Framing

When 50,000 lefties take the streets to confront corporate power, you're going to get 50,000 different critiques. To try to unify all that message diversity, we designed a "framing action." The day before the big protest, four climbers dropped a massive banner 300 feet above Seattle's main commuter highway that framed the action as a choice between democracy and the WTO. The photo of the banner went global on the day of the mass action, summing up in

stark and simple terms what the Battle in Seattle was all about.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Nuit Debout
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Schools of Struggle
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Carnival protest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Balance art and message
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- If you're not uncomfortable, your coalition is too small
- Maintain nonviolent discipline

- One no, many yesses
- Reframe the issue
- Take risks, but take care
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Think narratively
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Artivism
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Participatory democracy
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- The Global South
- The tactics of everyday life
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Action star
- Art of Hosting
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Austerity, Capitalism, Direct action, Street protest, Nonviolence, Labour, Movement building

STORY

BATTLE OF THE CAMEL

A violent attack on protesters in Tahrir Square by pro-regime, camel-riding thugs was a turning point in the Egyptian revolution, generating popular support for the protesters and leading to the fall of Mubarak.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Loay Bakr

A graduate of the Faculty of Law at Helwan University, Loay has been an activist in Egyptian civil society since 2008 and has participated in the observation of municipal and parliamentary elections. He was part of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and is co-founder of the El-Dostour Party, member of the coalition "Gabhet Tarik El Thawra," and co-founder of Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Egypt.

"THE PEOPLE HAD ANSWERED THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE."

On February 2, 2011, in a desperate attempt to disrupt the masses of protesters who were occupying Cairo's central Tahrir Square, thousands of *baltajiah* attacked protesters using stones, knives, and Molotov cocktails. Many rode camels, mules, and horses and used swords, sticks, and whips to attack the demonstrators. New fighting erupted again the next day involving live ammunition and rubber bullets.

Preliminary reports of a post-revolutionary fact-finding committee found that key members of the regime were behind the *baltajiah* who led this battle, demonstrating once again how convenient it is for those in power to get civilian thugs to do their dirty work for them.

Though the aim of the attack was to abort the revolution, quite the opposite happened. The attack instead provoked a massive wave of sympathy and support. The murder of nearly a dozen protesters and the wounding of 2,000 others created a public outcry, which led millions of people to take to the streets and join the Tahrir Square sit-in, forcing decades-long dictator Hosni Mubarak to step down nine days later.

The Battle of the Camel was a turning point in the Egyptian revolution. But it could have gone either way. What factors caused it to be a victory for the people? One was the resilience and bravery of the protesters. The thugs were each paid 200 Egyptian pounds to carry out the attacks, but the protesters' strong belief in their right to "bread, freedom, and social justice" was much sturdier than any

KEY TACTIC

Occupation

Occupying Tahrir Square was a geographically and politically strategic move. The square is located in the geographical centre of Cairo and is a focal entry and exit point. It disrupted business-as-usual not only for local shops and vendors, but also tourism, one of Egypt's main sources of income. Politically, having millions of people united under one demand was unprecedented for Egypt, and having them all gathered in the square showcased their numerical strength. Thus, the occupation of the square exceeded the threshold of acceptable risk for the regime. For 18 days, Tahrir Square became home to many protesters. Tents were erected, controlled points of entry were created, and revolutionary music concerts were held. What helped

monetary incentive. They not only held their ground, but also capitalized on the attack to expand and escalate the revolution.

For the first seven days of the occupation of the square there was no indication that the regime was willing to compromise. People were beginning to feel that their efforts were not bearing any fruit. But the attack showed that the regime was hysterical and had run out of options (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction). Despite the blood in the streets, it gave protesters a huge morale boost.

The protesters began calling upon their friends and relatives, marching through the alleyways, pleading with their Egyptian brothers and sisters to come to their rescue. And they did. The brutality of the regime provoked hundreds of thousands who were sitting on the fence and watching the revolution from afar to take to the streets and join the sit-in in Tahrir Square (see: PRINCIPLE: Anger works best when you have the moral high ground).

At dawn of February 2, there were 30,000 thugs and 25,000 protesters. By the afternoon, the number of protesters reached 300,000, and by nightfall there were a million protesters in the streets of Egypt. The people had answered the plight of the people in a surge of solidarity (see: THEORY: Al faza'a [a surge of solidarity]).

LEARN MORE

Egypt Revolution Turns Ugly as Mubarak Fights Back
The Guardian, 2011

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/02/egypt-revolution-turns-ugly>

Egypt Speaker "Plotted Battle of the Camel"
Al Jazeera, 2011

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/07/2011714172156277964.html>

The Battle of the Camel: The Final Straw to Mubarak's Regime
Daily News Egypt, 2013

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/02/03/the-battle-of-the-camel-the-final-straw-for-mubaraks-regime/>

make this tactic sustainable was the generosity of the people living around the square, who opened their houses for protesters to wash, eat, and rest.

KEY PRINCIPLE

The real action is your target's reaction

During the first week of the revolution, there was no indication that the regime was willing to heed the demands of the people. Many of us felt that the sleepless nights we were spending in Tahrir Square were a waste of time and should come to an end. But the Battle of the Camel changed our mood, as well as the mood of the entire country. The Egyptian people's response to the battle took the regime by surprise; it was clear they were reacting to the situation rather than containing it. The only interpretation was that the regime had run out of options and was effectively in a fight-or-flight mode. Now we knew: The harder we fought, the closer Mubarak was to fleeing.

KEY THEORY

Baltajiah

The Battle of the Camel is one of the most infamous examples of baltajiah in action. A marginalized group was paid an insignificant amount of money to attack the protestors. The regime tried to distance itself from the thugs by claiming that they were loyalists who were supporting Mubarak's rule. When it became evident that the regime's hands were soaked in blood, people were provoked. There was no room left for justification. Furthermore, the thugs could not sustain their attack when they

themselves had to pay the price.

Also, it became too expensive for the regime and some of its supporters from the velvet class to fund 25,000 thugs. And so, they vanished.

KEY METHODOLOGY

Spectrum of allies

The Battle of the Camel truly shifted the spectrum of allies and moved many of those who were on the fence (both inactive supporters and neutral people) to actually join the revolution. And this made all the difference. For the first week, tens of thousands of Egyptians were merely observers of the revolution. They preferred going about their daily lives without disruptions or were too comfortable behind the screen watching history. However, when protesters capitalized on the incident of the Battle of the Camel, and spoke to people's hearts and minds by exposing and highlighting the brutality of the regime, the people who had previously been inactive and neutral suddenly felt they had something bigger to lose. Quickly, people of different classes, ideologies, and backgrounds took to the streets and joined the revolution.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Manich Msamah
- Nuit Debout
- Québec Student Strike
- #ThisFlag
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Reframe the issue
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Alienation effect
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Hamoq and hamas
- Palace Coup
- Political identity paradox
- Postcolonialism
- Revolutionary reform

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Corruption, Dictatorship, Direct action, State violence, Street protest

STORY

BICYCLE RALLY FOR PEACE

In 2014, on the one-year anniversary of political violence in Rajganj, Noakhali, Bangladesh, the local community organized a bicycle rally to promote peace.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mohammad Shazed

Mohammad Shazed is a Bangladeshi activist working on climate change, disaster management, food security, tax justice, democratic budget movement, and human rights.

One year after an ugly incident of political violence, activists organized a cycle rally to commemorate the tragedy and promote peace (see: TACTIC: Critical Mass). The rally was open to the public; the cycling community participated, as well as youth from many different organizations including Participatory Research and Action Network (PRAN) and the Gandhi Ashram Trust (GAT).

We bicycled from the centre of the city to the place where violence took place. To make the rally colourful and attractive, we made banners and decorated bicycles with colorful papers. For added attention, we used small, noisy and interesting instruments like whistles, pinwheels, etc. Around 50 cyclists participated. We travelled 15 kilometers to the site. We made a single line in accordance with local traffic laws.

Once we arrived, we met with members of the community. They shared their stories with us, and told us about the problems they are facing, and how they are trying to recover. We made sure they were aware of their rights.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Critical Mass
- Trek

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Foster safer spaces
- Make the invisible visible

Theories

- Human rights

TAGS

Community building, Human rights, State violence, War and peace

STORY

BIDDER 70 (TIM DECHRISTOPHER)

In December 2008, Tim DeChristopher disrupted an auction of Utah oil and gas drilling leases by bidding, and winning, many parcels. He then used his arrest and trial to make the case for bolder climate action.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

Duncan Meisel

Duncan Meisel is a strategic troublemaker who lives in Brooklyn, where he conspires on how to respond to the impending end of the world. He is particularly interested in trying to stop the warming of the earth, ending the impoverishment of America by corporate power, and putting an end to the prison system as we know it.

"TIM'S ACTION STANDS OUT AS ONE OF THE MOST INSPIRED AND SUCCESSFUL ACTS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN RECENT US HISTORY."

In December 2008, word got out about an illegal US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) auction of oil and gas leases for drilling near beautiful Arches and Canyonlands National Parks in Utah. The auction was President Bush's parting gift to his good friends in industry. Student Tim DeChristopher set out with the intention of physically disrupting the event, but as he walked through the door, he was taken by surprise when an attendant asked him if he was there to bid. "Why, yes, yes I am," he answered, using his best Jedi mind trick, and the attendant gave Tim a paddle. In Tim's words:

Once I was in there, I realized that any kind of speech or disruption wasn't going to be very effective. But I saw pretty quickly how I could have a pretty major impact on the way this worked. It took me a little bit of time to build up my courage, knowing what the consequences would be — and then I started bidding and started driving up the prices. But I knew I could be doing more. So then I started winning bids, and disrupting it as clearly as I could.

Tim won about a dozen lots in a row — until the auctioneer realized something was wrong, suspended the proceedings, and had Tim arrested. After President Obama took office, his administration investigated the auction for "irregularities," and a federal judge

KEY TACTIC

Creative disruption

Tim intervened directly in the proceedings that would have sold off beloved public land to the oil companies. He hit upon an effective way to make sure the auction did not proceed (basically inventing a new kind of creative disruption on the spot), and then defended that action without compromise.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Consider your audience

Even when given the chance, Tim did not stand up and harangue the crowd of oil men, knowing such a crude disruption would be futile. Instead, he opted to do something seemingly compliant, but ultimately deeply disruptive: He played along with the

cancelled the sales. Tim's action — which single handedly saved many precious acres of Utah wilderness from destruction — stands out as one of the most inspired and successful acts of civil disobedience in recent US history.

At his sentencing hearing, Tim addressed the presiding judge to explain his actions. He concluded his remarks with the following words:

I want you to join me in standing up for the right and responsibility of citizens to challenge their government. I want you to join me in valuing this country's rich history of nonviolent civil disobedience. If you share those values but think my tactics are mistaken, you have the power to redirect them. You can sentence me to a wide range of community service efforts that would point my commitment to a healthy and just world down a different path. You can have me work with troubled teens, as I spent most of my career doing . . . You can steer that commitment if you agree with it, but you can't kill it. This is not going away. At this point of unimaginable threats on the horizon, this is what hope looks like. In these times of a morally bankrupt government that has sold out its principles, this is what patriotism looks like. With countless lives on the line, this is what love looks like, and it will only grow. The choice you are making today is what side are you on.

After reading his statement, Tim was sentenced to two years in federal prison.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Tim DeChristopher
<http://www.timdechristopher.org/>

Posing As a Bidder, Utah Student Disrupts Government Auction of 150,000 Acres Of Wilderness For Oil and Gas Drilling
Democracy Now, 2008
https://www.democracynow.org/2008/12/22/posing_as_a_bidder_utah_student

I Do Not Want Mercy, I Want You to Join Me
Tim DeChristopher, Common Dreams, 2011
<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2011/07/27/i-do-not-want-mercy-i-want-you-join-me>

Bidder70
<http://www.bidder70film.com/>

bidding process until it became clear that he had no intention of paying for all the leases he'd won. Then he turned his attention to another, more dispersed audience: activists who would be inspired by his example, and the public whose sympathies could shift toward greater support for bolder action on Climate Change (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies).

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Hoax
- Infiltration
- Jail solidarity
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Anyone can act
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Get arrested in an intelligent way
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Turn the tables
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Corruption

- Direct action
- Neoliberalism
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Climate justice, Capitalism,
Direct action, Energy,
Environment, Human rights, Land
use, Media, Nonviolence,
Privatization

STORY

BILLIONAIRES FOR BUSH

During President George Bush's 2004 re-election campaign, the Billionaires for Bush used humour, street theatre, and creative media actions to dramatize economic inequality and political corruption in the US.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Brian Fairbanks

Brian Fairbanks began his professional journalism career at the age of fifteen as a staff writer for The Hartford Courant and then went on to serve as an assistant/librarian to Dr. Stephen Ambrose and Douglas Brinkley where he worked on the collected letters of Hunter S. Thompson and the journals of Jack Kerouac. He then became an activist with Billionaires For Bush and local grassroots campaigns in New York City before finally ending up where most of society's outcasts do: in television.

Jeremy Varon

Jeremy Varon is a professor of history at the New School and a longtime activist, having worked with Billionaires for Bush and, most recently, Witness Against Torture. He is author of *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (2004) and teaches classes on social movements and civil disobedience.

"THE MEDIA WAS SMITTEN BY THE BILLIONAIRES' GLAMOUR AND CHARMED BY THEIR SAY-THE-OPPOSITE-OF-WHAT-YOU-BELIEVE THEATRICALS."

"Some people call you the elite," George W. Bush joked to his wealthy funders, "I call you my base." Whether US Republican presidential candidate Bush meant it as a joke or not, the Billionaires for Bush (B4B) campaign used humour, street theatre, and creative media actions to show the country how true the quip was. Working to expose how the Republican Party serves the interests of the super-rich, the Billionaires also addressed the broader issues of economic inequality and corporate greed.

An early version of the campaign in 2000, "Billionaires for Bush (or Gore)," had spread virally via the internet and mainstream media

KEY TACTICS

Distributed action

Well-crafted actions, occurring simultaneously in disparate locales, amplified the campaign's sense of unity, power, and reach. The B4B repertoire of distributed actions included Cheap Labour Day, "Education Is Not for Everyone Day" at the beginning

exposure. It rebranded itself for the 2004 election, taking as its crusade the defeat of Bush. The New York City chapter took the lead, assembling talented volunteers, among them professional designers, media producers, and actors. It then put the campaign pieces in place. A stylish logo swapped the Republican elephant with a piggy bank stuffed with bills. Satirical slogans — “Repeal the First Amendment,” “Free the Forbes 400,” “Corporations are people too” — adorned bumper stickers, buttons, and a slick website, often mimicking the look of Bush’s own propaganda. A songwriter produced tuneful renditions of what the super-wealthy *really* think, performed by meticulously rehearsed singers. “Billionaires” adopted personae, with names and costumes to match, spoofing iconic versions of the .01 percent: the *Monopoly*-style robber baron (Phil T. Rich), the dim-witted heiress (Alexis Anna Rolls), the trust-fund fuck-up (Monet Oliver D’Place), and so on.

Soon, the Billionaires could be found talking down to “the little people” at Bush campaign events, left-wing rallies, and street corners. They could also be found all over the mainstream media, garnering thousands of hits, including multiple features in the *New York Times* and on network and cable TV. Even the chant “Watch more Fox News, then you’ll share our right-wing views!” made it to the air . . . on Fox News.

Media coverage was generated by carefully planned hoaxes, such as the appearance, to a throng of adoring Billionaires, of a Karl Rove impostor (Bush’s senior advisor) at a GOP fundraiser. Other times, the campaign outsmarted the authorities to attract the media glare, such as when it held a croquet match in Central Park, from which a half-million anti-Bush demonstrators had been banned by New York’s mayor. The media was smitten by the Billionaires’ glamour and charmed by their say-the-opposite-of-what-you-believe theatrics.

The campaign was designed to be participatory and national. The core idea was easy both to replicate and embellish. Activists could download the materials they needed to do local actions, while a field organizer helped set up chapters in key swing states like Ohio. By late July, the hundreds of “Billionaires” from thirty states who showed up to protest at the Republican National Convention far exceeded the number of actual billionaires stumping for their President.

Deflated by Bush’s narrow victory, the B4B idea nonetheless lived on, generating spin-off campaigns such as Billionaires for Wealthcare, active in the health care debates of 2008-9 (see: STORY: Public Option Annie). Although, in 2004, the campaign sometimes felt like a clever joke in the wilderness, it in fact anticipated many of the core concerns of Occupy Wall Street and other “Great Recession”-era activism.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

of the school year, and others. “Dick Cheney is Innocent Day” began as a national day of action featuring coordinated, candle-lit vigils in front of Vice-President Dick Cheney’s residence in Washington D.C., state capital buildings, an official Cheney speaking engagement in Milwaukee, and outside the windows of the Fox News headquarters in New York City. Flyers were produced listing Dick’s many crimes (but protesting how baseless they were, of course!) and made available for easy download, alongside a national press release

Culture jamming

The Billionaires for Bush spectacle was a mind-bending double- or triple-take: apparent Bush supporters, spewing over-the-top pro-Bush rhetoric, were really Bush opponents, who made the Republicans appear both venal and ridiculous. Some observers remained fatally confused as to the group’s message. Occasionally, true conservatives begged the Billionaires not to make Bush look bad by being so brazenly pro-rich, as with this email to the campaign from an exasperated Republican: “*Shut up! You are not helping the President get re-elected. You are making the Republican Party look like a bunch of out-of-touch elitists! Assholes!*” Most people, however, soon got the joke: that the Republicans, despite their populist rhetoric, are a party of, by, and for the wealthy. Sometimes the Billionaires also playfully “jammed” the earnest culture of the political left. Retorting “This is what plutocracy looks like!” and

LEARN MORE

Billionaires for Bush

<http://billionairesforbush.com/>

No Billionaire Left Behind: Satirical Activism in America

Angelique Haugerud, 2013

https://books.google.com/books/about/No_Billionaire_Left_Behind.html?id=P4TSNAEACAAJ

A Place for Protest: The Billionaires for Bush Interrupt the Hegemonologue

Larry Bogad, 2006

<http://www.lmbogad.com/docs/bogad-perfandplace.pdf>

TRUTH IS A VIRUS: Meme Warfare and the Billionaires for Bush (or Gore)

Andrew Boyd, 2002

<http://andrewboyd.com/truth-is-a-virus-meme-warfare-and-the-billionaires-for-bush-or-gore/>

“Whose Streets? Wall Street!” to familiar lefty chants, the Billionaires suggested that progressive advocates of We the People had little inkling of the wealth and influence they were up against. The Billionaires didn’t just try to speak truth to power, but also *about* power.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Don't dress like a protester

The Billionaires differentiated themselves from other anti-Bush activists by their upper-crust look and ironic messaging, which denounced the Republicans by parodying their reactionary principles. As something new and different, B4B avoided the media’s boredom with the all-too-predictable angry protesters protesting, well, angrily. The result was media exposure of B4B messaging vastly disproportionate to the group’s size and resources.

Make the invisible visible

Politicians often avoid any direct reference to their ultimate agenda, especially when their plan is to plunder. One of the jobs of the activist is to expose their true intent. This unmasking was central to B4B shtick, and was the basis for particular actions. In 2005, the Billionaires joined the fight against Bush’s plan to privatize social security, which would have been the biggest shift of capital out of the public sector in history. To dramatize this outcome, Billionaires for Bush auctioned off Social Security in the most public forum available: eBay. The auction limited bidding to Wall Street bankers and casino operators and broke down the numbers on exactly what was to

be gained by the wealthy and lost by the rest. Though eBay quickly took down the auction, more than 25,000 people visited the sale, and bidding peaked at \$99,999,999. For days, media coverage continued to spread the message: "Billionaires for Bush auctioned off Social Security on eBay."

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Manich Msamah
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Flash mob
- Guerrilla marketing
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Create many points of entry
- Delegate
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny

- Make the invisible visible
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Personalize and polarize
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Stay on message
- Take advantage of unintentional irony
- Think narratively
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Capitalism
- Corruption
- Ethical spectacle
- Framing
- Memes
- Neoliberalism
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Democracy,
Elections, Humour, Media,
Pranks, Wealth inequality

STORY

BIRTHRIGHT UNPLUGGED/REPLUGGED

The Birthright Unplugged/Replugged project used travel as a subversive act to expose Israel's unjust restrictions of movement and violations of international law.

CONTRIBUTED BY

D. 'Alwan

D. 'Alwan is an Iraqi-American born in the United States who has lived, worked, traveled, and studied in the Middle East and North Africa. Her work has included making guerilla public art and culture jamming, documentary video, violence prevention education, facilitating art programs in U.S. prisons, and designing affordable housing.

"WHEN BIRTHRIGHT UNPLUGGED WAS SERVED WITH A CEASE-AND-DESIST COURT ORDER BY BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL, INSTEAD OF RUNNING FOR COVER, ORGANIZERS SAW IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE THE MEDIA AND PROMOTE THE PROJECT."

"When oppressed, silenced, and marginalized communities tell us their story, they are asking for something in return, asking us to take a stand as they have. To speak out as they have. To take risks, as they have. To truly listen is to know that we must truly act."

—June Jordan

Israel denies Palestinians the internationally recognized right of return for refugees. In addition, the Israeli government created and applies a "law of return" that extends citizenship benefits to any person of Jewish heritage. This is a de facto invitation to anyone of Jewish ancestry to visit and/or move to Israel, while simultaneously excluding millions of Palestinians from access to their ancestral lands. In response, the Birthright Unplugged and Birthright Replugged projects use travel as a subversive act to expose Israel's unjust restrictions of movement and violations of international law.

Birthright Unplugged was designed to expose this Israeli violation of international law while providing edifying experiences for international participants to travel to Historic Palestine, exposing them to the myriad of oppressive circumstances that Palestinians endure daily. This experience engaged participants more deeply in changing policy toward Palestinians and furthering collective liberation.

KEY TACTIC

Culture jamming

We chose to undermine the name of Birthright Israel by retooling it for our own purposes. This allowed us to contest the hidden power and assumptions behind the Zionist notion of birthright, and gain immediate name recognition along with a widely publicized critique of Birthright Israel.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Lead with sympathetic characters

Who is more sympathetic than children? Particularly children living in refugee camps who travel to the towns where their grandparents grew up, whose homes were confiscated and

(Naming the geography of “Historic Palestine” often requires some clarification. Historic Palestine is defined here as including today’s West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and the rest of the areas confiscated by Israel in 1948 when the Israeli state was founded. In Arabic the areas confiscated in 1948 are commonly called “ ‘48;” in this piece these areas will be called “Israel/’48.”)

The Birthright Unplugged program offers travel programming to Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank and the opportunity to spend time with internally displaced Palestinian people living inside Israel, as well as some Jewish Israelis who were working on non-military, non-aid-oriented approaches to the crisis like refusing army service, attending non-violent Palestinian-led marches and other actions. The program was designed primarily for those living in the West, though people of all backgrounds were welcomed. We prioritized people who come to their work with an anti-racist framework and are well positioned within their community to contribute to social justice work upon their return.

Throughout the journey, participants developed an understanding of daily life under occupation and apartheid and learned about the history of the region from people under-represented in Western discourse and profoundly affected by oppressive Israeli policies.

Birthright Unplugged’s sister program, Birthright Replugged, worked with Palestinian children living in refugee camps in the West Bank to enact their “right of return” — the international law that gives all refugees and their descendents the right to return to their ancestral lands. Israel has consistently denied this right to Palestinians since 1948 and also prohibits most Palestinian refugees from even visiting their lands. The simple act of bringing children to places they live near and are entitled to live or spend time in but cannot access at all, such as Jerusalem, the sea, and the villages their grandparents were expelled from is central to the mission of Birthright Replugged. These journeys are increasingly difficult as Israeli apartheid policies further restrict movement for Palestinians.

For three days, the children would stay with families who are Palestinian citizens of Israel; they would visit holy places, Jerusalem, the sea, and their ancestral lands. They would document their experiences with cameras and create exhibits in order to contribute to the collective memory in the refugee camp, and to share their stories with people abroad.

This experience was, and continues to be at the time of this writing, nearly impossible for most Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, who receive identity cards at age 16 which Israel uses to control their movement. As internationals, the program coordinators have been able to move with relative freedom, and so, unlike the children's parents and grandparents, we were able to take them on this trip. While it is technically not illegal, traversing checkpoints with busses full of Palestinian youths is challenging, as Israeli soldiers have little good will towards our young travelers and

mostly demolished by state-building armies, who seek to pray in their holy sites and visit the sea just a few kilometres away. These journeys draw a heartbreakingly real picture of what’s going on that is hard to turn away from (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible).

KEY THEORY

Anti-oppression

At its core, anti-oppression, anti-racist analysis, and intersectionality seek to subvert liberties and privileges in order to expose and address power inequities. Birthright Unplugged subscribes to these frameworks, using travel to expose and challenge power structures.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Ghana ThinkTank
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Build strength through repetition
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Solidarity, not aid
- Turn the tables

Theories

- Anti-oppression

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

tremendous latitude in how they patrol the checkpoints and who they let pass.

In January-February, 2008, Birthright Replugged also ran workshops for Palestinian children in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Palestinians in exile, unlike those living in refugee camps in the West Bank, have no ability to cross Israeli controlled borders to make the journey we take with our other young travelers. For this reason, workshops relied heavily on oral histories from the children's families. Virtual travel was conducted via maps from sources such as the Palestine Land Society.

All the childrens' photography, reflections, and writings about their experiences and their family histories were incorporated into exhibitions that were gifted to the camp communities and shaped into traveling exhibitions for use in the United States.

Shortly after the Birthright Unplugged/Replugged project launched, in 2005, it was served with a cease-and-desist court order for copyright infringement by Birthright Israel, a Zionist organization that offers free trips to "Israel/'48" for Jewish people ages 18-26 from around the world as a means of encouraging young Jews to support the state of Israel and its policies. This court order came at the moment we'd launched our website, had solicited applicants for travel, but hadn't yet taken our first trip. The threat of a lawsuit from this renowned Zionist institution garnered immediate press attention and helped us launch the project with a critique of Israeli propaganda and patriation trips.

We subsequently led hundreds of participants through Birthright Unplugged and Replugged delegations and received a great deal of media attention in Arabic, English, German, and Hebrew. Overall, these trips raised awareness, impacted the lives and work of the participants, made a splash in the media, and helped put Israeli human rights violations on the global map. However, the human rights crisis in Palestine and travel restrictions for Palestinians continue.

LEARN MORE

Resources and additional travel options

Birthright Unplugged

<http://www.birthrightunplugged.org/resources>

Should Israel Birthright include implication for Occupied Territories?

Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, NPR, 2010

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122416343>

Birthright Replugged touring exhibits

<http://www.birthrightunplugged.org/replugged/exhibits/>

TAGS

Art, Colonialism, Education,
Human rights, Land use

STORY

BOXING GENDER OPPRESSION

After Kenya's post-election violence in 2008, when many young women were sexually abused and traumatized, Boxgirls Kenya used boxing to fight the shaming, stigma, and fear they experienced.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hope Chigudu

Hope Chigudu is a Ugandan/Zimbabwean feminist activist and consultant in gender and organizational development. She is interested in coaching and supporting young leaders.

"WE USE BOXING TO FREE GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN FROM FEAR."

"We are as small as the hummingbird, but we are focused, effective, and unstoppable risk takers."

—Boxgirls

After Kenya's post-election violence in 2008, when many young women were sexually abused and traumatized, an organization called Boxgirls Kenya began using boxing as a strategic entry point for providing young women with a powerful antidote to the shaming, stigma, and fear generated by the oppression that they experience.

Most of the young women living in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, are children of rural migrants. Their parents are often away most of the day for work, leaving young girls to care for themselves and their siblings; the schools are poorly equipped; there are no facilities or activities for young people. All this leads to a situation where young women are vulnerable to sexual abuse.

In response, many have found in boxing a safe space to learn self-defence and an entry point for addressing issues related to sex and sexuality, leadership skills, money management, health, and well-being. Boxing has proven to be a powerful tool for equipping girls and young women to protect themselves and ensure their security while boosting self-esteem and building confidence. The initiative has even trained the first female Olympic boxer in Kenyan history, Elizabeth Andiego.

This work has been led by a community-based organization called Boxgirls Kenya, which aims to empower young women to understand the insecurities they are exposed to and to discuss strategies for dealing with them, so they can grow up free to love themselves. Boxgirls speaks movingly of the role boxing plays in the

KEY PRINCIPLES

Make the personal political

Boxing serves to politicize gender oppression by operating according to the feminist maxim "the personal is political." By fostering a safe space (see: PRINCIPLE: Foster safer spaces) for girls and women to share experiences and identify common challenges, participants begin to understand that their personal struggles are the consequences of an abusive and patriarchal social structure which they must work together to dismantle.

Create many points of entry

In Nairobi, boxing is used as an entry point for discussing difficult topics related to sex and sexuality, as well as addressing issues related to violence against women. It's hard sometimes to directly confront controversial political issues, but when it is grounded in something as personal and physical as boxing, people have a greater chance of

bout for a better world:

“Boxing is a strategy, power, and knowledge framework that creates an alternative world in which girls and young women’s bodies are protected and their security assured. We use it to free girls and young women from fear.”

Participants consistently report increased confidence, sense of agency, critical perspective, and willingness and ability to speak out and act against discrimination. It has strengthened young women’s leadership and confidence as citizens and political actors, inspiring them to educate, organize, and empower themselves and other young women to address problems together and challenge violence in every aspect of their lives. Finally, it has become a way to influence and inform the public, parents, schools, and local leaders, and hence change public discourse, attitudes, and behaviour.

LEARN MORE

The Fragile Strength

Documentary, by Patricia Esteve, 2015

<https://vimeo.com/122335637>

Box Girl

Documentary, by Jackie Adiwinata, 2013

<https://vimeo.com/71470557>

BoxGirls Kenya

FICCS Channel, 2012

<https://youtu.be/3MD26xhl2vg>

Kenyan Boxgirl

BBC World Service, 2015

<https://youtu.be/dRTZTC0RteY>

opening up. Sports have broad appeal, especially to youth; they seem non-political and less threatening. Boxgirls took those attractive qualities and provided a gateway to engage deeply in political issues that affected them.

KEY THEORY

Feminism

In her introduction to *Changing Their World: Concepts and Practices of Women’s Movements* (Association of Women’s Rights in Development [AWID], 2008), Srilatha Batliwala argues for an understanding of feminism as:

“an ideology and an analytical framework that is both broader and sharper than it was in the 60s and 70s We now stand not only for gender equality, but for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit, or marginalize any set of people, women and men, on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, class, caste, or ethnicity We seek a transformation

that would create
gender equality
within an entirely
new social order

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Stripping Power in Uganda

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Build strength through repetition
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Create many points of entry
- Focus on basic needs
- Make the invisible visible
- Make the personal political
- Training for the win
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Feminism
- New Pan-Afrikanism

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Education, Gender and sexuality,
Immigration

STORY

BRAZIL'S FREE FARE MOVEMENT

The Free Fare Movement awakened a generation of Brazilians to the power of mass street action and the utopian possibilities inherent in a popular uprising.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Gabi Juns

Gabi Juns is an activist for equality and diversity, and a co-founder of the Escola de Ativismo. She acts to create new ways of communicating, learning and collaborating. Daily cultivates chaos in the order, always believing "tomorrow will be bigger."

Vitor Leal

Vitor Leal is a campaigner and storyteller who became an activist within the Critical Mass movement and discovered an interest for learning processes at the School of Activism. Formerly in charge of planning and implementing innovative campaign projects at Oxfam in Brazil, he now works for the Climate and Energy campaign at Greenpeace Brazil.

"PROTESTERS AND JOURNALISTS STARTED CARRYING VINEGAR WITH THEM TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF POLICE TEAR GAS. THE POLICE RESPONDED BY ARRESTING ANYONE CAUGHT CARRYING VINEGAR, PROVOKING WIDESPREAD RIDICULE."

Ten years ago in Brazil, a horizontal, autonomous, independent, and non-partisan movement called the Free Fare Movement (*Movimento Passe Livre*) was formed to fight for free, high-quality public transportation. Since then, every time a municipal government in Brazil has tried to increase public transportation fares, the Free Fare Movement has mobilized to oppose the increase and push for free public transportation. In June 2013, these protests snowballed into a mass uprising, successfully reversing a planned fare hike and awakening a generation of young activists to the power of mass demonstrations.

When São Paulo and several other Brazilian cities announced fare hikes that summer, the Free Fare Movement took to the streets. Unlike past years, when the movement held actions on a weekly basis, organizers opted for more frequent demonstrations. Every second day, at rush hour, activists occupied São Paulo's main avenues and interrupted traffic for hours. At the end of each action, protesters would disperse chanting: "Tomorrow it will be bigger!"

And it was.

As the movement gathered steam, the police responded with repression, and the corporate media consistently portrayed protesters as vandals and hooligans, constantly running images of

KEY TACTIC

Blockade

In order to put pressure on the city's mayor and the governor of the state of São Paulo, the Free Fare Movement organized public actions with thousands of people disrupting traffic on the city's main avenues. This is a common tactic in Brazil, where people occupy (see: TACTIC: Occupation) streets, sometimes closing them with burning tires, trash, and wood. The aim is to create chaos in the cities, forcing the media to cover the issue and putting one's opponent in a decision dilemma. One common problem with this tactic is the public outcry it can provoke in defense of people's "constitutional right to come and

broken storefronts and burned buses. In contrast, social media were inundated with accounts of police violence and excessive use of tasers, pepper spray, tear gas, and rubber bullets, generating widespread support for the demonstrations.

Protesters and journalists started carrying vinegar with them to reduce the effects of police tear gas. The police responded by arresting anyone caught carrying vinegar, provoking widespread ridicule, as memes proliferated on social media celebrating "Salad Uprising," "V for Vinegar," "Vinegar Revolt," and so on.

On the day of the fifth action, more than 100,000 people flooded the streets of São Paulo. The wave of protests reached a level that hadn't been seen in Brazil since the struggle for democracy under military rule. A few days later over a million people in hundreds of cities took to the streets, marching not just for affordable public transportation, but against corruption, for better health care, and many other causes. Finally, after two weeks of near-continuous street actions, officials announced that the fare increase would be reversed.

Everyone felt the irresistible people power on the streets. The mobilization awakened a generation to the power of mass street action and the utopian possibilities inherent in a popular uprising.

Originally published in Bella Baderna (Edições Ideal, 2013), the Brazilian edition of Beautiful Trouble. Translated from the Portuguese by Gabi Juns and Christine Halvorsen.

LEARN MORE

The São Paulo Protests in 7 Acts
VICE Brazil, 2013

<http://www.vice.com/video/the-sao-paulo-protests-in-7-acts-part-1>

go," especially from the right-wing media. But since the mass mobilization to reverse the fare increase, occupying the streets has come to be much more accepted in Brazil, regardless of the motive.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Simple rules can have grand results

At the end of every action, the Free Fare Movement would announce the next action with very simple instructions: "Next Thursday, June 13, at 5pm. City Theatre." Nothing else needed to be said. Everyone knew exactly what it was about.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bicycle rally for peace
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- Distributed action
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Do the media's work for them
- Focus on basic needs
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seize the means of communication
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Stay on message
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Commodity fetishism
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Neoliberalism
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- The Global South
- The shock doctrine
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Points of intervention

TAGS

Direct action, Nonviolence,
Social media, State violence,
Street protest

STORY

BRING BACK OUR GIRLS

In April 2014, 276 girls were abducted from their school by the Boko Haram terrorist group, sparking a massive global campaign demanding their return.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Olatunji Olanrewaju

Olatunji is a humanitarian and rights activist in Nigeria. He is the Co-Coordinator of Adopt-A-Camp, a member of the Likeminds project and #BringBackOurGirls campaign, and the Co-Founder of Caritas Africanus.

“THE CAMPAIGN SUCCEEDED IN TRANSFORMING A LONG-TERM, UNADDRESSED PROBLEM TO AN ISSUE REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ACTION.”

The April 14, 2014, raid on a public secondary school in Chibok, Nigeria, by the Boko Haram terrorist group left the school razed to the ground. 276 school girls, who were preparing for an examination, were lined up at gunpoint and forced to march into trucks. 57 girls jumped off or escaped in the days that followed.

The response from the government was lethargic: The military at first denied the abduction even happened, an early claim of rescue was recanted, and a stakeholders’ meeting called by the First Lady turned emotional and rather comical at the Presidential Villa.

The Bring Back Our Girls campaign sought to achieve a two-fold objective: stand in solidarity with the parents and affected communities, and hold the government accountable for its failure to protect its citizens by its inadequate response towards the insurgency that has embroiled the country since 2009. The abduction was the tragic peak of a wave of terror on public properties, especially schools, by the Boko Haram.

The campaign utilized both online and offline organizing. Online organizing was framed by the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, which became viral both in Nigeria and internationally.

The online campaign started as offline activities were peaking. The first action was a march towards the National Assembly in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, organized and led by hundreds of women. Street tactics gained traction, from small community meetings to local protests, all of which gave the the hashtag even more prominence. This connected online efforts to the tactics on the ground. To bring about a more organized rhythm, regular

KEY TACTIC

Hashtag campaign

The use of Twitter and Facebook played a huge role in the campaign. Under a unified hashtag, those platforms were used to hold a public conversation in which specific messaging was disseminated and press statements widely circulated. Because of its virtual nature, the hashtag crossed boundaries and people all over the world paid attention to the abduction. The key elements that strengthened the use of this hashtag were that it was agreed upon collectively, formulated immediately following the incidence, and framed in line with the campaign’s demands.

KEY THEORY

Framing

The movement could not afford to be dragged into the cesspool of Nigerian politics, especially

outdoor gatherings or “sit-outs” were agreed upon and held daily in Abuja, and weekly in Lagos. Those sit-outs continue five years later, albeit with lower attendance. Nonetheless, the campaign succeeded in transforming a long-term, unaddressed problem to an issue requiring imminent action and attention by capitalizing on popular mass anger at that moment in time (see: THEORY: Al faza’a [a surge of solidarity]).

The campaign announced a call to action that empowered people to take part each from their locations and according to their capacities (see: PRINCIPLE: Create many points of entry). Suggested actions included pressuring governors and Members of Parliament, as well as symbolic solidarity actions. The call even characterized actions by location, both home and abroad. When the outrage became global, high profile people like Michelle Obama, Alicia Keys, and Angelina Jolie adopted the hashtag, while Parliaments across the world lent their voices to the demands of the movement.

From the time of the incident until April 2019, another 107 girls were successfully reunited with their parents through a combination of state-level negotiations and military force by a new presidential administration that took power in 2015.

LEARN MORE

Celebrities Show Support For BringBackOurGirls Movement
The National, May 20, 2014

<http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/celebrity/in-pictures-celebrities-show-their-support-for-the-bring-back-our-girls-movement#1>

with an incumbent government desperate to stay in power through elections that were just around the corner. By focusing on a key, single-issue demand to “bring back the Chibok girls,” the campaign was successful in overcoming disputes around both the narrative and how the abductions would be framed.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Blockade
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Create many points of entry
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don’t tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Direct action
- Framing
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Women’s rights, International solidarity, Direct action, Nonviolence, Street

protest, Education, Movement
building

STORY

BURMESE STUDENTS' LONG MARCH

In 2014, hundreds of students embarked on a 580 kilometre-long march across Myanmar to protest the military-controlled Parliament's attempt to outlaw student unions.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joseph Wah

After working for an exiled Myanmar nongovernmental organization based in Thailand, Poe Kyaw (Joseph Wah) returned to Myanmar in 2013, where he works with different youth organizations and networks on a voluntary basis. He partnered with other youth in providing strategic support to student unions' protests against the National Education Law, including organizing and taking part in solidarity protests, and performing outreach and advocacy to international organizations and governments.

"STUDENTS HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF DEMOCRACY MOVEMENTS THROUGHOUT MYANMAR'S HISTORY."

In 2011, over 50 years of military rule in Myanmar (also known as Burma) formally ended and, under a new quasi-civilian government, the country opened up to the world. However, significant challenges remain. One of these challenges emerged in 2014 when the military-backed government introduced the National Education Law. Disguised as a so-called "reform" process, the law's true intent was to institute a new, oppressive education system. Under the law, existing student unions would be outlawed and replaced with state-sponsored (and controlled) student and teacher associations.

Student unions called for amendments to the draft law, but were ignored. Although small in number, the unions chose to stand up and fight back. The military-backed government was particularly anxious about student union protests, as students have a strong legacy of playing leading roles in major democracy movements in the past, ranging from the struggle for independence from colonial powers to the various movements against oppressive military regimes, including the 8888 uprising and the 2007 Saffron Revolution.

The students' strategy was to recruit supporters, counter the proposed reforms, and push for better funding for education, all at the same time. Two months after the law was approved, students launched a four-day protest in Yangon and called on the parliament and government to open dialogue with them within 60 days to

KEY TACTIC

Trek

The tactical choice of a long march, or trek, was a smart one for several reasons. It was a bold and dramatic way to bring the students' cause to the people. By marching through many towns and villages, students engaged people across the country, not just in the largest city, Yangon. It also created a long campaign narrative, allowing the students to slowly build support and attention, as well as pressure on the government. Finally, in a sense, it also gave the government enough time to give in to the students' core demand.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Maintain nonviolent discipline

Students have been at the centre

discuss amendments to the law.

As their calls for dialogue were ignored, students decided to launch a protest march from Mandalay to Yangon in January 2015 — a 580-kilometer march from central to lower Myanmar. The long march was a very strategic move for the students. It gave voice to the widespread discontent with the problematic law and its creation of state-sponsored student and teacher associations. Students held public rallies in dozens of major cities in the country, both separately and as part of the long march.

When the brave young students took to the street, public and civil society extended their support as they became much more aware of the undemocratic law, which had been approved without scrutiny. The long march allowed the public and media to take the time to understand flaws in the law as well as flaws in the education reform plan as a whole. The campaign gained momentum and occupied front pages of newspapers for months. Monks, youth, civil society, celebrities, and the general public were all supportive of the student protesters. As public support grew, it undermined any legitimacy the unpopular, newly formed, state-sponsored student association might have had. The public realized they were nothing more than an attempt to undermine the independent student unions.

LEARN MORE

National Education Law – Student Protests
Burma Partnership, 2015

<http://www.burmapartnership.org/updates-national-education-law-student-protest/>

History Lessons

Bertil Lintner, The Irrawaddy, 2015

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/magazine/history-lessons.html>

of democracy movements throughout Myanmar's history. To maintain that legacy and hold the high moral ground, as well as ensure the campaign received traditional support from the public, it was vital for the students on the long march to remain nonviolent.

Lead with sympathetic characters

Because of the heroic role Burmese students have historically played in their country's struggle for democracy, the Burmese people were already predisposed to see the students on the long march in a sympathetic light. So, once they witnessed the bravery of those who marched, and the violent response of the government, the public quickly got behind the students, and many high-profile supporters began speaking out for education reform.

KEY THEORY

Direct action

When the new law outlawed existing student unions, students could have simply accepted the government's new rules. Instead, they took matters into their own hands. Not only did the unions refuse to comply with the law, they recruited more members and went on the offensive, strengthening their legitimacy by winning the sympathy and support of the people.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Fees Must Fall
- Québec Student Strike
- Schools of Struggle

- The Salt March
- Trail of Dreams
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Trek

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Fail forward
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Direct action
- Gerontocracy
- Hamoq and hamas
- Political identity paradox
- Revolutionary reform

Methodologies

- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Education, Student activism,
Democracy

STORY

CITIZENS' POSSE

In the final days of a stalled push to reform healthcare in the US, a “citizens’ posse” gathered to arrest those responsible for the gridlock.

CONTRIBUTED BY

John Sellers

John Sellers is co-founder of The Other 98%, a founding partner of Agit-Pop Communications, and president of the Ruckus Society. Before leaving to help start Ruckus, John worked for Greenpeace in the early '90s where he had the great fortune to be integrally involved in powerful peaceful actions all over the world: from the high seas with the Rainbow Warrior to the streets of Seattle in the uprising against the WTO.

“WE SURROUNDED THE BUILDING, DECLARED IT A CRIME SCENE, AND POSTED WANTED POSTERS OF THE CEOS.”

In early spring of 2010, the prospects of the US Congress passing comprehensive healthcare reform were looking bleak. The Democrats had caved on the public option, the Blue Dogs were turning red, and Democratic leaders weren't sure if they had the votes to pass anything.

Most of the mainstream players in the healthcare reform movement were busy on Capitol Hill “making sausage” while the reform bill grew weaker and less popular by the day. An edgier wing of health care reformers, however, were looking to seize the momentum. We had to remind people why reform was needed and we knew that if we could expose the criminal behaviour of Big Insurance, they would be convicted in the court of public opinion.

Luckily, a perfect target presented itself. America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), the top health insurance lobbying group, decided to bring their chief executives and lobbyists together at a fancy hotel in downtown Washington, D.C., for a summit. They sensed they were close to total victory. They needed to plot out their final moves, smoke their final cigars, and cut their final backroom deals.

Health Care for America Now (HCAN) — an alliance of labour unions, the progressive netroots, and a host of community-based organizations — hired Agit-Pop to help them go big, creative, and militant. Our job was to stage a major street action that would finally tell the story right: Americans want affordable universal

KEY TACTIC

Mass street action

Too often, street actions are like dances that everyone already knows the steps to: (A) march, followed by rally, with people speechifying from the stage, or (B) set-piece acts of civil disobedience with everyone singing Kumbaya until they're arrested (or, worse, ignored). The posse achieved a greater degree of militancy and dynamism by putting “We the People” in a heroic role that called for action.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Use the power of ritual

The most powerful moment of the whole action was when the entire 3,000-strong crowd, in call-and-response style, ritually took the Citizens' Posse oath:

healthcare; insurance companies don't because they're profiting from a broken system.

We decided to cast the CEOs as organized crime bosses who bribed politicians, denied healthcare to the critically ill, and ran real Death Panels for profit. Drawing on the Western movie trope of citizen-justice, we cast participants in the planned rally as a "People's Posse", which would be composed of ordinary people called upon to bring these corporate criminals to justice.

Union leaders were skeptical about whether their folks would take to the "posse" frame. But on action day, when their members saw the "CEO Wanted" posters, Citizens' Posse badges, and crime scene tape, they quickly wanted in. Our action had two marches of 1,500 people each converge on the D.C. Ritz Carlton. At that point, we surrounded the building, declared it a crime scene, and posted wanted posters of the CEOs. We had a rally with rousing speeches about corporate criminals, which culminated with the crowd being deputized with a Citizens' Posse Oath of Office. Then several union presidents and a VIP posse attempted to enter the hotel and make citizens' arrests. Ten VIP deputies were eventually taken into custody by the D.C. police.

As a result, the reform movement got a much-needed shot in the arm, and we owned the media cycle for a critical day or two in the homestretch to the vote. The bill (however flawed) eventually passed.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Health Care for America Now
<http://healthcareforamericanow.org/>

>*"I solemnly swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. [...] In the tradition of citizen posses throughout American history who in times of need have been called to service to bring criminals, corporate or otherwise, to justice, I swear to well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me Jefferson!"*
Simple Rules can have grand results

The "citizens' posse" concept provided an organic way for individuals to participate that helped the 3,000-strong mass in the streets function as a cohesive whole. The rules were simple

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Mass street action
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Storytelling
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Create a theatrical storyline that keeps the action going
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Reframe the issue
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Think narratively
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Corruption
- Ethical spectacle
- Hamoq and hamas
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Direct action, Health,
Privatization, Street protest,
Wealth inequality

STORY

CLANDESTINE INSURGENT REBEL CLOWN ARMY

A new methodology of civil disobedience, merging the ancient art of clowning with contemporary tactics of nonviolent direct action, which became an international protest phenomenon in the early 2000s.

CONTRIBUTED BY

John Jordan

John Jordan was co-founder of Reclaim the Streets (1995-2001) and now works with the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, a collective that merges art, activism, and permaculture. Co-author of *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-capitalism* (Verso), he has just brought out a new book-film with Isabelle Fremeaux exploring Europe's utopian communities, *Les sentiers de l'utopie* (Editions Zones/La Découverte).

"CLOWNING IS A STATE OF BEING RATHER THAN A TECHNIQUE."

To some, the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) might appear to be but a ragged bunch of activists sporting false noses, a smudge of grease paint, camouflage pants, and bad wigs. And those people may be right. But it is also a highly disciplined army of professional clowns, a militia of authentic fools, a battalion of true buffoons.

Art activist John Jordan and colleagues L.M. Bogad, Jen Verson, and Matt Trevelyan founded CIRCA in late 2003 to welcome arch-clown and US President George W. Bush on his royal visit to London. CIRCA aimed to be a new methodology of civil disobedience, merging the ancient art of clowning with contemporary tactics of nonviolent direct action. It went on to be a successful meme and international protest phenomenon, with self-organized groups taking action in the streets outside summits and military bases in dozens of countries from Colombia to New Zealand.

CIRCA worked with professional clowns to develop a methodology, *rebel clowning*, that introduced play and games into the process of political organizing. We developed a series of trainings that encouraged activists to reprogram their bodies, to develop their intuition and to "find their clown" — a childlike state of generosity and spontaneity. Rebel clown trainings attempted to peel off the activist armor and find the vulnerable human within.

KEY TACTIC

Carnival protest

The use of carnivalesque forms of resistance was a key tactic for the global anti-capitalist mass actions of the 1990s. CIRCA took this carnival spirit deeper into the individual mind and body of the activist. Clowning exists on the borderlines, dancing delicately on the edge of chaos, somewhere between life and art, being and pretending. Clowns are both fearsome and innocent, wise and stupid, healers and laughing stocks, scapegoats and subversives. They take this carnivalesque spirit with them wherever they go, infecting the body politic with insurrectionary dreams. When a crisis hits a culture, perhaps it is in these gray zones of creative uncertainty that we might find

Emphasizing the inner work of personal transformation that too many movements ignore, CIRCA viewed both soul and street as sites of struggle. The deep work of clowning, involving real letting go and finding the absolute spontaneous self, can have profoundly liberating psychological effects on participants. CIRCA's combatants are not meant to *pretend* to be clowns, they should be real clowns. Clowning is a state of being rather than a technique.

It's a core CIRCA premise that mocking and utterly confusing the enemy can be more powerful than direct confrontation. In one instance, a seventy-person-strong gaggle of clowns walked straight through a line of UK riot cops who, strangely, could not hold their line. When the video footage of the event was examined, it turned out that beneath their visors the cops were laughing too much to be able to concentrate. Other clowns filled their pockets with so much strange junk that it took hours and lots of paperwork when stop-and-searches occurred. A favorite tactic was to walk into army recruitment agencies and, in a clownish way, try to join up, thus causing so much chaos that the agencies had to close down for the day, and then CIRCA would set up its own shabby recruitment stall outside.

Turn-of-the-century anarchist Emma Goldman posed this problem: "how to be one's self and yet in oneness with others, to feel deeply with all human beings and still retain one's own characteristic qualities." CIRCA bridged that divide, allowing participants to discover their own inner clown while at the same time wearing a "uniform" that made them feel part of a strongly bonded group.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

CIRCA G8 Road Blockade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MX0aQU9x0Z4>

Carnivals Against Capital: Radical Clowning and the Global Justice Movement

L.M. Bogad, *Social Identities*, 2010

<https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/file/download/73b934ce3ec02f52ceff71c708835e306225cf92c669f38f1de81d4414551a0e>

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army Goes to Scotland via a Few Other Places

Kolonel Klepto and Major Up Evil, in **Shut Them Down!: The G8, Gleneagles 2005, and the Movement of Movements**, 2006

<http://www.labofii.net/docs/kolonel%20klepto%20and%20major%20up%20evil.pdf>

CIRCA: The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

L.M. Bogad, *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, 2004

<http://www.joaap.org/new3/bogad.html>

the answers.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Use absurdity to undermine the aura of authority

Ridicule and absurdity are powerful tools against authority. To be effective, authority has to be perceived as such, otherwise people would never obey its commands. On the other hand, who ever takes a clown seriously? Rebel clowning used this slippery dichotomy to great effect, turning the tables on authority in the street by posing in mock-serious fashion next to lines of cops, as well as at the highest levels of power, by pointing out the clownish behavior of US President George W. Bush and other authority figures.

Get arrested in an intelligent way

Watching police handcuff and bundle clowns into police vans is always entertaining for passersby, begging the question: What did the clowns do wrong? What is this all about? An arrested clown also makes for very mediagenic images. By staying in character during the whole process of an arrest, including giving their clown army names (e.g., Private Joke) and addresses (e.g., the Big Top in the Sky) as their real identity, rebel clowns caused much mirth and havoc in the police stations.

Reframe the issue

Rebel clowning helped reframe the media images of protests during the big summit mobilizations of the mid-1990s. A colorful band of disobedient clowns could easily capture the limelight and shift the narrative

Notes Whilst Walking on "How to Break the Heart of Empire"
John Jordan, European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies,
2005

<http://eipcp.net/transversal/1007/jordan/en>

away from violent clashes and
smashed windows.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Santa Claus Army
- The Teddy Bear Catapult

Tactics

- Carnival protest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Flash mob
- Inflatables
- Mass street action
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Be the change you want to see
in the world
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't fall in love with your
tactics
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of
steel
- Get arrested in an intelligent
way
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make new folks welcome
- Reframe the issue
- The real action is your target's
reaction
- Use humour to undermine
authority
- Use organizing strategies that
scale
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Activism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental

actions

- Hamoq and hamas
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Peel the onion

TAGS

Humour, Nonviolence, Pranks,
Street protest, Action design,
Direct action

STORY

CONFLICT KITCHEN

Cleverly retro-fitting a take-out window, Conflict Kitchen built cross-cultural understanding by introducing Pittsburgh locals to the food and culture of places with which the US government was in conflict.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Sydney Arndt

Sydney Arndt is a performer, creative writer, arts journalist, dramaturg, and activist based in New York City. She is the co-founder and Artistic Director of The Grace Period Blog, a digital platform and performance collective that fights student debt with art-making.

“CONFLICT KITCHEN MADE TANGIBLE THE POSSIBILITY OF A WORLD WHERE WE LISTEN TO EACH OTHER AND DRAW OUR OWN CONCLUSIONS.”

“. . . to give one another subject-to-subject recognition: that is an act of resistance.”

—bell hooks

Believing that the quickest way to a person’s heart is through their stomach, Conflict Kitchen sought to promote peace and build cross-cultural understanding by introducing people to the food and culture of places with which their government is in conflict. Based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US, and the brainchild of artist-activists Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski, Conflict Kitchen used a simple takeout window framed by a colorful facade to serve up the cuisine, and celebrate the culture, of a succession of countries, including Iran, Afghanistan, Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela, Palestine, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

The takeout window functioned as a platform for public dialogue, and the food line became a space for hungry Pittsburghers to engage with people and places the media consistently distorts and misrepresents. The takeout counter was staffed by chefs and public artists trained to facilitate conversations about the featured country. Each food wrapper was printed with personal profiles of people who live in the country being celebrated, as well as articles on the country’s food, art, religion, culture, and government.

To extend the experience beyond the takeout line and further encourage cross-cultural dialogue, Conflict Kitchen also organized public events that centered around food. Pittsburgh locals and Iranians in Tehran shared a meal via webcam in a virtual, city-to-city dinner party where both groups made the same Persian recipes,

KEY TACTIC

Advanced leafleting

Conflict Kitchen created a clever and surprising way to spread information: food wrappers! Composed of printed first-person interviews, the wrappers don’t just convey genuine perspectives; they tell a story while the patron is eating.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Create many points of entry

Everyone is different. Some people are shy, others are bold. Some people are visual learners, others respond best to stories. Some people are already on your invite list, others just stumble upon your project. It therefore behooves us to provide several ways for people to engage with our message and, in general, to be as accessible as possible. Conflict Kitchen offered many points of entry: conversations at

then sat down to eat together. Other events have included informal lunch hour discussions on food and politics, dinners with invited speakers, and live cooking lessons through Skype.

Although Conflict Kitchen operated successfully for several years, the attempt to celebrate Palestinian cuisine received death threats that forced it to close for nearly a week in November 2014. In response to the threats and allegations of being anti-Israel, the directors of Conflict Kitchen emphasized that their purpose is to hold a loudspeaker to the voices and historical experiences of people from across the world — Palestinians and Palestinian-Americans included. The backlash they received is proof that this type of work is necessary.

Conflict Kitchen used food as a vehicle for cross-cultural understanding, and provided a place for political discussion for the citizens of Pittsburgh — as well as delicious takeout.

LEARN MORE

Conflict Kitchen

<https://www.conflictkitchen.org/>

Conflict Kitchen Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/conflict.kitchen.7/>

Civic Lunch: Jon Rubin on Conflict Kitchen

MIT Center for Civic Media, 2014

<https://civic.mit.edu/blog/rahulb/civic-lunch-jon-rubin-on-conflict-kitchen>

Conflict Kitchen Reopening Oakland Restaurant Wednesday

Melissa McCart, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 2014

<http://www.post-gazette.com/life/dining/2014/11/11/Conflict-Kitchen-re-opening-restaurant-in-Oakland-Pittsburgh/stories/201411110166>

the takeout window, a visually arresting storefront display to attract attention from passers-by, food wrapped in printed interviews, and space for conversing and sharing food during public events. In short, the more points of entry, the more opportunities for changing minds and opening hearts. Sometimes, it can be that simple.

KEY THEORY

Prefiguration

The webcam meals between Pittsburgh and abroad provided a temporary glimpse of what it can mean to share cultures, politics, and, of course, food. By creating a zone of open dialogue and cross-cultural understanding for at least one meal, Conflict Kitchen made tangible the possibility of a world where we listen to each other and draw our own conclusions.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Gezi Park iftar
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Art Nanny Hotline

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Clandestine leafleting
- Enforced appearance
- Guerrilla marketing
- Identity correction
- Public art intervention
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Bring the issue home
- Consider your audience
- Create many points of entry

- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Solidarity, not aid
- Start a conversation
- Think narratively
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Artivism
- Cultural hegemony
- Postcolonialism
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The Global South
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Communications, Community building, Food, Indigenous rights, International solidarity

STORY

COUNTERING HOMOPHOBIC POLICING

A series of bold and creative direct action protests, from police station invasions to “wink-ins,” succeeded in pushing back against police persecution of gay men for consensual acts in the UK in the 1980s.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Federico Hewson

Federico Hewson has been an activist, actor, performance artist, dancer, educator, and social entrepreneur, and is currently getting a Masters in Art Education at New York University with an emphasis in activism. He's glad to live in a time where gay people can come out of the shadows and make a visible and recognized contribution to society.

“THE POLICE WERE MADE TO LOOK MEAN-SPIRITED AND SEX-OBSSESSED, WITH A PERVERSE SENSE OF PRIORITIES.”

Isn't the emotional buzz of a protest a legitimate part of the attraction?

—Peter Tatchell.

In the UK in the 1980s, thousands of men were being prosecuted for consensual gay behaviour — a level of institutionalized police and judicial discrimination greater than any other European Community member at the time. In 1989, convictions for “gross indecency” (a consensual, gay-only offense) were more than three and a half times higher than in 1966, the year before the decriminalization of male homosexuality. Lives and careers were ruined for the very act of flirting or winking. Thousands of serious violent crimes (including gay bashing) were being left unsolved while police resources went to creating a spy-house across from a public park with infrared cameras, a “hide” (a camouflaged shelter), and the installation of “pretty police”: officers posing as gay at public toilets to trap soliciting men. In this environment, angry gay men formed the lobbying group Stonewall and the more direct-action-focused group, OutRage!

OutRage! launched a wave of hit-and-run, guerrilla-style protests: invading police stations, photographing undercover pretty police, posting warning signs to frustrate entrapment operations, destroying hidden cameras, and disrupting public appearances by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. They widely publicized the fact that the costs incurred by police anti-gay shenanigans, and resulting prosecution and imprisonment, were estimated at £13 million, while serious crimes went unpunished (see: PRINCIPLE: Do

KEY TACTIC

Civil disobedience

By deliberately, publicly, and theatrically breaking an antiquated law, dating from the nineteenth century, which made it an offense for a man to persistently “solicit or importune” in a public place for an “immoral purpose,” OutRage! drew widespread public attention and forced the authorities into a decision dilemma: Either they had to enforce the law, thus demonstrating how absurd it was, or they had to stand aside, emboldening those pushing for its removal (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma). Mocking and flouting such a law on the streets of London won OutRage! lots of new friends and participants for their fun actions, which included a public “kiss-in” at Piccadilly

the media's work for them). The police were made to look mean-spirited and sex-obsessed, with a perverse sense of priorities.

OutRage! also organized a "wink-in" to protest against laws that prohibited men from winking, meeting, and exchanging numbers. Protesters held aloft giant eyes on pulleys, making the eyes wink. Oversized business cards were exchanged, with names and phone numbers. The phone numbers were actually for Buckingham Palace (the seat of the British monarchy) and 10 Downing Street (the home of the British Prime Minister).

Within three months of OutRage! starting their campaign, the police opened their first serious negotiations with gay community groups. "We would deliberately look smart, often wearing ties, to confound expectations of what a gay rights campaigner looks like," leading gay activist Peter Tatchell, one of the leading active campaigners of OutRage!, recalled in an interview with the UK *Independent* (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't dress like a protester). "We thought it would take years, but we won most of our demands from the police within 12 months. This gave us a real sense that what we were doing was having a tangible, positive effect." Within a year, the police agreed to five of OutRage!'s key demands for a non-homophobic policing policy. And within three years, the number of men convicted of gross indecency fell by two-thirds — saving thousands of gay men from arrest and a criminal record.

Tatchell told Beautiful Trouble, "We really shamed and embarrassed the police. They lost the PR battle. The public and the press had turned against them and they pleaded with us for negotiations. They had thought they could massage and fob us off, but we came back with really concrete, practical proposals about what a non-homophobic policing policy would look like."

LEARN MORE

OutRage!
<http://outrage.org.uk/>

Circus and "queer weddings" in Trafalgar Square. By targeting antiquated laws on London street behaviour in a loud and demonstrative way, they also helped make the invisible visible.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Kill them with kindness

In his interview with the *Independent*, Tatchell stated, "We would deliberately smile at the police and be ultra courteous. We would go up to them and shake their hands. It completely messed with their heads." He told Beautiful Trouble, "I recently did a lecture at the police headquarters and the older officers came up to me afterwards, saying, 'We remember those protests very well. We thought they were great fun.' That was partly the reason why the police weren't as heavy with us as they could have been. We presented well, very professionally, suit and tie

Joy is a revolutionary force

Demonstrations are fun. There's nothing like the rush of standing up for something you believe in, surrounded by others who feel the same. Making signs, decorating outfits, and generating slogans are enjoyable activities, so remember the pleasure to be found in what you're doing and let your creativity and joy guide you.

The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative

The first stage of George Lakey's "Five-Stage Revolutionary Movement Framework" is cultural preparation. According to Lakey, the "primary task of every revolutionary movement is

to create a vision of what activists want instead of the status quo." Lakey gives examples of activists caught in sudden success with unrealized opportunities due to a lack of visioning homework. With OutRage!, Tatchell and his colleagues created a clear plan of what they wanted from the police. Knowing what victory would look like in concrete, specific terms prepared them well to make it happen when the police came looking for compromise.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Flash mob
- Mass street action

Principles

- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Embrace the stigma
- Joy is a revolutionary force
- Kill them with kindness
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Cultural hegemony

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Community building, Direct action, Gender and sexuality, Humour, Media, State violence

STORY

COUPLE IN THE CAGE

This performance art piece was an ironic reenactment of the practice of displaying indigenous peoples in public venues designed to expose the historic prejudices of the museums in which it appeared.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Elisabeth Ginsberg

Elisabeth Ginsberg, an over-educated Dane currently living in Copenhagen, holds a master's in cultural studies and journalism from NYU and another Master's degree from the University of Copenhagen. In an attempt not to dry out completely, she wrote her thesis on Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert.

"THE COUPLE WAS THE OBJECT ON DISPLAY DURING THE LIVE PERFORMANCE, BUT THE AUDIENCE BECAME THE OBJECT ON DISPLAY DURING THE DOCUMENTARY."

Performance artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco started their "The Couple in the Cage" tour five hundred years after Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. For two years, they travelled through various Western metropolises, presenting themselves as undiscovered Amerindians from an island in the Gulf of Mexico that had somehow been overlooked for five centuries. They called their homeland Guatinau and themselves Guatinauis.

Exhibited in a cage, the couple performed "traditional tasks," which ranged from sewing voodoo dolls to watching television. A donation box in front of the cage indicated that for a small fee, the female Guatinaui would perform a traditional dance (to rap music), the male Guatinaui would tell authentic Amerindian stories (in a made-up language), and they would both pose with visitors. At the Whitney Museum in New York, sex was added to the spectacle when visitors were offered a peek at "authentic Guatinaui male genitals" for five dollars.

Next to the cage were two official-looking guards ready to answer visitors' questions, feed the Guatinauis, and take them to the bathroom on leashes. In addition to the authority of the guards, an institutional framework was evoked by didactic panels listing highlights from the history of exhibiting non-Western peoples and a simulated Encyclopedia Britannica entry with a fake map of the Gulf of Mexico showing Guatinau.

Aside from the authority provided by the various museum venues, everything on display was blatantly theatrical and clichéd: The

KEY TACTIC

Hoax

"The Couple in the Cage" was an ironic reenactment of the imperialist practice of displaying indigenous peoples in public venues such as taverns, museums, World Expos, and freak shows. By performing "The Couple in the Cage" in various museums, Fusco and Gómez-Peña exposed the historic racism, colonialism, and voyeurism of the very setting in which they appeared.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Show, don't tell

The performance is an example of silent eloquence. It said it all

KEY THEORY

Alienation effect

When the audience seemed to enjoy the same colonial

Guatinauis had their skulls measured, were fed bananas, and were described as “specimens,” among other things.

The performances were filmed and compiled in a documentary titled *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey*. The couple was the object on display during the live performance, but the audience became the object on display during the documentary. While Fusco and Gómez-Peña adopted the roles of the caged natives, they were simultaneously scrutinizing the audience’s responses. And what they found was surprising: Despite their intent to create an over-the-top satirical commentary on Western concepts of the exotic, primitive Other, it turned out that a substantial portion of the audience believed in the authenticity of the Guatinauis.

In an article about the performance, Fusco argues that the audience’s immediate response reveals their fundamental beliefs: “In such encounters with the unexpected, people’s defense mechanisms are less likely to operate with their normal efficiency; caught off-guard, their beliefs are more likely to rise to the surface.”

Seemingly making the same assumption, the documentary presents the audience’s reactions as indirect proof that racist beliefs — non-Western people are primitive, inferior, and essentially different from Western people — permeate our postcolonial society. Whether or not this is true, “The Couple in the Cage” persuasively argues that colonial ideas continue to influence Western approaches to non-Western cultures.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Coco Fusco

<http://www.thing.net/~cocofusco/>

Guillermo Gómez-Peña

<http://www.pochanostra.com/>

Belgium comes to terms with 'human zoos' of its colonial past
The Guardian, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/16/belgium-comes-to-terms-with-human-zoos-of-its-colonial-past>

exhibition practice that the performance meant to critique, it added some unintended irony. Yet Fusco and Gómez-Peña were quick to seize the audience’s misinterpretation and turn it into the focal point of the performance.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Hoax
- Invisible theatre

Principles

- Make the invisible visible
- Show, don’t tell
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Decolonization
- Human rights
- Theatre of the Oppressed

TAGS

Colonialism, Education, Humour, Indigenous rights, International solidarity, Language, Pranks, Racial justice

STORY

CRYPTORALLY IN MEXICO CITY

In response to a sweeping new telecommunications law, the CryptoRally was organized as a game played out on the streets of Mexico City, whose goal is to build skills in digital security and freedom of speech.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hackerspace Rancho Electrónico

Hackerspace Rancho Electrónico is a place in Mexico City where hackers, hacktivists and free software users get together to experiment with different kinds of technology.

When Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto presented the draft for the Federal Law on Telecommunications and Broadcasting, known as the Telecom Act, human rights and privacy activists were alarmed to see that the proposal would directly attack net neutrality, allowing Internet censorship and surveillance of digital communications by the government.

To combat the Telecom Act, digital rights activists organized a CryptoRally, a creative and fun learning event focused on sharing practical and effective security tools through participation in a competitive game. Participants formed teams and were given a map. Their objective was to complete technical tasks in different sites around the city center within a certain period of time.

The CryptoRally served to equip participants with effective methods for digital self-defence, in a funny way, without losing sight of the underlying political objectives. Because although lobbying and protests are necessary, they can be frustratingly ineffective in a country where political corruption, lack of accountability and media monopolies have significantly undermined the democratic process.

LEARN MORE

Cryptorally

Rancho Electronico, 2015

<http://criptorally.ranchoelectronico.org/sobre-el-criptorally/>

Cryptotarjetas: autodefensa y seguridad digital

Rancho Electronico, 2015

<http://media.espora.org/u/omaluma/m/criptotarjetas-completas/>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Hacking Apartheid

Tactics

- Encryption

Principles

- Practice digital self-defence
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Hacking

TAGS

Digital security, Communications, Media, Community building, Action design

STORY

DAYCARE CENTRE SIT-IN

Single moms pressured a public housing official for a daycare centre by not just sitting-in at his office, but actually turning his office into the daycare centre they needed.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“THE MOTHERS DIDN’T JUST OCCUPY THE OFFICE AND DEMAND A DAYCARE CENTRE — THEY MADE THEIR OWN.”

Low-income tenants at a public housing project in Rhode Island — many of them working mothers with young children — wanted an affordable daycare centre in their building. With petitions, pickets, and letters to the city council, they built up a steady drumbeat of pressure on the key decision maker, the local Housing and Urban Development (HUD) director. At a certain point they decided to escalate with direct action (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically), and occupied the HUD director’s office.

They didn’t just take it over with signs and shouting or a simple sit-in, however. They brought their kids. They brought their kids’ toys. They brought song books, a diaper changing table, and a fold-out crib. And they marched right into the HUD director’s office and turned it into a daycare centre.

They stayed for the whole day, and invited the press. Eventually HUD caved, and a permanent daycare centre was set up in the housing project.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Make your group comfortable and your target uncomfortable

What could be more an organic part of these parents’ lives than taking care of their own kids? They were completely comfortable with it, and needed to do it anyway. By the same token, having toddlers climbing around the office furniture was quite foreign to the business-as-usual habits of the HUD staff. It was messy and chaotic and made the target uncomfortable. Both of these dynamics helped shift power in the direction of the tenants, and made the target more willing to compromise.

Create a theatrical storyline that keeps the action going

Sometimes a protest can peter out because people don’t know what to do next. You get rebuffed by your target or the police and can’t figure out your next move, or you simply run out of chants, get bored, feel silly,

and go home. But the set-up-your-own-daycare-centre concept had a built-in theatrical logic and motivation that guided the whole action and kept it going all day. The tenants knew their roles well (they were simply playing themselves, the good parents they already were), and could respond naturally and “in character” to whatever action HUD or the police took, even if they were completely ignored.

Be the change you want to see in the world

The tenants wanted a daycare centre, so they made one themselves. They were the change they wanted to see in the world. This isn't just good ethics, it's good tactics, too. By walking their talk, the tenants demonstrated an integrity and authenticity that was not only empowering for all who participated, but also earned them respect from the public and in the press.

KEY THEORY

Prefiguration

This action was, in essence, a sit-in, but it had quite a bit more going for it than your average sit-in. It wasn't just disruptive, it was also constructive. The mothers didn't just occupy the office and demand a daycare centre

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Creative lobbying
- Occupation

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Create a theatrical storyline that keeps the action going
- Escalate strategically
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Make your group comfortable and your target uncomfortable
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Feminism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Prefigurative politics
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Housing, Women's rights

STORY

DHAWILI (TURN ON THE LIGHTS)

In 2012, Tunisian anti-corruption campaigners used blogs, flash mobs and lobbying of National Constituent Assembly deputies to enshrine the right to freedom of information in the post-revolution constitution.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Zyna Mejri

Zyna is a Tunisian activist and blogger, most known for her award-winning blog "Kelmti7orra." She worked with the I Watch Organization in the wake of the Tunisian Revolution to fight corruption and ensure post-revolution integrity and transparency, and later worked with the Youth Can organization to encourage political participation of youth.

In 2011, Tunisians overthrew corrupt dictator Zine Abidine Ben Ali. The following year, as the new National Constituent Assembly was drafting a post-revolution constitution, the anti-corruption citizens' group I Watch launched a campaign called *Dhawili* ("Turn on the lights" in Arabic) to establish the right to freedom of information.

I Watch believes that effective citizen democracy starts with public access to information; because if you have this right, and you practice it, you can hold accountable those who want to hide corrupt acts behind a veil of secrecy. We wanted to send a message that "the corrupt will run out of places to hide if we are aware of our right to know."

We began with a teaser campaign on the Internet to get the public's attention, then moved into the streets. In one visibility action, we walked through the streets in black blindfolds, holding signs like: "Know Your Rights." In another, we held up the word *Dhawili* (turn on the lights) with candles after sunset. Then we lobbied the legislature. Seeing bad regulations as the enemy, not the deputies, we won the support of key members of both parties, who in turn won over their colleagues. Shortly thereafter: Victory!

LEARN MORE

I Watch Organization

Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/I.WATCH.Organization/?fref=nf>

Discussion active in Tunisia on protecting access rights
Freedom of Information website, 2012

<http://www.freedominfo.org/2012/04/discussion-active-in-tunisia-on-protecting->

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Honk at Parliament
- Manich Msamah
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative lobbying
- Flash mob
- Hashtag campaign
- Light Brigade
- Street theatre

Principles

- Know your community
- Personalize and polarize
- Seize the means of communication
- Stay on message

Theories

- Action logic
- Corruption
- Framing
- Palace Coup
- Participatory democracy

Methodologies

access-rights/

#Dhawili

Youtube, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDv26PQrIH0>

- Peel the onion
- Power mapping

TAGS

Community building, Corruption,
Democracy, Dictatorship, Policy

STORY

DISRUPTING OBAMA'S TOWN HALL IN MYANMAR

In 2014, young activists at Yangon University, Myanmar, creatively disrupted a town hall meeting with President Obama to expose the flaws in the military-dominated government's political reform process.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joseph Wah

After working for an exiled Myanmar nongovernmental organization based in Thailand, Poe Kyaw (Joseph Wah) returned to Myanmar in 2013, where he works with different youth organizations and networks on a voluntary basis. He partnered with other youth in providing strategic support to student unions' protests against the National Education Law, including organizing and taking part in solidarity protests, and performing outreach and advocacy to international organizations and governments.

"THE ACTION SUCCEEDED IN PUBLICLY CONFRONTING PRESIDENT OBAMA WITH THE TRUTH ABOUT THE REAL DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE WITHIN MYANMAR."

President Obama was set to meet 400 young people in a town hall meeting at Yangon University on the morning of November 14, 2014, during his second official visit to Myanmar. The meeting was also attended by Burmese senior officials seated in the front rows. Cheers from the crowd filled the room as President Obama entered. As he began his remarks, the crowd settled back into their seats. However, several young people around the room remained standing. They were holding placards that read, "Reform is Fake", "Change", and "Illusion." Protesters handed an open letter to President Obama at the end of the meeting. The letter was also circulated to the media present in the room.

To appreciate the significance of this action, consider the political context: Myanmar (also known as Burma) was undergoing a political reform process after decades of military rule. The reform process began in 2010, after the rigged election had handed power to a new quasi-civilian government consisting mostly of members of the previous military government. Many believe that the sectoral reforms initiated by the new government were merely cosmetic efforts to improve the country's international image and convince western governments to remove economic sanctions, and were not actually about transferring power to a democratic government. The National Education Law, for example, introduced in 2014 as part of

KEY TACTIC

Creative disruption

This visit from Obama was meant to be the crowning achievement of the military-dominated government's attempt to reinvent itself as a democracy without actually relinquishing power. By disrupting that performance, activists called out the falseness of the reform process and let the world know that the struggle for real democracy in Myanmar was still very much alive.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Seek safety in support networks

Public protest in Myanmar can be very dangerous. The presence at the town hall of international

the education sector reform, was widely seen as an oppressive tool to prolong military rule (see: [STORY: Burmese Students' Long March](#)).

Believing the reform process to be going in the wrong direction, a group of young activists had stepped up to ally with civil society organizations and other youth organizations such as the student unions in order to undertake a mix of closed-door advocacy and public actions.

As a close supporter of Myanmar's quasi-civilian government, the United States has much influence in the country, so when President Obama announced his second official visit, these young activists gathered to discuss opportunities to send a message to him directly. Although only one member of the young activist group was initially invited to the event, he pushed the event organization to give admission to his friends, so a few more were accepted.

This was the context for what happened on the morning of November 14, 2014. With no political space to call for a more democratic reform process or discuss amending the draft National Education Law, this action succeeded in publicly confronting President Obama, one of the main supporters of the military-led "reform" process, with the truth about the real democratic struggle within Myanmar — while senior government officials, national and international media, and youth from across the ASEAN region looked on. For the young people of Myanmar, dialogue with the government and its supporters on critical issues such as the unpopular Education Law was never an option. These protesters were determined to confront the world with that fact.

LEARN MORE

Obama's second Burma visit falls flat
Kyaw Zwa Moe, *The Irrawaddy*, 2014
<http://www.irrawaddy.com/commentary/obamas-second-burma-visit-falls-flat.html>

Obama lends ear to Burma's youth
Feliz Solomon, *The Irrawaddy*, 2014
<http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/obama-lends-ear-burmas-youth.html>

observers (including media and students from nearby countries) and U.S. officials helped ensure the safety of the protesters. Any crackdown would have embarrassed the government and proved the protesters' point that the so-called democratic reforms were only for show (see: [PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma](#)).

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- [Burmese Students' Long March](#)
- [#GambiaHasDecided](#)
- [Public Option Annie](#)
- [#ThisFlag](#)
- [Who Would Accept?](#)
- [Yellow Pigs in Parliament](#)
- [Zapatista Caravan](#)

Tactics

- [Creative disruption](#)
- [Flash mob](#)
- [Hashtag campaign](#)
- [Media-jacking](#)
- [Visibility action](#)

Principles

- [Put your target in a decision dilemma](#)
- [Seek safety in support networks](#)
- [Stay on message](#)
- [Take risks, but take care](#)

Theories

- [Action logic](#)
- [Neoliberalism](#)
- [Postcolonialism](#)
- [The Global South](#)

Methodologies

- [Battle of the story](#)
- [Points of intervention](#)

TAGS

Communications, Democracy,

Dictatorship, Direct action,
Education, Elections, Human
rights, International solidarity,
Media, Social media, Student
activism

STORY

DOW CHEMICAL APOLOGIZES FOR BHOPAL

An imposter posing as a Dow Chemical spokesperson announced live on BBC World News that Dow would spend \$12 billion to compensate the victims of the Bhopal disaster, creating an instructive PR disaster for Dow.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mike Bonanno

Mike Bonanno (né Igor Vamos) is a guy from Troy, New York, who started the “Barbie Liberation Front” and co-founded the Yes Men. When not involved in tomfoolery, Bonanno is also a professor of media art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

“WHEN THE BROADCAST ENDED, THE BBC STUDIO TECHNICIAN WAS BEAMING. “WHAT A NICE THING TO ANNOUNCE,” SHE SAID.”

In 1984, an industrial gas leak in Bhopal, India killed thousands of people and injured hundreds of thousands. Neither of the companies responsible — Union Carbide and Dow Chemical — ever took responsibility for the accident or compensated the victims. However, on the twentieth anniversary of that disaster, Mr. Jude Finisterra, a “spokesperson” for Dow, appeared live on BBC World News, in front of a global audience of 300 million viewers, and announced the impossible: Dow accepted full responsibility for the Bhopal disaster, and, in fact, had just created a \$12 billion dollar plan to compensate the victims and clean up the site! Dow’s stock immediately (but temporarily) lost billions of dollars.

When the broadcast ended, the BBC studio technician was beaming. “What a nice thing to announce,” she said. “Well, I wouldn’t work for Dow if I didn’t believe in it,” he replied. He wasn’t lying; then again, he didn’t actually work for Dow. He was a member of the Yes Men, a band of corporation-impersonating pranksters.

How had someone with no acting training (see: PRINCIPLE: Anyone can act) managed to impersonate one of the biggest companies in the world in front of one of the biggest media audiences in the world? Embarrassed to have let it happen, the BBC chalked it up to an “elaborate hoax.” But all it took was one research error.

In November 2004, an email from a BBC researcher came in to DowEthics.com. The BBC was looking for a Dow representative to discuss the company’s position on the 1984 Bhopal tragedy.

KEY TACTIC

Identity correction

As fake Dow representative Jude Finisterra said in the interview, this was “the first time in history that a publicly owned company went against their bottom line simply because it was the right thing to do.” And it was, of course, too good to be true: Dow quickly made clear that it would not do the right thing . . . simply because it went against their bottom line.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Put your target in a decision dilemma

By announcing on live television that Dow was going to clean up the mess in Bhopal, the action forced Dow to respond. Any move they could make would make them look bad and draw further attention to their inaction

However, DowEthics.com, which *looked like* an official Dow Chemical corporate social responsibility website, had actually been set up by the Yes Men years earlier for a different project. The BBC thought they were emailing with Dow, but they were really emailing with the Yes Men!

Wanting to seize this unexpected opportunity, but not being able to afford to go to London on their shoestring budget, the Yes Men asked to be booked into a studio in Paris, where one of them, Andy, was living. No problem, said the BBC. And that's how Mr. Jude (patron saint of the impossible) Finisterra (earth's end) became Dow's official spokesperson.

And now came the big question: What to say? They settled on the impossible: Jude would announce a radical new direction for the company, one in which Dow would take full responsibility for the disaster. He would lay out a straightforward ethical path for Dow to follow to compensate the victims, clean up the plant site, and otherwise help make amends for one of the worst industrial disasters in history. Dow would either have to confirm the newly "announced" direction (um, actually, they would never do that), or deny it. Either way (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma), they would embarrass and further incriminate themselves, which would generate tons of press and needed attention to the disaster (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction).

After the announcement was made, the Yes Men helped Dow express itself more fully by mailing out a more formal retraction: "Dow's sole and unique responsibility is to its shareholders, and Dow CANNOT do anything that goes against its bottom line unless forced to by law." For a while, this statement was picked up by *Men's News Daily* — a reactionary online publication that didn't realize that this news release was also fake, and didn't object to what it said (see: PRINCIPLE: Use others' prejudices against them) — and became the top story on Google News.

The action put Bhopal and Dow front and center in the US news on the twentieth anniversary of the disaster. And it forced Dow to show, by its curt refusal to do anything positive, exactly how irresponsible "corporate social responsibility" can be.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Bhopal Disaster - BBC - The Yes Men
BBC, 2004

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiWlvBro9eI>

Meet the Yes Men Who Hoax the World
The Guardian, 2004

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/dec/13/mondaymediasection5>

on the issue.

Take leadership from the most impacted

Figuring out what Dow should say on the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal disaster proved to be easy: The work was already done by Bhopal activists in India, who had very specific, clearly articulated demands. It was a simple matter of putting those words in Dow's mouth.

Make the invisible visible

When Dow's stock fell because the market thought the company did a good deed for the Bhopal victims, it revealed

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Guerrilla marketing
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Anyone can act
- Bring the issue home
- Do the media's work for them
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Make the invisible visible
- Personalize and polarize
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick

The Yes Men's Bhopal Hoax

The Museum of Hoaxes, 2004

http://hoaxes.org/archive/permalink/the_yes_mens_bhopal_hoax

BBC Falls Prey to Hoax on Anniversary of Bhopal Disaster

New York Times, 2004

<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/04/world/europe/bbc-falls-prey-to-hoax-on-anniversary-of-bhopal-disaster.html>

- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Environmental justice

- Ethical spectacle

- Prefigurative politics

TAGS

Action design, Communications,

Environment, Human rights,

Media, Pranks

STORY

DUMP VEOLIA CAMPAIGN

BDS activists around the world forced the French company Veolia to divest from the Israeli market after causing it to lose \$20 billion worth of contracts for its complicity in Israel's human rights violations.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Michael Deas

Michael Deas is a Palestine solidarity activist based in the UK and works with the Palestinian BDS National Committee, the largest coalition of Palestinian civil society that leads the BDS movement.

“THE VICTORY OF THE BDS CAMPAIGN AGAINST VEOLIA SENT A CLEAR MESSAGE TO OTHER BUSINESSES AND INVESTORS: THERE IS A PRICE TO PAY FOR COMPLICITY IN ISRAELI APARTHEID.”

In 2003, French transport and environmental services multinational Veolia signed a contract to work with the Israeli government to help build and operate the Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR), which was set to run between west Jerusalem and the illegal Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory.

Official documents about the JLR made clear that the purpose of the project was to tie illegal settlements more closely to Israel and facilitate the expansion of the settlements. By signing up as a major contractor for the project, Veolia was aligning itself with Israel's long term goal of expelling as many indigenous Palestinians from their homeland as possible. It would later emerge that Veolia was also providing waste and transport infrastructure to illegal Israeli settlements.

The campaign against Veolia's role in Israeli colonisation and apartheid used a range of tactics from direct action to government lobbying, but what won the day was the relentless strategic focus on hurting (or threatening to hurt) the company's bottom line.

Contracts with municipal governments, a key income source for Veolia, were targeted by campaigners. In 2009, a coalition of church groups, unions and solidarity activists successfully persuaded Stockholm city council not to renew its \$4.5 billion contract with Veolia for managing the city's metro system.

This success was replicated across the world, from London to Kuwait City to St. Louis to Edinburgh. City by city, tireless grassroots

KEY TACTIC

Divestment

Activists were able to launch a global campaign targeted Veolia's bids and contracts worldwide until it sold off its entire stock in Israel. The seven-year-long campaign

KEY PRINCIPLE

Choose your target wisely

The primary target of the BDS campaign is Israel's regime of colonialism, occupation and apartheid. By focusing on a secondary target, Veolia, directly involved in the primary target's oppression, but more economically vulnerable to international pressure, the movement achieved a dramatic victory, sent a powerful message to potential other companies considering business in Israel, and further isolated and pressured the primary target.

campaigning that involved everything from private lobbying to protest marches on town halls, persuaded local councils to dump Veolia. In total, Veolia lost an estimated \$20 billion in contracts.

Veolia's crimes went beyond complicity with the Israeli colonial state, to include water privatisation, labour rights violations and greenwashing. United by a common target, different issue groups and strands of the movement linked up and stood alongside one another, building power and strengthening the leverage of all (see: THEORY: Intersectionality).

Alarmed by the clear evidence of Veolia's complicity and wary of the growing muscle of the campaign, a number of banks and investment funds divested (see: TACTIC: Divestment) from Veolia.

On more than a few occasions Veolia executives admitted that the campaign was hurting its profits and reputation. In 2013, Veolia began a gradual sale of its subsidiaries that were involved in projects tied to illegal Israeli settlements. Even then, BDS campaigns against Veolia intensified to ensure that the gradual sale was not a mere attempt to deflate the campaign's momentum. By 2015 Veolia had sold off the last of its operations in Israel, including its stake in the JLR.

The victory of the BDS campaign against Veolia sent a clear message to other businesses and investors: there is a price to pay for complicity in Israeli apartheid. Other major European companies including Orange and CRH have since exited the Israeli market.

These victories are important steps forward in the larger fight to end international support for Israeli apartheid and settler colonialism, and would never have been possible without countless hours of campaigning by thousands of people around the world.

LEARN MORE

BDS marks another victory as Veolia sells off all Israeli operations
Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement website, 2015
<http://bdsmovement.net/2015/bds-marks-another-victory-as-veolia-sells-off-all-israeli-operations-13270>

Dump Veolia
Dump Veolia Website
<http://www.dumpveolia.org.uk/>

Veolia Boycott Song
YouTube, 2012
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWqVNYk4-hA>

KEY THEORY

Intersectionality

Veolia was not only complicit in Israeli apartheid and colonisation of Palestinian land but was also involved in various other forms of oppression including water privatisation, labour rights abuses and greenwashing. This allowed activists to build coalitions and increase the scale of pressure on the company as well as strengthen their grounds for boycott/divestment calls.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Lysistrata Project
- Stolen Beauty
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan
- Taco Bell Boycott
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Consumer boycott
- Distributed action
- Divestment

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Create many points of entry
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically

Theories

- Decolonization
- Human rights
- Intersectionality

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Colonialism, Community building, Human rights, Indigenous rights, International solidarity, Privatization

STORY

EARTH FIRST!

In deep belief that there is “no compromise in defense of Mother Earth,” members of this movement put their bodies on the line to stop ecological destruction.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Beautiful Trouble

Beautiful Trouble is a globally dispersed group of activists whose mission is to make nonviolent revolution irresistible by providing strategic tools and trainings to inspire movements for a more just, healthy, and equitable world.

Earth First! is a worldwide movement of small, regionally based groups of radical environmentalists. Formed in 1979, Earth First! claims to have no members, only “believers” — self-proclaimed deep ecologists who believe all life is of equal value and act locally to defend the natural world.

Their actions range from public education, grassroots organizing and involvement in the legal process, to blockades, tree sits, and demonstrations. In alignment with their motto, “No compromise in defense of Mother Earth,” some Earth First!ers go a step beyond civil disobedience, sabotaging industrial equipment in ecodefence. Such nonviolent and “productive” forms of property destruction include road reclamation, destruction of genetically modified crops, and tree-spiking.

Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching — a compilation of articles and letters sent to the Earth First! Journal by dozens of individuals, edited by Dave Foreman and published by Earth First! Books — outlines methods for decommissioning bulldozers, flattening tires, burning machinery, and pulling out survey stakes, and discusses the security, safety, strategy, and justification behind such actions.

In the era of climate change, the kind of ecological resistance pioneered by Earth First! is as necessary as ever, and still going strong. Through 20 years of militant resistance, the small Turkish town of Artvin has managed to hold off the gold and copper mine threatening their lives and surrounding habitat. Across North America, fierce Indigenous resistance has stopped or delayed pipelines threatening tribal lands and critical watersheds. And 38 years after its founding, with its UK branch shutting down the country’s largest coal mine for one day in a 2017 direct action, Earth First! is still making no compromises in defence of Mother Earth.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Lysistrata Project
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- Distributed action
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Change a name to change the game
- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Don’t mistake your group for society
- Escalate strategically
- Fail forward
- Give voice to those that can’t speak

Theories

- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- The commons

LEARN MORE

Media from the Frontlines of Ecological Resistance

Earth First Journal

<http://earthfirstjournal.org/>

Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching

The Anarchist Library, 1993

<http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-ecodefense-a-field-guide-to-monkeywrenching>

Methodologies

- Action star
- SMART objectives
- Theory of change

TAGS

Climate justice, Direct action,
Environment, Indigenous rights,
Land use, International solidarity

STORY

EVERY HEARTBEAT COUNTS

Using the #LATE campaign hashtag, revolutionary artists and media activists are reinventing the aesthetic narrative of Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution and situating the commune at its symbolic center.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Beautiful Trouble

Beautiful Trouble is a globally dispersed group of activists whose mission is to make nonviolent revolution irresistible by providing strategic tools and trainings to inspire movements for a more just, healthy, and equitable world.

"Everyone returned with the same word on their tongues: love."
—Zobeida Guzman

In 2015 the provocative slogan #LATE, "Every heartbeat counts" flooded Venezuelan social media, appearing in vibrantly colored artwork, videos, and other multimedia. Much more than a passing hashtag, the campaign is the work of an army of revolutionary artists and grassroots media activists — from 21 Venezuelan organizations as well as groups from Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia and Peru — who seek to reinvent the aesthetic narrative of the Bolivarian Revolution and situate the commune at its "symbolic centre."

Just as Venezuela's growing commune movement is laying the foundations for radical political and economic democracy embodied in a new "communal state," the #LATE campaign aims to refound the Revolution's imaginary as a collective vision that does not belong to the government nor the PSUV (the United Socialist Party of Venezuela), but is shaped from below by social movements. In the face of the hotly contested December 6th parliamentary elections, instead of campaigning for any of the candidates or parties, #LATE campaigns called for radicalizing the revolution by implementing the "legislative agenda of the popular movements."

Read the interview with campaign founders and spokespeople Zobeida Guzman and José Omaña at venezuelanalysis.com, where this introductory text originates.

LEARN MORE

#LATE: A "People's Campaign" for the Commune and Chavismo's Revolutionary Rebirth
Venezuela Analysis, 2015
<http://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/11723>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Flower Speech Campaign
- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign

Tactics

- Guerrilla marketing
- Hashtag campaign

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Make the invisible visible
- Seize the means of communication
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Capitalism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Cultural hegemony
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

#LATE campaign website
<http://cadalatidocuenta.com.ve/>

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Art, Capitalism, Communications, Community building, Democracy, Direct action, Elections, Language, Media, Movement building, Social media

STORY

FEES MUST FALL

The 2015 tuition hikes sparked a national student movement in South Africa that demanded comprehensive reform and questioned the political, social, and economic status quo of the “rainbow nation.”

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ashanti Kunene

Ashanti Kunene is a social justice activist, published writer, activist poet, and an international relations masters student at Stellenbosch University. Ashanti was a prominent student leader at Stellenbosch University during the 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall student movement, and her life goals are to become a professor of “decolonial international relations theory” and to publish work that encourages and challenges us to be better humans.

“DESPITE BEING PORTRAYED AS A SINGLE-ISSUE MOVEMENT, “FEES MUST FALL” WAS A MANIFESTATION OF GENERATIONAL DISCONTENT WITH, AND DELEGITIMATION OF, THE IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND MORAL CONTRADICTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA’S POST-COLONIAL RULE.”

Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.

—Frantz Fanon

On October 14, 2015, students and staff at the University of Witwatersrand occupied the administration building and locked down the university in response to an intended tuition hike. The riot police arrested over 25 students, triggering a thousand more to gather overnight at the local police station demanding the release of their comrades.

Within a week, protests spread to universities across the country (see: TACTIC: Distributed action) not only against fees, but also to demand a broader reform in student affairs. The protests later coalesced under the umbrella of #FeesMustFall, marking the emergence of South Africa’s first major student movement since the 1976 Soweto uprising.

At Stellenbosch University, students protested the use of Afrikaans as an academic medium of instruction. At the University of Cape Town, the #RhodesMustFall protests problematised the continued

KEY TACTIC

Distributed action

“Fees Must Fall” protests spread to all universities across South Africa in a week, with different universities and campuses independently deciding what actions to engage in. By decentralising the movement, its decision-making processes and actions, “Fees Must Fall” made it difficult for the state to respond in a coordinated manner, or for any single faction to usurp the movement from within.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Create online-offline synergy

Students raised common

celebration of Cecil Rhodes who represented South Africa's dark past under colonialism and apartheid. Students defaced his statue and demanded its removal from campus. At the university currently known as Rhodes (UCKAR), female students who were victims of sexual violence exposed the crimes of their male counterparts by anonymously publishing a list of perpetrators in what became known as the #RURferenceList.

One of the movements popular maxims was, "*This revolution shall be intersectional or it will be bullshit.*" Building on this maxim, "Fees Must Fall" also engaged in solidarity struggles including the fight to #EndOutSourcing, which addressed the demands of underpaid university cleaners, chefs, and gardeners for decent wages.

Despite the intersectionality maxim, some components of the movement pushed against gender-related protests. Unsurprisingly for such a progressive upheaval, the movement diverted its criticism inwards as well as outwards. Internal ideological agitations led to the formation of groups such as #PatriarchyMustFall and #EndRapeCulture by intersectional feminists to counter the de facto silencing of gender issues dominant in national politics within "Fees Must Fall," as well as a commitment to intersectionality by the female cadres within the movement. (see: THEORY: Feminism).

Despite being portrayed as a single-issue movement, "Fees Must Fall" was a manifestation of generational discontent with, and delegitimation of, the ideological, political, and moral contradictions of South Africa's post-colonial rule (see: THEORY: Gerontocracy). Students were disgruntled with the political pattern where those who once fought for the freedom and dignity of the majority black population became a ruling elite, co-opted in global capital (see: THEORY: Capitalism) that perpetuated white supremacy and commodified essential services, like education, for profit. The student protests conceived a movement that demanded the decolonization of every aspect of life in South African society.

The 2015/2016 tuition hikes were scrapped only to be re-announced for the academic year that followed, sparking another wave of protests in 2016 and 2017, leading the government to eventually concede to the students demands. The government announced that poor and working class students would have access to free higher education — a decision yet to be implemented as of August 2019.

LEARN MORE

The Johannesburg Salon
The Salon, Vol 9 - JWTC (Johannesburg Workshop on Theory and Criticism), 2015
http://jwtc.org.za/the_salon/volume_9.htm

concerns and engaged in the "Fees Must Fall" conversation using multiple, consolidated hashtags, yet organized themselves on and across campuses through offline connections and mobilization. Students used online platforms like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp to communicate, get live updates on actions, and to brainstorm on which actions to replicate in their campuses under a common front.

KEY THEORY

Intersectionality

"Fees Must Fall" engaged in non-student struggles such as better pay by university workers and demanded non-fee related reforms from curriculum changes to confronting patriarchy. Intersectionality wasn't, however, fully reflected in the internal politics of the movement as female cadres found gender issues pushed to the periphery, with some female students facing harassment from their male counterparts even during the protests.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Burmese Students' Long March
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Québec Student Strike
- Schools of Struggle
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Distributed action
- Hashtag campaign
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Occupation

South African student protests are about more than just Fees Must Fall.

The Conversation, 2015

<https://theconversation.com/south-african-student-protests-are-about-much-more-than-just-feesmustfall-49776>

South Africa: Student movement splinters as patriarchy muscles out diversity.

The Conversation, 2016

<https://theconversation.com/south-africa-student-movement-splinters-as-patriarchy-muscles-out-diversity-57855>

Principles

- Be careful with each other so we can be dangerous together
- Build people power, then negotiate
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Change a name to change the game
- Create online-offline synergy
- Focus on basic needs
- Know your community
- Make the personal political
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Decolonization
- Gerontocracy
- Intersectionality
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Gender and sexuality, Capitalism, Privatization, Colonialism, Education, Language, Racial justice, Social media, State violence, Student activism

STORY

FLOWER SPEECH CAMPAIGN

In 2014, Burmese activists launched the *Panzagar* ("flower speech") campaign to counter hate speech in Myanmar in response to a rise in anti-Muslim violence.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Thinzar Shunlei Yi

Thinzar is a youth advocate and experienced activist, campaigner, and organizer based in Yangon, Myanmar.

"FLOWERS, THE KEY IMAGE OF THE CAMPAIGN, SYMBOLIZE PEACE IN MYANMAR."

In 2014, the *Panzagar* ("flower speech") campaign was launched to counter hate speech in Myanmar (also known as Burma) in response to a rise in anti-Muslim violence. *Al Jazeera* had reported 250 people killed in the violence, and more than 140,000 displaced and living in camps. The victims were predominantly from the minority Muslim Rohingya population, although some Buddhist monasteries, homes, and businesses were also burned down in revenge attacks. Flowers, the key image of the campaign, symbolize peace in Myanmar.

Although groups such as women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities have also come under attacks online, the majority of the recent surge in hate speech has been aimed at Myanmar's Muslim community. According to a report from the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, almost 90 percent of all online hate speech it reviewed was aimed at the Muslim community.

The *Panzagar* campaign was initiated by Nay Phone Latt, youth leader, blogger, and member of regional parliament, who in 2008 had been sentenced to more than 20 years in prison for blogging about the 2007 Saffron Revolution, but who was released in 2012. The campaign aims to promote the responsible use of social media and raise awareness of the serious consequences of online behaviour. The campaign partners with local young graphic designers and Facebook to create a set of positive "digital stickers" that users can share on the social media platform in response to any hate speech they encounter.

"Flower speech" campaign image from the Facebook page of "Support Panzagar: End Hate Speech With Flower Speech."

These stickers tend to depict, in animé style, a cute young woman with a flower in her mouth, using Buddhist imagery to symbolize a

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use your cultural assets

Holding a traditional flower in your mouth to symbolize the foundational Buddhist tenet of ethical conduct made the message familiar, accessible, and compelling to its target audience, as well as across other cultures.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

Placing a flower (a traditional symbol of peace) in your mouth had a powerful effect

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Every Heartbeat Counts

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Hashtag campaign

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Create many points of entry

commitment not to use or tolerate speech that can spread hate among people. Within days, thousands of people had liked Panzagar's Facebook page, and many, including several public figures, have posted photographs of themselves holding flowers in their mouths. This is a courageous act in a country where anti-Muslim sentiment is growing and where there have been fatal clashes — most recently in July 2014 in Mandalay, after a false rumour that a Buddhist woman had been raped by Muslim men surfaced online and went viral on Facebook.

In September 2015, Facebook's community standards were translated into Burmese for the first time. The standards are sent to users mostly through promoted posts that Facebook hopes will lead users to think twice before they share content that could be deemed inflammatory towards marginalized groups.

The campaign has also gone beyond social media and into rural communities. The team has created a "Travelling Panzagar" project going to different states and regions to speak about the campaign and the importance of countering hate speech with "flower speech."

LEARN MORE

Using "Flower Speech" and New Facebook Tools, Myanmar Fights Online Hate Speech

Mari Michener Oye, The Washington Post, 2014

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/using-flower-speech-and-new-facebook-tools-myanmar-fights-online-hate-speech/2014/12/24/3bff458c-8ba9-11e4-ace9-47de1af4c3eb_story.html

Hate Speech Pours Poison into the Heart

San Yamin Aung, The Irrawaddy, 2014

<http://www.irrawaddy.com/interview/hate-speech-pours-poison-heart.html>

- Kill them with kindness
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Seek common ground
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Art, Communications, Digital security, Education, Nonviolence, Racial justice, Social media, Student activism, War and peace

STORY

GEZI PARK IFTAR

When Turkish authorities tried to break the unity between secular and religious anti-capitalist protesters, Observant Muslims responded by inviting everyone to a public feast during the Ramadan Iftar.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Eda Gecikmez

Eda Gecikmez is an artist who lives and works in Istanbul.

During the 2013 popular protests that were sparked by opposition to the urban development plan of Istanbul's Gezi Park, the authorities tried to break up an anti-capitalist protest which included muslims and seculars.

It was the holy month of Ramadan and many were fasting. The crowd viewed the authorities' crackdown as an attempt to break-up the protesters unity, and so observant muslim protesters, due to break their fast by sunset, invited the crowd to a mass public feast for iftar.

It was an inspiring moment, which saw floods of people arriving, each with a simple dish celebrating the commonality of their struggle against capitalism. The feast stretched from Istiklal street off Gezi Park all the way to Taksim Square. About 30 minutes after the call to prayer (the time when the fast is broken), the police ordered everyone to leave Istiklal Street. Nonetheless, the peaceful steadfastness of the crowd forced the police to pull back.

Resistance blossomed from Gezi Park to Taksim Square to all Istanbul and then the rest of the country, and Gezi became a symbol of solidarity and determination in the face of capitalism. The spirit of unity was transformative for participants, and it proved that the people can unite regardless of their differences.

LEARN MORE

Our commons: Who, why?

Mustereklerimiz, 2013

<http://mustereklerimiz.org/our-commons-who-why/>

Taksim/Istiklal Yeryüzü Iftar/Gezi Park

YouTube, 2013

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMNS_zwL99Y

Turkey's Gezi Park Protesters Regroup for Ramadan

Al-Monitor, 2013

<http://www.al->

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen
- Streets Into Gardens
- Walk a mile in her shoes
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Human banner
- Occupation

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your community
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- The commons

monitor.com/pulse/fr/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/originals/2013/07/turkey-gezi-park-protesters-observe-ramadan-iftars.html#

Gezi Park Protests

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gezi_Park_protests

Methodologies

- Baraza

TAGS

Capitalism, Community building, Nonviolence, Movement building, State violence, Street protest

STORY

GHANA THINKTANK

A global art project that flips the script on the international aid model by enlisting regular folks in Ghana and elsewhere throughout the Global South to help “develop the First World.”

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ghana ThinkTank

Ghana ThinkTank was founded in 2006 by John Ewing, Matey Odonkor, and Christopher Robbins. Maria Del Carmen Montoya joined in 2009, and all of them have contributed to this piece.

“THE PROJECT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A BOLD MIX OF SYMBOLIC PROVOCATION AND REAL-WORLD PROBLEM-SOLVING.”

Whether motivated by generosity or greed, the language of “international development” often reinforces feelings of superiority on the part of “First World” citizens. Given the long and destructive history of colonialism and imperialism, these feelings of superiority can perpetuate rather than alleviate inequality. They also distract from the fact that the quality of life in the US has been declining for the past 30 years.

The Ghana ThinkTank — a network of “Third World” think tanks devising solutions for “First World” problems — flips this script. The network began with think tanks in Ghana, Cuba, and El Salvador, and has since expanded to include Gaza Strip, Iran, Morocco, Mexico, Indonesia, and a group of incarcerated young women in the US prison system.

Lists of problems — obesity, crime, depression, racism, boring meetings — are collected from residents in American and European cities, then sent to the think tanks in the “developing” world to analyze. These think tanks devise solutions, which are then implemented in the city where the problems originated. Each stage of the process is videotaped and shown as part of a gallery/museum exhibit. Local residents and gallery attendees are invited to help enact the solutions, or submit their own problems. Problems can range from the deeply personal, such as, “Yesterday I pretended to be bisexual to be accepted,” to the societal, “the elderly are treated like a burden,” to the nonsensical, “the city of Karlsruhe is too flat and boring.”

By reversing the usual roles of helper and helped, GTT creates a rare and entertaining avenue for sustained intercultural dialogue among groups with radically different experiences. As one culture

KEY TACTIC

Culture jamming

GTT undercuts the norms of international development using classic culture-jamming moves, for example by inviting a holocaust survivor from the Netherlands to cut the ribbon on an Anne Frank mosque in Palestine. (“If you build it, I will cut that ribbon,” she said.)

KEY PRINCIPLES

Turn the tables

By coyly setting out to “develop the First World,” GTT turns the tables on the usual First World/Third World power dynamic, flipping the script on the very notion of “expertise.”

Use humour to undermine authority

GTT gives license to both problem-listers and think-tank solvers to make subversively irreverent proposals that undermine common mindsets and cultural authority. When

contemplates the woes of the other, alternate perspectives emerge, with thoughtful (and often playful) commentary and intercultural critique interacting in interesting ways with stereotypes. "People in the US emphasize education in order to maintain a system of worldwide domination," said Salvadorans about the US. Mexico responded to the problem of generation gaps by saying "Latinos respect their elders, African-Americans do, and Asians do. It is because white people are in charge in Westport, Connecticut, that old people are mistreated," while Ghana asserted that "Westerners stress too much on individualism."

At the conclusion of the discussion, each think tank proposes solutions to the problems they have reviewed. Some of these suggestions have produced workable solutions, while others have created intensely awkward (and revealing) situations.

The think tank in Iran suggested that the reason old people are seen as a burden to society in Britain is because young people think old people have never done anything interesting, and so can't relate to them. The proposed solution: interview old people about their funny dirty memories, and play them for young people on mp3s. And so, we approached elders on the streets and bars in Cardiff and solicited raunchy stories from their youthful romantic exploits.

"We are almost all white and wealthy," residents of Westport, CT (one of the wealthiest cities in the US) complained. The think tank in El Salvador responded, "we bet there's plenty of diversity there — I mean, who fixes your houses and tends your yards? I bet they don't look like you." The Salvadorans suggested hiring immigrant day laborers to attend social functions in Westport, CT — which we did, at the same rate as their day laborer jobs, \$15/hr.

GTT has also used their same unexpected bridge-building model in zones of conflict around the world, from Mitrovica, Kosovo where GTT brought bitterly divided Serbs and Albanians together to try to solve each other's problems, to the increasingly militarized US-Mexico border where GTT asked undocumented immigrants to solve the problems border vigilantes were facing. Shortly after violence erupted in the Middle East over the Youtube video "The Innocence of Muslims," the US State Department and Bronx Museum selected GTT to work as cultural ambassadors in Morocco. Using a donkey cart transformed into a solar powered media center as our base, we traveled through rural villages petitioning Moroccans for help solving America's problems.

The project has always been a bold mix of symbolic provocation and real-world problem-solving. Lately, it has taken up solutions of greater consequence. Case in point: The American Riad is working with GTT's Indonesian and Moroccan think tanks in Detroit to build a 14-unit housing/business development using Islamic-Moroccan architectural principles (designed by internationally-known Syrian architect Dr. Marwa Al-Sabouni from the bombed city of Homs).

local Morrocans made the helpful suggestion that Americans read the Koran and think about revolution for 10 minutes per day, the US State Department (GTT's partner in Morocco) refused to have any part of it; GTT proceeded anyway.

Solidarity not aid

People ask whether international aid helps or hurts, but never ask what about this helping thing is helping in general. It turns out helping isn't helping. Solving other people's problems often creates worse problems. Instead of showing up in the Global South with a presumptuous "We're here to help you," GTT asks people for their best ideas. Instead of offering aid, GTT asks for solidarity. Treating people as a resource (rather than a needy victim) grants them high status.

KEY METHODOLOGY

Participatory action research

Many principles from PAR inform GTT, including meeting people where they're at, and within their time-frame. (GTT surveyed folks while they were waiting for the bus.) It shouldn't be something extra. Approach them "in the gaps" of their lives, and make requests that are appropriate for the level of relationship you have with them.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Conflict Kitchen

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Hoax

Barn-raising, or should we say *Riad-raising*, should be completed in 2019.

All the problem-solving aside, GTT's major goal is to connect people in intimate and meaningful ways in defiance of prejudice, racism, geographic barriers, and ethnic conflict. By redefining think tanks as groups of ordinary people who can solve complex problems, we are transforming the concept of a think tank from a group of highly-educated elites advising vulnerable and needy foreigners into a group of local citizens capable of solving global problems using the wisdom derived from their daily experience.

LEARN MORE

Ghana ThinkTank
www.ghanathinktank.org

Video: "Introduction to Ghana ThinkTank"

Ghana ThinkTank
<http://vimeo.com/30809767>

American Riad
Ghana ThinkTank, 2018
www.AmericanRiad.org

- Identity correction
- Public art intervention
- Storytelling

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Change a name to change the game
- If you're not uncomfortable, your coalition is too small
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny
- Solidarity, not aid
- Turn the tables
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Artivism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Framing
- Intersectionality
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Postcolonialism
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story
- Participatory action research

TAGS

Action design, Art, Colonialism, Community building, Humour, International solidarity, Pranks

STORY

HACKING APARTHEID

At the height of the anti-apartheid struggle, South African freedom fighters and hackers created an encrypted communication network that connected the leadership in exile with operatives in South Africa.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Sophie Toupin

Sophie Toupin's work explores the linkages between technology and activism. She presently works for Media@McGill, a hub for research and scholarship on media, technology, and culture at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

"THE CREATION OF AN ENCRYPTED COMMUNICATION SYSTEM GREATLY IMPROVED THE ANC'S ORGANIZING CAPACITIES."

"Cryptography is the ultimate form of nonviolent direct action."
—Julian Assange

During the apartheid era in South Africa, the ban imposed on the African National Congress (ANC) party meant that anti-apartheid activists were under constant surveillance, and were frequently forced into exile, arrested, jailed, tortured, or even killed.

Until the beginning of the 1980s, the ANC had a very limited communication network. It often used couriers who traveled in and out of the country to carry instructions, banned literature, and pamphlets. It also used Radio Freedom, the ANC's propaganda wing, to inform and inspire supporters. However, because communication methods were limited in their effectiveness, due in part to the distance separating ANC leaders in exile in Zambia from activists in South Africa, the creation of an encrypted communication system greatly improved the ANC's organizing capacities.

When exiled in London in the 1980s, the South African freedom fighter and hacker Tim Jenkin crafted an encrypted communication network that enabled operatives working underground in South Africa to report back to and communicate secretly with the African National Congress (ANC) leadership in exile in Zambia.

Known as Operation Vula, the system worked like this: Once it was fully up and running in 1988, Janet Love, a commander with Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), the armed wing of the ANC, would go to a safe house set up by a Canadian anti-apartheid couple and type a message on a laptop computer that had been smuggled in a few

KEY TACTIC

Encryption

Encryption enabled the building of an underground communication system that not only established a strong international communication network among key figures of the anti-apartheid movement, but also limited the apartheid regime's ability to surveil. While for many encryption projects today encryption is an end in itself, Operation Vula provides an example of a more practical encryption project, aimed at a politically specific and highly context-dependent outcome. It was not only about safeguarding communications, it was about enabling the exchange of strategic and tactical information crucial to the ultimate aim of liberating a people from oppression.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Practice digital self-defence

months before by Antoinette, a Dutch anti-apartheid flight attendant acting as a mule for the ANC. After typing the message and enciphering it, she would pass it out through the computer's serial port to an acoustic coupler modem. In this manner, she converted the digital data to sound, and the audio was recorded on a small cassette tape recorder. She would then dial Tim Jenkin in London, who had in his apartment a special answering machine attached to his landline phone to receive messages from South Africa. Jenkin played the received audio message back through a similar acoustic modem coupler attached to his computer, which converted it back to digital. The digital data would be deciphered using a matching floppy disk, which would make the plain text appear on Jenkin's computer screen. The floppy disk was based on an algorithm Jenkin had taken years to craft and polish. Depending on the content of the message, Jenkin would re-encipher it and pass it on to Lusaka, Zambia, where the senior leadership of the ANC was based. There, Lucia, another Dutch anti-apartheid activist, would receive Jenkin's enciphered message, decipher it, and print it out. A foot courier would pick up the message in Lucia's flat to take it to the senior ANC members.

By the late 1980s, the mass resistance in South Africa had reached unprecedented levels due to the fearless work of underground ANC activists, many of whom had slipped back into the country after having been exiled. The underground communication network became a highly effective means of passing information across borders to coordinate the anti-apartheid struggle. The anti-colonial hacking experimentation in the 1980s and 1990s came at a time when personal computers were just emerging, when cryptography was becoming recognized by many states as a weapon, and when countries such as the United States were restricting the selling of computers to South Africa for fear they would be used to strengthen the apartheid system.

LEARN MORE

Talking to Vula: The Story of the Secret Underground Communications Network of Operation Vula
Tim Jenkin, 1995
<http://www.anc.org.za/content/talking-vula>

The Vula Connection
YouTube, 2014
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSOTVfNe54A>

Escape from Pretoria
YouTube, 2013
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WyeAaYjlxE>

Obfuscation: A User's Guide for Privacy and Protest
Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum, MIT Press, 2015
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/obfuscation>

The development of a non-commercial encrypted communications infrastructure was indispensable to the anti-apartheid movement within and beyond South Africa, as it struggled against the surveillance, repression, and brutality of the apartheid regime. This network helped overcome a vicious circle: "Leaders could not go [to South Africa] because there were no underground structures in place to guarantee their safety; the underground structures could not develop because there were no key leaders in the country" (Jenkin, 1995).

KEY THEORY

Hacking

Hacking can be loosely defined as a practice that involves programming and/or tinkering with technology. Anthropologist Gabriella Coleman (2014) defines a hacker "as a technologist with a penchant for computing" and a hack as "a clever technical solution arrived at through non-obvious means." At the time, Jenkin did not identify as a hacker. Nevertheless, his tinkering with the phone system, computers, encryption, and acoustic coupler modems, among others, depended upon his ability to repurpose technologies through non-obvious means. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that when asked if Jenkin considers himself a hacker today, he responded in the affirmative.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- CryptoRally in Mexico City

Tactics

- Encryption
- Infiltration

Principles

- Practice digital self-defence
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Decolonization
- Hacking
- Postcolonialism
- The Global South

TAGS

, Colonialism, Communications, Dictatorship, Digital security, International solidarity, Movement building, Racial justice, State violence

STORY

HARRY POTTER ALLIANCE

An innovative cultural campaign that mobilized the huge Harry Potter fan-base to fight for justice, human rights, and democracy in our world, just like Harry did in his world.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Slack

Andrew Slack is creator, co-founder, and executive director of the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA) and a founding partner, performer, and writer in a traveling comedy group where he produced three videos that have been seen more than eleven million times. Andrew has written for numerous publications and has presented his theory of social change, cultural acupuncture, at TEDx in Rome, NPR's Morning Edition, Australia's Today Show, and is being studied at the University of Southern California.

“IF WE REALLY ARE FANS OF THE BOOKS, WE SHOULD FIGHT INJUSTICE IN OUR WORLD, THE WAY HARRY DID IN HIS.”

The Harry Potter fan-phenomenon is extraordinary. The franchise is the highest selling work of fiction in the history of literature. It cuts across cultures. After the Koran, it's been the most requested book in the Guantánamo Bay prison. Fans have invested enormous resources into conferences, written reams of fan fiction, started Quidditch sports leagues and tournaments, and birthed an entire genre of music: Wizard Rock, with literally hundreds of bands, all singing about Harry Potter.

And yet, something was missing.

“If Harry Potter were in our world,” I thought, “he'd do more than talk about Harry Potter. If we really were fans of the books, we should fight injustice in our world, the way Harry did in his.” In the books, Harry starts a student activist group called Dumbledore's Army that wakes the media and government to Voldemort's return. I wanted to create a Dumbledore's Army in our own world that could wake our media and governments to stop global warming and end genocide in Darfur. By tapping into a teenager's narrative connection to Harry Potter, such an organization could create a fun and accessible point of entry into what could otherwise be intimidating social issues.

And so, in mid-2005, I met up with Harry and the Potters, two brothers, both indie rock musicians who dress as Harry Potter and

KEY TACTIC

Distributed action

HPA has over 100 offline chapters worldwide, and relies on distributed action events as a way to act in unison. Our most successful actions have centered on the midnight releases of new Potter films. (They're simultaneous and worldwide, and people are already going, so it's a great organizing opportunity.) We asked supporters to organize a specific offline action in the movie theatre line that goes with the theme of the film. Fan sites were more eager to advertise for this event, as they were already hyping the movie release. At one release night, the New York Times showed up at our flagship event, and we gathered thousands of petition signatures

sing wildly popular punk songs at concerts with audiences in the hundreds and sometimes thousands.

Taking a novel approach to activism, we and a few others founded the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), and began using social media to organize the Harry Potter fanbase. Harry and the Potters reposted my action alerts to their 60,000 followers. Soon, other Wizard Rock bands were reposting the alerts. The biggest fan sites, like The Leaky Cauldron and Mugglenet, caught on and media coverage followed, with J. K. Rowling praising the group in Time magazine and on her own site. Soon the HPA was organizing among almost every facet of the Harry Potter fandom, and grew to over 70 volunteer staff and over 100 chapters around the world.

In the 10+ years of its existence, the HPA started and led a successful campaign to get Warner Bros to make all Harry Potter chocolate Fair Trade, has built libraries all over the US and world (Rwanda, Uganda, Detroit, Brooklyn, Puerto Rico, the Mississippi Delta, etc), and has sent five cargo planes of relief supplies to Haiti. With chapters in over 30 countries, the HPA has organized YouTube celebrities on net neutrality, advocated for human rights and equality on issues of class, race, sexuality, and gender. It leads a leadership training program called the Granger Leadership Academy. It's groundbreaking methodology has been featured in almost every major publication in the US, best selling books, documentaries, has influenced the direction of a 65 million dollar MacArthur study, and is continually cited as one of the pioneers of cultural activism in the 21st century.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Harry Potter Alliance

<https://www.thehpalliance.org/>

The Strength of a Story

Andrew Slack, TEDx Transmedia, 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq5NbWmyGWk>

Cultural Acupuncture and a Future for Social Change

Andrew Slack, Huffington Post, 2010

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/andrew-slack/cultural-acupuncture-and_b_633824.html

Fans of Action: How Harry Potter Inspired a New Generation of Activists

Abby Ohlheiser, The Revealer, 2011

<https://therevealer.org/fans-of-action-how-harry-potter-inspired-a-new-generation-of-activists/>

How "Dumbledore's Army" Is Transforming Our World: An Interview with the HP Alliance's Andrew Slack

from people all over the world asking Warner Brothers to make all Harry Potter chocolate Fair Trade. Distributed actions around movie releases were a tactical approach that can be neatly put to work by other campaigns doing culture-based organizing.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Know your cultural terrain

Meet people where they're at, not where you want them to be. Harry Potter has tens of millions of young fans. HPA went to that fanbase as a fan, and then from there to the political issues. HPA has also hooked into another huge base of young people: nerds (see: PRINCIPLE: Embrace the stigma). Fan and nerd culture make up a huge section of the most active people online, and nerdy teenagers are using the Internet to come together in unprecedented ways (just google Hunger Games, Whedon or Dr. Who). The Nerdfighters ("nerds using the power of their awesome to fight world suck") are already starting to do for nerd-dom what HPA has done for Harry Potter fans. Remember to speak your group's language and start with the values they would most readily respond to.

Think narratively

We need to organize through narratives on three levels: personal, collective, and mythological. The personal is your or your constituents' individual story; the collective is the story of a nation or group; the mythological is the deeper, archetypal language of the psyche. Think: Avatar fans fighting against the Sky People (aka the coal industry) to protect the Pandora for our world.

Create online-offline synergy

People congregate online around common interests, but long for offline and real-world connection. Give it to them. Offer the big fan websites and group leaders a chance to make a difference (they normally want it) while demonstrating how it will help them engage their audience more deeply. Have a project for them with a solid ask that is authentically in the language of their site/fandom. Use social media playfully, and with a healthy balance of the three P's: patience, persistence, and pizzazz.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

Tactics

- Creative lobbying
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Phone banking
- Storytelling
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Create many points of entry
- Create online-offline synergy
- Embrace the stigma
- Hope is a muscle
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make new folks welcome

- Make your own myths
- Meet people where they're at
- Think narratively
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Artivism
- Cultural hegemony
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Gerontocracy
- Human rights
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Human rights,
Humour, International solidarity,
Social media, Student activism

STORY

HONK AT PARLIAMENT

In June 2013, citizens began honking their horns outside Lebanon's Parliament to tell MPs that their time in office had expired. The protest spread until they were honked at everywhere they went.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hassan Tabikh

Hassan Tabikh is a Lebanese writer and activist working with civil society and international NGOs in Lebanon towards achieving social justice. Hassan also campaigns for gender equality and ending violence against women.

"WE LEARNED THAT YOU DO NOT NEED A LOT OF MONEY TO LAUNCH A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN. WHAT IT TOOK WAS A BIT OF CREATIVITY AND A LOT OF PERSISTENCE."

According to Lebanese Electoral Law No. 25/2008, the official mandate of an elected Parliament is four years. After one term is over, new elections must take place in line with civil and constitutional rights guaranteed for the people. Nonetheless, the 2009 Parliament, with a term set to expire in May 2013, voted to extend its mandate for a further 17 months.

On June 6, 2013, I and five other youths gathered in the crowded Abo Assaf cafe in the heart of the bustling Lebanese capital. We were dismayed by the Parliament's decision, and were determined to do something about it. We invited others, growing to a group of 15 that started brainstorming ideas for pressuring Parliament to call new elections. Many demonstrations had already occurred, but all had been repetitious, conventional, and ultimately ineffective.

We wanted results. We wanted something easy to participate in, yet flashy, nonviolent, and doable with zero budget. After many ideas were fleshed out, someone said: "We must not allow them to stay in Parliament in a quiet atmosphere." This sparked ideas of noise disruptions, from music to whistling, until finally someone suggested the idea of honking horns, which the group eventually unanimously endorsed.

We tried it first using air horns. In groups of ones and twos, we entered the zone around the Parliament. Because groups are not allowed to enter together, some of us were waiting at coffee shops, restaurants, and hotels within the vicinity of the Parliament. The first horn took the policemen by surprise, and then the horns of 35

KEY TACTIC

Noise-making protest (cacerolazo)

Lebanese people love music, whistling, honking, and clapping. Horns are usually used as a warning of danger, which made a strong statement about the illegal status of MPs. Noise-making objects, such as horns, are small, widely available, and easy to sneak through police checkpoints. They are disruptive yet nonviolent; they peacefully penetrated the walls and windows of the Parliament building, yet were loud enough to challenge its business-as-usual atmosphere.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Simple rules can have grand results

Spot a parliamentarian? Honk! This was the simple formula that allowed the protest to spread

participants filled the air.

“The horns were an obstacle,” said one MP to a TV reporter as he emerged from a parliamentary session. “We were not able to hear each other.” Our presence was impossible to ignore. We were interrupting business-as-usual. Our discontent and demands were being heard loud and clear.

We continued with the action on a weekly basis while Parliament was in session. Participant numbers increased dramatically until the police reacted by barring the public from the Parliament zone. In response, people began to honk from their balconies, in the streets, and from their cars wherever they spotted a car with the parliamentary insignia.

Our protest had started with 20 people with handheld air horns. Within three weeks, it had grown to thousands of people, using every kind of honking device imaginable. People were honking at MPs everywhere they went. Members of Parliament were visibly disturbed; some of them changed their license plates to hide their identity to avoid being honked at.

In spite of this widespread wave of protest, as well as all the media coverage and the nuisance caused to MPs, new elections have not yet been held. After the initial 17-month extension passed, the Parliament enacted another extension of its mandate for an additional 31 months, until June 2017.

Nonetheless, we created a new culture of protest in Lebanon: Now it is a tradition to honk at illegal parliamentarians whenever you’ve spotted one. With every honk, parliamentarians are reminded of what they know deep in their horn-battered bones: They are unlawful representatives of the public, effectively “occupying” the people’s place.

This fight is not over. We will honk at them until they are gone.

LEARN MORE

For the Republic
YouTube, 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqHZMKVJcaY>

For the Republic official page
Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/Lebpublic/?ref=br_rs

quickly and widely. All that was needed was a horn, and knowing what to honk at: a Parliament license plate, the Parliament building, or the MPs themselves. This straightforward concept enabled large-scale public participation across different locations and times.

KEY THEORY

Alienation effect

Before the honk protest began, MPs pretended to have a mandate; they were engaged in a pantomime play of democracy, which the public, as audience, passively participated in. If you passed an MP in the street or walked by the Parliament building, you could only be disgruntled by the fact that they had a false mandate. The honking campaign turned this banality into an outrage, making the familiar situation of non-representative government seem visibly odd, causing the MPs to feel out of place, and revealing to the audience (the Lebanese public) the hidden mechanisms of the play.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Creative disruption
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Enable, don't command
- Know your community
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Personalize and polarize
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Alienation effect
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Palace Coup
- Revolutionary reform
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Corruption, Democracy, Humour, Elections

STORY

JUSTICE FOR JANITORS

The Janitors' Union in Washington, D.C. used a series of escalating creative direct actions — dubbed Days of Rage — to win union recognition, wage hikes, and benefits.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Lisa Fithian

Lisa Fithian has organized since 1975, weaving together strategic creative nonviolent actions, anti-oppression work, and sustainable practices in student, environmental justice, workers rights, and peace and global justice struggles. Whether it was shutting down the CIA, White House, Supreme Court or the WTO, or working on Justice of Janitors, Camp Casey, Common Ground Relief or Wall Street banks, Lisa has supported tens of thousands of people in accessing their power and gaining the experience and skills they need to fight for justice, no matter how great or small the cause.

“WE HAD CAPTURED THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF PEOPLE IN D.C. FOR WHOM JANITORS WERE NO LONGER INVISIBLE.”

In 1994, after ten years of organizing, the Janitors Union in Washington, D.C., had only organized about 20 percent of the commercial real estate buildings downtown — not nearly enough to have the power to raise wages in the sector. A change in strategy was required. Over the next two years, Justice for Janitors organized a series of “Days of Rage”: creative escalating actions weaving together corporate campaigns, worker organizing, community support, and direct actions. Within the year, 5,000 janitors — 90 percent of those working in D.C. — were unionized and had won wage hikes and benefits. It was a huge victory. Justice for Janitors had hit upon one of the most successful union organizing strategies in recent US history, and the Days of Rage model has been repeated in many places since then.

The model requires several key components: 1) a visibility campaign (see: TACTIC: Visibility action) designed to reach the collective consciousness, 2) strategic research and campaign planning to create a map and calendar of opportunities, and 3) creative and escalating direct actions focused on a clear target. Combined, these elements help create a political crisis that forces the opponent to either resolve the issues or lose standing in the community (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma).

KEY PRINCIPLES

Define “hardcore” strategically

Building a campaign to win requires escalation over time, leading to a moment of compression and crisis. Rather than diving straight in to a “hardcore” strategy, start simply, keep training and building people’s confidence so that they take yet more radical steps and courageous actions.

Maintain nonviolent discipline

If you are going to build a political crisis using a committed minority, nonviolent discipline is critical.

Anger works best when you have the moral high ground

“D.C. Has Carr Trouble” was our main slogan in December of 1994. Oliver Carr was the biggest commercial real estate owner in D.C. and we thought our little pun creative, given how traffic was sure to be impacted by our bridge-blockading actions. We blocked buildings and parking garages of real estate giants, took over lobbies and the streets, and got arrested throughout the week.

In March we went to the homes of real estate moguls and blocked the roads to the Capitol building by erecting mock houses in traffic lanes. Then we simultaneously took over the City Council Chambers, the office of Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and disrupted Congress from the House Gallery right after the morning prayer, demanding that the wealthy pay their fair share.

September culminated in a massive action shutting down a major bridge from Virginia into D.C. In the middle of the highway, hundreds of janitors erected a classroom, complete with desks and chalk boards. We also parked a school bus and a school van across all four lanes, effectively closing the bridge.

When called out for blocking the bridges, SEIU President John Sweeney replied: “I believe in building bridges whenever [we can] be a full partner with our employers and a full citizen of the communities we live in. But I believe in blocking bridges whenever those employers and those communities turn a deaf ear to the working families we represent.”

The September actions had an impact beyond our expectations. Some Cabinet members couldn't commute in. Flights were delayed at Reagan National Airport and the Senate had to delay votes. Needless to say, it was soon made a felony to block a bridge in D.C. Meanwhile, though, we had captured the hearts and minds of people in D.C. for whom janitors were no longer invisible.

The Justice for Janitors creative direct action model of organizing has been used again and again to great success, including the series of street actions in New York during the week of May 12, 2011, which to some degree set the stage for Occupy Wall Street and the growing movement against big banking.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Stories of Raising America — Justice for Janitors
SEIU (Service Employees International Union), 2018
<http://www.seiu.org/justice-for-janitors>

The Corporation (film)
The Corporation, 2018
<http://thecorporation.com/>

Troublemaker's Handbook: How to Fight Back Where You Work —

If you are going to block a bridge and inconvenience thousands, people must understand what's at stake. You need to illustrate the depth of your commitment and passion for a just solution. You can then channel the resulting public anger to help solve the problem: *If you are pissed about this inconvenience, we are sorry, but call the mayor and demand that he resolve these issues!*

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Occupy Wall Street

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- General strike
- Mass street action
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Choose your target wisely
- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Stay on message
- Use others' prejudices against them
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Direct action
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

and Win!

Dan La Botz, 1991

<https://www.abebooks.com/book-search/title/troublemakers-handbook-fight-back-where/author/botz-dan/>

Campaign strategy, Capitalism,
Direct action, Labour, Street
protest, Wealth inequality

STORY

KISANGANI DEMANDS ELECTRIC POWER

Despite state violence, the people of Kisangani forced the Congolese authorities to honor their constitutional right to reliable electric power.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jedidia Mabela

Jedidia Mabela is a Congolese-Democratic Republic of Congo activist. He is a political and administrative sciences graduate, and active in pro-democracy and LUCHA (La Lutte pour le Changement) citizen movements.

“PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO TRANSFORM THEIR FEAR OF THE REGIME INTO POWER OVER THE SYSTEM.”

Blessed and cursed, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the world’s wealthiest countries in minerals, metals, and natural resources. Cobalt and copper, which are often used in rechargeable batteries and electric devices, are among the top natural resources exploited by multinational corporations. Yet, ironically, less than 20 percent of the population has access to electricity!

In 2018, the city of Kisangani, home to a major hydroelectric dam, suffered from two months of near total power shutdown. The National Electricity Company (Société Nationale d’Electricité — SNEL) was unable to service the six municipalities of the city, largely due to technical failures in the system and corrupt management. Faced by indifferent political and administrative authorities, the “Fight for Change” movement, a.k.a LUCHA (*La Lutte pour le Changement* in French) took on this battle. The movement focused on mobilizing the local population, as they were the constituency most affected by the shutdown (see: PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from the most impacted). But, awareness was a necessary predecessor to action. Because the country had been wrecked by wars and bloodshed, power outages were seen as normal and access to electricity as a fundamental right was not an urgent concern. LUCHA launched an intense awareness-raising initiative, from leafleting and banner hangs to in-person interaction and one-to-one recruitment. Two months later, the movement called for a rally, which was followed by more marches and demonstrations (see: TACTIC: Mass street action). People held popular sit-outs at the SNEL headquarters, the Town Hall, and the office of the Provincial Governor. They marched with a single demand to the authorities: Resolve load shedding once and for all. Such mobilizations were unusual as the regime was known for its brutality. Despite

KEY TACTIC

Mass street action

Gathering in large numbers at rallies, vigils, and sit-outs amplified the voice of the local population, allowing them to bypass their inept elected representatives and take up the battle directly with the authorities. Mass actions allowed activists and movements from outside the city to join forces and lend support to the local population, harnessing solidarity and a sense of unity. By using mass street actions, people were able to transform their fear of the regime into power over the system.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Maintain nonviolent discipline

Having experienced the bitterness of civil war, the people of Kisangani knew all too well how important it was to insist on nonviolence, regardless of the authorities’ response. This discipline was powerful in two

anticipating repression, the people of Kisangani took to the streets, armed with the moral indignation that their constitutional rights were being violated. The regime feared that the political tide would turn against it like it recently had in neighbouring countries. And so, shortly after the repression, the authorities dismissed the Provincial Director of the SNEL for “incompetence,” appointed a new director, and adopted a new strategic plan to resolve power shortages and improve electricity supply in Kisangani. They also announced plans to build a second hydroelectric dam. Afraid that a broader organized movement might emerge, the authorities were forced to buckle to popular pressure and find sustainable local solutions.

LEARN MORE

“Lutte pour le changement” Movement
LUCHA Official Website
<http://www.luchacongo.org/>

Congo: dissolution des compagnies d'eau et d'électricité
(dissolution of water and electricity companies)
Africa News, 2018
<https://fr.africanews.com/2018/02/03/congo-dissolution-des-compagnies-d-eau-et-d-electricite/>

ways: First, it created a sense of resilience that enabled people to overcome fear and confront police brutality, and second, it enabled the campaign to act wisely and call off the protests when the response by the regime became highly disproportionate.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

The campaign designed its actions to leave no room for ambiguity about their demand, including a “light the day” action, in which people walked through the streets in full daylight with lit candles, decrying the darkness that reigned over the city as a result of the electric power shutdown (see: TACTIC: Artistic vigil).

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- #GambiaHasDecided
- Street Graduation
- Who Would Accept?
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Mass street action

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself

Theories

- Action logic
- Hamoq and hamas
- The Global South
- The shock doctrine
- The social cure

Methodologies

- SMART objectives

TAGS

Corruption, Dictatorship, Energy, Movement building, State violence, Street protest, Wealth inequality, Land use

STORY

KUBATANA'S YELLOW POSTER CAMPAIGN

In 2014, after a disheartening election in Zimbabwe, despondent citizens were inspired by motivational posters around Harare to interact with each other via the online social justice site, kubatana.net.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Brenda Burrell

Brenda Burrell is one of the co-founders of Kubatana.net. She is an information activist with an interest in applying information technologies to social challenges.

“WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AVOID ANONYMITY, BECAUSE STANDING UP FOR YOUR CAUSE BUILDS RESPECT AND HELPS YOU HOLD YOUR SPACE.”

Kubatana, an online hub of social justice resources, has a knack for rallying people's spirits with its irreverent sense of humor. In 2014, as Zimbabweans and the economy reeled in the wake of President Robert Mugabe's landslide election, and the prospect of five more years of self-serving, corrupt governance, Kubatana.net decided to run a campaign that would lift spirits and engage citizens using inspiring and challenging quotations on bright yellow posters in public spaces.

Posters are typically used to sell products, promote political candidates or publicise events. Kubatana saw an opportunity to use them in an unconventional way – to stimulate discussion by posting nonpartisan, thought-provoking and inspiring quotations throughout the suburbs of Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare. For example: “If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention”; “Do things that make your heart beat faster”; “If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything”; and “Be yourself, everyone else is taken.”

Kubatana has tens of thousands of subscribers across email, social media, SMS and WhatsApp. These channels were used to raise the profile of the campaign and solicit feedback, which was received via all of our electronic channels and in person. People loved the campaign and remarked on the variety of places in which they'd seen the posters.

To make maximum use of the financial resources invested in the posters, Kubatana encouraged the public to interact with them in a variety of ways:

- Tell us which quote you like best and why

KEY TACTIC

Guerrilla marketing

Messaging in public space is closely monitored in Harare. However this 'unauthorised' poster campaign had such broad appeal that it raised no formal complaints and for that reason was even more appreciated by the public. Kubatana encouraged feedback with the intention of building a conversation around the posters as well as measuring their impact.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Start a conversation

People like to be heard, and conversations help build community. The poster campaign invited and responded to feedback, which helped build an appreciative and responsive audience. Everyone has their favourite social media or communication channel, so the campaign used more than one. We proudly put our name and

- Win airtime by helping us take the posters down (this ensured that the campaign never became stale)
- Buy posters from us and we'll donate the money to a charity of our choice.

A small contractor was engaged to produce and install the posters and later used to recover those that remained up at the end of the campaign.

LEARN MORE

Advertising for good
Kubatana.net, 2014

<http://www.kubatana.net/2014/08/04/2665/kubatana-net-advertising-good/>

URL on the posters, knowing that if you can, it's best to avoid anonymity, as it helps to build trust.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Every Heartbeat Counts
- #GambiaHasDecided
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Clandestine leafleting
- Currency hacking
- Guerrilla marketing
- Hashtag campaign
- Messaggio nella banconota

Principles

- Know your community
- Start a conversation
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Memes

TAGS

Communications, Community building, Dictatorship, Elections, Humour, Language, Social media

STORY

LYSISTRATA PROJECT

To protest the Iraq War, the Lysistrata Project held over 1000 readings in 59 countries of the ancient Greek comedy *Lysistrata*, which is about how women ended a war by refusing sex until the men quit fighting.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Kathryn Blume

She is co-founder of the radio show *Earth on the Air*, and the Lysistrata Project, the first worldwide theatrical event for peace. Kathryn has had essays published in numerous books, blogs, and magazines and she is also solo performer, climate activist, yoga teacher, wedding officiant, haphazard gardener, and irresponsible cat owner.

“THERE WAS A SENSE OF HOPE AND OPTIMISM THAT THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE MIGHT ACTUALLY PREVENT THE WAR.”

It was early 2003. In the face of unprecedented global public opposition, US President George W. Bush and his administration were moving relentlessly toward an illegal war on Iraq. Desperate to stop the war, people all over the world were seeking creative ways to voice their opposition.

Inspired by the then recently organized New York group Theaters Against War, Sharron Bower and I, both of us actors, organized an international day of theatrical action centered around a famous ancient Greek anti-war comedy, *Lysistrata* (see: THEORY: Artivism). Written by the playwright Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* tells the fictitious story of the women of Greece ending the Peloponnesian War by refusing sex until the men quit fighting (see: TACTIC: Sex strike). Productions traditionally involve nudity on the part of the women and excessively large phalli on the priapically crippled men — conditions which make viewing the play a highly memorable experience.

Over the course of a few days, Bower and I set up a website that served as an instruction manual for organizing a reading of the play. It contained downloadable logos, posters, fliers, a sample press release, a top-ten list of reasons for opposing the war, instructions for organizing a reading, and a page listing readings by geographic area with contact information (see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results). We then sent an email to everyone we knew offering this reading as a creative, powerful means of opposing the

KEY TACTIC

Distributed action

Lysistrata Project participants took great comfort and inspiration in knowing that they were part of a global day of action, and that there were people all over the world participating. The fact that the event was a mass distributed action also multiplied the power of what each group was doing, so there was less pressure on local organizers to have the biggest possible event

KEY PRINCIPLE

Make it funny

By choosing a comedy about a sex strike as a form of protest, Lysistrata Project organizers made participation fun for their performers and audience members and made the event

impending war. We suggested people adapt the play to the needs of their own community(see: PRINCIPLE: Know your cultural terrain), and feel free to do readings anywhere that suited them.

Everyone we knew forwarded the email to everyone they knew (see: THEORY: Dunbar's number), and we started getting phone calls and emails filled with excitement and support from all over the world.

Numerous playwrights offered their own translations of the play, which were posted on the website for free. And an educational team put together a penis-free version of the show for kids called *No Hugs, No Kisses* and a fifty-page study guide, which we also posted on the site.

By March 3, the day of the event, we had 1,029 readings in fifty-nine countries on six continents (no Antarctica) and in all fifty American states (see: TACTIC: Distributed action). The readings received widespread news coverage in the US and around the world. There were two star-studded readings in New York and Los Angeles, and smaller readings in living rooms, churches, parks, rain forest campsites, community theatres, trailer park diners, a Kurdish refugee camp, as well as at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens where the play is set. There were clandestine readings in China and Jerusalem, as well as in Northern Iraq — undertaken by the international press corps who had to keep it secret so they wouldn't get fired.

Lysistrata Project readings reached an estimated 200,000 people and raised over \$100,000 for peace-oriented charities.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Lysistrata Project Archive
<http://lysistrataprojectarchive.com/lys/>

Operation Lysistrata
Michael Kelly, 2008
<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/51971/Operation-Lysistrata>

irresistible to the media.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Earth First!
- No vote, no sex
- Stop Praver Plan

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Lamentation
- Sex strike

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message
- Create many points of entry
- Do the media's work for them
- Enable, don't command
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny
- Make new folks welcome
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Dunbar's number
- Feminism
- Non-cooperation
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Art, Gender and sexuality, Humour, Social media, War and peace, International solidarity

STORY

MANICH MSAMAH

After the revolution, Tunisian youth combined their wit and passion to demand “no reconciliation without accountability!” and prevent the corrupt business elite from escaping justice.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Juman Abujbara

An editor of the Beautiful Rising book and toolkit, Juman is an aspiring philosopher, a campaigner for social change, and a human rights defender.

“THE VISIBILITY OF THE T-SHIRTS AND THE UNITY INSPIRED BY THE CAMPAIGN LOGO, MADE PEOPLE FEEL PART OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE WAY THEY FEEL PART OF A SOCCER TEAM.”

In response to people-powered movements over the past decade, regimes across the Middle East and Africa have become more sly. Many initially successful revolutions, from Egypt to Zimbabwe, have been co-opted by pre-existing power structures through a premeditated shuffle in governance to maintain the status quo (see: THEORY: Palace Coup). While the revolution in Tunisia was not co-opted (gladly!), the powerful elite of former President’s Ben Ali’s pre-revolution regime still sought arrangements to serve their interests.

In 2015, President Essebsi proposed the “Economic Reconciliation Act,” which would allow corrupt business owners and officials to walk away scot-free from corruption charges, as well as be exempt of debts and taxes owed to the state treasury. The Bill was met by widespread resistance under the banner “no reconciliation without accountability,” giving birth to the youth-led movement known as *Manich Msamah* (“I won’t forgive” in Arabic).

The battle over the Bill was like a three-round boxing bout, bringing the capitalist forces, in one corner, and labour and progressive forces, in another corner, into head-to-head combat, while Parliament acted as the referee. Exploiting the economic deterioration that followed Tunisia’s 2011 revolution (see: THEORY: The shock doctrine), business owners technically threatened to withdraw their investments if the Bill was scrapped. Meanwhile, with the same dire economic conditions — unemployment, poverty, and inflation — that sparked the revolution getting worse by the day, the vast majority of people were as opposed to the Bill as the capitalists were for it.

In spite of the ferocity of popular sentiment against the Bill, the

KEY TACTIC

Advanced leafleting

How many times have you been handed a paper leaflet only to throw it in the next trash bin? Handing out T-shirts, however, was not only a cool freebie that people got excited about, but also a practical bit of merchandise they could wear anywhere. It became a mobile advert that sparked people’s interest to get their own and join the club.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Focus on basic needs

By focusing on issues like electricity and commodity prices, low wages and high rates of unemployment, the campaign spoke to the daily concerns of (and thus mobilized) a much wider segment of society (from parents to students to the elderly) than the usual progressive do-gooders who tend to show up at protests.

mainstream opposition adopted a traditional (and ineffective) framework of issuing press releases and holding seminars. Frustrated with this approach, a group of youth in the opposition got creative. Instead of leafleting, they handed out T-shirts (see: TACTIC: Advanced leafleting) and made the design readily available so that people could print their own. Quickly, people were walking around wearing the campaign's logo — a judicial mallet — which became the symbol of their demand for post-revolutionary justice and accountability (see: THEORY: Floating signifier).

Instead of long and sophisticated political speeches, they rewrote popular songs and used comical caricatures and satirical slogans to get their message across (see: PRINCIPLE: Use humour to undermine authority). The youth group who started *Manich Msamah* wasn't content to win the battle over the story only on the Internet, they also took it to the streets, roaming alleys and neighbourhoods recruiting people.

At the beginning, politicians supporting the Bill labelled the movement "a bunch of kids playing in the streets" (see: THEORY: Gerontocracy), but soon enough their tactics caught on fire. The visibility of the T-shirts and the unity inspired by the campaign logo (see: PRINCIPLE: Brand or be branded), made people feel part of the campaign in the way they feel part of a soccer team, and as the satirical songs went viral, the campaign's narrative advanced far and wide (see: PRINCIPLE: Do the media's work for them).

The Tunisian General Labour Union (TGLU) and several other of the country's largest syndicates joined forces to mobilize en masse, while others like the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) offered logistical support and protection. Dozens of civil society organizations from across the political spectrum became part of the movement. It was the first time since the revolution that civil society came together and worked collectively under one banner.

In 2015, about 300 protesters participating in a street action against the first draft of the Bill were met by police violence, sparking a wave of anger and attracting wider support for the movement (see: THEORY: Al faza'a [a surge of solidarity]). The Bill was tabled, amended, and proposed for a second reading in 2016, which was met by even larger civil society mobilization. The Bill was tabled again, re-drafted, and proposed for the third time in 2017 when it finally passed as the "Administrative Reconciliation Act."

While the movement did not succeed in scrapping the Bill altogether, they succeeded in significantly reducing the scope of amnesty proposed in the original draft. Perhaps more importantly, the movement succeeded in mainstreaming new organizing approaches that placed creativity and playfulness in the forefront. Further, it unified the diverse political spectrum of civil society under one banner, facilitated the exchange of knowledge between activists, and enriched their learnings on strategic planning and

KEY THEORY

Political identity paradox

Focusing solely on the political arguments against the Bill would have alienated a critical mass of allies who were more concerned with (and impacted by) its economic ramifications. It was crucial for campaigners to step out of their own group identity which placed political demands paramount, and recognize that most people were seeing the issue through the lens of their immediate needs and daily struggles.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Billionaires for Bush
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- #ThisFlag
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Artistic vigil
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Music video

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Do the media's work for them
- Focus on basic needs
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Reframe the issue
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism

coalition building. Crony-capitalists will think long and hard before they try to swindle the Tunisian people again.

LEARN MORE

Manich Msameh Official Page

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/manichmsame7/>

Film Trailer — Generation Manich Msamah

Facebook, 2019

<https://www.facebook.com/nawaat/videos/2681079168631384/>

Manich Msamah and the Face of Continued Protest in Tunisia

Jadaliyya Magazine, 2017

<https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/34515>

- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Gerontocracy
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Palace Coup
- Political identity paradox
- The shock doctrine

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Corruption, Democracy, Policy, Wealth inequality, Street protest, Campaign strategy

STORY

MARAIWATSEDE: THE LAND BELONGS TO THE XAVANTE

During Rio+20, the Xavante indigenous people partnered with other organizations mastering a strategic intervention to regain the land that had been promised to them 20 years before.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andreia Fanzeres

Has been a journalist for 10 years and dedicated herself to the coverage of environmental issues in the country at *O ECO* and *O Eco Amazônia*. Works closely with the socio-environmental movements in the Cerrado and Amazon regions. Responsible for communications at indigenous organization OPAN (Operation Native Amazon).

Marcelo Marquesini

Marcelo is a socio-environmental activist and campaigner who has been operating for 20 years in the Brazilian Amazon in defence of forest conservation and indigenous and traditional communities' rights. He is also a co-founder and facilitator of Escola de Ativismo (School of Activism).

Tica Minami

Rebellious troublemaker who loves life and happiness more than "revolution". Worked for nearly 10 years at Greenpeace, 8 of which in the Amazon. Participated in the School of Activism as a volunteer, as well as other activist and public mobilization initiatives related to sustainability, democracy, human rights and environmental protection.

"THE RIO+20 CONFERENCE WAS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE VISIBILITY TO THE XAVANTE CAUSE AND PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT TO FULFILL ITS 20-YEAR OLD PROMISE."

Under Brazil's military dictatorship, the government heavily promoted development in the Amazon. In the 1960s, a multinational oil company, Agip Petroli, bought part of a Xavante indigenous area known as Maraiwatsede. In 1992, Xavante chief Damiao Paridzane went to Rio de Janeiro for the UN's Earth Summit. There, he was promised that Agip Petroli would return part of his people's territory. Twenty years later, the return of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to Rio de Janeiro marked a symbolic and relevant moment for raising the issue of what had happened to the Xavante since the first conference.

Ever since they were forcibly removed by the military dictatorship in 1966, the people of Maraiwatsede has been trying to return to their ancestral land. Instead, the land was occupied primarily by ranchers and local politicians supported by the state government of Mato Grosso. Meanwhile, 85 percent of its area was deforested, and it

KEY TACTIC

Direct action

The presence of the Xavante in the official Rio+20 negotiations was essential to bring Maraiwatsede to visibility and expose 20 years of negligence by the Brazilian government. The response was immediate: in addition to the Chief Minister of the Presidency of the Republic's guarantee to return Maraiwatsede to the Xavante, the government acted to prevent the escalation of violence in the

became known as the most devastated indigenous land in the Brazilian Amazon.

The Rio+20 Conference was a unique opportunity to give visibility to the Xavante cause and pressure the government to fulfill its 20-year-old promise, particularly as the courts had already ordered that the land be returned to the community. OPAN (Native Amazon Operation), an organization that supports the Xavante, along with Escola de Ativismo (School of Activism), planned a series of political actions to pressure the Brazilian government to return Maraiwatsede land to the Xavante. The community participated actively in the decision-making process, and together developed a plan that resonated with their knowledge and way of organizing.

During the People's Summit march, the Xavante held their traditional log races, but ran in the opposite direction of the march, to symbolize the setbacks to indigenous rights and the disregard of the Brazilian government for the people of Maraiwatsede. Their action caught the attention of the organizers and participants, as well as the press and photographers.

Meanwhile, a variety of communications materials were developed to support the cause: a news blog, videos and photos to inform the press and civil society, in four languages. The message was bolstered by a strong visual identity that was created for the campaign, including social media, printed material about the Xavante, t-shirts, and banners.

Finally, to mark their presence in the negotiations of the official Rio+20 Conference in front of all authorities and heads of State, the Xavante intended to send their message directly to the Brazilian government. As soon as they spotted the Chief Minister of the General Secretary of the Republic, Gilberto Carvalho, and then-President of FUNAI, Marta Azevedo, the Xavante performed their intervention.

On the t-shirts that they wore and on the posters that they held, the message was clear: "Dilma, return Maraiwatsede". Their demonstration generated great repercussions in the national and international media, with good coverage, images and interviews in important media outlets. In front of the reporters, minister Carvalho assured the Xavante that removing the invaders from Maraiwatsede was a priority for the federal government. On the same day, chief Damiao Paridzane was one of the 13 indigenous leaders who had a private meeting with the chief minister of the Presidency and other authorities.

The visibility achieved at Rio+20 bothered the politicians and farmers who had properties within Marawatsede. They organized roadblocks and burned bridges to prevent community leaders from returning from Rio de Janeiro to the village. The situation of intense tension and conflict triggered a series of actions by the federal government, which hastened to fulfill the court order determining

region and removed the invaders from the area, keeping their word to the Xavante.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Take leadership from the most impacted

The success of this case is due to the leadership role of the indigenous community, which allowed the partner organizations to understand how they intended to act, taking into account their vision, their priorities, and their form of social organization.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Creative disruption

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Do the media's work for them
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Stay on message
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Environmental justice

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Indigenous rights, Land use, Nonviolence, Direct action

the removal of invaders from Maraiwatsede. A month later, the Supreme Court decided in favour of the indigenous community. Non-indigenous occupants of the area were notified, and the removal process began. Today, Maraiwatsede belongs to the Xavante once again.

STORY

MINING THE MUSEUM

Artist Fred Wilson presented a museum's collection in such a way that it called into question the entire worldview from which the collection was originally assembled.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Elisabeth Ginsberg

Elisabeth Ginsberg, an over-educated Dane currently living in Copenhagen, holds a master's in cultural studies and journalism from NYU and another Master's degree from the University of Copenhagen. In an attempt not to dry out completely, she wrote her thesis on Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert.

"WHAT THEY PUT ON VIEW SAYS A LOT ABOUT A MUSEUM, BUT WHAT THEY DON'T PUT ON VIEW SAYS EVEN MORE."

In 1992, a huge sign appeared on the façade of the Maryland Historical Society announcing that "another" history was now being told inside. The sign referred to African-American artist Fred Wilson's exhibition project "Mining the Museum," which presented the museum's collection in a new, critical light. Wilson chose to re-contextualize the Society's collection through an invitation to create an exhibition by the Contemporary Museum of Baltimore, a presenting museum with no permanent collection that holds art exhibitions in partnership with other institutions and museums.

Incorporated in 1844, the Maryland Historical Society was founded to collect, preserve, and study objects related to the state's history. This mission included accounts of colonization, slavery, and abolition, but the museum tended to present this history from a specific viewpoint, namely that of the its white, male founding board. It was this worldview that Wilson aimed to "mine." He did so simply by assembling the museum's collection in a new and surprising way, and by deploying various satirical techniques, first and foremost irony.

For instance, in the first room of the exhibit, the audience was confronted with a silver globe — an advertising industry award that dated from the nineteenth century — bearing the single word "Truth." The trophy was flanked by, on the one side, a trio of portrait busts of prominent white men and, on the other side, three empty black pedestals. The busts were of Napoleon, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson. None of these worthies had ever lived in Maryland; they exemplified those deemed deserving of sculptural representation and subsequent museum acquisition. The empty

KEY TACTIC

Culture jamming

Wilson appropriated the museum's collection and reshuffled it so that it communicated a different message, almost antithetical to that of the original. Titling his exhibition "Mining the Museum," he sowed a three-way pun: excavating the collections to extract the covert presence of racial minorities; planting emotionally explosive historical material to raise consciousness; and, finding reflections of himself within the museum (as in "making it mine")

KEY PRINCIPLES

Show, don't tell

Wilson communicated his critique through a strategic juxtaposition of the museum's artifacts. The audience was left to draw the conclusions. For example, in an installation

busts were labeled Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Banneker, and Frederick Douglass, three important African-American Marylanders who were overlooked by the ostensibly “local” institution.

“What they put on view says a lot about a museum, but what they don’t put on view says even more,” Wilson said in an interview about his installations. He communicated this point by contrasting what is with what should be. By drawing attention to the overlooked black figures, his installment asked whose truth was on display at the Maryland Historical Society.

The installation “Metalwork 1793–1880” was another way that Wilson reshuffled the museum’s collection to highlight the history of African Americans. The installation juxtaposed ornate silver pitchers and goblets with a pair of iron slave shackles. Traditionally, the display of arts and craft is kept separate from the display of traumatic artifacts such as slave chains. By displaying these artifacts side by side, Wilson created an atmosphere of unease and made apparent the link between the two kinds of metal works: The production of the one was made possible by the subjugation enforced by the other. When the audience made this connection, Wilson succeeded in creating awareness of the biases that often underlie historical exhibitions and, further, the way these biases shape the meaning we attach to what we are viewing.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

A Change of Heart — Fred Wilson’s Impact on Museums
Fred Wilson, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2010
<https://vimeo.com/11838838>

Mining the Museum: An Installation
Fred Wilson, 1994

<https://books.google.com/books?id=AJ-iQgAACAAJ&dq=Fred+Wilson,+Mining+the+Museum:+An+Installation.&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiRhseepbraAhVD94MKHd-cANcQ6AEIKTAA>

Fred Wilson

Archives Creative Practice

<http://www.archivesandcreativepractice.com/fred-wilson/>

entitled “Modes of Transport,” Wilson exhibited an old baby carriage in which a Ku Klux Klan hood substituted the usual bedding. The baby carriage was placed next to a photograph of black nannies with white babies

Make the invisible visible

One of the ways Wilson made the invisible visible was by rewriting the tags of the museum’s paintings and changing the lighting to redirect viewers’ attention. Further, in a series of “talking paintings,” Wilson gave black child slaves voices by playing recordings asking such questions as: “Who calms me when I’m afraid? Who washes my back?” or “Am I your friend? Am I your brother? Am I your pet?” By altering the lighting and adding an audio track, Wilson drew attention to people and groups who historically have been rendered invisible and mute.

Hope is a muscle

In the final part of his exhibition, Wilson displayed the journal of Benjamin Banneker, a free, self-taught African-American who became a prominent mathematician, surveyor, and astronomer. Banneker was one of the figures absent from the exhibition’s first installation. In this way, the exhibition ended with a solution to the problem it pointed out in the beginning. After the indictment of institutionally codified racism, Wilson offered a testament to those pioneers who had managed to resist oppression.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience

- Culture jamming
- Identity correction

Principles

- Hope is a muscle
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Anti-oppression
- Artivism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony

TAGS

Art, Colonialism, Education,
Human rights, Racial justice

STORY

MINISKIRT MARCH

After a video circulated in 2014 showing the public abuse and harassment of a woman in Harare, Zimbabwe, women organized a miniskirt march to protest widespread street harassment and to push for safe spaces.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Angeline Makore

Angeline Makore is a Zimbabwean human rights activist who is passionate about community development and defending women's and girls' rights. She is the founder of Spark READ, a youth-led initiative that seeks to address and redress challenges faced by young people in marginalized communities in Zimbabwe.

"THE BALL IS IN OUR COURT TO RISE CREATIVELY AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN IN THE HOME AND IN PUBLIC."

In Zimbabwe there is a cultural ideology that dictates that women are not allowed to wear revealing clothes, and if they do, men can publicly harass them with impunity. However, this ideology is now being challenged in the streets. In December 2014, social media in Zimbabwe and around the world lit up with a video showing a young woman being harassed and stripped naked at a taxi stand by rowdy men calling her all sorts of degrading names, allegedly because her dress was too short.

The video enraged the activist community, especially women's rights activists and human rights defenders. The women activists said "enough is enough," that it was high time they did something to challenge violence against women head-on. Various ideas for addressing the matter were put forward, but the one that stood out was dubbed a "miniskirt march."

The protest march was organized by Katswe Sistahood, a movement of dynamic young women fighting for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in Zimbabwe, and publicized through word-of-mouth and the involvement of grassroots women's organizations. Scores of women showed up in miniskirts and tight-fitting clothes to parade through the streets of Harare, protesting against the harassment they encounter on a daily basis.

Although the march was received with mixed feelings from the general public, it played a pivotal role in Zimbabwe in addressing the violation of women's rights. The attackers who stripped the

KEY TACTIC

Mass street action

Large numbers of women marching through the streets in miniskirts sparked an important debate around the horrendous treatment of girls and women in public. By seeking safety in numbers, these women ensured their voices rang out loud and clear against street harassment.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Foster safer spaces

Humiliation is one of the most insidious forms of gender violence. In response, many activists are working to create safe spaces for women in their homes, in the community, and in the streets. Similar miniskirt marches have been carried out in various other African countries, including Kenya, Swaziland,

young women were eventually arrested, remanded in prison, and are facing charges of indecent assault. The march also caught the attention of female political leaders like First Lady Grace Mugabe, who declared during the official launch of International Women's Day 2015 in Harare, "let us give our children the freedom to dress as they please."

Safety, security, and freedom of expression are fundamental if young women are to reach their fullest potential. The ball is in our court to rise creatively against sexual harassment of women at home and in public.

LEARN MORE

Humiliation: The Latest Form of Gender Violence

Sally Nyakanyanga, Africa Renewal, 2015

<http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2015/humiliation-latest-form-gender-violence>

Uganda, and Tunisia. The success or failure of these campaigns has depended on various factors including the sociocultural background of particular communities, as well as the religious and political environments, but all have sought to foster safe spaces for women as a way to encourage them to speak out against public harassment.

KEY THEORY

Feminism

In Zimbabwe, violence against women is rife. Young women in particular are vulnerable to human rights abuses including rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment in the streets, especially at taxi stands. Women's frustration is understandable in the face of the widespread harassment they face, including arbitrary arrests at night, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and limits to freedom of movement. Young feminist organizers are drawing on a long tradition of feminist thought and tactics as they grapple with how to stop this cycle of abuse and harassment. Miniskirt march participants marched under the banner of feminism, inspired by the movement's historic commitment to advancing women's equality and defending every woman's right to freedom of expression and movement.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Trail of Dreams
- Walk a mile in her shoes

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Mass street action

Principles

- Don't dress like a protester
- Embrace the stigma
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Foster safer spaces
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make the invisible visible
- Simple rules can have grand results

Theories

- Feminism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Prefigurative politics

TAGS

Gender and sexuality, Human rights, Street protest,

STORY

MODERN-DAY SLAVERY MUSEUM

To highlight abuses of farm workers and identify remedies, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (a community-based farmworker organization) created the Florida Modern-Day Slavery Museum.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Coalition of Immokalee Workers

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is a community-based farmworker organization headquartered in Immokalee, Florida, that seeks modern working conditions and fair treatment for farmworkers. In 2001, the CIW launched the Campaign for Fair Food to address human rights abuses in the Florida tomato industry by pressuring retail food giants to improve farmworker wages and to reward growers who respect farmworker rights.

“MODERN-DAY SLAVERY DOES NOT TAKE PLACE IN A VACUUM, NOR IS IT AN INEVITABLE FEATURE OF OUR FOOD SYSTEM.”

In December 2008, farm labour contractors Cesar and Geovanni Navarrete were each sentenced to twelve years in prison for their part in what US Attorney Doug Molloy called “slavery, plain and simple.” According to the Justice Department, the employers “pleaded guilty to beating, threatening, restraining, and locking workers in trucks to force them to work as agricultural labourers. . . . [They] were accused of paying the workers minimal wages and driving the workers into debt, while simultaneously threatening physical harm if the workers left their employment before their debts had been repaid to the Navarrete family.”

Although shocking in its details, the Navarrete case was simply the latest link in a long, unbroken chain of exploitation — including forced labour — in Florida’s fields. It was the seventh farm labour operation to be prosecuted for servitude in the state in the past decade, cases involving well over 1,000 workers and more than a dozen employers in total. The federal government has since initiated two additional prosecutions, bringing the total to nine as of 2011.

Even setting aside forced labour, farm work in the US still offers the worst combination of sub-poverty wages, dangerous, backbreaking working conditions, and lack of fundamental labour protections in the country. In this context of structural poverty and powerlessness,

KEY TACTIC

Public art intervention

The museum was not a “work of art” in the conventional sense of the term, but it did transform both the public spaces it inhabited and the people who viewed it. Through a host of different media and creative displays

KEY PRINCIPLES

Show, don't tell

It is often difficult for people to accept that modern-day slavery is a systemic problem in the United States. The thought that the tomato topping your hamburger or tossed in your salad may have been picked by a slave

Meet people where they're at

extreme forms of abuse such as forced labour are able to take root and flourish. These cases are reflective of the impunity and exploitation that is rampant throughout the agricultural sector. In other words, modern-day slavery does not take place in a vacuum, nor is it an inevitable feature of our food system.

To highlight these abuses and to identify their causes and solution, in 2010 the Coalition of Immokalee Workers — a community-based farmworker organization — decided to create the Florida Modern-Day Slavery Museum. The mobile museum consists of a cargo truck carefully outfitted as a replica of the trucks involved in the Navarrete case and a collection of displays on the history and evolution of slavery in Florida over the past four hundred years. The multimedia exhibits were developed in consultation with workers who have escaped from forced labour operations, as well as leading academic authorities on slavery and labour history in Florida. The museum booklet, complete with testimonial blurbs from experts, made it clear to both attendees and media that the museum's content had been independently vetted.

With a team of farmworker and ally docents, the museum toured Florida intensively, visiting churches, schools, universities and community centres for six weeks in the lead-up to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' three-day Farmworker Freedom March in 2010.

People's reactions to the museum were so overwhelmingly positive and such a buzz was generated that the CIW later decided to tour outside Florida to cities throughout the southeast and northeast United States, including a stop on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. In March 2011, former President Jimmy Carter visited the museum in Atlanta, Georgia. Approximately 10,000 people have toured the museum since its creation.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Florida Modern-Day Slavery Museum

<http://ciw-online.org/museum/index.html>

Modern Slavery Museum Is an Eerie Reminder of How Little We've Progressed

Altnet, 2010

https://www.altnet.org/story/146212/modern_slavery_museum_is_an_eerie_reminder_of_how_little_we%27ve_progressed

Instead of waiting for people to come to Immokalee to visit the museum, the CIW brought the museum to the people. With the museum as Exhibit A of an old-fashioned speaking tour, the museum crew toured across Florida and the Eastern US, often parking the exhibit right in the centre of town. There's nothing like a museum on wheels to draw people's attention, not to mention a museum on wheels that addresses such a pressing and controversial topic as modern-day slavery. It was an effective conversation starter.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Public art intervention
- Storytelling
- Visibility action

Principles

- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Meet people where they're at
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Capitalism
- Critical multiculturalism

TAGS

Capitalism, Education, Food, Human rights, Immigration, Land use, Labour, Racial justice, Wealth inequality

STORY

NO VOTE, NO SEX

An opposition party candidate in Zimbabwe's 2013 elections called for women to withhold sex from their husbands in order to pressure them to vote for change. The results were underwhelming.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Natasha Msonza

Natasha Msonza is a human rights activist and digital security trainer working in Zimbabwe with a non-profit women's rights organization, Her Zimbabwe.

"IN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF ZIMBABWE, HAVING THE RIGHT SPOKESPEOPLE, WITH THE RIGHT 'CREDENTIALS,' MATTERS, AND CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SUCCESSFUL OR FAILED CAMPAIGN."

In 2013, Ms. Priscilla Misihairambwi-Mushonga, a former minister and member of the opposition MDC political party, called for women to withhold sex from their husbands in order to pressure them to vote for change. Specifically, she called for Zimbabwean women to "hit the men where it hurts most – the bedroom." This was to ensure that they would act to right the wrongs in the country, by voting for change.

At the time, Zimbabwe was emerging from the doldrums of hyperinflation and reeling from massive de-industrialisation that saw a rise in unemployment and an unprecedented economic crisis. The general feeling was that the country's many problems could simply and immediately be solved through voting the then-ruling party out of power. The 'no sex no vote' campaign would necessarily put pressure on the men of the country to 'do something': specifically, come out in large numbers to vote against the ruling party

Previously, Zimbabweans had gone to the polls many times, but the ruling party and its president, Robert Mugabe, that had been in power since independence (1980), always managed to cling to power. Ms. Misihairambwi-Mushonga alleged that historically, voter turnout in Zimbabwe had been higher for women than men, and she saw an opportunity to mobilize men to tip the balance in the opposition's favour.

Her lone campaign was not a success, as voter turnout remained low, and Zimbabweans again found themselves with the same ruling party and president. Under the circumstances, including widespread allegations of vote rigging and political violence, it seems doubtful

KEY TACTIC

Sex strike

The action assumed that denying the men of the country conjugal rights would galvanise them into voting out the ruling party. Sex strikes have been used successfully in other contexts, including Kenya, Liberia and Colombia, but proved ineffective in Zimbabwe in 2013.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Choose tactics that support your strategy

Was a sex strike the right tactic in this case? There were some fundamental concerns from the beginning, like how would it be possible to know for certain that behind closed doors, women were actually putting the boycott into practice. In the context of widespread gender-based violence, such a tactic was risky to propose without a broad movement to offer strength and

that a simple vote could have ousted the ruling party in 2013.

LEARN MORE

The woman behind Zimbabwe's No Vote No Sex campaign
Thabo Kunene, Waza, 2013

<https://wazaonline.com/en/sex/the-woman-behind-zimbabwes-no-vote-no-sex-campaign>

Rock the Vote: Zimbabwe Women Call for Sex Strike Until Men Register

Atlantic Black Star, 2013

<http://atlantablackstar.com/2013/07/04/zimbabwean-women-urged-to-withhold-sex-unless-men-vote/>

support.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Lysistrata Project
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation

Tactics

- Consumer boycott
- Sex strike

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Fail forward
- Know your community
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Direct action
- Feminism
- The social cure

TAGS

Elections, Gender and sexuality

STORY

NUIT DEBOUT

In 2016 French citizens occupied the Place de la République for three consecutive months to expand democracy and protest attempts by the government to liberalize the labour market.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Marion Esnault

Marion is French campaigner based in Paris since 2014. Her interest in water scarcity and the right to water sparked a love story with ecological justice, and she is currently active with Alternatiba, a French citizen's movement that seeks to confront climate change.

"" . . . THE SQUARE BECAME A MELTING POT FOR JOINT STRUGGLES AND UNITY. ""

By the spring of 2016, with the rightward drift of the French Socialist Party towards neo-liberal positions, a large swath of French citizenry, especially those on the left, felt overwhelmingly disappointed and unrepresented. When the government tried to push through a set of laws to liberalize labour markets, the people revolted.

On March 31, 2016 French citizens occupied the Place de la République in Paris, beginning a series of round-the-clock demonstrations (see: TACTIC: Mass street action) that lasted for almost three months.

Everyday, a citizen assembly took place, with public, open-mic discussions amongst hundreds of citizens. The square became like an *agora*, where every citizen had the chance to raise their concerns and address the public. In addition to the assembly, dozens of discussion groups formed, each addressing a different problem and setting proposals for possible solutions.

Soon after, citizens from various professions and ideological orientations including nurses, educators, lawyers, feminists, ecologists and more joined. The protest became more than just an opposition to the proposed reform, but rather a demand for social and economic justice at large.

Out of this coming together, a social movement arose, composed of unions, associations, and citizens. Nuit Debout, which stands for "arise at night" in French, gave the people the chance to take part in politics in a direct and dignified way: organizing the community.

KEY TACTIC

Occupation

Occupying the Place de la République was a strategic tactic for Nuit Debout as the square

KEY PRINCIPLE

We are all leaders

Instead of relying on a leader (be it government or parliament) that was seen as representative of the people's aspirations, the movement created a space for citizens to lead the movement, especially via the daily citizen assemblies. It emphasized that an environment in which more people took leadership is a more representative one, not the opposite.

KEY THEORY

Neoliberalism

The Nuit Debout movement saw itself as part of a larger anti-austerity sentiment rising across the globe in which the people

The tactics ranged from demonstrations and sit-ins (see: TACTIC: Occupation) to citizen assemblies. The assemblies gave people a platform to speak out, and also to interact to resolve common challenges to their livelihoods. With almost 100 discussion groups forming to addressing 100 topics, the square became a melting pot for joint struggles and unity. Additionally, the people organized concerts, movie screenings, poetry readings, and workshops as part of the Nuit Debout life. At some point, Nuit Debout became like a new little community, organized by and for the people.

Initially, demonstrations and citizen assemblies began in Paris, but soon after they spread across France and beyond reaching Berlin, New York, Rabat, and Mexico City. These demonstrations embodied a protest against the broader austerity framework being implemented by neoliberal governments around the world.

While the labour market law was eventually forced through by the government without a vote in Parliament pursuant to the very undemocratic Article 39 of the French Constitution, Nuit Debout is now a cornerstone of the history of French social movements because it had no famous figures, only citizens. There were no spokespeople and no hierarchy. Indeed, it showed how a movement can give the floor to everyone with no pre-set demands or ideas, except the demand for a fairer world.

LEARN MORE

Nuit Debout

<https://nuitdebout.fr/>

Nuit Debout Protesters Occupy French in Revolutionary Call for Change

Angelique Chrisafis, The Guardian, 2016

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/08/nuit-debout-protesters-occupy-french-cities-in-a-revolutionary-call-for-change>

Nuit Debout

Wikimedia

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Campaign:nuit-debout?uselang=fr>

are struggling for a fairer world. The protest against privatization and the deregulation of markets

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Distributed action
- Mass street action
- Occupation
- Street theatre

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Fail forward
- Make new folks welcome
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Direct action
- Neoliberalism
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Democracy, International solidarity, Privatization, Street protest, Wealth inequality

STORY

ORANGE ALTERNATIVE

The Orange Alternative was a 1980s-era underground protest movement in Poland that used street happenings and absurdist provocations to ridicule the Communist regime and promote independent thinking.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Beautiful Trouble

Beautiful Trouble is a globally dispersed group of activists whose mission is to make nonviolent revolution irresistible by providing strategic tools and trainings to inspire movements for a more just, healthy, and equitable world.

The Orange Alternative was a 1980s-era underground protest movement in Poland. It used street happenings and absurdist provocations to ridicule the Communist regime and promote independent thinking. Their actions, enormously popular with students who often found Solidarity marches stiff and boring, included graffiti, distributing toilet paper (a consumer product in short supply at the time), and singing Stalinist hymns while holding hands around the orangutan cage at the Warsaw Zoo. Most memorably, they organized a march of 10,000 people in orange dwarf hats. "How can you treat a police officer seriously," notes founder Waldemar Fydrych, "when he is asking you the question: 'Why did you participate in an illegal meeting of dwarfs?'"

LEARN MORE

Lives of the Orange Men: A Biographical History of the Polish Orange Alternative Movement
Major Waldemar Fydrych (Author); Gavin Grindon (Editor); Yes Men (Foreword), 2014
<https://www.akpress.org/lives-of-the-orange-men.html>

The Orange Alternative: There Is No Freedom Without Dwarfs
Elcin Marasli, 2015
<http://culture.pl/en/article/the-orange-alternative-there-is-no-freedom-without-dwarfs>

Ridiculing the Regime: The Orange Alternative in Poland
Espionart, 2017
<https://espionart.wordpress.com/2017/02/24/ridiculing-the-regime-the-orange-alternative-in-poland/>

The Gnome Revolution: 'Major' Fydrych & the Orange Alternative
inyourpocket.com, 2017
https://www.inyourpocket.com/wroclaw/Alternative-orange-movement_70296f

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Santa Claus Army
- The Teddy Bear Catapult

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Flash mob
- Guerrilla marketing
- Mass street action
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Create many points of entry
- Don't dress like a protester
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Artivism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Memes
- Non-cooperation

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Action design, Art, Communications, Dictatorship, Humour, Pranks, State violence, Street protest, Student activism

STORY

PARK(ING) DAY

PARK(ing) Day is a worldwide movement to challenge and repurpose urban space by temporarily transforming metered parking spaces into public parks.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Danielle Endres

Danielle Endres is a professor of rhetoric and argumentation at the University of Utah. Her teaching and research examines discourse (verbal and nonverbal), persuasion (rational and irrational), activism, and social movements, with a focus on climate change activism, Native American activism, and environmental justice.

“INSTEAD OF JUST TALKING ABOUT HOW URBAN SPACE COULD BE ORGANIZED DIFFERENTLY, PARK(ING) DAY LETS US EXPERIENCE A LIVING EXAMPLE.”

Imagine you are walking down a busy city street. Cars zoom by, walkers navigate narrow and dirty sidewalks, and drivers vie for precious parking spots. Then you come upon a park. But this is not a typical city park. It is a mini-park, slightly longer than a car, nestled in a metered parking spot. You take a moment to sit down on its single bench. Perhaps you chat for a moment with another curious passerby. Or perhaps you simply think about the questions this little park raises, such as: Why is there so much space in our cities for vehicles and so little for public gathering? How might we redesign our urban spaces to make them more convivial and humane?

This concept — a park in a parking spot — was the brainchild of Rebar, a design studio working at the intersections of art and activism. It became the initial spark for PARK(ing) Day, a worldwide movement to challenge and repurpose urban space by temporarily transforming metered parking spaces into public parks. The first PARK was erected in downtown San Francisco in October 2005. Rebar filled the meter with coins and thus effectively rented a seven by twenty-two foot curbside parking space in downtown San Francisco. They rolled out sod, added a potted tree, put out a bench, and created a temporary park for several hours.

The PARK capitalized on San Francisco’s legal code, which did not specifically state that parking spaces be limited to use by private vehicles. Co-organizer Blaine Merker described this performance installation as a “creative repurposing of familiar elements to

KEY TACTIC

Culture jamming

Although culture jamming, or *détournement*, is most often used to describe the playful hacking of mass media, it can also be used to alter the meaning of a particular space or place. PARK(ing) installations subvert the normal use and understanding of parking spaces, and with the help of a pun on the double-meaning of “park,” suggest that every parking spot is just a PARK waiting to happen.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Don't dress like a protester

In its PARK(ing) Day manual, PARK(ing) Day warns potential participants, “Remember, you are not protesting.” Importantly, they encourage participants to build temporary open spaces in which any passerby will be

produce new meaning,” using principles such as creative adaptation, absurdity, innovation, and beautification to change the way we think about metered parking spots and urban space more generally. No longer just places to park automobiles, PARK(ing) spots become rentable public spaces, “temporarily expanding the public realm and improving the quality of urban human habitat, at least until the meter ran out,” as Rebar’s website put it.

Following the initial installation, a picture of the PARK in San Francisco spread through various electronic media. It became what’s known as a “sticky” idea (see *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell and *Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath). After seeing the circulated image, people from all over the world contacted Rebar to find out how to stage a similar event. In response, Rebar chose the third Friday in September as “PARK(ing) Day” and, starting the following year, encouraged people to make their own playful and transformative PARK(ing) performances. PARK(ing) Day adopted a creative commons license and encouraged an open source ethic, so long as participants limited their events to the specified day and followed a few simple guidelines. PARK(ing) Day has thus become an international movement reaching hundreds of cities across the world. The initial PARK has become a meme that can be adapted to local situations, and used to raise awareness about a variety of issues facing urban residents.

The PARK(ing) Day movement has also resulted in more permanent changes in urban space. Several cities have created permitting processes for the creation of enduring “parklets.” For example, a parklet on 9th Avenue between Irving and Judah Streets in San Francisco’s inner sunset neighborhood provides several benches so passersby and patrons of nearby bakeries and shops can stop, take a rest, and question how we use urban space.

LEARN MORE

The PARK(ing) Day Manual

Rebar, 2009-2011

https://asla.org/uploadedFiles/CMS/Events/Parking_Day_Manual_Consecutive.pdf

Not Just a Place to Park Your Car: PARK(ing) as Spatial Argument

Danielle Endres, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Brian Cozen, 2017

https://www.academia.edu/9801529/Not_Just_a_Place_to_Park_Your_Car_PARK_ing_as_Spatial_Argument

welcome to take part. Even though PARKs radically repurpose urban space, they do so by offering a fun, welcoming, and legal opportunity for everyone to participate.

Enable, don’t command

PARK(ing) Day is an open-source movement that calls on participants to adapt the form however they see fit, in keeping with the event’s creative commons license. The PARK(ing) Day website provides participants with tools to achieve their own vision as opposed to telling them what a PARK should be.

Reframe the issue

PARK(ing) Day uses temporary parks as a way to reframe conversations about the use of public space. PARKs call our attention to the dominant frame of a car-centred mode of urban design and allow participants to envision alternative frames.

KEY THEORIES

Prefiguration

PARK(ing) Day doesn’t just complain about or protest car culture, it offers the public a positive, participatory way to experience a more human-scale and convivial use of public space, prefiguring the positive change it seeks to bring about. Who knows what exciting initiatives might come about thanks to the efforts of par(k)ticipants inspired and excited by all the ways a parking space could be put to use!

The tactics of everyday life

PARK(ing) Day acts as a tactic that makes use of a “crack” in the strategy of urban planning: the lack of specificity in the legal

codes pertaining to the use of metered parking spaces. PARKs tactically challenge the normalized use of parking spaces and offer temporary alternatives.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Schools of Struggle

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Occupation

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Don't dress like a protester
- Enable, don't command
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Artivism
- Prefigurative politics
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Environment, Land use, Privatization, Street protest

STORY

PANTY POWER

Burmese dissidents protested Myanmar's ruling junta by encouraging supporters to mail panties to foreign embassies and top generals (who superstitiously feared that female underwear sapped their power).

CONTRIBUTED BY

Dave Oswald Mitchell

Dave is the Editorial Director of Beautiful Trouble and a co-editor of Beautiful Rising.

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"NOTHING BREAKS THE SPELL OF POWER QUITE SO EFFECTIVELY AS LAUGHTER."

In 2007, after a brutal crackdown on widespread democratic protests, public protest in Myanmar (also known as Burma) became impossible. Nonetheless, dissent remained widespread, and many creative, subversive and lower-risk actions proliferated. Though they weren't enough to overcome the generals' grip on power, these actions served to further isolate the ruling generals, helping people overcome their fear and trauma and feel part of an active resistance.

Playing on the military leadership's superstitious fear that coming into contact with women's underwear could take away their power, Lanna Action for Burma called on women across Myanmar to protest the regime and its use of sexual violence by mailing panties to the generals. Supporters around the world were also asked to mail panties to their Myanmar embassy or consulate.

Lanna Action for Burma also used other symbolic means to ridicule the military and confront the government. Association with stray dogs is highly offensive in Burmese culture, so activists attached images of Senior General Than Shwe to the collars of stray dogs. On his birthday, they baked cakes in the shape of panties with Than Shwe's face on them, and would leave them in the street for stray dogs to feed on. Later, to protest the corrupt 2010 elections, Lanna Action for Burma engaged in a bit of electoral guerrilla theatre, attempting to register the Lanna Panty Party, circulating a "pantifesto", and vowing to "contest and win the Burma 2010 elections, form a transitional government and hand over power to the peoples of Burma, and then have a nice lie down with a good book and a cool beer" (see: TACTIC: Electoral guerrilla theatre).

During a time of extreme state violence, when public gatherings were outlawed, the "panty power" action offered easy and low-risk ways to express dissent. It brilliantly used superstition and cultural

KEY TACTIC

Distributed action

At a time when public gatherings were outlawed, this action gave people a way to protest in a decentralized fashion, on their own time and in their own lives, both in Myanmar and abroad.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use humour to undermine authority

This action brings to mind the story of the emperor who paraded through the streets naked because he'd been told that only the stupid and incompetent wouldn't be able to see his supposed new clothes. In both cases, the power of the ruler proves to be extremely vulnerable to laughter and ridicule, whether it's a child exclaiming that the emperor has no clothes or women pointing out that the generals are afraid of underwear. Nothing breaks the spell of power quite so effectively as laughter.

RELATED TOOLS

taboo to inject humor into a dire situation and undermine an immensely powerful opponent.

LEARN MORE

Burmese women campaign for human rights (Panties for Peace)
Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2007

<http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/burmese-women-campaign-human-rights-panties-peace-2007>

The Joke's on the Generals

Yeni, The Irrawaddy, 2008

http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=14535

Four potent lessons in creative cultural activism from Myanmar

Nadine Bloch, Waging Nonviolence, 2015

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/4-potent-lessons-creative-cultural-activism-burma/>

Tactics

- Clandestine leafleting
- Distributed action
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerrilla marketing
- Lamentation

Principles

- Create many points of entry
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your cultural terrain
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Feminism

TAGS

Democracy, Dictatorship, Gender and sexuality, Humour, International solidarity, Militarization, Nonviolence, Pranks, State violence, Women's rights

STORY

PEDESTRIAN DEATH PUPPETS

Student activists hung full-sized human foam core cut-outs over a dangerous highway in Beirut to draw attention to pedestrian fatalities, successfully pressuring the city council to build an overpass.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hassan Tabikh

Hassan Tabikh is a Lebanese writer and activist working with civil society and international NGOs in Lebanon towards achieving social justice. Hassan also campaigns for gender equality and ending violence against women.

“WE NEEDED A TACTIC THAT WOULDN’T PUT US PHYSICALLY IN DANGER, BUT WOULD LET PEOPLE FEEL THE DANGER WE FELT EVERY DAY WHEN WE CROSSED THE HIGHWAY.”

In 2011, one student was killed and four injured by cars on the highway leading to the Faculty of Public Health at Lebanese University in Beirut. I and hundreds of other students were outraged by the lack of concern for our lives and well-being, and we decided to do something about it. We wanted the city to install an overpass over that dangerous section of highway that we needed to cross every day.

First we tried a number of “traditional” protests and petitions. We protested at the university, but the university board didn't heed our demands. We protested outside the municipal offices, but the mayor told us that it wasn't his responsibility. He said it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Infrastructure, yet there was no Minister for Infrastructure at that time. We hung banners on both sides of the highway but people were passing too fast, and didn't pay attention. We even drew 3D paintings of bumps and holes on the highway. At the beginning it was effective: people slowed down, were confused, wondered what was going on, but after two weeks people knew that it was just paint, and, again, we were ignored.

We were looking for a protest method that would effectively draw attention to the problem, and also pressure the authorities to fix it. It had to be an emotional statement that directly motivated drivers to slow down, and also generally support our cause. It also had to be something we could do on a low budget. Finally, we didn't want to take sides between the political and religious polarities in Lebanon, so we had to make it just a student health and quality-of-life campaign that was neither religious nor explicitly political. We

KEY PRINCIPLE

Do the media's work for them

Traffic deaths are a terrible tragedy, but each traffic death does not necessarily attract the media interest it deserves. By dramatizing the risks in a new and creative and visual way, protesters offered journalists a compelling story, and in the process, attracted widespread media and public attention to the issue.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

A well-designed action should have a clear “logic”: demonstrating the what the problem is and what's at stake with little additional explanation. The foam core cut-outs strung low across the highway did this in an intuitive and visual way; and the accompanying messages drove the point home: people were dying unnecessarily

needed a tactic that wouldn't put us physically in danger, but would let people feel the danger we felt every day when we crossed the highway. That's a lot of tricky requirements and constraints to balance. Only a creative, outside-the-box idea was going to fit the bill.

After much trial and error, we finally hit on a tactic that worked: we cut human shapes out of foam core and hung them over the highway, just above the tops of cars, but low enough for trucks to hit them. We worked with a painter who added statements to the body cut-outs. "Just as you hit this, you will hit a student" he wrote. And we added statistics: "If you hit a person while driving at 120 km/h, you will kill them in less than 2 seconds" and: "Every month a student is hit by a car on this highway."

As people were driving, they would hit or nearly hit the hanging cut-outs. It unnerved them, and they slowed down and read the statements. The media became aware of the campaign and began running stories. Nine days later, our message reached the head of the Municipal Committee for Public Works. He called us and we met with him. We told him that we wanted a pedestrian bridge. Three weeks later, they started building the bridge and within another three months time we had our bridge. Victory!

With a little bit of creativity and a lot of persistence, we were able to prevent countless deaths and injuries to students and members of the public who could not afford private transport and had no choice but to cross that deadly highway in order to attend University. Private universities have more funds and enjoy better-serviced and equipped campuses; for students attending public universities, however, we have to fight for our equal rights. In this case, we did, and we won.

because they had no choice but to cross a dangerous highway. People driving towards the cut-outs and signs, or even reading about them in the media, could not fail but to viscerally understand the point of the protest, and become more sympathetic to it.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Fees Must Fall
- Pyramid of Shoes

Tactics

- Banner hang

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Focus on basic needs
- Make the invisible visible
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- This ain't the Sistine chapel

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Direct action

TAGS

Action design, Street protest, Student activism

STORY

PIMP MY . . . CARROÇA!

In Brazil, activists used humorous graffiti to decorate the carts of trash collectors, bringing them visibility and respect, while demonstrating the importance of their contribution to city life.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Caio Tendolini

Caio Tendolini graduated in economics, but was always passionate about innovation and collective projects capable of generating a positive impact on society. He currently is at a creative house called Estufa, where he works on Catarse (a Brazilian crowdfunding platform) and other disruptive projects.

Gui Bueno

Gui Bueno is a native of Brazil and completely crazy for theoretical discussions about the media, its central role in capitalism, its disadvantages and (why not?) benefits. He works for Open Knowledge Foundation Brazil where he takes care of communications (but learns much more than he communicates).

Daniela Teixeira

Daniela Teixeira is an artistic, political, and cultural public producer in love with the streets and its many forms of occupation. Romantic and practical, Daniela believes that everyone can adjust their actions for the benefit of others, and that the only paths for this adjustment are creative forms of awareness.

Mundano

Mundano is a graffiti artist whose creative manifestations blur the frontiers of traditional collective artistic interventions regarding social engagement. He created Pimp My Carroça, where he combined the upgrading of the carts used to collect solid waste with medical and psychological assistance for the catadores in a political action that fought for better working and living conditions for these professionals.

“JUST GOING AHEAD AND CREATING THE WORLD WE WANT IS OFTEN THE BEST WAY TO ADDRESS AN INJUSTICE.”

Carroça is the Portuguese word for carriage — that is, a wheeled vehicle for conveying people, often drawn by horses, and designed for comfort and elegance. Curiously, in Brazil this word also refers to the ramshackle carts that some human beings are compelled to use to earn a living. These are the collectors of recyclable materials, or just “collectors” — the thousands of informal workers that scavenge, carry, and sell reusable supplies to local junk shops or recycling co-ops.

Wherever there is unemployment and waste, they will be found. In São Paulo, which lacks selective garbage collection, they are responsible for 90% of all the city’s recycling. Yet no official support or protection to collectors has ever existed. Since their source of income is considered trash by many people, they are called all sorts of derogatory names, such as idle, homeless, or lazy. Even though they help clean the city, some consider them a social problem.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Make the invisible visible

The goal of the action was to make the collectors visible. This initiative was not only designed to make Brazilian society see collectors, but to understand the difficulties brought on by their being “invisible.” The happening helped Brazilian society realize the importance of the collectors’ contribution to city life, and in turn, to bring recognition to their struggle.

Take leadership from the

How to bring visibility and respect to these marginalized citizens? By means of a marginalized, invisible, and disrespected art. In Brazil, graffiti is considered a crime against the environment, but it was a graffiti artist, not a politician, who first called attention to the important role collectors played.

Mundano began as a tagger, then he became an “artist” — that is, an artist working for political ends. He began writing messages on *carroças* such as “proud to be a collector,” “recycle your concepts,” and “my car doesn’t pollute.” This became his life project, so that over five years he traveled to many countries, decorating around 160 “*carroças*.”

However, what he could achieve working alone was limited, so he gathered friends and supporters together to dream up a bigger initiative. That’s when Pimp My Carroça was conceived — a social parody of MTV’s popular show *Pimp My Ride*, in which real people got to have their old and run-down cars fixed up and personalized. The Pimp My Carroça project was submitted to a crowdfunding platform, where 792 sponsors contributed over \$30,000.

Pimp My Carroça culminated in an event in the historic centre of São Paulo. Dozens of volunteer artists were on-hand to “pimp” collectors’ carts: fix and improve their structure, add safety devices such as rear view mirrors and reflective stickers, and decorate the carts with colorful, critical messages.

While their carts were being “pimped,” the participating collectors were offered free meals, haircuts, health check-ups, and therapy sessions. They also received an official T-shirt made of recycled materials and, when needed, a pair of glasses. Parades and music concerts created a cheerful atmosphere, showing that civil society was finally fighting for the acknowledgment of collectors.

The day closed with a *carroceata* (a play on the Portuguese words for carts and demonstrations): The collectors marched to City Hall with their carts pimped out, where they read the Pimp my Carroça Manifesto demanding fairer conditions for collectors and denouncing the lack of recycling in the city. Between the original event in São Paulo and a follow-up event in Rio de Janeiro, about 70 collectors, nearly 300 volunteers, and 90 graffiti artists participated.

Originally published in Bella Baderna, the Brazilian edition of Beautiful Trouble. Translated by Gabi Juns and Christine Halvorsen.

LEARN MORE

Pimp My Carroça
National Movement of Recyclable Materials - MNCR 7
<http://pimpmycarroca.com/>

most impacted

Not only did the collectors know more about Sao Paulo’s waste disposal problems than any other group, but depending on what official measures the government might decide to take to address the city’s lack of recycling, collectors could easily be affected and lose their sources of income. That’s why Pimp My Carroça recognized and prioritized the authority and leadership of these informal workers in discussing real solutions to the city’s garbage problem.

Do the media's work for them

From the beginning there was a concern about how the action would be interpreted by the broader public, and the way the media would present it. In order to ensure that the point of the action was clear, activists themselves transformed footage into a mini-documentary, *Pimp My Carroça: São Paulo + Rio de Janeiro*, with subtitles in Spanish and English, and which has been viewed by tens of thousands of people in Brazil and worldwide.

KEY THEORY

Prefiguration

When Mundano and others occupied public space to take care of collectors and their carts, they created a space for imagining another possible world within the harsh reality of a big city. Through the whole day, the negligence and mistreatment faced by the collectors on a daily basis were replaced by generosity, recognition, and care, proving that just going ahead and creating the world we want is often the best way to address an injustice.

Pimp My Carroça Manifesto

Movimiento Nacional dos Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis, 2012

<http://www.mncr.org.br/artigos/manifesto-201cpimp-my-carroca201d>

Pimp My Carroça: São Paulo + Rio de Janeiro

Parede Viva, 2012

<http://vimeo.com/46827769>

Trash Cart Superheroes

Mundano, TEDGlobal 2014, 2014

https://www.ted.com/talks/mundano_pimp_my_trash_cart

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen
- Replacing Cops with Mimes

Tactics

- Public art intervention
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Do the media's work for them
- Embrace the stigma
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Think narratively
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Artivism
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Art, Community building,
Environment, Wealth inequality

STORY

PUBLIC ART NANNY HOTLINE

A hilarious fake talk show that domestic workers in the U.S. can dial into for information on overtime wages, tax requirements, trafficking, and more.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Marisa Jahn

Marisa Jahn, an artist, writer, and activist of Chinese and Ecuadorian descent, is the lead artist of both New York and national nanny hotlines, an artist in resident with The National Domestic Workers Alliance, and the Executive Director of REV-, a nonprofit studio whose public art projects combine creativity, bold ideas, and sound research to address critical issues. A graduate of MIT, Jahn's work has been presented at venues including The White House, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Modern Art, and the Walker Art Center, and reviewed in media such as ArtForum, BBC, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times.

"COULD WE TRANSFORM THE CELL PHONE INTO A TOOL FOR POPULAR EDUCATION?"

Nannies, housekeepers, and eldercare providers have long been excluded from basic labour protections in the United States, but thankfully, this is now starting to change. In 2010, New York passed the very first Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, followed by Hawaii and California, with other states soon to follow. In the wake of these major victories, a challenge arose for organizers, who recognized that these victories would be hollow if workers remained unaware of the changes. Given that domestic workers generally have low print literacy, don't regularly listen to the radio, and often work in isolation, how best to inform them about their newly enshrined rights? And how to communicate the law — a wonky snore-fest — in a lively and engaging way that domestic workers could act on?

To help address this challenge, Domestic Workers United, a New York City-based advocacy group, turned to REV-, a non-profit art, media, and social justice studio. Via a survey, they noted that all domestic workers at least had a basic cell phone. Could we transform the cell phone into a tool for popular education? Collaborators from the MIT Center for Civic Media and Terravoz were brought in to flex their tech, while lawyers from local

KEY TACTIC

Public art intervention

An issue like domestic workers rights can raise a lot of thorny issues and elevate levels of fear for both domestic workers and their employers. But by referring to these nanny hotlines as "public art," the topic became more approachable: Domestic workers were more excited to participate, and referring to their contribution as "art" valorized their creative agency. For employers, framing the project as art dismantled their inhibitions and allowed them to explore the topic in a new way.

community groups (the Urban Justice Center and the National Employment Law Project) were brought in to ensure that the creative work of the project aligned with long-term legal advocacy goals (see: PRINCIPLE: Use the law, don't be afraid of it).

With REV- at the helm, the team created a public art nanny hotline. Here's how it works: With even the simplest of cell phones, users can call (347) WORK-500 and hear humorous episodes of a show called New Day New Standard about topics like overtime wages, tax requirements, trafficking, and more.

Users would call in to hear the New Day New Standard host, Christine Yvette Lewis, a spunky nanny and advocate from Trinidad & Tobago whose charisma had landed her a guest spot on the Colbert Report — bantering back and forth with the fictional Miss Know-It-All and other characters calling in to the fake talk show.

The project launched in May 2012 as part of a citywide campaign led by domestic worker groups. Each month since then, the hotline receives from 400 to 1200 calls a month. While the hotline's primary audience is domestic workers, the project and its message were carried further through media attention (BBC, GOOD magazine, parent blogs) and through presentations at universities, film festivals, and the White House (yes, that White House).

In response to the requests of domestic worker groups from coast to coast, in early 2014, REV- led a collaboration that includes new partners like The National Domestic Workers Alliance and NuLawLab in the creation of a souped up national nanny hotline whose content is being created with workers around the US via a mobile design studio and sound lab dubbed NannyVan. The national hotline, appropriately called the "Domestic Worker App" — but still accessible by any kind of phone — features new functionalities such as the ability to subscribe to weekly SMS tips about topics like the law, domestic worker history, health and safety, and the growing movement.

Call (347) WORK-500 to check out more!

LEARN MORE

New Day New Standard (now the Domestic Worker App)
Studio REV-
http://www.studiorev.org/p_ndns.html

Nanny Van
<http://www.nannyvan.org/>

Domestic Workers: Know Your Rights Resources Page
Domestic Workers United
<http://domesticworkersunited.org/index.php/en/2012-01-07-00-45-55>

KEY PRINCIPLES

Take leadership from the most impacted

Both the New York and national nanny hotlines were created from the stories, data, and strategies developed by local domestic worker groups across the nation. Working in concert with local domestic worker leaders, REV- upped participation through storytelling workshops that included voice acting, skits, drawing, and envisioning ways to tell a critical piece of policy in a compelling and creative way.

Make it funny

Humour and off-the-cuff banter can often more effectively convey information than straightforward delivery of hard news. The success of New Day New Standard's fake call-in radio shows was built on this premise.

Lead with sympathetic characters

Characters and character-driven narratives are a fun and easy way to hook in your audience. The New York nanny hotline's episodes were inspired by and written around the character of Christine Yvette Lewis, whose charisma drove the narrative. The national nanny hotline boasts a bevy of bonkers, yet relatable characters whose dialogue makes the messages stick.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Guerrilla marketing
- Public art intervention

Video: "The Domestic Worker App - Preview!"

Studio REV-, 2014

<https://vimeo.com/84907598>

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Consider your audience
- Know your community
- Make it funny
- Make the personal political
- Stay on message
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Memes
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Peel the onion

TAGS

Art, Communications, Humour,
Labour, Media, Wealth inequality,
Women's rights

STORY

PUBLIC OPTION ANNIE

In 2009, at the height of the Obamacare fight in the US, a band of creative activists snuck into a major health insurance industry gathering and did a guerrilla musical that got national attention.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“SHOWS WHAT A FEW DETERMINED PRANKSTERS CAN DO WHEN THEY COMBINE MOXIE, MILITARY PRECISION, FAKE IDS, AND GOOD OLD MUSICAL THEATRE.”

In fall of 2009, at the height of the Obamacare fight in the US, the prospects of passing major health care reform looked dire. With growing resistance from the insurance industry and town hall meetings overrun by angry right-wingers up in arms (literally) about a supposed “government takeover of health care,” progressives had officially lost control of the health care debate. Could a daring creative action that brought the fight directly to the insurance industry help reframe the conversation and shift momentum back toward reform? One group of creative activists known as Billionaires for Wealthcare certainly thought so.

Working closely with the main health care reform coalition, we snuck a handful of professional singers and stealth videographers into a high-profile gathering of insurance industry lobbyists. With fake name tags and business suits, we blended in with the crowd and, just as the closing keynote began, let loose with a guerrilla musical complete with soloists, chorus, and comic asides. Dubbed “Public Option Annie,” and set to the tune of Annie’s “Tomorrow,” it by turn surprised, charmed, and irritated the assembled lobbyists until security escorted everyone out. Within two hours we had turned the footage and audio into a polished viral video, loaded it onto YouTube and shopped it around to media outlets.

Rachel Maddow ran a glowing MSNBC segment on it that same night, calling it “the single most unexpected turn of events yet in the fight over health reform.” It was then picked up by CNN’s Wolf Blitzer and numerous local TV stations. The blogosphere lit up, reform supporters cheered, and Jon Stewart picked up the story, mocking the “terrible” singing for blowing out his eardrums.

That same week the public option made it into the Senate bill. Of

KEY TACTICS

Guerrilla musical

Who doesn’t love a good song and dance number? And how much more exciting when the musical breaks out unexpectedly, right next to you, in the middle of an otherwise boring day? And, if on top of that, this guerrilla musical is actually singing truth to power behind enemy lines, all the while smiling and staying in key? Those insurance industry lobbyists never had a chance.

Media-jacking

In the theater proper there’s a literal stage, but in the (political) world at large, a stage is wherever the action is, whether that’s Tiananmen Square or inside an insurance industry conference. By inserting your action into a contested space, you turn it into a stage. By challenging the powers that rule that space, you create the kind of real-world, conflict-laced drama that can powerfully tell

course, it later got struck from the final legislation. "Tomorrow," indeed!

Here's what Variety magazine had to say about the prank:

"The stunt was worthy of something dreamed up by a Hollywood press agent of yesteryear: A group of health reform activists quietly infiltrated a D.C. meeting of health insurance executives and, one by one, added their voices to a growing chorus of a satirical version of "Tomorrow" from *Annie*. The antics, from the group Billionaires for Wealthcare, was a bit of showmanship in a health care debate that has until only recently been scarce in showbiz moments."

And as one YouTube user commented:

"The right sends armed, angry, and misinformed people to disrupt town halls. The left invades with clever send-ups. Charm, wit, and intelligence will eventually carry the day."

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Public Option Annie

YouTube, 2009

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMuZWSvllIMY>

Public Health Insurance Option

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_health_insurance_option

Protesters Sing Their Satire

CNN, 2009

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fZrZbJaVDo

Public Option Limited

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, 2009

<http://www.cc.com/video-clips/au3q6t/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-public-option-limited>

your story

KEY PRINCIPLES

Do the media's work for them

You cannot count on the mainstream media to tell your story for you

Balance art and message

There's a tendency on the Left to think that if intentions are good, art doesn't have to be. This is rarely true. If your art is good, people will pay more attention to what you're trying to say. Even people who disagree with your views will still respect your effort because you showed them the respect of making as strong and beautiful an artwork as possible. The lead "Annie" soloist was a professionally trained opera singer with six years at the Met. The "Annie" team went through four scripts till they hit on the right one, and then rehearsed it as intensely as time would allow. That amount of preparation isn't always possible but, in general, if you take your art seriously, your audience is more likely to take your ideas seriously.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Guerrilla musical
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking
- Music video
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message

- Develop an inside-outside strategy
- Do the media's work for them
- Kill them with kindness
- Personalize and polarize
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Reframe the issue
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- The real action is your target's reaction
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle
- Neoliberalism

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Direct action, Health, Humour, Pranks, Wealth inequality

STORY

PYRAMID OF SHOES

As part of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, marchers built huge pyramids of shoes to visualize the number of people still being killed or injured by landmines in lapsed conflict zones.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“THE PYRAMID OF SHOES WORKED BECAUSE IT WAS VISUALLY ARRESTING, EMOTIONALLY POWERFUL, AND EASY BOTH TO PARTICIPATE IN AND TO UNDERSTAND.”

In the post-Cold War era, in lapsed conflict zones from Cambodia to Mozambique, anti-personnel landmines were maiming and killing ordinary people every day. They blew off their victims' legs, feet, toes, and hands. They drove shrapnel into their faces and bodies. Because anti-personnel mines are indiscriminate and stay in or on the ground long after wars end, the vast majority (70 to 85 percent) of victims were civilians, not soldiers — and all too often they were children simply playing in the fields near their village.

In 1992, the International Committee to Ban Landmines (ICBL) was formed to address this global problem. Their goal: a world free of anti-personnel mines. Linking together groups concerned with children, women, veterans, the environment, human rights and arms control, and picking up marquee supporters like Princess Diana, the campaign spread across the world, growing into a powerful network spanning more than 100 countries.

Because landmine violence was scattered around the world, in remote lapsed warzones no longer in the headlines, it was critical to find a way to visualize the issue to the public in Western capitals where rising public sentiment could pressure key governments. One tactic, half-way between an artistic vigil and a media stunt, and used most notably at mass rallies in Paris throughout the 90s, was to build huge, symbolically powerful pyramids of shoes. In at least one case, the pyramid contained 18,000 shoes, representing the more than 18,000 people who were being killed or injured by landmines every year.

With an understanding that the feet and legs of innocent civilians were being blown apart by landmines the world over, every attendee to the march was asked to bring an old pair of sneakers

KEY PRINCIPLES

Make the invisible visible

Because landmine violence was happening in remote corners of the world, many of which had long ago passed from the headlines, it was largely hidden to Western media and the public. It was crucial, therefore, to “make the invisible visible.” The pyramid of shoes was a clear, concrete, and human-scale visualization of the need for action. And, crucially, given the way modern media works, it could be conveyed with a single, powerful photo-op.

Use the power of ritual

Though there was little pomp or ceremony, the simple act of adding a shoe to the pile was suffused in the power of ritual

Simple rules can have grand results

Bringing an old worn-out pair of shoes or sneakers to the march was an easy ask. Adding them to

(see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results). As each marcher passed a central location, they paused for a solemn moment, and added their shoes to the pile. Over the course of the march, the pile grew, eventually becoming a mini-monument to the horrors of landmines, symbolically capturing the scale of the suffering and the human cost of not banning this evil weapon. More than any speech or protest sign could, the sculpture and the ritual moments around it brought the issue home, adding not just gravitas, but also a powerful photo op that made it onto front pages across the world (see: PRINCIPLE: Do the media's work for them).

Eventually, the Mine Ban Treaty (banning the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of anti-personnel mines) was adopted in September 1997. As of 2017, there were 162 state parties to the treaty, and 30 countries have become mine-free. In 1997, the ICBL and its founding coordinator, Jody Williams, jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize.

LEARN MORE

International Committee to Ban Landmines
<http://www.icbl.org>

Handicap International
<http://www.handicap-international.ca>

20 Years After Landmine Ban, Deaths and Injuries Down Dramatically
Evan Dyer, CBC, 2016
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/landmines-ban-treaty-20-years-1.3822868>

the pile was a simple enough instruction that everyone could follow. And yet for many, that moment was profound, and the sculpture that arose from the accumulation of each of these simple acts told a big, complex story that captured the scale of the problem.

Know your cultural terrain

In the end, the final pile of shoes called to mind the sorted piles of clothes, shoes, and other personal effects of those killed in Nazi concentration camps, still on display at Auschwitz. Though many observers likely didn't register it consciously, and the organizers didn't draw attention to it explicitly, knowing that one holocaust would unconsciously evoke another was part of the wisdom and power of this action.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

The best creative actions

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Earth First!
- Pedestrian death puppets

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Public art intervention
- Visibility action

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Do the media's work for them
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible

- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle

Methodologies

- Action star

TAGS

Action design, International solidarity, War and peace

STORY

QUÉBEC STUDENT STRIKE

In 2012, Québec students managed to reverse a major tuition hike and a draconian anti-protest law through direct democracy, creative tactics, and mass demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of people.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stefan Christoff

Stefan Christoff is a writer, community activist, and musician living in Montréal, Québec. Stefan wrote “Le fond de l’air est rouge,” a booklet on the 2012 Québec student uprising.

“CRITICALLY, THESE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE ROOTED IN A PROCESS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY, AS STUDENT GENERAL ASSEMBLIES BECAME THE MOBILIZATION HUBS OF THE STRIKE.”

In a grassroots process, starting in 2010 and extending over a couple of years, Québec student unions, specifically the anarcho-syndicalist-inspired *Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante* (ASSÉ), began publicly organizing toward an indefinite general strike to oppose rising tuition. In parallel, the ruling Liberal Party was pushing an unprecedented 80 percent tuition fee hike.

The strike was rooted in a fundamental clash between two political visions: fully accessible post-secondary education squaring off against Québec’s political and corporate class applying an austerity-driven framework (see: THEORY: Neoliberalism).

In fall 2011, major protests began, with tens of thousands joining demonstrations against the proposed tuition hike and neoliberal policies more generally. Critically, these demonstrations were rooted in a process of direct democracy, as student general assemblies became the mobilization hubs of the strike.

As momentum towards the strike grew, the governing Liberals arrogantly pushed ahead, refusing to open any real negotiations with students — a miscalculation that helped galvanize support for the student movement. As the 2012 winter semester began, one student general assembly after another voted to support a *grève générale illimitée* (an indefinite general strike).

On March 22, 2012, hundreds of thousands took the streets (see: TACTIC: Mass street action), marking the first of what would become monthly mass demonstrations backing the strike, all calling for the total abolition of post-secondary tuition.

KEY TACTICS

Mass street action

Autonomous nightly protests in different neighborhoods of Montréal and beyond were key to building momentum for the strike. These protests sustained political momentum and created a space for many members of the broader community to participate.

Blockade

On multiple occasions student activists and allies organized human blockades at the doors of the institutions holding political and economic power in Québec. Using the element of surprise, activists would arrive early in the morning and lock down multiple outside entrances to government buildings and the offices of corporations and banks that backed the tuition hikes.

Street theatre

Forms of street theatre were also

Strategically, ASSÉ moved to create an open, non-sectarian assembly process, gathering representatives from student unions across Québec, members of ASSÉ, and beyond. These gatherings, called CLASSÉ (*Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante*), would help chart the direction of the strike. CLASSÉ also included many members of the two more mainstream federations, the *Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec* (FECQ) and *Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec* (FEUQ), which were being pushed by their members to actively join the strike movement (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies).

A key turning point in the strike was the imposition of Bill 78 by the governing Liberals in May, after months of student demonstrations. This “special law” drastically undermined the fundamental right to protest, declaring all future protests in Québec illegal unless pre-approved by police. Fortunately for the student movement, the special law backfired and actually worked to invigorate greater non-student participation in the strike (see: PRINCIPLE: If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest), including growing nightly casseroles demonstrations where thousands of sympathizers took to the streets banging pots and pans (see: TACTIC: Cacerolazo [noise-making protest]).

Direct action became a key tactic for sustaining political momentum around the strike. ASSÉ created a public online calendar for the strike that quickly filled with autonomous actions, including many demonstrations carried out by decentralized networks of student activists and community members (see: PRINCIPLE: We are all leaders).

In the end, the political momentum behind the strike proved unstoppable, driving the governing Liberals out of office in the September 2012 election. Though the election results certainly didn't reflect the systemic critique of ASSÉ, they ushered in a Parti Québécois minority government that was forced by circumstances to cancel the proposed tuition hike and repeal Bill 78.

LEARN MORE

Solidarity with Québec Students on Strike
Tumblr, 2012
<http://solidaritywithquebecstudents.tumblr.com/>

2012 Québec Student Strike
The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2014
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/quebec-student-protest-of-2012/>

key modes of inspiring action within the strike movement. One example was *la ligne rouge* (the red line), an early morning action where students dressed head to toe in red and stood in long lines across different metro platforms in the city. As a subway car would pass the action a human red line would blur across the platform as the metro car slowed, arriving to find students dressed in full on carré rouge gear.

General assembly

Student general assemblies played an essential role in the incredible outpouring of energy and mass participation in the strike. Because major policy-related decisions concerning the future of the strike couldn't be taken exclusively by the ASSÉ elected executive council, proposals were seriously and openly debated in regular general assemblies which included representatives from the various member associations of the ASSÉ-driven coalition.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Build people power, then negotiate

Student organizers understood that politicians holding state power would not back away from their agenda through negotiations alone. By unleashing the autonomous power of people on the streets, and prioritizing street action over political debate, organizers allowed independent political momentum to develop far outside the halls of power. This drove the politicians crazy, and in the end was integral in shaping the outcome of the strike.

KEY THEORY

Floating signifier

An essential visual element of the Québec student strike was the carré rouge, the red fabric square that countless thousands pinned on their jackets throughout the strike. Simple and easy-to-make, the red square proliferated quickly, providing a clear signifier of public support for the strike. The red spoke both to the indebtedness of the students (being "in the red") and at the same time broadly signified a radical resistance to austerity. As a symbol, it "floated"

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Fees Must Fall
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Creative disruption
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- General assembly
- Mass street action
- Public art intervention
- Street theatre

Principles

- Build people power, then negotiate
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest

- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The real action is your target's reaction
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Floating signifier
- Gerontocracy
- Memes
- Neoliberalism

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Community building, Democracy, Education, Movement building, Street protest, Student activism

STORY

RECLAIM THE STREETS

Reclaim the Streets began as creative activist group in London, but its tactics, blending party and protest, soon spread around the world.

CONTRIBUTED BY

John Jordan

John Jordan was co-founder of Reclaim the Streets (1995-2001) and now works with the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, a collective that merges art, activism, and permaculture. Co-author of *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-capitalism* (Verso), he has just brought out a new book-film with Isabelle Fremeaux exploring Europe's utopian communities, *Les sentiers de l'utopie* (Editions Zones/La Découverte).

"ALL CAME TOGETHER TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW FORMS OF MASS ACTION."

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) began as creative activist group in London, but its tactics, blending party and protest, soon spread around the world. Merging the direct action of Britain's anti-road-building movement and the carnivalesque nature of the counter-cultural rave scene, RTS became a catalyst for the global anti-capitalist movements of the late 1990s.

RTS saw the streets as the urban manifestation of the commons, in need of reclaiming from the enclosures of the car and commerce and transformed into truly public places to be enjoyed by all. RTS became most known for its street parties, which served not only as a protest vehicle against car culture but also as a prefigurative vision of what city streets could be in a system that prioritized people over profit and ecology over the economy (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics).

The first street party took place in North London in May 1995. Using rave culture tactics, the location was kept secret until the last moment, and participants were led from a public meeting point through the subway to emerge at the party site before the police had time to gather forces.

The event began with two cars crashing into each other. The drivers jumped out in theatrical road rage and began to destroy each other's vehicles with hammers. Meanwhile, 500 people emerged from the subway station into the traffic-free street that the crashed

KEY TACTIC

Carnival protest

With its music, wild costumes, liberated bodies, colour and revelry, RTS created rebel carnivals. Unlike regular carnivals and parades, RTS never asked for permission, leaving the event open to the possible and impossible, turning the world on its head in true carnival spirit.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Hope is a muscle

While street parties were often accompanied by written propaganda explaining the ideas and theories behind them, the thing that had the greatest impact was not the theory that went into the events but the hope that emerged. The hope that unfurled from these events not only catalysed the anti-

cars had blocked, and started the party, dancing, sharing free food, and meeting new friends.

From 1995-98, street parties evolved in complexity and scale. Creative techniques ranged from tons of sand dumped in the road to create a sandbox, to tripods made from scaffolding erected in the middle of the street with someone sitting on top. These “intelligent” barricades blocked the road for cars and yet opened it for pedestrians.

In the summer of 1996, 8,000 participants took over a motorway while huge carnival figures with hooped skirts moved amongst them. Underneath the skirts, hidden from view, activists drilled into the tarmac with jackhammers and planted saplings into the motorway. This story took on the power of a myth as it circulated on the early threads of the world wide web. It even inspired striking longshoremen from Liverpool to make common cause with RTS, proof that imagination can break down barriers of class, politics, and culture.

The RTS meme soon spread across the UK and the Western world. A global street party in seventy cities occurred in May 1998, coinciding with the G8 summit. A year later, a “Carnival Against Capital,” coordinated by RTS and the People’s Global Action network, saw simultaneous actions in financial districts across the world, from Nigeria to Uruguay, Seoul to Melbourne, Belarus to Dhaka. Six months after that, a carnivalesque mass street action shut down the WTO in Seattle, an event that proved to be the coming-out party for the anti-globalization movement (see: STORY: Battle in Seattle).

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Reclaim The Streets! From Local to Global Party Protest

Julia Ramírez Blanco, Third Text, 2013

http://thirdtext.com.contentcurator.net/domains/thirdtext.com/local/media/images/medium/Julia_Blanco_Reclaim_the_streets_1.pdf

Reclaim the Streets!: Global Protests and Local Space

Marion Hamm, RepublicArt, 2002

http://www.republicart.net/disc/hybridresistance/hamm01_en.htm

DIY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain.

George Mckay, 1998

<https://books.google.com/books?id=KaP-bAMAYIYC&lpq=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism

Notes from Nowhere, 2003

https://books.google.com/books?id=YrdGcZU66vIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepa

globalization movement; many of those involved went on to work in various global justice movement groups such as Genetic Engineering Network, the Wombles, Dissent!, the Rising Tide Network, the Clandestine Insurgent Clown Army, the Climate Camp, and the Occupy movement.

No one wants to watch a drum circle

Although the surprise location of the street parties was not something that could be public knowledge before the event, as the police would have shut them down, the events themselves were very participatory. RTS was an open invitation for people to come to the street party with whatever creative ideas they wanted. Unlike marches with set themes and slogans, street parties were frames for collective spontaneity. Even if you did not bring your own costume, giant prop, or free feast, then simply the act of dancing with thousands of others on a road meant that you were an active participant rather than spectator or consumer.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil’s Free Fare Movement
- Streets Into Gardens

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Carnival protest
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Inflatables
- Mass street action

ge&q&f=false

No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies

Naomi Klein, 2000

<https://books.google.com/books?>

id=zzj69hdCOn4C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Principles

- Build strength through repetition
- Create many points of entry
- Hope is a muscle
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Simple rules can have grand results
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Commodity fetishism
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The commons

TAGS

Art, Capitalism, Community building, Humour, Land use, Privatization, Street protest

STORY

REPLACING COPS WITH MIMES

Faced with a notoriously corrupt traffic police force, chaos on the roads, and many traffic deaths, Bogotá mayor Antanas Mockus disbanded the corrupt cops and offered to retrain and rehire them... as mimes.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Tomaz Capobianco

Tomaz Capobianco is an architect and researcher. While living in São Paulo, Capobianco worked with different informal communities, studying temporary autonomous zones and informal urban settlements such as the favela of Heliópolis.

“THE MIMES INFUSED BOGOTÁ’S STREETS WITH COMMON SENSE — OR, RATHER, A SENSE OF THE COMMONS.”

In the early 1990s, Bogotá was a city in crisis. Poverty, corruption, and crime were endemic, public faith in government had bottomed out, and life in the capital had, for many, descended into a battle of all against all. This was the situation that philosophy professor Antanas Mockus stepped into when he was elected mayor — an unlikely politician with unconventional methods (he’d campaigned in a spandex superhero costume) and an uncommonly large mandate for radical political change.

In his two terms as mayor (1995-1997 and 2001-2003), Mockus catalyzed tremendous improvements to Bogotá. Launching civic campaigns that involved massive, voluntary public participation, the homicide rate fell 70 percent, while the percentage of homes with drinking water increased from 79 to 100 percent.

There is no better example of the mayor’s audacious and highly effective approach than his program addressing traffic safety, which saw traffic fatalities drop by over 50 percent. After piloting the project with theater students, Mockus fired 3,200 traffic cops from a notoriously corrupt police force and then offered them the option to be retrained and hired back — as mimes. Four hundred accepted the offer, trading their handcuffs and batons for white gloves and face paint.

Each day, the mimes moved through traffic and seized on opportunities to dramatize the struggles and frustrations of drivers and pedestrians. They heaped scorn on cars blocking pedestrian crosswalks and then gestured as if repainting the crosswalk, endorsing its existence. They helped elderly people cross the street, and pretended to push cars blocking intersections out of the

KEY PRINCIPLES

Use state power to build people power

Like so many other politicians who get swept into office with a mandate for radical reform, Mockus could have just settled into business as usual. But he didn’t; instead he used his power to do something audacious. He didn’t just “disarm” the traffic police, a wing of the repressive state apparatus he inherited (which would have been a stunning accomplishment in itself), he re-invented it, flipped it on its head. By turning corrupt state agents into gentle, beguiling civil servants, he created a “constructive vacuum” of state power that gave rise to people power. The lesson: The state won’t “wither away” on its own, it must be creatively dismantled in a way that invites civil society to take responsibility for the self-regulation of society. Mockus understood this and took

way. In addition to the mimes, Mockus also distributed 350,000 “thumbs-up/thumbs-down” cards that citizens could use to peacefully express approval or disapproval of others’ traffic behaviour.

At first glance, it seemed an absurd way to make traffic safer, and Mockus was ridiculed in the press for pursuing it. But gradually, by making fun of drivers and pedestrians who didn’t follow basic rules and celebrating those who did, the mimes managed to transform the entire traffic culture of the city, successfully infusing Bogotá’s streets with common sense — or, rather, a sense of the commons.

The construction of the urban environment, a duty usually reserved for engineers, architects, developers, and the like, became, under Mockus' mayorship, the responsibility of all urban inhabitants. His programs for Bogotá viewed citizens as political beings who are always already participating in the construction of their city, either with their good or bad attitudes.

“The mayor's genius,” suggests Raymond Fisman, “was in recognizing that writing harsher laws or hiring more gun-toting policemen would be futile when confronted with a law-breaking culture. Instead he enabled Bogotá's citizens to make change themselves.” Or as Mockus himself explains it, “Knowledge empowers people. If people know the rules and are sensitized by art, humour, and creativity, they are much more likely to accept change.” Mockus proved that creativity and humour can work where legal punishment has failed.

LEARN MORE

Academic Turns City into a Social Experiment
Maria Cristina Caballero, Harvard Gazette, 2004
<http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/03.11/01-mockus.html>

Bogotá Change
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwgWM3h_l-4

Antanas Mockus: Colombians Fear Ridicule More Than Being Fined
Sarah Marsh, The Guardian, 2013
<http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2013/oct/28/antanas-mockus-bogota-mayor>

Cards Against Harassment: Another Example of the Social Cure at Work
<http://www.cardsagainstharrassment.com/index.html>

provocative action to move that vision forward.

Kill them with kindness

Unlike the cops, who depend on coercive force, the mimes’ only power was their capacity to scold or induce laughter. Because of their lack of authority and their vulnerability amidst the traffic, the mimes stood on the same level as other citizens, and thus were able to affect them more powerfully. It was precisely this empathic common ground that allowed the mimes to shift the traffic culture of Bogotá.

KEY THEORY

The social cure

Part of the genius of the mayor’s program was how it leveraged peer pressure to shift Bogotá’s traffic from a culture of impunity to a culture of courtesy rooted in unspoken rules. The mimes set a new tone, but it was when motorists themselves took up the dramatization of these rules

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!

Tactics

- Citizen’s arrest
- Image theatre
- Invisible theatre
- Legislative theatre
- Street theatre

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Don’t fall in love with your tactics

- Foster safer spaces
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your community
- Make the invisible visible
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use state power to build people power
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Artivism
- Corruption
- Cultural hegemony
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary reform
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Theory of change

TAGS

Community building, Corruption,
, Democracy, Humour, Policy,
Pranks

STORY

ROUND DANCE REVOLUTION

In 2012, a movement combining flash mob tactics and traditional Indigenous round dances rose up to defeat a bill that would have eroded Indigenous sovereignty and environmental protections across Canada.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Paul Kuttner

Paul Kuttner is an educator and researcher who works at the intersection of art, culture, education, and social change. He has taught theater, creative writing, and civic engagement in schools and community organizations, is a co-author of *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform*, and serves as Minister of Cultural Scholarship for the US Department of Arts and Culture.

“THE FLASH MOBS CARRIED THE RESONANCE OF TRADITION AND CEREMONY, WHILE ALSO BEING FUN, LOUD, ENTERTAINING, AND CONTAGIOUS.”

In October of 2012, the Canadian government introduced Omnibus Budget Bill C-45, which significantly eroded Indigenous sovereignty and environmental protections. Indigenous communities immediately voiced concerns. In Saskatchewan, four women — three Indigenous and one non-native — launched a teach-in and website in order to raise awareness about the issue. They dubbed their effort “Idle No More.”

By December, the Idle No More movement was in full swing. Rallies were being held across Canada and internationally; the hashtag #idlenomore (see: TACTIC: Hashtag campaign) was trending on Twitter; and Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence was on hunger strike seeking a meeting with the Canadian government. The movement had quickly broadened to encompass a collective demand for governments worldwide to “honor Indigenous sovereignty and to protect the land and water,” as the group’s website declared.

It was in this context that a group of organizers put out a call to action on Facebook asking “Aboriginal people, non-Aboriginal people, Metis, youth, and anyone willing to dance/sing/drum with us” to meet at the Cornwall Centre shopping mall in Regina, Saskatchewan. At 7:00 pm on December 17, Aboriginal activists gathered at the mall and began beating out a steady rhythm on hand drums and singing. Others soon emerged from the holiday

KEY TACTIC

- Flash mob

Flash mobs are unrehearsed public actions that can be easily replicated, and maintain their coherence with minimal coordination. In this case, Idle No More organizers found synergy between the flash mob and the round dance, itself an improvisational performance that invites observers to join in. Quickly planned and carried out, these events helped drive the rapid spread of the movement in a way that more rehearsed and controlled performances would not have been able to do.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Use the power of ritual

The Idle No More round dances served as collective rituals with

shopping crowd to join hands around the mall's massive Christmas tree, circling clockwise in a traditional Indigenous round dance. By the end, an intergenerational and interracial group of over 500 people had gathered on two floors to take part in the action. Mall security and city police arrived, but the flash mob remained entirely peaceful before melting away.

While the flash mob itself lasted less than 15 minutes, videos and articles about it circulated widely on the Internet. Another round dance took place the following day in the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta. These actions captured the imagination of others in the movement, and dozens of round dance flash mobs began popping up in malls and public spaces across Canada and the US. On December 29, over 1,000 people gathered for a round dance protest at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Round dances, often used as a form of celebration and as an expression of friendship and unity, are practiced in different forms by many Indigenous nations in North America. Along with many other aspects of Indigenous culture, the round dance was suppressed in the process of colonization, but it has recently reemerged as a celebratory practice, and recorded round dance music has become increasingly popular. The round dance flash mobs, then, represented both a powerful expression of resistance and a practice of cultural regeneration (see: THEORY: Decolonization).

Round dance flash mobs became a strong enough presence in the Idle No More movement for some to begin referring to it as the "round dance revolution." Organizers had hit upon a way to combine social media and flash mobs — both highly popular forms of activism among young people — with traditional music and dance in a way that bridged generations and cultures, creating space for experiencing solidarity and building community. The round dances symbolized the movement's core tenets of peace and unity, while sending the simple message: "We are here, our culture is strong, and we will not be silent in the face of destruction."

LEARN MORE

Round Dance: Why It's the Symbol of Idle No More
Melissa Martin, CBC, 2013

<http://www.cbc.ca/manitoba/scene/homepage-promo/2013/01/28/round-dance-revolution-drums-up-support-for-idle-no-more/>

Idle No More

The Idle No More movement, Ongoing...

<http://www.idlenomore.ca/>

Idle No More: Where do we go from here?

Chelsea Vowel - âpihtawikosisân - Law, language, life: A Plains Cree speaking Métis woman in Montreal, 2012

deep symbolic resonance. They made it easy for people from many backgrounds to "fall into the rhythm" of the action; they offered participants a direct experience of unity and solidarity; and they spoke viscerally to the strength and vitality of Indigenous cultures.

Use your cultural assets

Opponents of social change efforts often have powerful cultural tools at their disposal, mass media in particular. To combat this, groups working for justice must recognize and build upon their own cultural strengths

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Cultural disobedience
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Hashtag campaign
- Lamentation

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Create many points of entry
- Keep it positive
- Make new folks welcome
- Make the invisible visible
- Make your group comfortable and your target uncomfortable
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Action logic
- Decolonization
- Environmental justice
- Human rights
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now
- SWOT

TAGS

Action design, Colonialism, Environment, Indigenous rights, Racial justice, Social media, Nonviolence

STORY

SANTA CLAUS ARMY

A radical theatre collective dressed in Santa costumes took to the streets of Copenhagen to demonstrate the true meaning of Christmas. Hilarity ensued, and a legend was born.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Elisabeth Ginsberg

Elisabeth Ginsberg, an over-educated Dane currently living in Copenhagen, holds a master's in cultural studies and journalism from NYU and another Master's degree from the University of Copenhagen. In an attempt not to dry out completely, she wrote her thesis on Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert.

"THE PERFORMANCE DEMONSTRATED THAT TRUE GENEROSITY IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHIN THE NARROW BOUNDS OF CAPITALIST SOCIETY."

In the lead-up to Christmas 1974, an army of about seventy Santa Clauses, male and female, paraded through the city of Copenhagen, Denmark, singing carols, handing out sweets and hot chocolate, and asking everyone what they wanted for Christmas.

After spending a few days cementing the bearded senior's good image, the generosity of the Santas became increasingly radical. Among other things, they climbed a barbed-wire fence surrounding the recently shuttered General Motors assembly plant with the purpose of giving jobs back to "their rightful owners."

The week-long performance reached its crescendo inside one of Copenhagen's biggest department stores when the Santas started taking items from the shelves and handing them to customers as gifts. Before too long, security guards and shop assistants interrupted the magic, desperately tearing the presents out of people's hands (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction). The police soon showed up and escorted the Santas out onto the street, where they were roughed up and thrown into paddy wagons in spite of the fact that it wasn't clear that a criminal act had been committed, except perhaps on the part of any customers who took home the presents without paying.

The performance exposed the radical implications of the myth of Santa Claus' boundless generosity, demonstrating that true generosity is impossible within the narrow bounds of capitalist society (see: THEORY: Capitalism). With widely distributed photos of Santa Claus getting beaten for being too generous, the action

KEY TACTIC

Guerrilla theatre

Most of Solvognen's actions were surprise performances for unsuspecting audiences in unlikely public spaces. Through performances that were playful, bold and easy to understand, Solvognen managed to spread its political ideas beyond the circle of true believers: most Danes knew about Solvognen and its activities. Legend has it that people even started seeing them when they weren't there: at a public viewing of an American F-16 jet fighter, three real security guards were arrested on suspicion of being members of Solvognen!

KEY PRINCIPLES

The real action is your target's reaction

The performers made it difficult

was a hit.

The people behind Santa's beards were the Danish theatre collective *Solvognen* ("The Sun Chariot," an allusion to Norse mythology). During the 1970s, the collective performed many large-scale actions intended to make bourgeois Danish society "act itself out as theatre."

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Santa Army 1975

Solvognen, 1974

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-FDutpUdcPg>

for the authorities not to become part of the theatre. Doing their job, the police were obligated to intervene. Had the police for some reason ignored the performers, the theatre would have been incomplete. Hence, the success of the performance was dependent on the actions of the target.

Make friends with the police (unless it's funny not to)

Solvognen's interaction with the police was highly strategic. Always staying in character even in the midst of violent confrontation with the police, the performers created priceless photo ops.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Orange Alternative

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Guerrilla theatre
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Invisible theatre

Principles

- Escalate strategically
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make friends with the police (unless it's funny not to)
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek common ground
- The real action is your target's reaction

- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons

TAGS

Capitalism, Humour, Pranks

STORY

SCHOOLS OF STRUGGLE

Students occupied over 200 schools in São Paulo to protest the governor's plan to close schools, forcing him to reverse course, and igniting a wave of student resistance across the country.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Carolina Munis

Carolina Munis has a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and is the co-founder and a member of LGBT rights group Coletivo Transformação, which builds an autonomous, nonformal popular education experience for transgender people in São Paulo, Brazil. She is also a member of Escola de Ativismo (School of Activism).

Marcel Taminato

Marcel is an anthropologist, learning facilitator, and co-founder of Escola de Ativismo (School of Activism) in Brazil and co-editor of the Portuguese edition of *Beautiful Trouble* *Bela Baderna: Ferramentas Para Revolução*.

"THE OCCUPATIONS SOON BECAME THE EDUCATIONAL SPACES THAT THE STUDENTS HAD ALWAYS WANTED."

In September 2015, the governor of São Paulo, the richest state in Brazil, announced a so-called "reorganization" of public schools that concentrated students in fewer, larger schools in order to cut costs. The measure would have led to the closing of 94 institutions and the transfer of 311,000 students and more than 74,000 teachers, many of whom would have been relocated to schools far from their homes. The decision was made without any prior consultation with teachers, students, or families. And, even worse, the plan did not address any of the severe issues faced by the public education system, such as lack of teachers, lack of safety, overcrowded classrooms, crumbling infrastructure, and poor-quality meals — on the contrary, it only aggravated these issues.

In response to the announced plan, after street protests and appeals to the Secretary of Education, city councillors, and regional directors of education were met with silence, the students of Diadema State School decided to occupy their school, located on the outskirts of the state capital. The next day, students from Fernão Dias Paes State School, located in downtown São Paulo, did the same.

The state government made several attempts to intimidate and demobilize the students. They ordered that both schools be cleared, a decision that was soon overruled by a state court upholding the students' right to protest. State police were constantly showing up at the occupations, threatening the protesters and causing disruption. And the authorities fueled a media campaign to portray the students as vandals who were

KEY TACTIC

Occupation

The occupations were initially intended to defend the schools against closing, but they also ended up serving as hubs to activate a solidarity network around the students' uprising. Almost every aspect of the daily life in the occupations was crowdsourced, from basic necessities such as food and materials, to the workshops and classes. Therefore, the tactic in itself served as a way to broaden the movement and build support.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Breakfast is persuasive

The students used the occupation to create the schools they wanted. They built a fabulous schedule of classes, demonstrating that the claim that the students did not care about

destroying and looting school property.

However, the repression only increased public support for the students: Their families and teachers, demonstrating their support, were quickly joined by artists, journalists, opinion makers, trade unions, social movements, and other groups. The public outrage generated by the government and police attacks triggered a massive wave of school occupations: In the following weeks, 213 schools across the state were occupied by students opposing the “reorganization” plan.

The occupations soon became the educational spaces the students had always wanted (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics). There was a busy schedule of daily activities such as lectures, debates, public classes, and workshops on a variety of subjects (e.g. gender issues, direct democracy, digital culture, environmental education, permaculture, drugs and harm reduction, languages, etc.), most of which were crowdsourced to volunteers. Moreover, the students made sure that basic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and safety were collective and self-organized. The collaborative and autonomous experience constituted a clear opposition to the government’s authoritarian discourse of austerity, and was a practical display of the quality that the public education system had failed to provide. As the occupations grew, there was no indication that the status quo would prevail over a self-organized, autonomous student movement that had turned the ideal of free and democratic education into reality.

In December, after two months of occupations, the state government finally announced the suspension of the school reorganization plan. The next day, the Secretary of Education resigned. The students’ uprising had launched a debate on the role of democracy in schools and the true meaning of public education. The students and their supporters emerged as a strong coalition with the ability to respond quickly to future attacks on education. And best of all, the movement soon spread beyond the state: In the following months, occupations took place in several other states in Brazil, reaching over 1.000 other schools in protest against precarious infrastructure, inferior meals, lack of quality, lack of transparency, and privatization of education, as well as demanding free public transportation.

LEARN MORE

Wave of High School Occupations Across São Paulo
Left Voice, 2015

<http://www.leftvoice.org/Wave-of-High-School-Occupations-across-Sao-Paolo>

Educação Ocupada
Vice, 2015-2016

http://www.vice.com/pt_br/series/educacao-ocupada-sao-paulo

their studies was fallacious. While the government was calling them vandals, they were fixing what was broken with the voluntary help of the community.

Choose tactics that support your strategy

The occupation was not the only tactic employed by the students. In order to build up even more pressure, they made use of other actions simultaneously, such as street blockades in major avenues in São Paulo, music festivals with the support of famous singers, mass demonstrations, and creative interventions.

Use your cultural assets

The students created and recorded songs, many of which were political adaptations of widely popular Brazilian funk songs. These interventions were boosted by nimble and impactful communications on social media, independent media, and the use of celebrities, which served as a reliable alternative to the conservative mainstream press. Updates on each of the occupations were posted on an hourly basis, and a channel was established to connect with supporters and issue calls to action.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

When the students demonstrated that quality public education could be effectively implemented with no financial or political excuses, it was easy for the public to understand what was going on: Students were keeping schools open in order to keep schools open.

RELATED TOOLS

Escolas de Luta

Editora Veneta, 2016

<http://www.editoraveneta.com.br/livros/escolas-de-luta/>

A Batalha do Vivo

Grupo Contrafile, 2016

https://issuu.com/grupocontrafile/docs/a_batalha_do_vivo

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Fees Must Fall
- PARK(ing) Day
- Street Graduation
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- Consumer boycott
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Mass street action

Principles

- Create many points of entry
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Stay on message
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Gerontocracy
- Neoliberalism
- Political identity paradox
- Prefigurative politics
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power

- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Austerity, Direct action,
Education, Democracy,
Movement building, Social
media, Street protest, Student
activism

STORY

SIGN LANGUAGE SIT-IN

Deaf activists in Zimbabwe stood up (and sat-in) to demand access to information in sign language, successfully pressuring the national broadcaster to include sign language interpretation in news broadcasts.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Agness Chindimba

Agness Chindimba is a feminist and a disability rights activist who is passionate about advocating for issues that affect persons with disabilities, especially women and girls because they are the most vulnerable.

“THE DEAF COMMUNITY DID NOT LOSE HEART WHEN THEY MET CHALLENGES SUCH AS LACK OF RESPONSE FROM AUTHORITIES, NOR DID THEY TAKE ‘NO’ FOR AN ANSWER.”

When people in Zimbabwe talk about disability, the main assumption is that disability is synonymous with physical impairments. Deafness is often overlooked because it is not visible at first glance. As a result, deaf people tend to lag behind and live at the periphery of society. Their marginalization is compounded by a general lack of access to information, including the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC)’s failure to provide information to the deaf community. However, beginning in 2012, in a remarkable campaign targeting the ZBC, deaf people mobilized themselves and their allies, stood up, claimed their constitutional right to information, and demanded that their voices be heard.

First, a delegation was sent to the Disability Advisor in the President’s Office to advocate for the needs of the deaf community in Zimbabwe, after which he wrote a supportive letter to the Ministry of Information and Publicity, airing the concerns that he had received from the delegation. Next, they visited the ministry to deliver the Disability Advisor’s letter, but to their surprise, the secretary advised them to make a phone call to place an appointment! They responded that they could not make a phone call because they are deaf, and they did not have the minister’s cell phone number so could not send a text message.

Unwilling to leave empty-handed, the delegation opted to sit in and wait for the minister to come out of his office. Eventually, they were given 20 minutes to discuss their concerns with the minister, after which he provided a supportive letter to hand over to ZBC.

Now armed with two letters of support, the delegates made clear to the ZBC that if their grievances were ignored, they would refuse to

KEY TACTIC

Occupation

Sitting in at the office of the Minister of Information and Publicity and refusing to leave the building without seeing the minister proved an effective tactic for pressuring him to meet with the delegation and act on its demands.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Choose your target wisely

Though the primary target of this campaign was the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, organizers recognized that the real power lay with the Minister of Information and Publicity, so that is where they focused their pressure. Without that supportive letter from the Disability Advisor in the President’s Office, direct appeals to the ZBC likely would have required far greater levels of mobilization to be effective.

pay television licences, and mobilize other deaf people in Zimbabwe to join the campaign. The broadcasting representatives promised to offer them a slot during the day to air a program in sign language. The delegates responded that deaf people in Zimbabwe worked during the day, just like everyone else. They demanded prime time access, and were soon granted it.

This campaign by deaf people in Zimbabwe saw the introduction of sign language on all ZBC weekday news bulletins. Prior to this, sign language was only offered during the lunch hour news bulletin. The activists also won 30 minutes of airtime each week for a program in sign language disseminating information of interest to deaf people. Thus was born Action Power, a program that airs on national television every Tuesday evening, raising awareness about deaf culture and sign language, and providing information to the deaf community on a variety of topics. Other producers for programs aired on ZBC have started to emulate Action Power by hiring interpreters for their programs.

Buoyed by these victories, the deaf community set its sights on further progress: They feel the national broadcaster should pay them for their productions (currently ZBC gets them for free). Also, there is still a need for sign language during weekend news bulletins and current affairs programming, as well as captioning for soaps and dramas. The battle was won but the war would continue.

LEARN MORE

ZBC-TV Saluted by the Deaf for Complying with the New Constitution

Deaf Zimbabwe Trust, 2015

<https://www.facebook.com/Deaf.Zimbabwe.Trust/posts/778113092267537:0>

KEY THEORY

Social model of disability

The campaign was underpinned by the belief in the social model of disability. The model acknowledges that the problem of disability does not reside in the individual, nor does it lie in the impairment, but in the response of the society towards a person with a disability. For deaf people, the major barriers have to do with attitudes and communication, resulting in exclusion from participation in mainstream society, poor services, and violation of rights, especially the right to access to information. This campaign sought to directly challenge these attitudes by dramatizing the deaf community's need for access to information.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Consumer boycott
- Creative disruption
- Occupation

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Focus on basic needs
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seize the means of communication
- Start a conversation

Theories

- Direct action
- Social model of disability
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Communications, Direct action,
Human rights, Language, Media,
Policy

STORY

STANDING MAN

Sometimes one person standing in defiance of police repression is enough to galvanize a movement of millions. That's exactly what happened in Turkey in 2013.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Erdem Gündüz

Erdem Gündüz is a Turkish dancer, actor, performance artist, choreographer, and teacher who became internationally known as "The Standing Man" due to his protest action in Taksim Square against the Erdoğan regime in June 2013. Erdem is interested in the use of "improvisation, ritual, and public action as tools for investigating political realities and social movement."

"I STOOD SILENTLY FOR EIGHT HOURS, AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED. WHO ARE YOU? HOW WILL YOU STAND UP?"

On May 28, 2013, a group of environmentalists gathered in Taksim Gezi Park, a beloved public space in the heart of Istanbul, to protest plans to uproot a stand of trees. Before long, the park was occupied, a wave of protest had spread across all of Turkey, and millions of Turkish citizens were marching in the streets.

The uprooting of a few trees was the spark, but it was about so much more: excessive police power, the silence of the mainstream Turkish media, and the rightward drift of the ruling AKP party away from the Turkish Republic's founding principles of secularism and equal rights. The police response was brutal; by the time I arrived in Istanbul on June 17, four people had been killed, 6,000 injured, and 65 blinded. The police cleared Taksim Square and sealed it off to protesters. I snuck in with tourists. After all that violence, all I could do was stand still.

My "Standing Man" action was not a planned protest. I wasn't prepared beforehand and I hadn't notified the media. I didn't even know if I was going to get noticed. I turned to face the Atatürk Culture Centre (AKM), the iconic arts building which dominates Taksim Square. Right in front of me, the Turkish flag was waving. I also knew that the the country's primary news agency, Anadolu Agency, had an office overseeing the square. I started standing just like a statue.

I had been appalled at how false and manipulative the media coverage of the protests had been. By standing in passive defiance

KEY TACTIC

Artistic vigil

As a choreographer, my attention is on what you can say with the body. Sometimes the body can be political. And sometimes the attitude of a body can be more meaningful than language. Standing Man was actually a political vigil done as performance art. I stood still like a statue for hours. I was standing up to gravity, but also to the regime. It was not a normal vigil, say, with candles and pictures of the fallen. It had a mystery to it. An ambiguity. It was clearly making a statement, telling a story, but people had to figure it out what it meant themselves, and like art, it offered many interpretations.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Maintain nonviolent discipline

of Prime Minister Erdogan, there in the Square, right below the Anadolu Agency offices, they could no longer falsely claim that the protests were over. Also, as an artist, I was outraged that the order had been given to demolish the Culture Centre, after all the other centres of arts and culture we'd lost in recent years. By keeping the Centre — and the name Atatürk, who had done so much for the arts and for Turkey — directly in my gaze, I could not only honor him, but also keep vigil and draw attention to this cultural treasure I wanted to protect.

After about an hour, I was noticed. Curious bystanders began to surround me. They asked questions about my identity, occupation, and intentions. Four police officers body-searched me. They asked me whether I was waiting for someone. Did I have a problem? I remained calm and mute. I didn't have a problem, but in the following hours, as my picture and the mysterious alias "Standing Man" spread on Twitter, I became one. The action was all over social media. People were doing what the media failed to do by broadcasting the action all around Turkey via Livestream. Even a few news channels were talking about the action.

Eventually, more than 300 people joined me, all doing the same thing: standing still, facing the Cultural Centre and refusing to leave. The action was taken up by other people across Turkey who also started standing still, each coming up with their own version. Citizens had discovered a whole new way to protest, that, because of its nonviolent nature and its unusualness, the authorities didn't know how to deal with. Our resistance was able to continue, and the protest movement was seen in a new, more sympathetic light by the general public.

I believe in the power of independent, individual actions. We should not always have to wait for a collective action. If you are against something, maybe you should just act out of the truth of who you are. Who knows what might happen. I happen to be a performance artist, so I stood silently for eight hours, and look what happened. Who are you? How will you stand up?

Originally published in the Turkish edition of Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Turkey's 'Standing Man' Shows How Passive Resistance Can Shake a State

Richard Seymour, *The Guardian*, 2013

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/18/turkey-standing-man>

In general, the authorities didn't know how to respond to Standing Man. They were disarmed by the silence, discipline, and decorum of my protest. Deputy Prime Minister Arinc told reporters that the standing protests were peaceful and "pleasing to the eye." "This is not an act of violence," he said. "We cannot condemn it." Similarly, a couple of days after my action, pro-government counter-protesters showed up in the square. They quickly realized that their double negation amounted to an affirmation, and left after half an hour.

Simple rules can have grand results

Standing Man is not a man but an action and a reaction. It can be performed again and again at different places, by different people, in different ways. Some people sat in public squares with a loaf of bread in front of them in mourning for Berkin Elvan, the 14-year-old boy who was hit in the head by a tear gas canister as he was walking to the bakery; others stood still facing the Turkish flag, reading a book. Some were standing still against the destruction of art, some against police violence, others stood still for their freedom. The action became so widespread because it was a simple, nonviolent gesture that anyone could do, and invest with their own meanings.

If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest

According to the Turkish criminal code, when three or more people gather together, they can be deemed a terrorist group. This is ridiculous and wrong, and basically criminalizes everyday

life. But it is the law. Although one person, standing alone, is not against the law, the police and the government were still suspicious of me, and responded as if I was some kind of threat. My protest didn't break the law, but by doing something very normal, and everyday

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Civil disobedience
- Cultural disobedience
- Distributed action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The real action is your target's reaction
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Use the power of ritual
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Direct action
- Floating signifier
- Hamoq and hamas
- Memes
- Non-cooperation
- The commons

TAGS

Action design, Nonviolence,
Street protest

STORY

STOLEN BEAUTY

The Stolen Beauty boycott campaign targeted the Israeli cosmetics manufacturer Ahava, causing economic damage, a tarnished reputation, and ultimately, a promise to move the factory out of historic Palestine.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Kristen Ess Schurr

Kristen Ess Schurr was formerly the Palestine Bureau Chief for KPFA's Flashpoints and also corresponded for several Pacifica affiliates while running the English department of the Palestine News Network in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Her writing can be found in independent journals and the anthology *Live From Palestine*; she is now residing in Los Angeles and working on CODEPINK's Stolen Beauty and Boycott SodaStream campaigns.

"THE MESSAGE IS IN THE MUD: THERE IS NOTHING BEAUTIFUL ABOUT OCCUPATION."

A group of women enter the Ahava (which means "love" in Hebrew) cosmetics shop in the Tel Aviv Hilton. Sporting bikinis, they smear mud on their bodies, scrawling the words "Stolen Beauty" and "No Love in Ahava." Questions are asked, and a dialogue begins. A few weeks later at a "Tel Aviv Beach Party" in New York, another group of women in bikinis convey the same messages.

These actions were just the beginning of a multi-pronged international boycott campaign against Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories, an Israeli company located in an illegal settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The message is in the mud: there is nothing beautiful about occupation.

Stolen Beauty seeks to educate consumers, store managers, CEOs, and the general public about Ahava's illegal practices. The tactics range from guerrilla theater to online culture jamming, and the target is Ahava — its location in an illegal settlement, its fraudulent labeling, and its illegal pillaging of mud from the shores of occupied and colonized lands. By drawing attention to Ahava's violations of international law and human rights, the goal is to educate the American and global public on what is really happening in Palestine, and contribute to the much larger Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement demanding freedom and justice for the Palestinian people.

Soon after the launch of the campaign, it was discovered that "Sex

KEY TACTICS

Creative disruption

Stolen Beauty activists get attention and tell a story with outrageous costumes, direct action, and clever yet clear messaging. Stores that sell illegal settlement products come to a standstill when we enter singing in bathrobes, smeared with mud or performing marriage ceremonies pledging ourselves to the pursuit of Palestinian human rights.

Distributed action

Stolen Beauty has succeeded in getting a diverse set of tools into the hands of high numbers of activists to wage a multi-pronged, global campaign. The script and song sheets for actions like performing a marriage ceremony pledging to

and the City” star Kristin Davis was both Ahava’s spokesmodel and an Oxfam Goodwill Ambassador. Boycott supporters contacted Oxfam, which has an explicit policy against Israeli settlement products. Oxfam suspended Davis from publicity work for the duration of her Ahava contract. The story landed in the gossip column of the New York Post, which was terrible publicity for Ahava, but good for fans of justice and peace. Davis did not renew her contract with the company.

Following that, Ahava announced a Twitter contest for free products. In response, the Stolen Beauty campaign issued a call to tweet in messages like: “Does AHAVA offer a moisturizer to sooth my hands after so much ethnic cleansing?” We culture jammed their marketing contest, and turned it into a #socialmediafail.

Creative interventions continue to target key sale and marketing points that carry Ahava’s products (see: METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention). For instance, ten women wore pink bathrobes with matching towels wrapped around their heads and walked into stores, singing jingles about the ills of occupation. Protesters and other patrons asked the store to stop stocking Ahava cosmetics.

Ahava’s reputation as an international brand has been tarnished by the boycott campaign. For example, in 2010 Ahava was condemned as being complicit in Israel’s regime of occupation, colonization, and apartheid and its crimes at the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, and its production and labeling practices have come under extensive scrutiny in Europe. Years of pressure and bad press eventually led to the company’s announcement in 2016 that Ahava plans to move its factory from the occupied West Bank to within Israel’s pre-1967 borders.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Stolen Beauty Campaign
<http://www.stolenbeauty.org>

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) Movement
<https://www.bdsmovement.net>

BDS Brides Boycott SodaStream and Ahava Sales at Bed Bath & Beyond
Youtube, 2011
<http://trb.la/AxwI82>

boycott Israeli products in front of the Bed, Bath & Beyond Bridal Registry are easily downloadable from the Stolen Beauty website. We provide Twitter suggestions via email for the lone wolf and tips for indoor Valentine’s Day parties when the weather is bad to clog the comment threads of beauty sites that sell Ahava.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Occupation is illegal. It directly contravenes international law, the Geneva Conventions, and existing United Nations resolutions. Stolen Beauty puts the onus where it belongs: Israeli companies are breaking international law and profiting from the occupation, and should be held to account. While bringing attention to these facts, activists dressed in bathrobes, bikinis, or bridal wear risk arrest in order to creatively disrupt business as usual.

Make the invisible visible

People shopping for high-end cosmetics, as well as passersby, store clerks and managers, are made aware of the Israeli occupation when they are exposed to Stolen Beauty’s actions. The campaign undermines the legitimacy of the “Made in Israel” stamp, and makes visible illegal profiteering from occupation.

Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win

Will activists stop Israel’s occupation and colonization of Palestine by boycotting a cosmetic company? No. But the campaign affects Ahava’s reputation and bottom line by

exposing its ugly secrets, and supports the much larger BDS movement. Activists have convinced many local stores to stop carrying Ahava, and the BDS campaign in the UK was able to get the Ahava flagship store to close its Central London location in Covent Garden.

KEY THEORY

Decolonization

BDS activists challenge the economic manifestations of Israel's colonial and apartheid regime in Palestine by targeting companies profiting from its crimes. This grassroots approach, which was launched in Palestine and has spread globally, contributes to the broader vision of reversing Israel's territorial and economic exploitation of the indigenous Palestinian population and its land.

KEY METHODOLOGY

SMART objectives

Instead of choosing a general long-term vision such as "free Palestine," the Stolen Beauty campaign identified a short-term objective through targeting and boycotting Ahava

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Stolen Gas Campaign

Tactics

- Consumer boycott
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Divestment
- Guerrilla theatre
- Media-jacking
- Street theatre

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Choose your target wisely
- Create many points of entry
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Decolonization

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Colonialism, Direct action, Indigenous rights, Land use, War and peace

STORY

STOLEN GAS CAMPAIGN

Grassroots Jordanian activists mobilized popular opposition against a \$15 billion deal with Israel to import natural gas, both before and after the deal was signed.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Samar Saeed

Samar Saeed is a writer based in Jordan who holds a BA from George Mason University and an MA in Near and Middle Eastern Studies with a major in Politics (Distinction) from SOAS, University of London. Her research and academic interests include the political economy of the Arab world, history, education, and culture.

“ONCE THE BATTLE LINES WERE DRAWN, VERY FEW PEOPLE WANTED TO BE SEEN AS SIDING WITH THE VILLAINS.”

In September 2014, the Jordanian National Electric Power Company signed a letter of intent to import natural gas from the Israeli-controlled Leviathan fields, located offshore in Mediterranean waters. When news of the agreement broke, a massive grassroots campaign arose to oppose the deal, and when the deal was signed two years later, opposition grew ever stronger.

In the first few months of the campaign, a national coalition operating under the name “The Jordanian National Coalition Against Importing Gas from Israel,” consisting of dozens of major political parties, trade unions, grassroots groups, parliamentarians, and others, was formed to consolidate broad yet unified public rejection of the deal (see: PRINCIPLE: If you’re not uncomfortable, your coalition is too small).

The widespread anger was provoked by the fact that not only would this deal undermine the global efforts of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement to isolate Israel for its violations against the Palestinian indigenous population, but would also threaten Jordan’s economic stability and political sovereignty (see: THEORY: Hamoq and Hamas).

The Jordanian regime hoped that the deal would normalize relations with a settler-colonial state and transform its “cold” peace with Israel into a warmer one. In contradiction to the regime’s intentions, however, the deal provoked large numbers of people who had not been engaged in politics to become active organizers against it (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies).

KEY TACTIC

Phone banking

Jordanian parliament and elections are not models of democracy: It was highly unusual for large numbers of people to call members of parliament to lobby them on an issue. This novelty made the tactic very effective. Probably for the first time, Jordanian members of parliament were having to defend their position, again and again, to members of the public. At the beginning, it was hard for MPs to believe that the activists calling them were not journalists, but later the phone banking tactic became the major political topic of the season and helped to build strong ties with parliamentarians, some of whom became strong allies of the campaign.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The significance of this campaign, which continues to be waged even after the government signed the deal in September 2016, lies in the fact that it represents the longest and most widespread opposition movement in Jordan since the 2011 popular protests during the Arab Spring. The difference is that activism has played a crucial role in manifesting opposition to the deal. For examples, several video clips (see: TACTIC: Music video) and songs have been produced denouncing the government's decision. In a truly grassroots tactic of switching off the lights for an hour every Sunday night, artists, comedians, and musicians have performed in candlelight week after week to express their opposition.

Amongst the several active groups in this campaign was the Jordanian chapter of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. One of the tactics that Jordan BDS used was phone banking sessions to mobilize members of parliament (see: TACTIC: Phone banking). When the tactic was first used in 2014, it was a huge success that led to forming a broad Parliamentary opposition that voted overwhelmingly not only against the deal but for cancelling the letter of intent. However, the reuse of this tactic in 2016 was not as fruitful, given that a higher vote threshold, and therefore more public pressure on the members of parliament, was required to challenge the government on a binding deal rather than a letter of intent (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't fall in love with your tactics). The campaign continues at the time of writing, with more innovative ideas and escalatory tactics mushrooming every day (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically).

LEARN MORE

Pumping Revenue Into Israel's Coffers: The Israeli-Jordan Gas Deal Platform Research Centre, 2014

<http://platformlondon.org/p-publications/pumping-revenue-into-israels-coffers-the-israeli-jordan-gas-deal/>

#AgainstStolenGas Factsheet

Jordan BDS, 2014

http://jordanbds.net/?page_id=816

The Jordanian National Coalition Against Importing Gas from Israel Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/>

/

الحملة الوطنية الأردنية لإسقاط اتفاقية الغاز مع الكيان -
1579179568983659-الصهيوني/?fref=nf

Symbolic Tribunal on Jordan's Gas Deal with Israel

Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN), 2015

<http://apnature.org/en/content/symbolic-tribunal-jordans-gas-deal-israel>

Song "I Don't Want Gas"

RoyaComedy, 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/results?>

Escalate strategically

The campaign did not play all its cards at the beginning, as we were aware that we faced a long-term battle. Thus, the campaign began with awareness-raising and challenging government misinformation, expanded to demonstrations and petitions, then to mobilizing the majority of the parliament to vote against the deal and holding a people's trial against the government. This strategic escalation allowed the campaign to remain sustainable while ensuring that the government and the Jordanian National Electric Power Company continuously felt the heat of the opposition. The bigger the actions and the more ambitious the tactics, the greater the impact they had on the government's position.

Personalize and polarize

The first thing that campaigners and various groups did was to label the government and the National Electric Power Company as the villains for misleading the public by disseminating false information, and for jeopardizing the sovereignty and independence of the nation. As this framing of the issue became more and more popular, activists were able to persuade the general public to take sides. Once the battle lines were drawn, very few people wanted to be seen as siding with the villains.

KEY THEORY

Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)

In a state of imminent threat or danger, people will put aside their differences and come together in large numbers to

respond to an emergency. When the letter of intent was signed, people expected that a full deal would be reached within a few months, so tremendous numbers of people came forward to mobilize against it. After the threat faded, far fewer people remained part of the day-to-day organizing against the deal.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Earth First!
- Manich Msamah
- Stolen Beauty
- Stop Praver Plan
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Banner hang
- Creative lobbying
- Creative petition delivery
- Mass street action
- Music video
- Phone banking

Principles

- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- If you're not uncomfortable, your coalition is too small
- Personalize and polarize
- Recapture the flag

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Artivism
- Hamoq and hamas
- Intersectionality

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Democracy, Policy, Movement
building, Capitalism, Colonialism

STORY

STOP PRAWER PLAN

In response to a draft Israeli bill that aimed to expel 70,000 Palestinian Bedouins from their ancestral land, Palestinians organized a massive campaign that led to the withdrawal of the proposed bill.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nisreen Haj Ahmad

Nisreen Haj Ahmad is a Palestinian activist, organizer, and co-founder of Ahel.org. She trains and coaches people and organizations to run campaigns in the Middle East, using Marshall Ganz' organizing framework.

“UNLIKE WHAT HAPPENS IN MANY OTHER CAMPAIGNS, THE CAMPAIGN LEADERS SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME *ORGANIZING* RATHER THAN *MOBILIZING*.”

Official Israeli policy does not recognize the rights of the Palestinian Bedouins in the Negev to their ancestral land, and therefore prohibits them from accessing infrastructural services. Israel continually attempts to confiscate the land and destroy the homes and villages of the Bedouins as a means of slow yet systematic ethnic cleansing. The Praver-Begin draft bill aimed to destroy 35 villages, making up 800 square kilometres of Bedouin land, and ethnically cleanse 70,000 Palestinians in one go. It was claimed that they had received the approval of the Bedouins on the plan.

With a four-vote majority, the bill passed in the Knesset (Israel's national legislature) on its first reading in June 2013. With such a large-scale plan of ethnic cleansing, this was seen as yet another *Nakba* (the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948). The goal of the Stop Praver Plan campaign was to stop the Praver draft from passing in its second and third readings. The bigger objective, of course, was to stop home demolitions and land expropriation of the Palestinians in the Negev, and to see their villages provided with infrastructure and services.

Initially, various actions were taken by local groups and political parties, yet the number of people mobilized was low. Disappointed by the number of participants, a group of young Palestinian Bedouins organized a campaign to ensure that the Praver plan would not pass.

The campaign collected Bedouin signatures on the petition denouncing the law, organized a general strike on the day the Knesset committee visited the Negev, and, in alliance with other groups, lobbied the Knesset members to vote against the bill. The

KEY TACTIC

Distributed action

In coordination with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, the organizers of the Stop Praver Plan campaign were able to send a call to action to groups and organizations all over the world. Accessing this already-existing network of organized groups made action possible in 34 cities worldwide on the Day of Rage. As interest spread, groups they'd never even heard of contacted them and joined the day of action. This access and networking made all the difference.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Know your community

Initially, the collection of signatures on the petition refusing the Praver Law was slow and tedious, given the distances involved. Municipal council elections were set for October

campaign organized a global Day of Rage (see: TACTIC: Distributed action) with actions in 34 cities around the world and across historic Palestine, including in the Negev, Haifa, Yaffa, Jerusalem, Nablus, and Gaza. All these actions were accompanied by strong media outreach and coverage.

In parallel, all these peaceful actions were met by a violent crackdown by the Israeli police and army to repress Palestinians from nonviolently resisting their continued ethnic cleansing and forced expulsion from their ancestral lands. During the campaign, Israeli intelligence investigated dozens of campaigners and arrested many more who participated in peaceful demonstrations.

Despite the challenges, on the eve of the Day of Rage, the head of the Labour Party withdrew his support for the draft law. A week later the government decided to shelve it. The Palestinians won. Praver did not pass.

LEARN MORE

Demolition and Eviction of Bedouin Citizens of Israel in the Naqab (Negev) - The Praver Plan

Adalah

<http://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7589>

Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Escalating BDS to Stop Israel's Racist Praver Plan, Urges Inter-Parliamentary Union to Suspend Knesset's Membership

BDS movement, 2013

<https://bdsmovement.net/2013/bnc-praver-nov30-11450>

Forty-Thousand Bedouin Are Being Kicked Off Their Land by Israel Vice, 2013

https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/forty-thousand-bedouin-are-being-kicked-off-their-land-by-israel

22, 2013, so the organizers smartly used these high-traffic points to collect signatures outside the polling stations and saw numbers on the petition multiply.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

As action on the campaign was building, the Knesset committee tasked with studying the draft law decided to visit the Negev and meet with the heads of the Bedouin tribes to prove that the Bedouins approved the draft bill. The campaign leaders, along with other organizations, called for a general strike and took to the streets as the Knesset committee arrived. This way, even if the committee had found a few tribesmen to say they supported the bill, bigger numbers taking to the streets against the proposed law would speak far louder.

KEY METHODOLOGY

Theory of change

Because of limited time and resources, it was necessary for activists to choose their actions strategically and invest their limited resources smartly. Despite the many creative ideas that came up, the leaders decided to focus on a few assumptions, which became the guiding principles of their action and alliances. Their four theories of change were that the draft would not pass if: (1) Bedouins demonstrated in an organized way that they were against the draft law contrary to what Praver said, (2) large numbers of people could be convinced to boycott Israel for being a racist and apartheid state, (3) Knesset

members were pressured by their own constituencies, and (4) Israel's ability to secure order in the streets was jeopardized. Organizers recognized that only if one or more of these four conditions were realized would their opposition be taken seriously.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Lysistrata Project
- Stolen Gas Campaign

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Creative petition delivery
- Distributed action
- General strike
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Know your community
- Make the invisible visible
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Decolonization
- Framing

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Colonialism,
Community building, Health,
Housing, Indigenous rights,
International solidarity, State
violence, Street protest

STORY

STREET GRADUATION

Graduates across Zimbabwe creatively turned their unemployment into a daily protest routine, instilling a clear link in public consciousness between unemployment, the financial crisis, and corruption.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Robson Chere

Robson Chere is the Secretary General of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe.

“TO MAKE ACTIONS MEMORABLE, THEY PRESENTED THEIR PERSONAL STRUGGLES AS A POLITICAL ISSUE.”

Despite Zimbabwe having one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, years of economic mismanagement and sanctions led to an inevitable financial crisis. In 2013, the government promised to create two million jobs, yet the crisis only seemed to get worse over time. In 2016 this led a youth group, unable to find jobs or live a dignified life, to protest unemployment in Zimbabwe, which has one of the highest rates in Africa.

At the height of the crisis, most people with undergraduate, postgraduate, and even doctorate degrees found themselves unemployed, or under-employed. To afford the basics of life, often they were working at jobs outside of the scope of their degrees — jobs such as airtime, vegetable, or newspaper vendors (see: PRINCIPLE: Focus on basic needs).

Graduates had traditionally used their graduation ceremonies to stage protests as an effort to express their frustration. Some would smuggle placards and flash them during ceremony, causing disruptions. But these ceremonial protests proved to be ad-hoc and far apart, thus largely ineffective when used as stand-alone tactics.

In 2016, a group of youth organized themselves under the banner *unemployed graduates*. Drawing on learnings from previous efforts, they realized that they needed to focus on memorable actions sustained over a longer period of time so as to actually and directly influence public discourse. To make actions memorable, they presented their personal struggles as a political issue (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the personal political).

As street vendors, the group began selling vegetables wearing their graduation gowns. Soon, many other unemployed graduates joined forces, not only because the tactic was easy to organize independently (see: PRINCIPLE: Use organizing strategies that

KEY TACTIC

Satire

In going about their daily activities dressed in graduation gowns, the unemployed graduates exposed the high levels of unemployment in a defiant yet subtle satirical act. The use of humour helped the message spread among other unemployed graduates, citizens more broadly, and the media, thereby increasing the pressure on the government to respond.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Expose inequality with a viral gesture

Wearing the graduation regalia was simple, low-risk, and creative, making it easy to join planned actions or organise actions independently anywhere across the country. Those ingredients were crucial in enabling the tactic to go to scale.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

scale), but also because they felt more safe in doing so collectively. Graduates working as public transport drivers (*kombi* in Zimbabwean lingo; *matatu* or *daladala* in Swahili) started going about their daily operations wearing the regalia (see: PRINCIPLE: Expose inequality with a viral gesture).

With widespread participation and creativity, actions began drawing significant attention. The group seized this momentum to become more public. They organized street soccer games in different neighbourhoods across Harare also wearing their regalia. In Zimbabwe, and more generally in the Global South, school kids often play soccer in the streets during term break, which indicates that they are “off” or have nothing to do. By doing so, the unemployed graduates were sending out a similar message (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your cultural terrain).

The simplicity, creativity, and consistency of their message was effective in influencing public discourse as they had intended, which put the state on the defensive. Ironically, the regime responded to this humour by arresting the unemployed graduates and charging them with the criminal offence of “public nuisance” (see: PRINCIPLE: Use humour to undermine authority). However, the court found them not guilty and ordered their release.

LEARN MORE

Zimbabwe Coalition for Unemployed Graduates

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/zimunemployedgraduates/?tn-str=k*F

Unemployed graduates protest lack of opportunity in Zimbabwe Waging NonViolence, 2016

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2016/08/unemployed-graduates-protest-lack-of-opportunity-in-zimbabwe/>

Zimbabwe's unemployed graduates in passive but powerful protest against jobs crisis

Kubatana Facebook Page, 2016

https://www.facebook.com/Kubatana/photos/basw.AbqDcSxYjYbh4s4NT7Qhq-CA7isuHFJ8hMCWUA1AIODa388_zgLELO5nrj9vUpliVNvWkJPtXvIHclRbnMztqCfURHCUPjBkiRsKaXThP6swZg0EpNfLZ4T-0CLVhd5tyz_vHibgCKdDyOpU0O_MvFS6z5-2Ay4a9QpESCUGjCV4Yfg.1748484195407689.503437173185217.1278210708856992.1751033635152745.1989481621307944.1585652698391325/1278210708856992/?type=1&opaqueCursor=Abr8iZawqEpMJE82iF8wmPHwmqH5IJwtMAtefzvmSwpNDm2EX8TrHlgO3gTaf3Z8Aznt_3tiOxtObGFMvqpbuUf41-j2ptnGRoq5n_mg8gDLnD_QH4jpXHVbunjHimNKO4FTbegKJbxTukMgex6m9XrsoWkQyCICIFihG00R2W05MknYIYntjppgPnJdAgfj5N0ocxh_BrpgSTRphpSao3eM82aX6CYFV SbsV9XBPPMKNWhoWinRtnx2vFmpJN3KPj6QtrpIq8BBSO3bfE4ZjY1pnXAuzM02ZF91kRO-Ld_4fIWQlaN6XYg7icuygt2j6anUIdC7EDG95cNmKA7RxUxZellt4mfcaf51mZiPtQa-obMT8ukYq03PiHK_F888fE5dloG84QO2UMonH0A5iNSISdYIN_sP_RbIE22SP7teYcemHkCYGj5RbfAh66-AwZV4urOESeS5laxhFLz-fFlt1bF631DDvC0dFJa7049pezefFLasimKJKlfaxAvFyKkghgOCx8JBUcv5RhHVFlrw6MldQnd12hHZrT5Ow&theater

- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Schools of Struggle
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- #ThisFlag
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Mass street action
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Make the personal political
- Seek safety in support networks
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Capitalism
- Floating signifier
- Neoliberalism
- Poverty
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Humour, Corruption, Labour, Education, Street protest

STORY

STREETS INTO GARDENS

In 1999 New Yorkers turned the tables on the mayor's attempt to auction off hundreds of their beloved community gardens by turning the streets themselves into gardens and staging a "festival of resistance."

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mark Read

Mark Read is a filmmaker and professor of Media Studies at NYU, with a focus on video as a tactical tool in community organizing. In other incarnations he has also been a community gardens activist; a Union Square Park defender; a Critical Mass rider and organizer; a coordinator of large spectacles in public spaces such as subway train parties; and a core organizer and propagandist for Reclaim the Streets NYC.

""IF THEY'RE GOING TO PAVE OVER THE PLACES WHERE WE PLAY, THEN WE WILL PLAY IN THE PLACES THEY'VE PAVED OVER.""

In the spring of 1999, real estate values in New York's East Village and Lower East Side neighbourhoods were skyrocketing, in no small part due to the beautiful network of community gardens in the area. In a massive giveaway to corporate developers, then-Mayor Rudolph Giuliani announced he would auction off 198 community gardens. Gardeners and their supporters began organizing to stop it from happening.

On a gray and quiet Saturday afternoon weeks before the auction, two teams of nonviolent blockaders and their "tripods" (blockade tech composed of three tall poles and a harness) were anxiously milling about on Avenue A in the East Village, anticipating the arrival of a boisterous crowd assembling several blocks away. The tripod, along with several flower boxes and other sundry items, had been stashed in strategic and discrete locations along the sidewalk.

Meanwhile, the diverse and growing crowd was in the garden finishing its face-painting, elf-costuming, and other preparations. Lace-winged children and leaf-adorned stilt-walkers made their way into the street. The brass notes of trombones, tubas, and saxophones rang out as the throng of garden protectors proceeded westward along 7th Street and turned the corner onto Avenue A. When the crowd arrived, the teams quickly erected the tripods.

The designated "perchers" quickly ascended the rope that hung

KEY TACTIC

Carnival protest

This action was a "festival of resistance" or a carnival-protest, and it certainly benefited from the use of this tactic in the expected ways: The protest didn't feature a long list of speakers, it didn't insist on using angry chants to drive its message, it was participatory, and it was fun! People from around the neighbourhood actually joined in the action and stayed in the street with the demonstrators. The carnival protest tactic was especially well suited to the action, which was all about maintaining and protecting public spaces that are themselves sites of celebration and community participation.

from the center of the the tripods and installed themselves in the cradle formed at the top. Traffic was thus effectively and immediately shut down (see: TACTIC: Blockade). Marchers dragged the flower boxes into the street, gave packages of seeds to the children, and began teaching them how to make roses grow. With a bit of rope and some ingenuity, others were able to turn several misplaced police barricades into a seesaw. Beautifully wrapped packages were opened to the delight of all as the crowd, which had been asked to bring gifts to share, bestowed one another with presents. A sound crew wheeled a massive set of speakers into the street and began broadcasting a pirate radio signal that was transmitting from a nearby apartment. Dancing began in earnest, and the crowd soon swelled to 300, then 400, then 500.

For the next several hours, a city block became the sort of public space that Giuliani was planning to eliminate by selling the gardens. One banner above all others summed up the logic driving the action: "If they're going to pave over the places where we play, then we will play in the places they've paved over." The frame stuck, and was repeated in the mainstream media that night and the next day. By the time the auction was scheduled to take place, public sentiment had shifted strongly against the mayor on this issue. He was ultimately forced to stop the auction and sell the gardens to private land trusts instead of greedy developers. All of the gardens were preserved in perpetuity.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

New Yorkers Attempt to Prevent Garden Demolition (El Jardin de la Esperanza), 1999-2000

Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2010

<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/new-yorkers-attempt-prevent-garden-demolition-el-jardin-de-la-esperanza-1999-2000>

KEY PRINCIPLE

Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win

Although saving the 198 gardens that were up for auction was an uphill climb, we always felt the fight was winnable. There was wide support for community gardens throughout the city, including allies on the city council and within the mainstream media. Our action was one part of a broad and powerful campaign that was well organized and well connected. We were not shocked that we won, but it was a big enough win to warrant widespread celebration.

KEY THEORY

Prefiguration

The utopian edge of this action is a world that values human relationships and community life over profits and losses. For an afternoon, participants created that world in the street. People gave gifts instead of exchanging money, sang and laughed, and talked instead of passively consuming. It was prefigurative politics at its best.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Gezi Park iftar
- Reclaim the Streets

Tactics

- Blockade
- Carnival protest
- Mass street action
- Street theatre

Principles

- Be an ethical prankster
- Be the change you want to see

in the world

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Create many points of entry
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Personalize and polarize
- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win
- Reframe the issue
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Turn the tables
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Commodity fetishism
- Ethical spectacle
- Prefigurative politics
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The commons

Methodologies

- Action star

TAGS

Action design, Capitalism,
Community building,
Environment, Food, Humour,
Privatization, Wealth inequality

STORY

STRIPPING POWER IN UGANDA

Female elders in northern Uganda invoked powerful cultural taboos by removing their clothes in front of two government ministers who were attempting to grab their land, successfully chasing them away.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

"THE MINISTER OF LANDS BURST INTO TEARS AT THE SIGHT."

For a number of years, a land conflict has been raging between residents of the oil-rich, fertile rural area of Amuru District in northern Uganda and the self-interested dictatorship and its corporate affiliates who were seeking to sell off the land. Several lives had been lost at the hands of abusive government agencies seeking to drive off those living on the land. In April 2015, the situation came to a head: The government began evicting people in Apaa Village by force, at night. They used the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF), setting homes and gardens on fire and physically attacking locals. This particular area had been sold by the adjacent district, as if that district (Adjumani) were the owner of land outside of its geographic reach. The buyer was a South African investor by the name of Bruce Martin, who wanted the land, which includes an animal reserve, for elite sports game hunting.

In response, community leaders working with organizers from Solidarity Uganda called for peaceful demonstrations. After trainings in nonviolent direct action, a few days of simple marches, and other related peaceful demonstrations, residents prepared to risk their lives, as more and more military personnel began setting up camp sites. Two government ministers, the Minister of Lands and the Minister of Internal Affairs (who is also a military general), came to demarcate land once and for all in an attempt to redistrict Apaa out of Amuru District and into Adjumani District.

To block the ministerial convoy, the community put up a roadblock in a forested area of the village (see: TACTIC: Blockade). Local women stripped naked at the roadblock, invoking a powerful cultural omen or curse in Uganda, where it provokes deep shame to

KEY TACTIC

Nudity

When the female elders fell naked to the ground, wailing and shouting, they made the ministers run away, ashamed. It reminded those male officials about how disgraceful they were being against those women, who were only trying to help sustain lives, like their own mothers did.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use your cultural assets

Stripping naked and pointing breasts at the enemy is a cultural omen in Acholi culture. It invokes the worst maledictions and great harm against those who do injustice. The curse of nakedness has proven very effective in helping movements strengthen the collective identity tied to the land.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

see a woman the age of one's mother naked. The Minister of Lands burst into tears at the sight and began begging the community to end the protest, trying to argue that he hadn't come to steal their land after all. The Minister of Internal Affairs attempted to dodge the situation altogether by looking away, but the massive number of people and the overwhelming sight of the elders flailing their naked limbs about prevented him from proceeding with his mission. The convoy returned to the capital city having failed to place the mark stones they had brought for redistricting.

Shortly thereafter, the military occupation in Apaa was disbanded. Many soldiers repented of their wrongdoings, claiming that they hated carrying out the orders of their superiors. Civil society groups organized local leaders to pass several resolutions, demanding the release of a few community leaders arrested in conjunction with the action, and insisting that the land of Apaa never be considered part of Adjumani District.

LEARN MORE

Meet the Ugandan Peasant Grandmother Who Terrifies Her President

Phil Wilmot, *Waging Nonviolence*, 2015

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/meet-ugandan-peasant-grandmother-terrifies-president/>

Did Grandmothers Kill a Government Minister, Nonviolently?

Phili Wilmot, *Waging Nonviolence*, 2016

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/uganda-women-omen-minister-aronda/>

Uganda: Amuru Women's Naked Power

Joseph Were, *The Independent*, 2015

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201505041729.html>

- Boxing Gender Oppression
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Miniskirt March
- No vote, no sex

Tactics

- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Cultural disobedience
- Eviction blockade
- Lamentation
- Nudity

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't dress like a protester
- Escalate strategically
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Know your community
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Seek safety in support networks
- Think narratively
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Postcolonialism
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Direct action, Gender and

sexuality, Land use,
Militarization, Street protest

STORY

TACO BELL BOYCOTT

In 2005, farm workers in Florida, US, led a nationwide boycott of Taco Bell. They eventually won a historic victory, raising wages and setting an inspiring example for farm worker organizing.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Yutaka Dirks

Yutaka Dirks is a tenant and community organizer and writer who is active in anti-poverty, workers rights, and international solidarity movements, as well as offering legal support to social justice movements through the Movement Defence Committee of the Law Union of Ontario. His writing has appeared in Upping the Anti and Briarpatch Magazine as well as Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine.

"THE BOYCOTT WIN WAS AN UNQUALIFIED VICTORY. ALL DEMANDS WERE MET, INCLUDING THE FIRST-EVER ONGOING, DIRECT PAYMENT TO FARM WORKERS."

For years, workers in Florida's tomato fields have endured poverty wages and terrible working conditions. In 1993, a small, community-based organization called the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) formed to demand an end to these unfair labour practices. By 2005, they had won a boycott campaign against Taco Bell, one of the largest fast-food corporations in the world, raising wages by almost 75 percent and setting an inspiring precedent for farm worker organizing.

The CIW began by developing a list of concrete demands that, if met, would realize their vision of social justice in the fields. These were later refined into "fair food principles" which would bring tangible benefits to their broader constituency, and were sufficiently clear that the workers could know whether or not they had succeeded in their campaign.

Once they had established their goals, the CIW identified tomato growers as the primary target that had the power to respond to their demands. The CIW fought a well-organized campaign targeting the growers, which included three community-wide work stoppages (see: TACTIC: General strike) and a high-profile hunger strike (see: TACTIC: Hunger strike). The CIW was able to win the first wage increase in twenty years, yet wages were still well below the poverty level. They realized that they, the workers alone, did not have the power to force their target to capitulate, so they

KEY TACTIC

Boycott

While the Taco Bell Boycott went beyond asking people not to purchase Taco Bell products, it was a useful centerpiece for the campaign, tapping into a rich history of US boycotts led by exploited and oppressed people, including the Montgomery bus boycott and the California grape boycott. Recalling those powerful examples, the public easily understood the key issues and saw how it could lend its support to the CIW.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Choose your target wisely

The CIW's first actions targeted the growers responsible for wages and working conditions, but after winning their first wage

looked for another target (see: METHODOLOGY: Power mapping).

The CIW identified the corporations that bought from the growers, including Taco Bell, as a secondary target (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose your target wisely). Taco Bell's success, unlike that of the growers, depended on its public image. The CIW also identified potential allies that could help them put pressure on their target. They reached out to students, because Taco Bell targeted them as consumers. They also allied themselves with social justice-oriented religious groups (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies).

In 2001, the CIW launched the boycott of Taco Bell, calling on the fast-food giant to take responsibility for human rights violations in their supply chain, to improve wages and working conditions by passing on a penny-per-pound pay increase to the workers, and to buy only from Florida growers who passed this penny per pound payment on to the farm workers.

The CIW-led campaign organized cross-country caravans that held rallies outside Taco Bell restaurants; students organized petitions to "Boot the Bell" from campus food courts; religious, labour, and community leaders were approached to publicly endorse the boycott and further isolate Taco Bell from support; and they directly targeted Taco Bell headquarters with public hunger strikes and marches (see: TACTIC: Mass street action).

After four years of actions by the CIW and their allies, Taco Bell conceded. The boycott win was an unqualified victory. All demands were met, including the first-ever ongoing, direct payment to farm workers, substantially raising their wages, and an enforceable code of conduct. The agreement was a clear victory for the workers who struggled for it against an intransigent target, and helped bring renewed energy to the fair-food movement.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Coalition of Immokalee Workers
<http://www.ciw-online.org/>

From the Jaws of Defeat: Four Thoughts on Social Change Strategy
Yutaka Dirks, Briarpatch Magazine, 2011
<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/from-the-jaws-of-defeat>

increase in 1998, it became apparent that the CIW did not have sufficient power to extract further concessions. Recognizing that the growers could be made vulnerable through pressure from the corporations that bought their tomatoes, the CIW re-crafted their campaign strategy in way that played to their strengths.

KEY METHODOLOGY

Spectrum of allies

The CIW built a broad-based campaign that exposed the consumers of Taco Bell's products to the reality of the working conditions of tomato pickers. The CIW was able to offer leadership to supporters who were not farm workers and encourage them to become active, allowing them space to craft their own actions to put pressure on Taco Bell.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dump Veolia Campaign

Tactics

- Consumer boycott
- Divestment
- General strike
- Hunger strike
- Mass street action
- Trek

Principles

- Bring the issue home
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Enable, don't command
- Focus on basic needs
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Take leadership from the most

impacted

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Capitalism
- Poverty
- Revolutionary reform

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Capitalism, Campaign strategy,
Food, Labour, Movement
building

STORY

TAXI DRIVERS STRIKE AGAINST TAXATION

To protest continued harassment and exorbitant illegal charges by tax collectors, taxi drivers and conductors throughout Kampala parked their vehicles and stopped working.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Farouk Minawa

Minawah is a taxi driver with Nakindye Stage Kampala and vice-chairperson of the Drivers and Conductors Central Association.

In Kampala, the transportation system relies heavily on the work of taxi drivers and conductors, since there is no other means of transportation apart from the matatus (vans), boda bodas (motorcycles), and a few buses.

In July 2011, drivers and conductors decide to stop working, parking their vehicles to show dissatisfaction against harassment, exorbitant charges for illegal loading, and exaggerated fees from the Uganda Taxi Operators and Drivers Association. The striking drivers wanted the government to abolish harassment and the abusive collection of taxes, so they struck, effectively putting the government in a decision dilemma.

With almost no means of transportation available, people were forced to walk to their places of work, or had to pay three times the ordinary fares for the taxis whose operators decided not to take part in the strike. Some schools and companies were closed. Due to the lack of transport, the police arrested drivers, so instead of bringing a solution, the arrests intensified the problem at hand. Public discontent was widespread, and eventually this discontent forced the government to remove the oppressive taxes and release the drivers who had been arrested.

LEARN MORE

Taxi drivers strike (video)

NTVUganda, 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIG7RSPjwDo>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- No vote, no sex
- Québec Student Strike
- Street Graduation

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Consumer boycott
- Distributed action
- General strike

Principles

- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Focus on basic needs
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Commodity fetishism
- Corruption
- Direct action
- Non-cooperation
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Direct action,
Corruption, State violence,
Nonviolence

STORY

THE SALT MARCH

In 1930, Gandhi famously led a march to the sea to collect salt (which Indians were banned from producing), forcing the British Raj into a classic decision dilemma and paving the way for Indian independence.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

“AS SALT MAKING SPREAD, AND THE BRITISH RESPONDED BRUTALLY, THE EMPIRE'S FACADE OF CIVILITY SLIPPED AND THEN FELL AWAY ENTIRELY.”

“Gandhi’s greatness lay in doing what everyone could do but doesn't.”

—Louis Fischer, Gandhi's biographer

Any collection of creative actions worth its salt would include a reference to Gandhi’s famous march — and the conversation would be flavored with strategic and practical lessons still resonant today.

In 1930, the Indian National Congress adopted *satyagraha* (essentially, nonviolent protest) as their main tactic in their campaign for independence. Mahatma Gandhi was appointed to develop a plan of action; he proposed marching to the sea to make salt in defiance of the Salt Act of 1882. Violation of the Salt Act, which made it illegal for anyone to collect or produce salt except for authorized British nationals, did not immediately catch the imagination of the delegates, and was reportedly met with some laughter in the Congress. The Raj (as the British empire in India was known) did not take this idea as much of a threat either. As Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall point out in their book *A Force More Powerful*, Viceroy Lord Irwin actually wrote back to London to report, “At present the prospect of a salt campaign does not keep me awake at night.”

This would soon change, however, as the salt march, which began with about eighty participants, quickly gathered supporters on its way to the Indian Ocean. Gandhi framed the 240-mile march from his ashram to the sea within a traditional cultural practice known as the *padyatra* (a long spiritual march). Not only did this help make the whole program more understandable to the Indian public, it opened up the possibility to do outreach, gather more supporters, educate and provide training, and work the national and

KEY TACTIC

Trek

The act of marching and the culminating act of making salt by the sea’s edge, while seemingly simple, actually offered the masses a chance to act courageously through both coordinated and dispersed action. As the march attracted more adherents, and as the movement grew, so the pillars of the empire's power (see: METHODOLOGY: Pillars of power) were seriously undermined. The salt march set the stage for India’s eventual independence as Indians and Brits alike realized that rule was not practicable without the consent of the governed. That consent had dissolved into the sea.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Put your target in a decision dilemma

The public defiance of the salt

international press. Advance teams worked the route and followers slept out in the open in each town to be more accessible.

When he and more than 12,000 supporters finally reached the sea, the day chosen to make salt was the ten-year anniversary of the first round of national resistance actions. The British were slow to react at first, allowing more Indians to join in the protest. As salt making spread, and the British responded brutally, the empire's facade of civility slipped and then fell away entirely.

LEARN MORE

The Indian Independence Struggle (1930-31)

Lester Kurtz, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2009

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/index.php/movements-and-campaigns/movements-and-campaigns-summaries?sobi2Task=sobi2Details&sobi2Id=17>

The Salt March (video)

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Salt_March.ogg

A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict

Palgrave, 2000

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/index.php/learning-and-resources/resources-on-nonviolent-conflict?bTask=bDetails&bId=1>

march put the empire in a classic double bind: Each salt maker arrested would become a martyr for the movement and expose the brutal hand of the regime. Of course, by doing nothing, they also gave space for the movement to grow, and even worse, for onlookers to think that the English had either lost the will or the ability to control the situation.

Choose your target wisely

The British Salt Tax perfectly embodied the injustice of the British rule. The burden of this regressive tax fell disproportionately on those who could least afford it. Challenging it provided a way for anyone with access to seawater

KEY THEORY

Prefiguration

Making salt married an improvement in quality of life to political aspirations for independence, and provided a pattern for "constructive work" that was the backbone of a myriad of Indian resistance efforts, which included advocacy of homespun cloth, schools, and gardens. In fact, the entire march was set up to prefigure an alternative way of life and social structure that modeled an ideal (and economically self-reliant) Indian society and prepared Indians to assume political leadership.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Burmese Students' Long March
- Trail of Dreams

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Distributed action
- Mass street action
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Trek

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Focus on basic needs
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Hamoq and hamas
- Political identity paradox
- Postcolonialism
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- The commons
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Colonialism, Direct action, Land use, Movement building, Nonviolence, Wealth inequality

STORY

THE TEDDY BEAR CATAPULT

In a tit-for-tat of escalating absurdity, anti-globalization activists found themselves lobbing teddy bears at police with a toy catapult, and police found themselves mocked for taking it seriously.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Dave Oswald Mitchell

Dave is the Editorial Director of Beautiful Trouble and a co-editor of Beautiful Rising.

“EVERYONE THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE THE END OF IT, BUT THE POLICE COULDN’T BEAR TO BE OUTFLANKED ON THE ABSURDIST FRONT.”

It was a classic summit protest at the height of the anti-globalization movement. Thirty-four heads of state from across the Americas were gathering in Québec City to negotiate the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), a sweeping trade deal with deeply anti-democratic provisions. Protests had been called, tens of thousands were expected to fill the streets, and a giant fence defended by thousands of riot police was to be erected around the Old City to keep protesters far from the convention centre.

As the summit drew closer and heated debates raged in activist circles about how to oppose the FTAA most effectively, a group calling themselves the Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology (DIST) circulated a satirical booklet promoting more creative protest tactics: “For those who yawn every time they see yet another Black Bloc, the Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology presents this brief list of alternatives, to help spark discussion and inject a bit of creativity and derisive laughter into the mix.”

Their list of protest ideas included the Gary Coleman Bloc (tactic of choice: continuously walking up to cops and demanding, “Whatchu talkin’ bout, Willis?”), the Mascot Bloc, the Bloc Parents, and the Fuchsia Bloc (“dressed in tights and pink tutus, the Fuchsia Bloc’s role is to follow the Black Bloc and tease them mercilessly”). DIST also jokingly proposed challenging the fence around the conference area with a Monty-Pythonesque Medieval Bloc: “If the man is gonna turn the summit into a fortress, the Medieval Bloc will lay siege with gusto. Beautiful battering rams, ladders, siege towers, Trojan donuts, catapults, and dead cows infected with the plague.”

It was a good laugh, but seemingly nothing more — until a public figure sympathetic to the cause contacted the group and said, “if you can find someone to build a catapult, I’ll pay for it.” A group of

KEY PRINCIPLES

Say it with props

Whether it’s a giant Earth Mother puppet, a rented woodchipper redecorated into an outsized Enron stock shredder, or a teddy bear catapult, well-chosen larger-than-life props can help create a media spectacle and tell a story. By choosing an absurdist siege engine, DIST neatly exposed the absurdity of the larger situation: democratic leaders forced to meet “under siege” from their constituents when making hugely unpopular decisions.

Use humour to undermine authority

To operate, power depends on the aura of authority. The man in the uniform or the business suit has everything under control. He’s sober, serious, knows best, and maybe above all, is needed (to protect you). Nothing quite undermines this aura (and the rationale for state violence that goes with it) like laughter, especially in the context of an absurd situation they don’t know

catapult enthusiasts in Ottawa agreed to build the prop (rigged to ensure it couldn't launch anything very far on the off-chance it was actually taken for a weapon), and DIST smuggled it into the city. On the day of the march, activists with pots and colanders on their heads pulled the full-size catapult up to the fence and began gently lobbing teddy bears into lines of riot cops. Meanwhile, other activists dismantled the offending fence with bolt-cutters as cameras rolled.

The stunt complete, the activists disabled the prop and abandoned it to the police who were advancing through clouds of tear gas. Everyone thought that would be the end of it, but the police couldn't bear to be outflanked on the absurdist front. They retaliated by sending plainclothes officers to snatch a prominent activist, Jaggi Singh, who had had nothing to do with the catapult, and charge him with possession of a "dangerous weapon": the prop itself. Singh was held for seventeen days before being released.

The spurious weapons charge only added fuel to DIST's fire, setting off a whole new round of press releases and media stunts mocking the security establishment, with activists turning in their "stuffed comrades" (i.e. teddy bears) to local police stations across the country and sending them to the Canadian Prime Minister's office to protest the absurd charge.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

We Made the Catapult, Judy Rebick Got the \$\$\$
Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology, 2001
<http://rabble.ca/news/we-made-catapult-judy-rebick-got>

Turn In Your Teddy Bear for an AK47
Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology, 2001
<http://rabble.ca/news/turn-your-teddy-bear-ak47>

how to handle. If they react to it according to their normal logic, they look ridiculous and/or paranoid

Use the materials at hand

As Yogi Berra said, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it!" This action succeeded because those involved responded intelligently and creatively to the unexpected opportunities that presented themselves: first, a serious offer of funding in response to an absurd proposal, and second, a police overreaction that made everything that came before look completely un-absurd and entirely normal.

Show, don't tell

The Canadian security establishment justified its unprecedented mobilization by stirring fears of violent protests. But what is less violent than a teddy bear? By building an actual engine of war and choosing to gently fling teddy bears off of it, DIST found a playful and unexpected way to demonstrate their commitment to nonviolence and expose the government's trumped-up fears as ridiculous.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Orange Alternative

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Street theatre

Principles

- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Reframe the issue
- Say it with props
- Show, don't tell
- The real action is your target's reaction
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use the materials at hand

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The tactics of everyday life
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Humour, Policy, Pranks,
Privatization, Street protest

STORY

TRAIL OF DREAMS

In 2010, four US immigrant youth leaders walked 1,500 miles to Washington, D.C. to put a human face on the immigration debate and pressure politicians to fix the broken and unjust US immigration system.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Gaby Pacheco

Gaby Pacheco is an undocumented American and an immigrant rights leader from Miami, Florida, currently leading a national project, Education Not Deportation (END), to stop the deportation of immigrant people who qualify for the American DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors). In what would be dubbed the Trail of Dreams, in 2010, she and three friends walked 1,500 miles to urge President Obama to stop the separations of families and deportations of DREAM Act eligible youth.

“EVERY ENCOUNTER WAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE OUR STORY, TO PLANT A SEED.”

On January 1, 2010, four immigrant youth leaders (Carlos Roa, Felipe Matos, Juan Rodriguez, and myself) embarked on a 1,500 mile walk from Miami, Florida, to Washington, D.C. The long-term goal of this arduous journey was to put a human face on the immigration debate in the United States and counteract the effect of anti-immigrant portrayals in the mainstream media (see: THEORY: Framing). The short-term goal was to put pressure on Washington to fix a failed system that has kept millions of undocumented members of our communities and families in the shadows.

We had four demands. The first was for then-President Obama, through an executive action, to stop the detentions and deportations of students for two years and halt removal proceedings for people with immediate family members who are US citizens. The second was the passage of the DREAM Act (“Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors”) to allow access to higher education. Third, protection of immigrant workers’ rights, and last, the implementation of just and humane immigration reform.

At the core of the Trail of Dreams trek (see: TACTIC: Trek) was the desire to escalate our activism by publicly sharing stories and struggles in order to inspire others to take up similar actions throughout the United States. The ultimate goal was to open hearts

KEY TACTIC

Trek

By creating a national support network and taking our demands on the road, we were able to directly challenge racist and anti-immigrant policies. As openly undocumented youth with the legitimacy of a broad-based movement behind us, we were able to meet with sheriffs, police officers, immigration agents, and other officials without being detained or deported. We proved that the power of people is stronger than inhumane laws and a broken immigration system.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel

and change minds in order to create much-needed policy change. Over four months we walked through Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, finally arriving in Washington, D.C., on May 1. Each day we walked 16 to 18 miles. Every encounter was an opportunity to share our story, to plant a seed.

With the help of hosting communities, we held events where we broke bread and invited people to share their stories, organize and fight for their dreams. We were welcomed by congregations from various faiths, including the Lutherans, Unitarian Universalists, United Methodists, Christ Churchers, Catholics, Baptists, and others. We spoke to crowds of white conservatives, conducted a joint event with African-Americans in Georgia, and of course reached out to the Latino base, immigrants and citizens alike. The trek would not have been possible without the support of a small but dedicated group, including a project manager, a logistics coordinator, a driver and an on-site coordinator. Our organization, Students Working for Equal Rights, set up local teams along the route to ensure our safety and well-being.

We faced many challenges. One was blisters, body aches, and walking through one of the coldest winters in recent memory. Another was the backlash from anti-immigrant hate groups, including the Klu Klux Klan, which targeted us with a rally in an unsuccessful attempt to intimidate the walkers. Additionally, three of us faced the constant risk of deportation by entering into direct contact with federal immigration authorities.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Trail of Dreams campaign website
<http://trail2010.org/>

There is nothing more powerful than letting your heart lead you. If we had listened to all the people who told us this walk was crazy, suicidal, “not real organizing,” or impossible, the trek never would have happened. We didn’t let fear paralyze us; we knew that if we opened our hearts to the community, people would listen and respond. We followed our hearts and sparked a movement.

Kill them with kindness

We didn’t fight hate with hate but rather with love. When a man told Felipe he was less than human because he was an “illegal,” Felipe responded, “God bless you.” When a group of young people came to disrupt our walk with a big Confederate flag, we walked with them and shared our stories until they folded the flag and left. When we went to Arizona and met with then-sheriff Joe Arpaio, “America’s toughest sheriff” and an immigration hard-liner, I hugged him. I told him that he was our brother who had gone astray, that he and I were equals, and that our “papers” were in our blood. I touched his heart with my right hand and said that I hoped he would change. He didn’t arrest us, and that day we faced each other as equals.

KEY METHODOLOGY

Spectrum of allies

Although one of our goals was to inspire our community, another was to reach out to people who were misled by the media. We wanted to speak to those who felt that we did not belong. We wanted to share with them our stories and allow them to decide for themselves. After talking with

us, many people with anti-immigrant feelings shifted their position.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Burmese Students' Long March
- Miniskirt March
- The Salt March

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Occupation
- Storytelling
- Subversive travel
- Trek

Principles

- Create many points of entry
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care
- Think narratively
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it
- Use the power of ritual
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Framing
- Gerontocracy
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Community building, Direct
action, Human rights,
Immigration, Policy

STORY

WELCOME TO PALESTINE

Hundreds of international solidarity activists staged a “fly-in” at Ben Gurion airport demanding to visit Palestine in protest of Israel’s racist border policies and de facto siege of historic Palestine.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ribal Al-Kurdi

Ribal Al-Kurdi is a theater actor and dance trainer, has a law degree from Al-Quds University, and is the Executive Director of the Alrowwad Cultural and Arts Society in Bethlehem, Palestine.

“THE ACTIONS DISRUPTED THE STATUS QUO AT THE HEART OF INJUSTICE, MAKING A CLEAR STATEMENT THAT COULD NOT BE SILENCED EXCEPT BY REPRESSION.”

The Palestinian people have been enduring systematic repression, colonization, and ethnic cleansing since the occupation of Palestine in 1948. Today, Palestinians live in Bantustan-like areas segregated by an apartheid wall built on stolen Palestinian land to allow Israeli settlers to enjoy Jewish-only privileges. Historic Palestine has been torn into scattered pieces of land disconnected from each other.

In 2011, Palestinians in the West Bank invited people of conscience from across the world to visit Palestine with the aim of drawing attention to the cruelty of life under the occupation, in general, and racist Israeli border policies, in particular. The initiative also aimed to strengthen the ongoing boycott effort to isolate Israel, demonstrate the hypocrisy and illegitimacy of the Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestine, and exert pressure on European and other governments accused of collaboration with that occupation.

Since Israeli authorities regularly deny visitors the right to visit Palestine if they state their intention to do so at the border, the idea was to have international solidarity activists fly into Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion airport, and try to publically exercise their right to visit Palestine. Inevitably, they would be denied that right, which, if well-publicized, would help expose the truth about Israel’s regime of occupation, colonization, and apartheid.

In the first year, more than 300 people from different countries and nationalities took part. After arriving at the airport, activists peacefully unfurled their “Welcome to Palestine” banners, creating a dramatic scene at the airport. Israeli police attacked the protesters, and ripped down their signs. Activists and non-activists alike were arrested and interrogated. Those identified as part of the

KEY TACTIC

Subversive travel

Freedom of movement is a basic right denied to Palestinians. By deliberately trying to exercise that right, which required defying Israeli travel restrictions, the Welcome to Palestine campaign put a global spotlight on the racist border policies imposed by the Israeli occupation.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The real action is your target’s reaction

Welcome to Palestine activists knew they would be denied entry to Palestine once they’d explicitly stated their intentions. They knew how the Israeli regime would react, and so they planned their action accordingly. And that reaction did a better job of demonstrating the racist, oppressive, and colonial policies of the apartheid state than any

campaign were deported or sent to detention facilities.

In response, the Israeli government launched a “diplomatic” campaign requesting governments of other countries to help bring an end to this form of solidarity. Some airlines cancelled the scheduled flights, others, at the behest of Israeli security, prevented activists from boarding planes for which they had already purchased tickets that they had every right to use.

In 2012, most of the 400 people worldwide who were set to fly to Palestine were denied boarding. Activists responded by holding sit-ins inside airports across Europe to protest their governments’ complicity in supporting the Israeli occupation and violations of Palestinian human rights. During the sit-ins, activists also distributed flyers to raise awareness about the campaigns. In some of these airports, pro-Palestine protesters were violently dispersed and expelled from the airports.

All told, the actions disrupted the status quo at the heart of injustice, making a clear statement that could not be silenced except by repression. The extensive local and international media coverage exposed the repression and racism of Israeli policies, leading the Israeli regime to launch a massive PR campaign in an attempt to save face.

LEARN MORE

Welcome to Palestine

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welcome_to_Palestine

Welcome to Palestine — If You Can Get In

The Guardian, 2011

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jul/05/welcome-to-palestine-israel>

Israel Bans “Flytilla” Activists but Hundreds Left in Europe

Ahram Online, 2012

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentPrint/2/0/39339/World/0/Israel-bans-flytilla-activists-but-hundreds-left-i.aspx>

critique could.

Play to the audience that isn’t there

When designing your action, keep in mind the people who aren’t physically in the immediate vicinity of where the action is taking place. The fly-in action was planned to have global media reach; organizers were keenly aware that their primary audience was not witnessing it directly in the airport, but receiving it indirectly all across the world through TV and other media.

KEY THEORY

Decolonization

The fly-in staged by international solidarity activists was a media big bang that challenged and exposed Israeli apartheid as one of many facets of the Zionist colonization of the indigenous Palestinian population. It was yet another example of grassroots disobedience to the ongoing colonization of Palestine. By exposing the racist border policies, the violence against solidarity activists, and collusion of Western governments, the action disrupted, even if only momentarily, the balance of power between colonizer and the colonized.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright Unplugged/Replugged
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Stolen Gas Campaign

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Occupation

- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Do the media's work for them
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Critical multiculturalism
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Framing
- Postcolonialism

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Human rights, Colonialism,
Direct action, State violence,
International solidarity

STORY

WHO WOULD ACCEPT?

After Egypt's 2013 coup, when the only safe way to criticize the regime was to focus on poor economic conditions, ten Egyptian women held up banners with messages like, "Who would accept... such high gas bills?"

CONTRIBUTED BY

Asmaa Aboyousof

Asmaa Aboyousof is a political researcher and trainer pursuing a PhD in international relations. As a trainer, her interests include democratic transition, empowerment of women, women's role in conflict resolution, political campaigning, and civil and political rights.

"WITHOUT MAKING ANY DIRECT CRITICISMS OF THE REGIME, OUR CAMPAIGN WAS NONETHELESS ABLE TO INDIRECTLY CRITICIZE THE CORRUPTION AND INCOMPETENCE OF THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP."

Since the 2013 military coup in Egypt, the country witnessed an unprecedented state of despair. People were afraid to talk about politics due to the regime's brutality: ten thousand detainees, several hundreds martyrs, and thousands of victims of torture, all due to the widespread state violence. The situation was intolerable particularly because it followed a wave of fearless struggle, full of sacrifices, for freedom and dignity that actually achieved the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 - a victory against decades of tyranny and dictatorship.

Under such repressive circumstances, it was logical for activists and people in general to be wary of criticizing the authorities and the military. In response, myself and nine women initiated a safe way to provoke people towards expressing their resentment of the regime and restore their desire for change while maintaining a low risk of being arrested or otherwise repressed by the authorities.

We established a movement called "Free June 30" and we worked on two campaigns, one of which was "Who Would Accept" that addressed politics through economic arguments.

The target audience of both campaigns was the general public. Our main goal in the first campaign was to encourage people to find their courage, and to realize that there are safe ways to speak out. The campaign spoke only about "non-political" issues: high gas prices, garbage in the streets, bread shortage, electricity blackouts,

KEY TACTIC

Visibility Action

Our simple, portable banners could be easily unfurled and quickly concealed again. We mostly hid our faces with the banners, and would assemble without warning in a public location, prepared to scatter if the police arrived. It was a good idea to hide our faces instead of putting on masks, as masks sometimes make both police and members of the public suspicious and distrustful.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Focus on basic needs

From the beginning of this campaign we chose to avoid a direct political attack on the regime because it would have likely led to a police response, and probably arrest. Instead, we

water shortages, extreme poverty, and many other economic problems. Without making any direct criticisms of the regime, our campaign was nonetheless able to indirectly criticize the corruption and incompetence of the military dictatorship, since, obviously, these problems were happening under their tenure.

The campaign began by holding small demonstrations with big banners.

We wrote the hashtag, #who_would_accept (#يرضي_مين), on the banners, and then we wrote on each banner one sentence describing a specific problem, such as: " high price of gas", "unemployment", and so on.

This initiative attracted all sorts of reactions. Some bypassers would react to us with anger, which we understood because at the time the media was portraying all activists as traitors who are serving America, Turkey and Qatar. Nonetheless, the majority of people appreciated our efforts with many coming by thanking us for our courage or saying "May Allah bless you".

Our demonstrations took place twice a week over a period of six months, until one morning the police came and we were forced to flee. We decided to suspend the demonstrations to avoid further security escalations.

LEARN MORE

Free June 30 Movement Facebook page
Facebook, 2013
<https://www.facebook.com/free30movement>

Who Would Accept?
Facebook, 2013
<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=1435315796724666&set=vb.1430633807192865&type=3&theater>

implicitly, and more safely, criticized the regime by highlighting everyday economic issues. This was our central insight, which allowed the protest to succeed, and continue for six months. This choice also reduced the public anger we experienced, and created a safer space for the public to share their own complaints, as well.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

It was obvious what we were standing for: decent economic conditions and the right to criticize the regime. The message and purpose were evident in the action itself and thus no one needed to ask why were we demonstrating. Our presence per se told a story, and the slogans on the banners were straightforward and self-explanatory.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Flash mob
- Visibility action

Principles

- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- Foster safer spaces
- Know your community
- Recapture the flag
- Stay on message

- Take risks, but take care
- Think narratively

Theories

- Action logic
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Capitalism
- Neoliberalism
- Poverty
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- SWOT

TAGS

Austerity, Dictatorship, State violence, , Food, Education, Human rights

STORY

WHOSE TEA PARTY?

On Tax Day in 1998, fair tax campaigners cleverly pranked a GOP media event on the Boston Tea Party Ship Museum, stealing the day's headlines, and offering a master-class in the tactic of media-jacking.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

““PRANKS ARE SYMBOLIC WARFARE.””

Two US Republican Congressmen, Dick Armey from Texas and Billy Tauzin of Louisiana, have come to Boston to promote their snake oil proposals for a flat tax and national sales tax, two initiatives that would dramatically shift the tax burden off the wealthy and onto low- and moderate-income working families.

They've set up a classic photo opportunity by inviting national TV and print media to the Boston Harbor Tea Party Ship Museum, where they plan to symbolically throw the entire IRS tax code into Boston Harbor. With the cameras rolling, they step up to the railing of the Tea Party boat, ready to heave forth an enormous trunk containing the tax code.

Suddenly, two protesters from United for a Fair Economy (UFE), a Boston-based group working for greater economic equality, paddle into sight in a small dinghy. One of them is in a hard hat, the other clutching a plastic baby doll. They paddle the precarious "Working Family Life Raft" into position directly below where Armey and Tauzin are standing and plead, "Your flat tax will sink the working family!" and "You'll drown us with your sales tax!" Other UFE protesters, who have snuck onto the Tea Party ship and are dressed in fancy suits and dresses, start egging on the Congressmen, chanting, "Sink 'em with the sales tax!" and "Drown 'em with the flat tax!"

Armey and Tauzin stand paralysed on the boat. Their handlers go into a panic as UFE staff approach the media with press releases, explaining the symbolism of the protest and offering evidence of how both the flat tax and the national sales tax will sink working families.

Finally, not knowing what else to do, they throw the tax code trunk into the harbor, swamping the fragile life raft and plunging UFE Education Director Chris Hartman, UFE financial manager Kristin

KEY TACTIC

Media-jacking

The congressmen set up the event and sent out the press releases. It was their name recognition (and PR budget) that drew the media coverage. But the UFE stunt hijacked it out from under them. Two ordinary people (and a doll) getting capsized by a couple of congressmen is far more interesting than the hokey set-piece event the suits had planned. If the intervention hadn't been so ballsy, dramatic, and entertaining, the media wouldn't have followed UFE as they flipped the event away from GOP talking points.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Put your target in a decision dilemma

Once the congressmen were caught by surprise, they had two choices: go ahead with their plan and drop the trunk of tea onto the life raft, or back down, sparing the ordinary folks down below the consequences of their

Barralli, and plastic baby doll Veronica into Boston Harbor.

Their media stunt hijacked out from under them, Representatives Tauzin and Armev retreat to their limousine, which is now surrounded by cheering members of the Rich People's Liberation Front, a UFE theatre group, holding signs reading, "We love you Armev and Tauzin!" "Tax cuts for us, not our maids," "Free the Forbes 400," and "Rich folks love the flat tax!"

Quickly, images of the upended Working Families Life Raft are broadcast around the planet through hourly runs on CNN and other networks. The Reuters International story is titled, "GOP Tax Photo Op Backfires." The Associated Press reports, "Protesters Use Tax Day For Batting Practice." Rush Limbaugh chortles that he was glad the UFE protesters got wet. UFE staff conduct live TV interviews and radio feeds all afternoon describing the protest and why the flat tax and sales tax will hurt working families. The next day, the Boston Globe and dozens of other daily papers run a three-photo sequence of the raft's demise.

For UFE activists, it's just another day fighting the power by combining education, humour, direct action, research, media savvy, and nautical skills.

LEARN MORE

Demonstrators Crash Tea Party

Associated Press, 1998

<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/article/19980416/News/304169945?start=2>

The Boston Tea Party, 1998 — No Billionaire Left Behind

Angelique Haugerud, 2013

[https://books.google.com/books?id=GU-](https://books.google.com/books?id=GU-yM7U9owwC&pg=PA102&dq=UFE%20Armev%20Tauzin%20boston%20tax%20Workin)

[yM7U9owwC&pg=PA102&dq=UFE%20Armev%20Tauzin%20boston%20tax%20Workin%20Family%20Liferaft%201998&pg=PA95#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=GU-yM7U9owwC&pg=PA102&dq=UFE%20Armev%20Tauzin%20boston%20tax%20Workin%20Family%20Liferaft%201998&pg=PA95#v=onepage&q&f=false)

selfish actions. Either way, they would lose: Either they participated in demonstrating the damage their policies would cause, or they conceded the truth of that damage and were seen as rethinking their controversial stance.

Do your research

The UFE activists sleuthed out the crucial details by calling up the congressman's office and pretending to be supporters planning to show up and cheer them on, and designed their action accordingly. UFE also scoped out the physical site beforehand, identifying a good hiding place for the raft.

Capture the element of surprise

The congressman didn't know that the little raft was coming. They didn't realize that the Rich People's Liberation Front was in their midst until the trap had been sprung. Seizing the initiative allowed UFE to steal the show. The congressman being caught by surprise itself became part of the media story.

Do the media's work for them

UFE didn't just pull off the prank and hope for the best from the media, they guided the media through every element of the story. The organisation's co-director (in a straight, non-theatrical role) worked the media both before and after the stunt. He handed out press releases and gave the cameramen a heads-up, suggesting they set a wide angle to capture the larger scene that was about to unfold. Afterwards, he was available on the spot (and the rest of the day by phone) for expert commentary addressing both the prank and

the deeper issues to which it spoke.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Guerrilla theatre
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Capture the element of surprise
- Do the media's work for them
- Do your research
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make it funny
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Democracy,
Direct action, Humour, Labour,
Media, Pranks, Wealth inequality

STORY

WISCONSIN CAPITOL OCCUPATION

In 2011, tens of thousands of workers and students filled Wisconsin's state capitol with a non-stop protest to protest Governor Walker's attempt to strip civic unions of collective bargaining rights.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Duncan Meisel

Duncan Meisel is a strategic troublemaker who lives in Brooklyn, where he conspires on how to respond to the impending end of the world. He is particularly interested in trying to stop the warming of the earth, ending the impoverishment of America by corporate power, and putting an end to the prison system as we know it.

"WHAT BEGAN AS A SIMPLE DEFENCE OF WORKERS' RIGHTS BECAME AN INCLUSIVE FORUM FOR MULTIPLE GROUPS HURT BY BUDGET CUTS."

From February 14 to early March 2011, opponents of Governor Scott Walker's legislation to strip civic unions of collective bargaining rights filled Wisconsin's state capitol with a non-stop protest that became one of the largest labour mobilizations in the US in a generation. Though the protests were ultimately unsuccessful, they heralded a major watershed in the US labour movement's resistance to austerity cuts.

Protests began shortly after Gov. Walker proposed his legislation. On February 14, a group of unionized teaching assistants from the University of Wisconsin at Madison led a Valentine's Day-themed protest at the capitol, joined by labour and student groups. Labour-student collaboration became a model for the remainder of the organizing, as state employees used their workplaces and community roles to contact people not immediately affected, widening the struggle and helping provoke a political crisis in the state.

Wisconsin state law allowed for the capitol to remain open as long as public debate continued about a pending bill. The teaching assistants noticed that the senate had failed to set a limit on the number of speakers on a floor debate about Walker's bill, and so signed up thousands of people to offer testimony. This kept debate open indefinitely, as well as the capitol itself, and eventually turned the occupation into a twenty-four-hour speak-out, with a microphone set up in the middle of the rotunda. The microphone

KEY TACTIC

Occupation

The occupation of the capitol itself provided a focal point for protesters trying to unite broad communities against the budget cuts and created a space for diverse groups to work together to solve common problems. Holding the space and filling it with sound and people united diverse voices, while also giving them a way to be heard.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Honk at Parliament
- Sign Language Sit-in

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience

served as an invitation to everyone to be heard at the protest, and triggered an important shift in tone and approach. What had begun as a simple defense of workers' rights now shifted to become an inclusive forum for multiple groups hurt by budget cuts. The boldness and persistence of the tactic galvanized thousands of people to join in, and within days 70,000 people were marching to oppose the Governor's budget.

Protests were also well-coordinated with progressive and Democratic legislators. Three days after protests began, fourteen senate Democrats fled the state of Wisconsin to deny the GOP a quorum. This bought political space and time in addition to the literal space and time that had been seized in the capitol building.

Additionally, the occupation focused attention and support by connecting with other movements and national progressive media networks. The Egyptian revolution was in full flower at the time and lent energy and inspiration to the Wisconsin encampment. Protesters carried Egyptian flags, and several Egyptian revolutionaries sent support in the form of pizzas ordered from local business to be delivered to the capitol. Solidarity pizzas then rolled in from across the world. The occupation was also one of the first to use continuous livestreaming to document itself.

Eventually, Governor Walker's legislation was passed in a legally suspect parliamentary gambit. The worker-student coalition that had led the occupation then switched their focus to the electoral arena, in an attempt to recall the Governor in a special election that was held in June of the following year. Unfortunately, Tom Barrett, the Democratic candidate who ran against Walker, fell short by 46% to 53%. In spite of these defeats, the Wisconsin Capitol Occupation marked a turning point in grassroots mobilization on the US left, fueling other more successful efforts against austerity and inequality, including Occupy Wall Street and the Fight for Fifteen campaign.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

How Wisconsin Renewed the Politics of Protest, from Madison to Wall Street

John Nichols, 2012

<https://books.google.com/books/about/Uprising.html?id=syEkm1edtV4C>

The Spirit of Wisconsin: How Scott Walker's Unionbusting Spurred a Popular Uprising

John Nichols, 2011

<https://www.thenation.com/article/spirit-wisconsin/>

- Creative disruption
- General strike
- Light Brigade
- Mass street action
- Occupation
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Create many points of entry
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Develop an inside-outside strategy
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Personalize and polarize
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Neoliberalism
- Participatory democracy
- The shock doctrine

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Austerity,
Campaign strategy, Democracy,
Direct action, Labour, Student
activism, Nonviolence, Street
protest

STORY

YELLOW PIGS IN PARLIAMENT

In 2014, to protest government corruption and high rates of youth unemployment, young activists painted two pigs yellow (the colour of the ruling party), and let them run wild in Uganda's Parliament.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Norman Tumuhimbise

Norman Tumuhimbise is an activist and coordinator of The Jobless Brotherhood, a nonviolent Ugandan youth activist group. He is also the author of the books *Behind the Devil's Line* and *Unsowing the Mustard Seed*.

"SOMETIMES LAUGHTER CAN BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO DISPEL PEOPLE'S FEAR OR COMPLACENCY AND PUNCTURE A LEADER'S AURA OF INVINCIBILITY."

In June 2014, President Yoweri K. Museveni and the Ugandan Parliament presented their State of the Nation address and their national budget, without ever mentioning the scandalous unemployment rate of 84 percent among Ugandan youths — more than 10 million young people, around a third of the country's population.

This provoked a small group of young activists to sneak two yellow-painted pigs (yellow is the colour of the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement [NRM]) into Uganda's Parliament to protest government corruption and high rates of youth unemployment. This nonviolent action was inspired by similar protests in Kenya one year earlier, but this time activists took more of a prankster approach, releasing the pigs inside, rather than outside, Parliament.

Pigs are known for their greedy and sometimes cannibalistic behavior — when they are hungry, they sometimes eat their own piglets. The message of the protest: Museveni's government acts similarly, "eating Uganda's young people" to feed their own greed. The two pigs represented the president and the prime minister, who were responsible for this catastrophic situation and were the main beneficiaries of corruption.

The Ugandan Parliament was chosen as the site of the demonstration because it's the place where all governmental institutions and decision makers meet to discuss and pass the laws that perpetuate corruption, injustice, oppression, and exploitation. The pigs had slogans pinned to their ears condemning corruption. And the two young activists who released them wore white T-shirts with red letters denouncing youth unemployment, corruption, and

KEY TACTIC

Creative disruption

By bringing an unruly beast into the halls of power, the yellow pigs protest shattered decorum, undermined authority, and caused a national scandal. But it was more than disruption for disruption's sake; it was symbolically effective disruption informed by a sharp understanding of Uganda's culture and ethics. There was no better symbol of corruption run amok at the highest levels of power than a greedy, cannibalistic pig painted in the ruling party's colors scampering through the Parliament.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use humour to undermine authority

President Museveni has consistently tried to portray himself as invincible, going so far to call himself *Sebalwanyi*

government extravagance.

By equating the dictatorial president and the prime minister with pigs, the action was designed to shame Uganda's two top rulers as corrupt, and denounce their permanent neglect of the youth situation. Unexpectedly, however, the media and public attention that resulted focused much more on the security breach and the mockery it made of the government's boasts about its strong security policies. This turned out to not be all bad, as making such a fool of his security forces undressed the dictator completely and created an embarrassing enough situation that the country's inspector general of police had to come in and investigate. In the end, the action sparked widespread attention and debate, and the people behind the action were constantly invited to radio and TV programs to talk about the yellow pigs protest, which brought many opportunities to spread their intended message, possibly to an even broader audience than they would otherwise have had.

LEARN MORE

Firsthand Account of the Yellow Pig Demonstration
Norman Tumuhimbise, *Unsowing the Mustard Seed*, 2015
<https://unsowingm7.wordpress.com/>

In Uganda, an Activist's Resurrection Is a Victory for a Growing Movement
Phil Wilmot, *Waging Nonviolence*, 2015
<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/uganda-activists-resurrection-victory-growing-movement/>

(loosely meaning "warrior of warriors"). By showing how easily pigs could enter and wander the halls of the parliament building without being noticed, the action undercut this overblown image and widely exposed him to ridicule. Sometimes laughter can be the most effective way to dispel people's fear or complacency and puncture the leader's aura of invincibility.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Honk at Parliament
- Street Graduation
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Clandestine leafleting
- Creative disruption
- Infiltration
- Public filibuster
- Visibility action

Principles

- Do the media's work for them
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Fail forward
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Personalize and polarize
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action

TAGS

Corruption, Dictatorship,
Humour, Pranks

STORY

YOMANGO

The ethical shoplifting, culture jamming, direct-action movement Yomango turned the impulse to shoplift into a movement and an art form.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Leónidas Martín Saura

Leónidas Martín Saura is a professor at Barcelona University, where he teaches New Media and Political Art, and is a member of the cultural collective Enmedio. For many years he has been developing collective projects between art and activism as well as writing about art and politics for blogs, journals and newspapers, and has created several documentaries and movies for television and internet.

“YOMANGO TURNS THE IMPULSE TO SHOPLIFT INTO A MOVEMENT, A METHOD, AN ART FORM.”

On July 5, 2002, a strange new brand began cropping up in the streets of Barcelona. That day, at the height of sales season, more than 50 people rushed through the centre of Barcelona to the Bershka clothing store to perform the very first Yomango fashion show.

The show lived up to its “magical” billing: A simple object was turned into a symbol of another way of living. To be more precise, a ten-euro dress was spirited from the store, later to show up as a work of art at one of the most important art museums in the city. All the activities of Yomango were open, public, and publicized.

The name “Yomango” and the lifestyle it celebrates refers to *mangar*, a Spanish slang term meaning “to shoplift,” particularly from multinational corporations. The concept of ethical shoplifting had suddenly acquired public visibility.

The Yomango brand is itself a reappropriation, or *détournement*, of the wildly popular Mango brand (see: TACTIC: Culture jamming). By adding a pronominal prefix (yo, or “I” in Spanish) to the clothing company’s name, the modified brand takes on a different meaning entirely: *I swipe*. Yomango disrupts the primary goal of the original brand, turning it into a new direct action practice based on the widespread habit of shoplifting.

At first glance, this may seem like a simple surrender to the greedy

KEY TACTIC

Ethical shoplifting

Yomango celebrates stealing, not from people, but from large transnational corporations that show no respect for workers’ rights, the environment, or anything other than their bottom line. In many cases Yomango’s actions have been supported or directly fostered by employees of these large chains, some of whom have become active members of Yomango chapters. Stealing (labour, time, ideas, lives) is what transnationals do. What Yomango does is ethical shoplifting: returning to the people what the transnationals have stolen.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Brand or be branded

Yomango is a brand that

logic of capitalism, but nothing could be further from the truth. As Yomango states on its website, its only interest in commodities is “to make something new happen in their midst, to push them to the point of turning them into something else, something that has nothing to do with producing a way of life that is dedicated to consumption, but rather moves toward inventing new possible ways of living.”

Through its actions and its philosophy, but also through its style and design, Yomango turns the impulse to shoplift into a movement, a method, an art form. For instance, Yomango introduced designs that were not only cool, but also served as gear for shoplifting, such as a “jacket of a thousand pockets,” in which all the many pockets were interconnected. When an object is surreptitiously placed in the jacket, it simply disappears, only to be discovered again sometime later, perhaps in the safety of your own home.

Thanks to a proliferation of workshops in arts institutions and social organizations in cities around the world, Yomango’s actions have expanded since the anti-brand first debuted. The website — built on an open-publishing framework enabling people to exchange information and experiences with anyone else carried away by the Yomango brand — also contributed to its spread. Various Yomango communities began appearing in different parts of the world: Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Germany, Italy, as well as other Spanish cities including Madrid and Bilbao.

Though it celebrates individual acts of self-liberation, the Yomango brand also gestures toward mass political action, with actions targeting various multinational corporations, such as the “Yomango-Tango,” in which a crowd of Yomango dancers in Argentina liberated hundreds of bottles of champagne from a Carrefour supermarket, and then uncorked and drank them in a branch of Banco Santander — two entities that were directly implicated in the Argentinian economic crisis.

These actions have served as brand advertisements as enticing as the glittering billboards in the heart of the metropolis. In this way, the Yomango brand spreads through direct action events and highly diverse avenues of communication: from the alternative media to the official press, from supermarkets to activist meetings, and from art catalogues to the Internet. The anti-brand is designed so that any person or group can reappropriate it in whatever manner they choose, transforming it, plagiarizing it, elaborating on it.

Yomango. You want it? You got it!

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Yomango

appropriates and undermines other brands. Yomango captures the desires these brands harness and liberates them from the power of the market. Like other brands, it promises a lifestyle, except what Yomango is “selling” costs nothing at all. Yomango is a brand that exists outside the market.

Create many points of entry

Yomango opens up a broad and diverse participatory process. All the ideas and tools, as well as the Yomango brand itself, were created with the anonymous participation of many people. In this sense, Yomango is what organizers call a “social brand.” By making its tools freely available, Yomango offers a kind of participation that may be less visible than your average multinational brand, but much more extensive and integrated into the day-to-day lives of participants.

Make the invisible visible

Shoplifting is widespread, but remains largely invisible. Yomango makes shoplifting visible, transforming a clandestine gesture of non-cooperation with consumer culture into a brand, a fashion and a lifestyle that embodies a critique of consumer capitalism.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Ethical shoplifting
- Flash mob
- Guerrilla marketing

<http://yomango.net/>

Shoplifting as Social Commentary

Wired, 2005

<https://www.wired.com/2005/08/shoplifting-as-social-commentary/>

- Identity correction

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Create many points of entry
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Take risks, but take care
- Turn the tables
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Action logic
- Capitalism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Neoliberalism
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Art, Capitalism, Media, Pranks

STORY

ZAPATISTA CARAVAN

In 1994, university students organized educational brigades to break the information blockade and rumours about the uprising of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN).

CONTRIBUTED BY

Abraham García Gárate

Abraham was a founding member of the Zapatista Caravan and a student activist in the 1990s.

Sergio Beltrán

Sergio Beltrán Arruti — better known as Yeyo — was born and raised in Mexico City and moved to Oaxaca in 1997 to support and learn from indigenous communities. Through his work he has developed a deep respect for the capacity people have to make a good life (*buen vivir*) for themselves when they are able to freely take responsibility for their own communities.

“UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FOUND IN ZAPATISTAS WHAT NOBODY IN THE MEXICAN POLITICAL CLASS COULD OFFER: HONESTY.”

“For everyone, the light. For everyone everything. For us pain and anguish, for us the joy of rebellion, for us a future denied, for us the dignity of insurrection. For us nothing.”

—Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

On January 1, 1994, in the southeast of Mexico, the uprising of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) began on the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect. The revolt of the EZLN made evident that the recent neoliberal reforms enacted by the PRI, Mexico’s corrupt ruling party, had left a large gap among social sectors of society, with indigenous peoples and peasants being the most marginalized.

One of the firsts groups to stand in solidarity with the demands of the Zapatistas were students. In the various schools and campuses of the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM), students quickly began holding meetings and leading educational brigades to inform their peers about the uprising in Chiapas. Thus, organized students amplified the voice of the indigenous movement in order to break the blockade of disinformation and rumours that commercial mass media, together with the government, erected between the people and the EZLN.

In this context was born, on June 19, 1994, the Ricardo Pozas University Caravan (named after the Mexican anthropologist Ricardo Pozas Horcasitas, whose writings had provided a clear description of the conditions of the indigenous Tzotziles in the highlands of

KEY TACTIC

Visibility action

One of the most useful tactics employed was the alliance with political musicians who also supported the Zapatistas. Together they managed to reach an audience far more vast than either group would have reached separately.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves

Perhaps the principle that best illustrates the life and spirit of the Ricardo Pozas University Caravan was one taught by the Zapatistas themselves. The struggle for autonomy is a political struggle in the service of all, and not only for the participants of the movement.

Chiapas), also known as the Zapatista Caravan. Led by members of the University Student Council, several student organizations took on the task of organizing the First Rock Festival for Peace and Tolerance, a massive music concert inside the university campus that promoted the gathering of two autonomous movements of the country: the university community and the indigenous peoples of Mexico, whose aspirations were reflected in the Zapatista demands.

In the presence of massive numbers of young people from all social sectors, an agreement was reached for the student movement to support and spread information about the EZLN movement. The bond of solidarity and trust between the young people from the Caravan and the Zapatistas became so strong that some were invited to act as consultants for the EZLN in peace talks with the government.

University students found in the Zapatistas what nobody else in the Mexican political class could offer — honesty. From that first concert in 1994 until the Zapatistas' national consultation of 1997, the Caravan accompanied all activities organized by EZLN, embracing Zapatista slogans and ideas, specifically *leading by obeying and everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves*.

The youth movement in general, and specifically the student movement, learned from their solidarity with the indigenous uprising that their demands and struggles should not just focus on issues of public education, but also on the national demands they shared with all marginalized sectors. For its part, the EZLN gained a bridge that allowed them to share their message more widely, in diverse and creative ways, making it strongly visible in different sectors of Mexican society and around the world (see: PRINCIPLE: Seek safety in support networks).

LEARN MORE

We Make the Road by Walking: Lessons from the Zapatista Caravan
Rachel Neumann, Monthly Review, 2001
<http://monthlyreview.org/2001/06/01/we-make-the-road-by-walking/>

KEY THEORY

Intersectionality

The solidarity of students with the historically marginalized and discriminated indigenous movement served to strengthen both movements and helped participants to find a role for themselves in a common and wider struggle for autonomy and against inequality and injustice.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bicycle rally for peace
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Fees Must Fall
- Gezi Park iftar
- Schools of Struggle

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Occupation
- Trek
- Visibility action

Principles

- Create many points of entry
- Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Training for the win

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Direct action

- Floating signifier
- Gerontocracy
- Intersectionality
- Neoliberalism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Poverty
- The commons
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Art, Communications, Movement building, Indigenous rights, Student activism

STORY

“YOU’LL NEVER HAVE A HOME IN YOUR F***ING LIFE!”

Housing rights activists organized this participatory publicity stunt to reframe the housing crisis as a shared problem that would require record-breaking collective action to resolve.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Leónidas Martín Saura

Leónidas Martín Saura is a professor at Barcelona University, where he teaches New Media and Political Art, and is a member of the cultural collective Enmedio. For many years he has been developing collective projects between art and activism as well as writing about art and politics for blogs, journals and newspapers, and has created several documentaries and movies for television and internet.

“THE CALL WAS CLEAR AND CONCISE: ‘COME PARTICIPATE IN THE LOUDEST COLLECTIVE SCREAM EVER DIRECTED AT REAL ESTATE SPECULATION.’”

On October 6, 2007, thousands of people gathered in front of city halls in various Spanish cities to break the world record for the number of people simultaneously shouting “*No vas a tener casa en la puta vida!*” (You’re never going to have a home in your fucking life!).

How had the struggle to solve Spain’s housing crisis come to this?

With a housing bubble well on its way to bursting, prices in Spain had risen to such an extent by 2007 that having a home was a luxury that few could afford. Organizers needed a way to call attention to the issue of unaffordable housing that would profoundly shift how the public thought about the issue.

This protest spectacle was devised to work in two ways: It would occupy public space as a form of protest against real estate speculation, and it would bring the problem of access to housing to the public eye. To achieve the latter, it was essential to create a story that a lot of people could identify with. It had to be a story where the protagonists would be regular people who suffer daily and personally due to the devastating effects of real estate speculation. The arc of the story had to reach its climax on the day of the action and, afterward, it had to stay in the collective imagination for a long time. That was the action’s primary objective. And it more than succeeded.

KEY TACTIC

Flash mob

The call was clear and concise: “Come participate in the loudest collective scream ever directed at real estate speculation.” It was a matter of joining a *performative* action in a public space, an event that was conceived and designed so that thousands of people, strangers to one another, could join together to confront a shared problem.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Do the media's work for them

The action had to be an irresistible piece of candy for the media, something that they could not help but cover. Organizers took great care to

Organizers contacted the Guinness World Records organization in an attempt to include the event in their catalog. After extensive negotiations, the Guinness technical team rejected the proposal on the grounds that it was “too strange” (this from the weirdos at Guinness??). Of course, that decision didn’t discourage the organizers one bit. They moved on with their plan.

To publicize the event, organizers used every single resource that they had available to them, including a series of shareable videos that received thousands of visits in the days leading up to the event.

Events were staged across Spain; Barcelona’s was the largest. An enormous stage was set up in front of Barcelona’s city council and from there a group of entertainers and activists led the action, all of it conceived as a grand spectacle. Above the stage, a large screen showed live images from the gatherings that were happening in other cities. The screen also displayed a “putómetro” (which roughly translates to “fuckedometer”) — a gauge to measure the fury of the shouting crowd designed specially for the occasion.

The event was a complete success: The thousands of participants broke the record on their first try. And with it, the issue of access to housing shifted from being perceived as a personal problem to what it is increasingly seen as in Spain today: an authentic social conflict requiring record-breaking collective action to resolve it.

Originally published in Bella Revuelta (Milrazones, 2014), the Spanish edition of Beautiful Trouble. Translated by Joe Keady.

LEARN MORE

A Call for the World Record of People Shouting, “You’ll never own a house in your whole fucking life”

leodecerca, Vimeo, 2014

<https://vimeo.com/84767474>

World Record of People Shouting, “You’ll never own a house in your whole fucking life”

leodererca, Vimeo, 2014

<https://vimeo.com/84765203>

You’ll Never Have a Life in Your Fucking House

La Felguera Collective (Madrid committee), Occupied London, 2009

https://issuu.com/occupied_london/docs/occupied_london_3

make the event as accessible as possible to journalists, as well as document it themselves. Many of the images published by the media in the days that followed came directly from the documentation that event organizers had themselves made.

Brand or be branded

“No vas a tener casa en la puta vida” expressed something publicly that everyone was feeling privately; it was a slogan that everyone who shouted it could embrace as their own. It quickly became a brand of the movement, and a meme with a lot of staying power that has been applicable to all of the struggles against real estate speculation since. By finding a compelling and catchy brand of its own, the movement was able to define itself (as well as the problem it was fighting) before hostile media could hang distorted labels on them.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Human banner
- Mass street action
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Do the media’s work for them
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Make the personal political
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Play to the audience that isn’t

there

- Simple rules can have grand results
- Think narratively

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Debt revolt
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Memes
- Political identity paradox

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Housing, Humour, Media, Social media

TACTIC ADVANCED LEAFLETING

People are more likely to take your leaflet, read it, and remember what it's all about if you deliver it with flair. (Or ice cream!)

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Steve Lambert

Steve co-founded the Center for Artistic Activism, was a senior fellow at New York's Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology from 2006-2010, developed workshops for Creative Capital Foundation, and is a faculty member at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Steve's parents, former clergy members, imbued in him the qualities which prepared him for life as an artist.

"MAKE IT FUN. MAKE IT UNUSUAL. MAKE IT MEMORABLE."

Leafletting is the bread-and-butter of many campaigns. It's also annoying and ineffective, for the most part. How many times have you taken a leaflet just because you forgot to pull your hand back in time, only to throw it in the next available trash can? Or you're actually interested and stick it in your pocket, but then you never get around to reading it because of the dull design and tiny type? Well, if that's what a socially engaged person like you does, just imagine what happens to all the leaflets you give out to harried career-jockeys as they rush to or from work.

In a word, if you're doing standard leafletting, you're wasting everybody's time. What you need is *advanced* leafletting: adding a creative twist that gets people's attention and makes them more receptive to your message.

Be inventive: In advanced leafletting, we acknowledge that if you're going to hand out leaflets like a robot, you might as well have a robot hand them out. Yes, an actual leafletting robot. In 1998, the Institute for Applied Autonomy built "Little Brother," a small, intentionally cute, 1950s-style metal robot to be a pamphleteer. In their tests, strangers avoided a human pamphleteer, but would go out of their way to take literature from the robot.

Be creative: Make your leaflets and their distribution fun, unique and memorable. Climb up on some guy's shoulders and hand out leaflets from there, as one of the authors of this piece did as a student organizer. The shareholder heading into a meeting is more likely to take, read, and remember the custom message inside the

KEY PRINCIPLE

Kill them with kindness

'Nuff said. Pissing people off won't do your cause any favours, so don't piss people off. Disarm with charm, and maybe your audience will let their guard down long enough to hear what you have to say.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen
- Manich Msamah
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Clandestine leafletting
- Creative petition delivery
- Currency hacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Street theatre

fortune cookie you just handed her than a rectangle of paper packed with text.

Be artistic: Using theatre and costumes to leaflet can be effective. In the 1980s, activists opposed to US military intervention in Central America dressed up as waiters and carried maps of Central America on serving trays, with little green plastic toy soldiers glued to the map. They would go up to people in the street and say, "Excuse me, sir, did you order this war?" When the "no" response invariably followed, they would present an itemized bill outlining the costs: "Well, you paid for it!" Even if the person they addressed didn't take the leaflet, they'd get the message.

The point is, leafleting is not a bad tactic. It's still a good way to tell passersby what you're marching for, or why you're making so much noise on a street corner. But people are more likely to take your leaflet, read it, and remember what it's all about if you deliver it with flair. (Or ice cream!)

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Little Brother

21st Century Digital Art, 2016

<http://www.digiart21.org/art/little-brother>

The Tactical Ice Cream Unit

Center for Tactical Magic

<http://www.tacticalmagic.org/CTM/project%20pages/TICU.htm>

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Consider your audience
- Kill them with kindness
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Use others' prejudices against them

TAGS

Action design, Art, Communications, Humour, Pranks, Street protest

TACTIC

ARTISTIC VIGIL

A vigil that draws upon artistic and ritual elements — thoughtful symbolism, the right tone, and a distinct look and feel — to deepen the experience for both participants and observers.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“THESE VIGILS WERE SILENT AND SOLEMN, BUT THERE WAS A PRECISION TO THE MESSAGE THAT GAVE THEM A VISCERAL POTENCY IN THAT EMOTIONALLY RAW TIME.”

The word *vigil* comes from the Latin word for wakefulness, and refers to a practice of keeping watch through the night over the dead or dying. Compared to the blustery pronouncements of a rally, a candlelight vigil offers a more soulful and symbolically potent expression of dissent. Unfortunately, routine and self-righteousness can strip vigils of their power. In the American peace movement of the 1970s, '80s and '90s, the “candlelight vigil” — all too often a handful of dour people silently holding candles — became a standard, and fatally predictable, form of protest. An *artistic* vigil, on the other hand, brings a more artful touch. This doesn't necessarily mean costumes and face paint and puppets (though it could). It means thoughtful symbolism, the right tone, and a distinct look and feel that clearly convey the meaning of the vigil. An artistic vigil often draws upon ritual elements (see: PRINCIPLE: Use the power of ritual) to both deepen the experience of participants and demonstrate that experience to observers. A good example is the series of “Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War” vigils organized by the Artists' Network of Refuse & Resist in New York City in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the twin towers. People were asked to wear a dust mask (common in NYC after 9/11), dress all in black (common in NYC all the time), show up at Times Square at exactly 5 pm, and remain absolutely silent. Each participant held a sign that read “Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War.” These vigils were silent and solemn, but there was a precision to the message that gave them a visceral potency in that emotionally raw time, for participants and observers alike. The most famous vigils of the late twentieth century were probably those organized by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group of Argentinian women whose children were disappeared by Argentina's 70s-era military dictatorship. By gathering every Thursday for more than a decade in the plaza in

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Manich Msamah
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Round Dance Revolution
- Standing Man
- Who Would Accept?
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Blockade
- Creative petition delivery
- Distributed action
- Human banner
- Hunger strike
- Image theatre
- Lamentation
- Light Brigade
- Street theatre
- Trek
- Visibility action

Principles

front of the Presidential Palace, they not only kept vigil for their lost loved ones, but also kept pressure on the government to answer for its crimes. The "artistry" of a vigil can be exceedingly complex, or as simple as a few basic rituals. The simple fact of women wearing black and gathering in silence on Fridays gives shape and presence to the Women in Black worldwide network of vigils. Begun by Israeli women during the First Intifada to protest the occupation of Palestine, it has since expanded across the globe and embraced broader anti-war and pro-justice themes, but nonetheless maintains its distinctive character. At the other end of the spectrum, artist Suzanne Lacy has created complex works of art in which victims of sexual violence stand vigil amidst the art installations that tell their stories. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

The Body Politics of Suzanne Lacy

Jeff Kelly in **But Is It Art?**, Ed. Nina Felshin, 1994

<https://books.google.com/books?id=CSXrAAAAMAAJ&sitesec=reviews>

The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle

T.V. Reed, 2005

<https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-art-of-protest>

Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War

<http://www.dreadscott.net/works/our-grief-is-not-a-cry-for-war/>

Suzanne Lacy

<http://www.suzannelacy.com/z5y586vebs1pis7o7yg0ginbfqp98g>

Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/the-mothers-of-the-disappeared-challenging-the-junta-in-argentina-1977-1983/>

Women in Black

<http://womeninblack.org/>

- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Build strength through repetition
- Consider your audience
- Focus on basic needs
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Art, Dictatorship

TACTIC

BANNER HANG

Hanging a banner off a building or structure makes for great media coverage, alerting the broad public to an issue or campaign. It's also a good way to frame or contextualize an upcoming action.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"IF IT'S WORTH SAYING, IT'S WORTH SAYING LOUDLY!"

What better way to air the dirty laundry of an irresponsible institution than to hang a giant banner over its front door? A banner drop can also be an effective way to frame or contextualize an upcoming event or protest (see: PRINCIPLE: Reframe the issue). Banner hangs can also function as public service announcements to alert the public of an injustice or a dangerous situation.

Banner hangs can be as low-tech and low-risk as several bedsheets tied to road overpasses, but the ones that really pack a punch involve large pieces of cloth or netting deployed at great heights, often by experienced climbers.

Regardless of the level of risk or complexity, all effective banner hangs start with a clear goal (you have a goal, right?!), and fall into two broad categories: *communicative* (concise protest statements), and *concrete* (blockade elements that directly disrupt business as usual). In 1991, small communities in the Pacific Northwest sought to stop nuclear warships from entering Clatsop County, Oregon, a designated nuclear-free zone on the Columbia River. In a great example of a banner hang with a concrete goal, an enormous net banner was deployed from the Astoria Bridge, affixed below the span where it would be difficult to remove, and weighted by the climbers' bodies themselves. The action succeeded in delaying the warships' entrance while educating the area on the issue.

Most banner hangs, however, tend to be communicative. Take, for instance, the banner hung from a crane in downtown Seattle in November 1999 (see: STORY: Battle in Seattle) just before the opening of the World Trade Organization meeting. The banner messaging was as clear as day: an iconic visual of a street sign with arrows pointing in opposite directions: democracy this way, WTO that way. This was a classic "framing action" (see: THEORY: Framing). Hung on the eve of a big summit meeting and a huge protest, the banner made it clear what all the fuss to come was

POTENTIAL RISKS

If the banner hang requires specific climbing skills or tools, do not skimp on training, scouting, or the quality of gear. Cutting corners could result in the banner snagging, the team being detained before the banner drops, or someone getting seriously injured or killed. Pay attention to changing weather conditions that could turn a proverbial walk in the park into a life-threatening situation (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care). Also, make sure that lighting, lettering, building height, and other factors are taken into account to ensure a readable banner.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Say it with props

If it's worth saying, it's worth saying loudly! If it's worth doing, it's worth doing boldly! What better way to put your message out there, than to spell it out in twelve-foot-high letters?

RELATED TOOLS

really about: a basic struggle of right and wrong; the People vs. the WTO.

For a successful banner hang, you need to choose your location strategically and target high-traffic areas (see: PRINCIPLE: Consider your audience). In Lebanon, the Pedestrian Death Puppets campaign hung full-sized human foam core cut-outs over a dangerous highway on which they wrote messages about pedestrian fatalities. They made the dangers of crossing the highway visible and tangible to drivers (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible), and convinced the municipality to build a pedestrian overpass. Another example is when Jordanian activists used a road overpass adjacent to the national electricity company to hang a huge banner calling on people to honk at the company in protest of a controversial gas deal (see: STORY: Stolen Gas Campaign).

When there is no crane, bridge, or building to hang your banner from, large helium-filled weather balloons have been used to raise everything from CODEPINK's "pink slip for President George Bush" in front of the White House to a banner deployed from a houseboat on the East River in New York with a message for the United Nations. Smaller balloons have been used to raise banners indoors in the atriums of malls or corporate or government buildings.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Balloon Banner Manual
The Ruckus Society
<http://ruckus.org/training-manuals/manuals-checklists/balloon-banner-manual/>

Cornell Tree Climbing
Cornell University
<http://treeclimbing.coe.cornell.edu>

Banner Drops
Destructables
<http://destructables.org/node/56>

Banner Hoist
Destructables
<http://destructables.org/node/57>

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Stolen Gas Campaign

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Guerrilla marketing
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Visibility action

Principles

- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Focus on basic needs
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Reframe the issue
- Say it with props
- Show, don't tell
- Take risks, but take care
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing

Methodologies

- Action star
- Power mapping

TAGS

TACTIC BLOCKADE

A human chain or physical barrier that shuts down something bad (a coal mine or Shell meeting), protects something good (a forest or home), or makes a purely symbolic statement.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“THINK OF THE ACTION AS ‘THE MIDDLE,’ AND EXPECT A TON OF PREP WORK AND FOLLOW-THROUGH — LEGAL, EMOTIONAL, AND POLITICAL.”

Blockades commonly have one of two purposes: First, to stop the bad guys, usually by targeting a point of decision (a boardroom), a point of production (a bank), or a point of destruction (a clearcut) (see: METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention); or second, to protect public or common space such as a building occupation or an encampment.

Blockades can consist of soft blockades (human barricades, such as forming a line and linking arms) or hard blockades (using gear such as chains, U-locks, lock-boxes, tripods, or vehicles). Blockades can involve one person or thousands of people, and can be a stand-alone tactic or an element of a larger tactic like an occupation.

Successful blockades can be primarily concrete or communicative. Either way, all participants should be clear on the goals. For example, if your blockade is symbolic, it does not require a decision dilemma (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma). If, however, you have a concrete goal, like preventing people from entering a building, you must ensure that your blockade has the capacity to achieve that goal. In other words, make sure you’ve got all the exits covered.

Whatever the case, it’s important to lead with your goals. Don’t think in terms of less or more radical; think in terms of what is appropriate to your goals, strategy, tone, message, risk, and level of escalation (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy).

POTENTIAL RISKS

A complex and confrontational tactic like blockade requires meticulous planning and preparation, and should never be attempted without significant preparation, research, and training (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care).

KEY PRINCIPLE

Put your target in a decision dilemma

When employing a blockade with a concrete goal, your ability to hold the space will depend on your decision dilemma. If you are able to prevent your target from going out the back door (metaphorically or literally), you have successfully created a dynamic where you cannot be ignored.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind, adapted from the Ruckus Society's how-to guide, *A Tiny Blockades Book*:

Build a crew. It all begins with a good action team and good nonviolence/direct action training.

All roles are important. A good support team is essential.

Know your limits. Make a realistic assessment of your capacity and resources.

Scout, scout, scout. Spend a lot of time getting to know your location. Know your choke points. These are the spots that make you the most secure and pesky blockader. Choose a spot that your target cannot just work, walk, or drive around.

Practice, and prepare contingency plans.

Don't plan for your action; plan through your action. Think of the action as "the middle," and expect a ton of prep work and follow-through — legal, emotional, and political.

Have a media strategy. Make sure your message gets out and your action logic is as transparent as possible (see: THEORY: Action logic). Don't let communications be an afterthought.

Eliminate unnecessary risk. Make your action as safe as it can be to achieve your goals (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care).

Do not ignore power dynamics within your group or between you and your target. Race, class, gender identity (real or perceived), sexual identity (real or perceived), age, physical ability, appearance, immigration status, and nationality all affect your relationship to the action.

Dress for success. Make sure that your appearance helps carry the tone you want to set for your action. Dress comfortably. Ensure that support people bring water, food, and extra layers.

Be creative. Have fun.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Resources for Organizers

Praxis Makes Perfect

<https://joshuakahn russell.wordpress.com/resources-for-activists-and-organizers/>

A Tiny Blockades Book

The Ruckus Society, 2005

<http://risingtideseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/a-tiny-little-blockades-booklet-reduced.pdf>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Earth First!
- Justice for Janitors
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Schools of Struggle
- Streets Into Gardens
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Civil disobedience
- Eviction blockade
- Flotilla
- General strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Mass street action
- Occupation
- Phone blockade

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Action logic

Lockboxes

Destructables

<http://destructables.org/node/59>

- Comunalidad (communality)
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Neoliberalism
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- The commons
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Action star
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping

TAGS

Action design, Climate justice, Colonialism, Direct action, Energy, Environment, Nonviolence, State violence, Street protest

TACTIC

CACEROLAZO (NOISE-MAKING PROTEST)

Let your resistance be heard loud and clear by making lots of noise en masse — banging pots and pans, blowing whistles, honking horns, or setting off cell-phone ringtones.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stefan Christoff

Stefan Christoff is a writer, community activist, and musician living in Montréal, Québec. Stefan wrote “Le fond de l’air est rouge,” a booklet on the 2012 Québec student uprising.

“A CACEROLAZO IS DRIVEN BY SHARED DISCONTENT; THE TACTIC IS FUNDAMENTALLY PARTICIPATORY AND DEMOCRATIC.”

“You and I travel to the beat of a different drum.”
—Linda Ronstadt

As the clock struck 8 pm on a Montréal spring night in May 2012, a sound rose like crickets at dusk: a metallic tapping in the distance that multiplied and spread until a cacophony of clanging pots and pans filled the air. All over the city, tens of thousands of people took to the streets that night, and for many nights to follow, armed with kitchenware. It was the largest pot-banging protest — *cacerolazo* in Spanish, *les casseroles* in French — that North America had ever seen.

As a protest tactic, the *cacerolazo* first gained international prominence in the 1970s, emerging as a powerful means of expressing popular dissent under brutal repression in Chile during the US-backed military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. It again came to prominence during Argentina’s neoliberal financial crisis in 2001. The tactic was widely deployed in Québec during the student strike in 2012 (see: STORY: Québec Student Strike), and again in Turkey the following year during mass protests against widespread government corruption and police repression.

Given its auditory force, a *cacerolazo* of sufficient size can be incredibly effective in drawing people into the streets, and massing them in public spaces (see: TACTIC: Mass street action). It also costs nothing and requires no previous activist training or skills (see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results). A *cacerolazo* is driven by shared discontent; the tactic is fundamentally participatory and democratic. People can also participate without hitting the streets, just by leaning out their window and banging a pot and pan in solidarity (see: PRINCIPLE: Create many points of

POTENTIAL RISKS

Some critics, while acknowledging the excellent collaborative, creative, and disruptive qualities of the *cacerolazo*, point out that in a revolutionary context, the tactic can serve as a less challenging and potentially less effective alternative to more instrumental actions (see: THEORY: Expressive and instrumental actions), such as a bank blockade or a general strike. However, it’s important to consider the broader social and political context within which *cacerolazos* are taking place. Under the terror and extreme repression of Pinochet’s 1970s regime in Chile, or in a repressive context like the Québec student strike (when government authorities passed a law making street protests illegal), spontaneous *cacerolazos* served as an antidote to fear and drew wide swaths of the population into active participation in civil

entry).

Given the speed and spontaneity with which the tactic can spread, and the resulting clamor, a successful cacerolazo is disorienting to police forces attempting to control the protests. A cacerolazo protest is versatile and decentralized. It can be deployed during mass street demonstrations, but can also be used as a disruptor, say, for example, at a politician's press conference, or a corporate luncheon (see: TACTIC: Creative disruption). Musically, it can range from a noisy, chaotic free-for-all to more coordinated rhythms. The tactic appeals to all ages and is particularly popular with children, who love banging pots and pans together even more than adults do.

While the tactic, most prominent in Latin America, originally began with the use of kitchenware, it can also extend to other type of noise-making instruments or tools including horns, whistles, ringtones, and more. For example, in Lebanon, people used air horns in the Parliament square as well as car horns at the sight of Parliamentarians to protest the illegal extension of the Parliament's term (see: STORY: Honk at Parliament).

LEARN MORE

Casseroles - Montréal, 24 Mai 2012

Jeremie Battaglia, 2012

<https://vimeo.com/42848523>

A Brief History of Pots and Pans

Colin M. Snider, Americas South and North, 2012

<https://americasouthandnorth.wordpress.com/2012/06/08/a-brief-history-of-pots-and-pans/>

disobedience.

KEY PRINCIPLE

No one wants to watch a drum circle

Everyone can participate in a cacerolazo. It provides a framework of protest that is both easy to join and easy to spread and, in certain contexts, also seriously subversive. Calls for people to organize or join nightly casseroles protests simultaneously across different neighborhoods or even cities can easily spread by word of mouth, text messages, and social media. Ultimately, hundreds of thousands of people can participate in actions, which is a key factor in building momentum, and demonstrating the power of numbers, and increasing pressure on your target.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Honk at Parliament
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Round Dance Revolution

Tactics

- Blockade
- Creative disruption
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- General strike
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Create many points of entry

- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make new folks welcome
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Street protest, Humour, Nonviolence

TACTIC

CITIZEN'S ARREST

What can people do when criminals or corrupt officials are beyond the reach of the law? Um, arrest them! :-)

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

"AS WITH HUMOUR, WHERE YOU WANT TO "PUNCH UP, NOT DOWN," A CITIZEN'S ARREST IS A WAY FOR THE LESS POWERFUL TO HOLD THE MORE POWERFUL TO ACCOUNT."

"Laws are spider webs through which the big flies pass and the little ones get caught."

—Honoré de Balzac

A citizen's arrest is a type of direct action in which people place someone they deem a criminal under arrest. This "arrest" can be physical (surrounding the car of an escaping corrupt official until the police arrive to arrest him for real), symbolic (handing a DIY arrest "warrant" to a CEO whose lobbying efforts against healthcare reform are tantamount to manslaughter), and/or quasi-legal (the practice of citizen's arrest dates back to medieval English common law, in which sheriffs encouraged ordinary citizens to help apprehend law breakers).

In 2018, in Bushenyi, Uganda, Municipal Engineer Deus Baingana had been allocated nearly \$100,000 to fix local roads but had done nothing. Hundreds of outraged citizens marched on district headquarters. He ran to his car, and there was a scuffle. The citizens then surrounded his car and cut his tires (which was pretty funny because the whole thing was about embezzling money meant for roads). Eventually, he was indicted and forced to repair the roads.

In 2003, US President George W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair launched an unprovoked war of aggression against Iraq that led to mayhem and mass murder. Yet, more than a decade later, neither have been held to account for their crimes. This grave injustice prompted British journalist George Monbiot to launch Arrest Blair, inspiring more than a few upstanding citizens to

POTENTIAL RISKS

Taking the law into your own hands can be risky. The person or persons you are trying to "arrest" may not take kindly to it. In spite of your best nonviolent discipline, obvious evidence of their crimes, iron-clad moral arguments, overwhelming public support, etc., they might resist violently. Also, local law-enforcement may feel their role and status is being threatened, and may respond forcefully. Finally, if your own people are not acting in good faith or with discipline, there's always the danger of things descending into mob justice. What can you do about these potential risks? Anticipate them and plan for them. Be transparent about your intentions. As much as possible, rehearse and train your team before your action. Agree on a decision-making system, and

attempt citizen's arrests on Blair. Although the ex-Prime Minister did not consent to proceed willingly to the local police station, these "arrests" succeeded in drawing attention to Blair's heinous war crimes, and to challenge the culture of impunity that helped enable them.

Compared to the "hard" more militant example from Bushenyi, Arrest Blair is a "soft" version of the tactic, one that is more theatrical, performative, and symbolic. Other soft examples include the scene in *Capitalism, a Love Story* when political-stunt filmmaker Michael Moore tried to do a citizen's arrest of everyone on Wall Street. Similarly, in 2009, this author was involved in a Citizens' Posse action, in which a VIP posse of several union presidents attempted to enter a DC hotel where health insurance executives were holed up and make citizen's arrests for the crime of "manslaughter," for conspiracy to block health care reform.

The hard and soft versions of citizen's arrest involve very different levels of risk and vary considerably from country to country, and context to context. It should also be noted that the tactic can unfortunately also be used by the more powerful (and possibly racist) against the more vulnerable — for example, in 2019 when vigilantes along the US-Mexico border performed a "mass citizen arrest" on migrants and refugees. Which begs the question: What kind of ethics (see: THEORY: Ethical spectacle) should guide our use of citizen's arrest? Here's a start:

Arrest up, not down — As with humour, where you want to "punch up, not down," a citizen's arrest is a way for the less powerful to hold the more powerful to account. **Nonviolent** — This is not a kidnapping, black ops, or act of terror or intimidation, and should not have the feel of such. **Intentional** — Be clear about your motivations. Plan carefully. Stay unified. Follow the legal and cultural protocols involved — or if you choose to exceed them, do so with wisdom and deliberateness. **Transparent** — Perform the arrest in public in the light of day. Clearly state your reasons and present your evidence. Even invite the public to witness (and/or participate in) the arrest. **Grounded** — Do your due diligence. Make sure your rationale for the "arrest" is solid (and if necessary, well-researched.)

When we perform a citizen's arrest, we are literally (and symbolically) taking justice into our own hands. This is sometimes necessary, often empowering, and potentially dangerous. If we're clear on our goals, and follow strong ethical guidelines, justice will be in good hands.

LEARN MORE

How to Make a Citizen's Arrest

Malia Wollan, The New York Times, 2016

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/magazine/how-to-make-a-citizens-arrest.html>

most important of all: Maintain nonviolent discipline.

In addition to these risks, there are legal risks, which vary from country to country. In some countries, making arrests as citizens is a legal right, but requires certain protocols be followed. If you plan on carrying out arrests legally, make sure you consult the law and deliberate extensively about the intricacies of the arrest, so that you are well prepared and your plan does not backfire. Wikipedia has a brief run-down on the country-specific rules, as well as offering this general warning:

"A person who makes a citizen's arrest could risk exposing him or herself to possible lawsuits or criminal charges — such as charges of false imprisonment, unlawful restraint, kidnapping, or wrongful arrest — if the wrong person is apprehended or a suspect's civil rights are violated. This is especially true when police forces are attempting to determine who an aggressor is. Private citizens do not enjoy the same immunity from civil liability when making

arrests on other private citizens as do police officers.

Finally, remember that criminals — even those of the “legalize crime” variety — are notoriously skilled in dodging the long arm of the law. If your team wants to capture an opponent and put them behind bars, make sure that you have considered as many possible scenarios as you can, so that your target won’t slip away scot-free.”

KEY PRINCIPLE

Maintain nonviolent discipline

When planning a citizen’s arrest, expect your opponents to brand you as unruly hooligans no matter what you do

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Citizens’ Posse
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Stripping Power in Uganda

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Nonviolent search and seizure

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Anyone can act
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don’t tell

- The real action is your target's reaction
- Turn the tables
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Framing
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Prefigurative politics
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Action star
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Action design, Corruption, Democracy, Direct action, Humour

TACTIC

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Breaking a law in public in order to challenge the moral legitimacy of that specific law (e.g. racial segregation) or a greater injustice committed by the state (e.g. corruption).

CONTRIBUTED BY

Søren Warburg

Dad, political organizer, strategist, facilitator, Rosa Luxemburg lover, and Operations Director of Beautiful Rising, Søren spent years working with social movements and activists across the globe and is currently the Strategic Advisor for ActionAid, focusing primarily on social movements and creative direct action.

“ACTS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAN CHALLENGE NOT JUST A SPECIFIC LAW, BUT ALSO THE VERY LEGITIMACY OF A STATE.”

"Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience."

—Howard Zinn

The greatest strength of social movements is often their capacity to disrupt. At its core, an act of civil disobedience is a disruption that expresses political opposition beyond what the law permits. In an act of civil disobedience, you either publicly break an unjust law in order to challenge the legitimacy of that law, or you commit some minor infraction (trespassing, for example, or obstruction), with the intent of bringing about broader political changes.

Civil disobedience can manifest in a number of different ways. Strikes, sit-ins or sit-downs, marches, and lockdowns, among many other tactics, can all be used as acts of civil disobedience.

Because it seeks to awaken the conscience of society to some injustice, an act of civil disobedience should be carefully planned if it is to have maximum effect. Design your action so that it places your target in a decision dilemma or uses humour to undermine their authority. Be public about your intent, maintain nonviolent discipline, and be prepared to go to jail (see: TACTIC: Jail solidarity).

Though nonviolent resistance to injustice is as old as injustice itself (as the classic Greek tragedy *Antigone* tells us), the modern understanding of civil disobedience dates to Henry David Thoreau's book *Civil Disobedience* (1849). Thoreau argued that the individual has a right to resist government abuses and injustices, stating, "the

POTENTIAL RISKS

An act of civil disobedience is by definition a breaking of a law, so the risk of being arrested is pretty high. You should expect arrest, and plan accordingly. Make sure your group is prepared to offer jail solidarity. If the state is particularly brutal or if you are a member of an oppressed group, the stakes of breaking the law are naturally higher and the ability to awaken the conscience of the broader public is often more limited. Build a support network that will be able to apply pressure on the authorities in order to deter harsh sentences or violence against you (see: PRINCIPLE: Seek safety in support networks). Research whether there are international mechanisms that you can use to apply pressure on your behalf (see: PRINCIPLE: Activate international mechanisms).

only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right." He refused to pay his taxes because they were being used to expand slavery in the United States and wage a war against Mexico. A century later, Hannah Arendt argued that civil disobedience is integral to a democratic state, since only "extralegal action," such as civil disobedience, can expand rights and justice beyond the existing limits of the law.

Acts of civil disobedience can challenge not just a specific law, but also the very legitimacy of a state — particularly a colonial or occupying power (see: THEORY: Decolonization). Indeed, one of the best known examples of civil disobedience is Gandhi's salt march from Ahmedabad to Dandi to make salt in violation of the wildly unpopular British salt laws, a campaign that played a key role in exposing the illegitimacy of British authority and ultimately led to India's independence. This act of civil disobedience was brilliantly planned and strategically well thought-out. Gandhi crisscrossed the country for weeks, publicly announcing the impending "crime" and telling his fellow Indians that it was their duty to disobey British rule by marching with him. This put the British authorities in a decision dilemma: If they arrested the salty lawbreakers, it would spark even wider support for the movement and confirm the British rulers' brutality. But if they didn't do anything, they would look as if they had lost the ability to enforce their own laws. Either way, British rule was doomed by Gandhi's mass public violation of a simple law.

LEARN MORE

Civil Disobedience Resources

ActUp

<http://www.actupny.org/documents/CDdocuments/CDindex.html>

Letter from Birmingham Jail

Martin Luther King, 1963

https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

KEY PRINCIPLE

Maintain nonviolent discipline

If participants in an act of civil disobedience become violent, you have already lost. The power of civil disobedience lies in a respect for a moral law that is more powerful than the state's laws, and you need to hold the moral high ground (see: PRINCIPLE: Anger works best when you have the moral high ground). To be effective, you must ensure that everyone participating is committed to nonviolence during the action (see: THEORY: Strategic nonviolence). Otherwise, you will only bolster the legitimacy of the state, and give them an excuse to beat up the "common lawbreaker." If you stay cool and disciplined, you will have a much higher chance of winning the respect and support of the public than if you don't (see: THEORY: Hamoq and hamas).

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Citizens' Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Earth First!
- Fees Must Fall
- Justice for Janitors
- Nuit Debout
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Standing Man
- Stop Praver Plan
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taxi drivers strike against

taxation

- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Welcome to Palestine
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Creative disruption
- Critical Mass
- Cultural disobedience
- Encryption
- General strike
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Training for the win
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Hamoq and hamas
- Palace Coup
- Postcolonialism

- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- SWOT
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Climate justice, Campaign strategy, Colonialism, Democracy, Direct action, Militarization, Movement building, Nonviolence, Racial justice, State violence, Street protest, Student activism, War and peace

TACTIC

CLANDESTINE LEAFLETING

When it is unsafe to protest or campaign publicly, there are many creative ways to deliver your message without putting yourself at risk — even floating lanterns or ping pong balls.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“IN SOME SITUATIONS THE SIMPLE ACT OF SHARING YOUR OPINION ON A LEAFLET CAN BE HIGHLY DANGEROUS. A CREATIVE APPROACH CAN BOTH KEEP YOU SAFE, AND MEMORABLY SPREAD YOUR MESSAGE.”

“Art is anything you can get away with.”
—Marshall McLuhan

In some situations the simple act of sharing your opinion on a leaflet can be highly dangerous. A creative approach can both keep you safe, and memorably spread your message.

In Myanmar (Burma), citizens placed leaflets in floating lanterns and released them to waft over the city. In the early days of the uprising against President Assad, Syrian activists would write the word “Freedom!” on hundreds of ping-pong balls, released them from the top of a hill in Damascus, and let them bounce through the streets. During the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the ANC used nonviolent “leaflet bombs” — small time-bomb devices that would explode hundreds of pamphlets into the air, while doing no harm to anyone nearby. Even when there is no risk involved, sometimes leafletting in creative ways can be a more effective way to get people’s attention. Make it fun. Make it unusual. Make it memorable. Consider climbing up on someone’s shoulders and handing out leaflets from there. Or putting your custom message inside a fortune cookie and handing out the cookie. Or using theatre and costumes. (See Beautiful Trouble’s “Advanced Leafletting” tactic for more examples of this kind.)

LEARN MORE

Advanced leafletting
Andrew Boyd, Beautiful Trouble, 2012

POTENTIAL RISKS

In a repressive political environment, the risk of speaking out can be severe. Even leafletting clandestinely can be dangerous if you are caught in the act, or if the messages can be traced back to you. So take precautions: If fingerprints are a concern, use gloves. If you think your handwriting could be recognized, disguise it. If you are launching your messages (via ping-pong balls, floating lanterns, or other means) from a central location, be sure to quickly disappear from that spot once they are launched.

KEY PRINCIPLE

When protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
When free speech is banned, any expression of it

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen
- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign
- Panty power
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Creative disruption
- Currency hacking
- Messaggio nella banconota

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Foster safer spaces
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your community

Theories

- Decolonization
- Memes

TAGS

Action design, Art, Communications, Democracy, Dictatorship, Direct action, Human rights, Humour, Language, Media, Pranks, State violence

TACTIC

CREATIVE DISRUPTION

You *could* disrupt an illegitimate event by shouting or thuggery, but this might not help your cause. To outshine your target's message, it's often better to disrupt creatively: song, glitter, clever theatrics.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nancy Mancias

Nancy Mancias is a campaign organizer for CODEPINK. An anti-war advocate, she has been actively trying to bring the troops home and is a part of the movement against torture and a proponent of closing the prison in Guantánamo.

"YOU CAN OFTEN BE MORE EFFECTIVE IF YOU STEP OUT OF THE "COMBATIVE SPEECH BOX" AND CONSIDER VISUALS, SONG, THEATRE, AND HUMOUR."

"Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted."
—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

If a mass-murderer like Augusto Pinochet or a war criminal like Dick Cheney or an openly white-supremacist provocateur like neo-Nazi Richard Spencer comes to town, what's the best way to challenge their ideas and the spin they'll put on their misdeeds? Often, the scale of the misdeeds and the imbalance of power are so great that activists will forgo dialogue and move straight to disruption, attempting to shut down or seriously disrupt the event. Disruption can be an effective tactic, and has been used successfully by small groups of people, often with little advance notice or planning. The problem, of course, is that not only does the target control the mic, the stage, and the venue, but even more importantly, as an invited guest or the official speaker, s/he has the audience's sympathy. A poorly thought-out disruption can easily backfire. The target can portray themselves as a victim of anti-free speech harassment, thus gaining public sympathy and a larger platform. The challenge is to disrupt the event without handing your target that opportunity. Sometimes an oblique intervention that reframes the target's remarks (see: PRINCIPLE: Reframe the issue) or forces a response to your issues without literally preventing anyone from speaking can be more effective than just shouting down someone. When House Speaker Nancy Pelosi held a rare town hall meeting in San Francisco in 2006 during the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, CODEPINK demonstrators — angry that Pelosi was not pushing for a cut-off in war funding — waited until the question and answer session, then surrounded the stage with their "Stop Funding War" banners and stood there, silently, for the remainder of the meeting.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Put your target in a decision dilemma

Well-designed creative disruption should leave your target no good option. If Nancy Pelosi had acknowledged or engaged with the protesters, she would have only elevated their credibility and drawn further attention to their message. Had security cleared out the silent activists, it would have looked heavy-handed. Had she left the scene, it would have been seen as a capitulation. Her least worst option, and what she chose to do, was continue with the event

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Citizens' Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army

The creative use of a sign or banner can help you avoid the “it’s an attack on free speech” trap. In effect, you’re adding an additional “layer” of speech; you’re engaging in *more* free speech, not less. Song can also be used in this way. A 2011 foreclosure auction in Brooklyn, for instance, was movingly disrupted by protesters breaking into song. Song creates sympathy. A creative disruption needn’t be passive. When Newt Gingrich came to the Minnesota Family Council conference for a book signing, a queer activist dutifully waited in line and when it came to his turn, dumped rainbow glitter over Gingrich, shouting, “Feel the rainbow, Newt! Stop the hate, stop anti-gay policies” as he was escorted out of the room. The video documenting the event (see: PRINCIPLE: Do the media’s work for them) went viral and the disruption gained international press attention, sparking a wave of LGBT activism. The tactic of “glitter-bombing” even made it into an episode of the TV show *Glee*. Theater is another way to “disrupt without disrupting.” When Jeane Kirkpatrick (Reagan’s Ambassador to the UN) came to UC Berkeley in the 1980’s, activists staged a mock death-squad kidnapping. “Soldiers” (students) in irregular fatigues marched down the main aisle barking orders in Spanish and dragged off a few students kicking and screaming from the audience. Others then scattered leaflets detailing the US’s and Kirkpatrick’s support for El Salvador’s death-squad government from the balcony onto the stunned audience. As these examples show, it’s critical to tailor your disruption to the specific target and situation. Often, you can be more effective if you step out of the “combative speech box” and consider alternate modalities, like visuals, song, theatre, and humour. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

College Students Should Resist – Not Silence – Their Political Foes
Bill McKibben, *The Guardian*, 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/10/college-students-resist-not-silence-political-foes>

Newt Gingrich Gets Glittered at the Minnesota Family Council

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8OZsJokBB0>

Auctioneer: Stop All the Sales Right Now!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3X89iViAlw>

- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Disrupting Obama’s town hall in Myanmar
- Honk at Parliament
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Public Option Annie
- Québec Student Strike
- Santa Claus Army
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stolen Beauty
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Citizen’s arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Clandestine leafleting
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Flash mob
- Flotilla
- Graffiti drone
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla theatre
- Infiltration
- Jail solidarity
- Media-jacking
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Bring the issue home
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Do the media’s work for them
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Kill them with kindness
- Personalize and polarize
- Play to the audience that isn’t there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma

- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Postcolonialism
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Democracy, Student activism

TACTIC

CREATIVE PETITION DELIVERY

Petitions can often feel ineffectual, but when you deliver them creatively — with art, theater, or humor — you can make public opinion more visible to a campaign target.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Duncan Meisel

Duncan Meisel is a strategic troublemaker who lives in Brooklyn, where he conspires on how to respond to the impending end of the world. He is particularly interested in trying to stop the warming of the earth, ending the impoverishment of America by corporate power, and putting an end to the prison system as we know it.

“A NUMBER OF WELL-LABELED BOXES ROLLED INTO A TARGET’S OFFICE IS A TRIED AND TRUE APPROACH, BUT OTHER UNUSUAL TACTICS CAN BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AS WELL.”

“Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.”
—Erich Fromm

Online petitions are an effective way of spreading information, raising an outcry or putting pressure on a target. But online tactics alone are easily ignored by targets. To translate virtual signatures into real-world action, a number of netroots organizations have developed the art of creative petition delivery. While publicizing your message and the support it has garnered, creative petition deliveries put public pressure on your target.

It’s helpful to find creative ways to physically quantify the number of petition signatures (see: THEORY: Activism). A number of well-labeled boxes rolled into a target’s office is a tried and true approach, but other unusual tactics can be highly effective as well.

For a petition asking the World Health Organization to investigate and regulate factory farms, the international multi-issue campaign organization Avaaz set up 200 cardboard pigs — each representing 1,000 petition signers — in front of the World Health Organization building in Geneva, providing the media with a visual hook on which to peg stories about factory farms and swine flu.

The location of delivery can also make a huge difference. In protest against a multibillion gas deal with Israel (see: STORY: Stolen Gas

POTENTIAL RISKS

Sometimes you might have the urge to be overtaken by your imagination, leading you to construct complex scenes of creative delivery and eventually getting overwhelmed by an idea and its implementation. Keep it simple! Also, keep in mind that you need to be as straightforward as possible so that any member of public is able to understand the demand of your campaign.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Make the invisible visible

Creative petition deliveries give an abstract issue a physical and visual presence. Public figures and decision-makers can afford to avoid listening to public outcry as long as it remains

Campaign), the Jordan Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement handed the deputy head of parliament a petition to be delivered to the Prime Minister on behalf of the people. Taken by surprise, the PM stormed off during the session and his reaction generated increased public mistrust in, and negativity towards, the government's narrative.

But you don't always have to physically occupy the same space as your target — attracting media attention can be an effective way to reach a target as well. In one instance, to deliver a petition against nuclear energy to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Avaaz purchased an ad in *Der Spiegel*, the German paper of record.

Or try a more outlandish media stunt. To deliver a petition against deepwater oil drilling in the Arctic, Greenpeace International sent its executive director to a controversial oil rig in the middle of the ocean, where he trespassed onto the rig to deliver the petition to the ship's captain — at which point he was arrested and held for four days. Between the unusual way it was delivered and the media coverage that resulted, the petition was difficult for the target to ignore.

Sometimes less public tactics can be equally effective: to deliver a petition about cluster bombs to a UN conference debating arms munitions treaties, Avaaz first digitally delivered 600,000 petition signatures to the head of the conference, and then quietly distributed 1,000 fliers to conference attendees (see: TACTIC: Advanced leafleting), describing the issue and listing the number of people who'd signed the petition. Even the subtle hint of public pressure created a stir in the often obscure world of UN diplomats. The delivery had a big impact on the eventual outcome of the conference, which did not adopt a draft treaty to allow stockpiling of cluster bombs.

Creative petition deliveries allow organizers to turn online outcry into offline action. By becoming unavoidably visible to a campaign target (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible), creative deliveries make sure the voices of thousands of petition signers are publicly heard.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

How Our Petitions Work

Avaaz

https://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/how_an_online_petition_works/

distant and exclusively online. By bringing the voices of petition signers to a target (and the media) in a way that makes them impossible to ignore, creative petition deliveries amplify the effectiveness of online organizing efforts.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Artistic vigil
- Distributed action
- Trek

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Create online-offline synergy
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Kill them with kindness
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle

Methodologies

- Action star
- Pillars of power

TAGS

TACTIC

CULTURAL DISOBEDIENCE

Civil disobedience is the deliberate violation of unjust laws. In a similar spirit, cultural disobedience bravely subverts unjust *cultural* norms.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phionah Kyokusiima

Phionah Kyokusiima is the Western Uganda Coordinator for Solidarity Uganda and has done community organizing against corruption for many years. She hails from Bushenyi, and is a member of a citizen action team known as Make Bushenyi Great Again.

“ALL OF US FACE UNWRITTEN CULTURAL LAWS THAT FEEL OPPRESSIVE; ALMOST ALL OF US REBEL AT SOME POINT IN OUR LIVES.”

“If you are always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be.”

—Maya Angelou

Civil disobedience is the deliberate violation of unjust laws. In a similar spirit, cultural disobedience bravely subverts dominant *cultural* norms. We may think of culture as softer and more malleable than institutions and laws, but in many places cultural taboos are so strong that they become entrenched as law, while in other places, cultural taboos function as de facto law.

It takes both a strong will and calculated strategy to subvert oppressive cultural norms.

In the land of Ankole, like other parts of western Uganda, women are prohibited from a number of activities that most of the world considers normal to the human experience, including whistling, tree climbing, and riding bicycles. On International Women’s Day 2018, a group of young ladies organized taboo-breaking competitions, including a bicycle race. The events were considered so rebellious against the patriarchal norms of the region that the women received widespread media attention. Encouraged, a number of the lady cyclists went on to form the Rukararwe Women Riders’ Club, which used the taboo-breaking empowerment of women’s cycling caravans and other activities to curb domestic violence, elect local female leaders, and convince many male neighbors that rather than being a threat to the community, women’s empowerment made it better.

According to a 2012 United Nations survey, more than half of

POTENTIAL RISKS

Cultural disobedience takes many forms; precise risks will depend largely on the particulars of one’s context. Radical acts of cultural disobedience stand to incite trouble not only from state authorities, but from the conservative vigilanties of society. Throughout history, women have been shamed, beaten, raped, and even murdered for trying to do things typically reserved for men. Emmett Till, a 14-year-old African American was brutally lynched in Jim Crow-era Mississippi for “looking the wrong way” at a white woman. Social change is a process that takes courage and the wise calculation of the risks involved.

Acts of cultural disobedience may also be misunderstood by onlookers, or stir up distracting public conversations that are

Malawian girls are forced to marry before 18 years old. A female chief in central Malawi, Theresa Kachindamoto, has fought against sexual initiation camps and has annulled over 850 child marriages (see: PRINCIPLE: Use state power to build people power). For this she has been dubbed “The Terminator.”

For LGBT+ members of most African societies, existence is resistance. While a few pride parades and festivals have popped up around the continent, two South African men went so far as to tie the knot in a traditional wedding ceremony in 2013. In addition to professing their love, they also hoped to send a message that “being gay is as African as being black.”

Why might you use cultural disobedience? 1. To make an invisible oppression visible. 2. To publicly shatter a taboo, or to inspire its total elimination. 3. To normalize something that should be normal in the first place. 4. To prefigure life without an oppressive cultural norm; and show that “another way of living/being is possible.” 5. To be in solidarity with those who cannot safely disobey culture. 6. To draw attention to a larger social injustice in spectacular fashion.

But acts of cultural disobedience don’t have to be spectacular. In fact, many of us are engaged in small, everyday (and sometimes quite subtle) acts of cultural disobedience all the time, whenever we deviate from the expected norm. The frequent targets are dominant gender and sexuality paradigms, but cultural disobedience can take on stifling cultural taboos around almost anything: age, class, ability, race, religion, language, or the dominant ideology.

In the 21st century, as progressive organizing becomes more intentionally intersectional, cultural disobedience is becoming an increasingly strong vehicle for social change. When we can cohere our individual acts of rebellion and self-expression into a larger force, cultural disobedience can ignite not just a public dialogue about what is right and wrong, but also social changes that are both profound and lasting.

All of us face unwritten cultural laws that feel oppressive; almost all of us rebel at some point in our lives. Our rebellion can be stronger when we have a plan and act together.

LEARN MORE

When Women Defy Societal Unjust Norms — Rukararwe Women Riders

<https://prospect.org/article/culture-politics>

irrelevant to the main purpose of your action. In planning an act of cultural disobedience, consider how people will react (right or wrong), and try to make sure their reaction (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction) helps move forward the conversation *you* want to have. Either make sure the point of your action is obvious — or in the case of a deliberately confusing act of cultural disobedience, that it produces enough intrigue or controversy to get people talking in a productive way.

Another danger of cultural disobedience is attracting more attention to the cultural transgression than the main problem. When NFL Quarterback Colin Kaepernick “took a knee” during the national anthem to protest police brutality, public dialogue revolved around his supposed disrespect for the flag, although police brutality was the issue he was aiming to highlight. Practitioners of cultural disobedience should expect opposing propaganda and prepare for it.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Birthright Unplugged/Replugged
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Mining the Museum
- Miniskirt March
- Orange Alternative
- Round Dance Revolution
- Standing Man
- Stripping Power in Uganda

Tactics

- Civil disobedience

- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Identity correction
- Invisible theatre
- Storytelling

Principles

- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Know your cultural terrain
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Solidarity, not aid
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Framing
- Memes
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Story of self, us, and now
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Art, Gender and sexuality, Humour, Language, Pranks, Women's rights

TACTIC

CULTURE JAMMING

A cultural intervention that alters a brand or meme to make a subversive political point.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Zack Malitz

Zack Malitz, a New Yorker, thinks that fossil fuels belong underground.

“A CAREFULLY PLANNED CULTURE JAM BYPASSES THE AUDIENCE’S MENTAL FILTERS BY MIMICKING FAMILIAR CULTURAL SYMBOLS, THEN DISRUPTING THEM.”

Urban living involves a daily onslaught of advertisements, corporate art, and mass-mediated popular culture (see: THEORY: Society of the spectacle). As oppressive and alienating as this spectacle may be, its very ubiquity offers plentiful opportunities for semiotic jiu-jitsu and creative disruption. Subversive and marginalized ideas can spread contagiously by reappropriating artifacts drawn from popular media and injecting them with radical connotations.

This technique is commonly known as culture jamming. It originates in the practice of *détournement*, popularized by Guy Debord and the French Situationists. *Détournement* (which roughly translates to “overturning” or “derailment”) appropriates and alters an existing media artifact, one that the intended audience is already familiar with, in order to give it a new, subversive meaning.

In many cases, the intent is to criticize the appropriated artifact. For instance, the neo-Situationist magazine *Adbusters* has created American flags bearing corporate logos in place of stars. The traditional flag, which is often used to quash dissent by equating America with liberty and progress (see: THEORY: Floating signifier), is made to communicate its own critique: Corporations, not the people, rule America. Similarly, an *Adbusters* “subvertisement” for Camel cigarettes, perfectly rendered in the style and lettering of real Camel advertisements, depicts a bald Joe Chemo in a hospital bed.

Culture jamming works because humans are creatures of habit who think in images, feel our way through life, and often rely on familiarity and comfort as the final arbiters of truth (see: PRINCIPLE: Think narratively). Rational arguments and earnest appeals to morality may prove less effective than a carefully planned culture jam that bypasses the audience’s mental filters by mimicking familiar cultural symbols, then disrupting them.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Culture jamming is just a tactic, and like any tactic, it’s more powerful when integrated into a larger strategy (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy). While culture jamming can be a highly effective political tool on its own, when divorced from a larger campaign, it can slide into complacency (or even complicity) in the guise of resistance. There’s nothing wrong with taking savage pleasure in subverting grossly offensive media images, but try to avoid using culture jamming as a mere palliative or substitute for organizing (see: PRINCIPLE: Don’t fall in love with your tactics). Also, as a communicative strategy that closely mimics dominant culture, culture jamming often replicates — or even relies on — oppressive cultural assumptions and biases. So: Know your cultural terrain!

KEY PRINCIPLE

Know your cultural terrain

For instance, University of California, Davis police officer Lt. John Pike began to pop up in some unexpected places after he was captured on film casually pepper spraying students during a peaceful protest. One image depicted Lt. Pike walking through John Trumbull's classic painting The Declaration of Independence and pepper spraying America's founding document, while another depicted him in Georges Seurat's A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, pepper spraying a woman lounging in the grass. These images, and other culture jams of "pepper spray cop," are some of the most visible critiques of police brutality (at least against white people) in recent American history.

In addition to its instrumental, critical function, culture jamming has an important humanistic function. Culture jamming can be used to disrupt the flow of the media spectacle and, ultimately, to rob it of its power. Advertisements start to feel less like battering rams of consumerism and more like the raw materials for art and critical reflection. Advertising firms may still generate much of culture's raw content, but through culture jamming tactics, we can reclaim a bit of autonomy from the mass-mediated hall of mirrors that we live in, and find artful ways to talk back to the spectacle and use its artifacts to amplify our own voices.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs

Mark Dery, 1993

http://markdery.com/?page_id=154

The Art and Science of Billboard Improvement

Destructables

<http://destructables.org/node/82>

Shop Dropping Product Labels - by The Yes Lab

Destructables

<http://destructables.org/destructable/shop-dropping-product-labels-yes-lab>

Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America

Kalle Lasn, 1999

https://books.google.com/books/about/Culture_Jam.html?id=xcLHQgAACAAJ

The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed

Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, 2010

https://books.google.com/books/about/Rebel_Sell.html?id=PSUFJ7-AeIC

A User's Guide to Détournement

Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman, translated by Ken Knabb, 1956

<http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm#1>

As an act of semiotic sabotage, culture jamming requires the user to have fluency in the signs and symbols of contemporary culture. The better you know a culture, the easier it is to shift, repurpose, or disrupt it. To be successful, the media artifact chosen for culture jamming must be recognizable to its intended audience. Further, the saboteur must be familiar with the subtleties of the artifact's original meaning in order to effectively create a new, critical meaning.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Couple in the Cage
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Mining the Museum
- PARK(ing) Day
- Santa Claus Army
- Stolen Beauty
- Walk a mile in her shoes
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yomango
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Cultural disobedience
- Currency hacking
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla marketing
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Light Brigade

Détournement as Negation and Prelude

SI 1959, translated by Ken Knabb, 1959

<http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/315>

- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Embrace the stigma
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Gerontocracy
- Memes
- Postcolonialism
- Society of the spectacle
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Art, Campaign strategy,
Communications, Humour,
Media, Pranks

TACTIC

CURRENCY HACKING

Money can speak loudly, whether we'd like to admit it or not, so why not turn it into a tool to protest and organize, by stamping messages on local currency, and turning bills into leaflets.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ramsey George

Ramsey George works on independent media in the Arab World and lives in Amman, Jordan. He is the co-founder of 7iber.com and the program director of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism.

"Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant."
—P.T. Barnum

Currency hacking, a kind of culture jamming that turns paper money into protest leaflets, has been used by movements across the world to creatively and cost-effectively spread their message.

In 2011, in Occupied Palestine, an activist Facebook group encouraged people to write "Free Palestine" onto shekel paper notes. Eventually Israel's Central Bank had to put out a statement that any notes marked with "Free Palestine" would not be accepted by the bank — which only further boosted the campaign (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction).

Occupy George designed downloadable stamps that treated \$1 US bills as a kind of graph paper to highlight economic disparity in the USA.

Other examples include gay rights activists who stamped "Gay Money" and "Lesbian Money" onto bills to demonstrate the growing consumer clout of the gay community; and Syrian democracy protesters who wrote messages onto bills and threw them into the air (see: TACTIC: Clandestine leafleting).

This tactic is not without risks, as many countries have laws against defacing currency. While it's a difficult law to enforce, it's always wise to assess your risks. All legal issues aside, currency hacking is a generally safe, provocative and low-cost way to spread your message.

LEARN MORE

Facebook Campaign Promotes Palestinian Freedom, on Money
Haaretz, 2011
<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/facebook-campaign-promotes-palestinian->

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Clandestine leafleting
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Guerrilla marketing

Principles

- Balance art and message
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your cultural terrain
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Artivism
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony
- Hacking

freedom-on-money-1.347607

Money Delivers Gays' Message

Orlando Sentinel, 1993

http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1993-07-07/lifestyle/9307040249_1_gay-money-words-gay-national-gay

- Memes

TAGS

Action design, Art, Capitalism, Colonialism, Communications, Direct action, Humour, Language, Pranks, Social media, Wealth inequality

TACTIC

DEBT STRIKE

Inspired by a common struggle against systemic financial exploitation, a debt strike is a coordinated refusal to make monthly debt payments and thereby force the banks to negotiate.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Matthew Skomarovsky

Matthew Skomarovsky is optimistic and googleable.

Sarah Jaffe

Sarah Jaffe is a journalist, rabblrouser, and Internet junkie living in Brooklyn. She is currently an associate editor at AlterNet.org, where she writes about economic justice, activism, and more.

“A DEBT STRIKE IS AUDACIOUS, SIMPLE, AND EASY TO PARTICIPATE IN — EASIER THAN PAYING BILLS, SINCE ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS *NOT* PAY YOUR BILLS.”

“If you owe the bank \$100, that’s your problem; if you owe the bank \$100 million, that’s the bank’s problem.”

—John Paul Getty

What does non-cooperation with our own oppression look like? Sometimes it looks like Rosa Parks refusing to sit in the back of the bus, and sometimes it’s less visible — for instance, a coordinated refusal to make our monthly debt payments. With wages in many countries stagnant since the 1970s, people have increasingly turned to debt financing to pay for education, housing, and health care. Banks have aggressively pursued and profited from this explosion of debt, fueling economic inequality, inflating a massive credit bubble, and trapping millions in a form of indentured servitude. Most people feel obliged to pay back loans no matter the cost, or fear the lasting consequences of default, but the financial crisis has begun to change that. After watching the government shovel trillions in bailouts and dirt-cheap loans to big banks, growing numbers view our debt burdens as a structural problem and a massive scam rather than a personal failure or a legitimate obligation. But asking politicians and banks for forgiveness is unlikely to get us anywhere, because our payments are their profits. What we need is leverage. Enter the *debt strike*, an experiment in collective bargaining for debtors. The idea is simple: En masse, we stop paying our bills to the banks until they negotiate. Because they can’t operate without these payments — for student loans, mortgages, or consumer credit — they’re under severe pressure to negotiate. Such a strike can be connected to demands to reform the financial system, abolish predatory and usurious loan conditions, or provide direct debt forgiveness. Strikers could even

POTENTIAL RISKS

While the initial sign-up is as easy as signing an online petition, unlike a petition, there are potentially serious consequences. Defaulting on a loan impacts your credit rating, which can severely impact your future ability to get a credit card, rent an apartment, buy a car, or even get a job. Thus a successful debt strike will require support networks for strikers, the same way a union has a strike fund to support striking workers. Achieving the critical mass required for the tactic to be effective may also be a challenge. A debt strike is only effective at large scale.

KEY THEORY

Debt revolt

Debt is too often treated like a personal failing that shouldn’t be discussed in public, rather than a common struggle against

pool some or all of the money they're not paying, and put it into a "strike fund" to support the campaign or kick-start alternative community-based credit systems. Coordination is key. We can't act in isolation, exposing ourselves to retaliation and division. Instead, participants should all sign a pledge — either public or confidential — to stop paying certain bills. When enough people sign up to provide real leverage, strike. In the meantime, organize furiously, publicize a running total, aggregate grievances, collect outrageous debt stories, and watch the financial elite panic. A debt strike is audacious, simple, and easy to participate in — easier than paying bills, since all you have to do is *not* pay your bills. It takes courage and social support, but provides immediate gratification. Who doesn't despise the monthly ritual of sending away precious cash to line the pockets of dishonest and destructive financial institutions? Although a massive debt strike has not yet been organized, efforts are underway. People have been mobilizing for years to fight foreclosures and predatory loans. The Occupy Student Debt Campaign aims to gather a million student debt refusal pledges. Another group is building a social pledge system to connect debtors by neighborhood, common lenders, and demands. Online social networks, pledge-to-act platforms like ThePoint.com and story aggregators like Tumblr may soon become weapons on the battlefield of debt. The outrage, organizers, techniques, and tools already exist, and the tactic has perhaps never been more justified. The debt strike is out there, waiting to take the world by storm. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

The Debt Resisters' Operations Manual
Strike Debt, 2013
<http://strikedebt.org/drom>

Debtor's Revolution: Are Debt Strikes Another Possible Tactic in the Fight Against the Big Banks?
Sarah Jaffe, AlterNet, 2011
https://www.alternet.org/story/152963/debtor%27s_revolution%3A_are_debt_strikes_another_possible_tactic_in_the_fight_against_the_big_banks

The Occupy Movement Takes on Student Debt
Vauhini Vara, The New Yorker Magazine, 2014
<https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/occupy-movement-takes-student-debt>

Some Quick Thoughts on the Notion of a Debtors' Strike
Rortybomb, 2011
<https://rortybomb.wordpress.com/2011/11/09/some-quick-thoughts-on-the-notion-of-a-debtors-strike/>

Strike Debt
<http://strikedebt.org/>

systemic exploitation. We also tend to think of debt as a non-negotiable fact rather than a social construct. Once we realize that debts are shared fictions that can be renegotiated or even rejected entirely, we discover we have the power to pull the plug on a system that relies on our separation, shame, and consent. Household debt in the US is around 90 percent of GDP, has grown at nearly twice the rate of real incomes, and as Mike Konczal has noted, impacts the bottom 99 percent disproportionately. As the slogan for the Occupy Student Debt campaign says: "Can't Pay? Won't Pay? Don't Pay!"

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Divestment
- Eviction blockade
- General strike

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Choose your target wisely
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Embrace the stigma
- Escalate strategically
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Capitalism

- Commodity fetishism
- Corruption
- Debt revolt
- Direct action
- Neoliberalism
- Non-cooperation
- Postcolonialism
- Poverty
- The commons
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Austerity, Capitalism, Corruption, Labour, Policy, Wealth inequality

TACTIC DISTRIBUTED ACTION

A decentralized mass protest where large numbers of people express their support by taking many small, simple, coordinated actions: banging pots, turning lights off, wearing the same colour of clothing, etc.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Phil Aroneanu

Phil Aroneanu helped launch 350.org in 2008 with author/activist Bill McKibben and a small group of fellow students. Since then, Phil has led national and global campaigns to push back against corporate polluters and build an authentic grassroots climate movement.

“A DISTRIBUTED ACTION PROJECTS THE POWER OF THE MOVEMENT AND GIVES ACTIVISTS A SENSE OF BEING PART OF A GREATER WHOLE.”

“Victory has a thousand mothers.”
—The Internet

Our default model for large-scale protest is usually the bringing together of thousands, maybe millions, of people in one central location (see: TACTIC: Mass street action). Martin Luther King’s famous 300,000-strong March on Washington in 1963, or the Tahir Square Occupation in Egypt in 2011 are classic examples of this concentrated form of mass protest. But protests can be equally massive — and sometimes more impactful — not by concentrating people together in one place, but by linking together many small, simultaneous protests across the country, or even the world. This is not a new phenomenon — just think of the coordinated protests across the US in October 1969 that were part of the Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam. But the advent of the Internet, decentralized “meet-up” online organizing tools, and social media, has made it easier (and cheaper) to pull off these kind of distributed actions with more precision, visibility, and sense of community.

The Internet is a radical tool for connecting people around the world in service to a common cause — not just by signing your name to an online petition, but by taking real-world action in your community in coordination with others taking action in theirs. A successful distributed action demonstrates the power of a social movement and the breadth of support for a cause (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible), while also giving participants the feeling of being part of a greater whole. It is a particularly useful tactic when a movement is young, dispersed, and minimally networked.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Given its open architecture, a distributed action is risky — not physically, but politically. You put out a call, and people you’ve never met respond and roll into action under your banner. Some folks may go way off message or do something foolish that requires you to engage in damage control. Most things will probably go swimmingly, but the more you follow the guidelines above — a strong framework, a clear call to action, and solid tools to help folks stay on track — the less likely you are to have problems, and more likely you are to make an impact. Many groups also use nonviolence guidelines or a code of conduct that all participants agree to abide by when signing up online.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Hope is a muscle

Distributed actions generally kick-off when an individual or a group puts out a compelling call to action, that includes either a political demand or a unifying message (see: THEORY: Memes), as well as an action framework that allows far-flung participants to take a similar action at the same time in a coordinated fashion.

To pull off a successful distributed action, one should pay attention to these key elements:

A day of action. Having your many small events happen all at the same time gives a distributed action power and coherence, and ups the chances that you can break through the media fog and get the public's attention focused on your issue. Days (or weeks) of action can be highly disciplined and structured, or much looser — more like a potluck dinner, where everybody brings the dish s/he feels like cooking. Organizers might choose to invest time and energy in select flagship locations — taking things to a higher level in a few spots — to help drive the story.

A call to action. A call to action should resonate not just with your core supporters and networks, but should tell a story that the general public will understand, and motivate new volunteer leaders to take to the streets. Depending on the situation, a call to action might include a pointed demand of political leaders, or it can be a more open-ended expression of grievances, like the call to #occupywallstreet, or even an artistic gesture (see: STORY: Lysistrata Project).

Tools for action Hard work, a compelling story, and a healthy dose of inspiration are the most important elements of a successful distributed action. But it can also be very helpful to provide some extra resources for those participants who've never organized an action before, or for those who have who want to take things to the next level. This can be as simple as posting a web link to a few organizing tips, or as involved as offering in-person trainings (see: PRINCIPLE: Training for the win) and downloadable toolkits with posters, checklists, sample press releases, and more. Some kinds of actions, especially those that involve Civil Disobedience or nonviolent direct action, will require more support than others (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care).

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Billionaires for Bush Do-It-Yourself Manual
Billionaires for Bush, 2004
http://www.billionairesforbush.com/diy_v1_contents.php

A successful distributed action demands commitment from all involved. It's easy to feel like nobody is listening. A distributed action runs on inspiration, momentum, hope, and hard work. If you tell a story that resonates, pour your utmost efforts into empowering others to take action, and keep a positive and fun outlook, you can pull off a great and successful distributed action.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Earth First!
- Fees Must Fall
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Honk at Parliament
- Lysistrata Project
- Nuit Debout
- Panty power
- PARK(ing) Day
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Round Dance Revolution
- Standing Man
- Stolen Beauty
- Stop Praver Plan
- Street Graduation
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Trail of Dreams
- Yomango
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Creative petition delivery
- Critical Mass

- Currency hacking
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- Flash mob
- Hashtag campaign
- Hunger strike
- Light Brigade
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Phone banking
- Phone blockade
- Visibility action

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Build strength through repetition
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Consider your audience
- Create many points of entry
- Delegate
- Do the media's work for them
- Enable, don't command
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Hope is a muscle
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make new folks welcome
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Stay on message
- Take risks, but take care
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the power of ritual
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Decolonization
- Floating signifier
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Action design, Community building, Movement building

TACTIC DIVESTMENT

Withdrawing your investment from a company can be a powerful form of economic pressure on an industry or state that is profiting from injustice and destruction.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hoda Baraka

Hoda Baraka is an Egyptian environmentalist currently working as Global Communications Manager for 350.org, a global campaign working to build a climate movement.

Mahmoud Nawajaa

Mahmoud Nawajaa is a Palestinian human rights activist and youth organizer. He is the General Coordinator for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) National Committee, a Palestinian-led global movement.

“WHILE THE CORE FOCUS OF A DIVESTMENT CAMPAIGNS IS TO BRING DIRECT AND INDIRECT ECONOMIC PRESSURE ON A TARGET, THE CAMPAIGN’S MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION IS OFTEN MORE BROADLY MORAL AND POLITICAL.”

“The logic of divestment couldn't be simpler: If it's wrong to wreck the climate, it's wrong to profit from that wreckage.”

—Bill McKibben

“Those who invest in South Africa should not think they are doing us a favour; they are here for what they get out of our cheap and abundant labour, and they should know that they are buttressing one of the most vicious systems.”

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

A divestment campaign is an effective way to apply economic pressure on an industry or state that is profiting from injustice and destruction. The idea is that stock sell-offs, cancelled contracts, and the like will scare off potential investors and create enough economic pressure to compel the target to comply with your demands. A divestment campaign helps to politically isolate the target and limit its ability to act with impunity.

The tactic became prominent in the 1980s, when it was used to bring concentrated economic pressure on the government of South Africa, helping to force it to abolish its racist policy and crime of apartheid. The tactic has most recently been taken up by Palestine solidarity activists and by the global climate justice movement. Both campaigns have shed light on the power and versatility of a divestment strategy.

The global climate justice movement has chosen to target the fossil fuel industry, identifying it as the main obstacle blocking serious

POTENTIAL RISKS

Targets will often try to deflate your enthusiasm, momentum, or anger by making misleading statements and false promises. Divestment is a long-term campaign that requires patience and persistence. The pressure must continue until the actual goal is achieved.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Personalize and polarize

Divestment focuses on one secondary target at a time (e.g. the Tate Museum’s sponsorship of British Petroleum) in order to increase pressure and build public anger against the primary target (e.g. the fossil fuel industry as a whole), so that it becomes isolated and eventually has no choice but to comply. People start to personally identify the primary target with the injustice you are fighting,

action on climate change. The 2015 climate talks in Paris saw 500 institutions commit to divest their capital from fossil fuel companies, while many students have launched campaigns pressuring the universities they attend to divest. So far, the movement has won pledges to divest \$3.4 trillion — a sign that the tide of public opinion is turning against the fossil fuel industry.

Often, a divestment campaign will focus on *secondary targets* because the *primary target* is too powerful or too removed from your supporters' daily lives to be directly pressured (see: TACTIC: Consumer boycott). This is how the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement has operated. In 2008, for instance, the BDS movement called for divestment from Veolia, a French multinational company that was involved in building a light rail system in Palestine that would connect Jerusalem with illegal settlements, thereby contravening international law and Palestinian human rights. After mounting pressure from people of conscience across the world and having lost billions of dollars worth of global contracts, in 2015 Veolia officially declared that it would end all its business in Israel's occupation of Palestine (see: STORY: Dump Veolia Campaign). Through many similar victories against businesses that profit from Israel's regime of colonialism, occupation, and apartheid, the BDS movement is mounting significant pressure on Israel to comply with international law — far more than it could have brought to bear by focusing only on its primary target.

Potentially, any company or institution can become a target of a divestment campaign, but it is absolutely critical that the target is chosen strategically (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose your target wisely). Once a target is chosen, power map the web of relationships around that target. In weighing the range of primary and secondary targets, organizers should consider the degree of involvement of each potential target in the violations at hand, and how vulnerable the target might be to pressure or persuasion.

While the core focus of a divestment campaigns is to bring direct or indirect economic pressure on a target, the campaign's most important function is often more broadly political and moral. The South African divestment campaign helped to politically isolate the apartheid regime. The BDS movement is successfully forcing wider and wider sectors of global public opinion to confront the criminality of Israel's occupation and colonization of historic Palestine. From museums, to college campuses, to investment firms, the global fossil fuel divestment movement is successfully turning the fossil fuel sector into a rogue industry and revoking its social license. Furthermore, because these divestment campaigns simultaneously draw a clear ethical line in the sand and offer many local targets, and therefore create many points of entry, they have been particularly effective at deepening and broadening the movements they're part of.

Almost all entities being lobbied to divest will initially resist or

eventually seeing it as the main obstacle to a just solution. The idea is to dismantle the network of support that your target enjoys, including clients, sponsors, shareholders, or the general public, until the target accedes to your campaign's demands.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Stolen Beauty
- Taco Bell Boycott

Tactics

- Consumer boycott
- Debt strike
- Distributed action

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Create many points of entry
- Escalate strategically
- If you're not uncomfortable, your coalition is too small
- Personalize and polarize
- Solidarity, not aid
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself

Theories

- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Floating signifier
- Intersectionality
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Climate justice, Campaign

ignore your call. It is thus important to remain persistent and have an escalation plan you can stick to until your target concedes to your demands (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically). Remember: A divestment campaign is only one piece of a long-term, multi-pronged strategy, and the breakthrough will come only after a trickle of small successes that continue to accumulate until the last straw breaks the camel's back — and you win.

strategy, Capitalism,
Communications, Colonialism,
Direct action, Energy,
Environment, Human rights,
International solidarity,
Movement building, Policy,
Student activism

LEARN MORE

Interview: The Man Behind the BDS Movement

Rami Younis, +972 Magazine, 2015

<http://972mag.com/interview-the-man-behind-the-bds-movement/107771/>

The Case for Fossil Fuel Divestment

Bill McKibben, Rolling Stone, 2013

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-case-for-fossil-fuel-divestment-20130222>

What is Fossil Fuel Divestment?

Go Fossil Free

<http://gofossilfree.org/what-is-fossil-fuel-divestment/>

Private Prison Divestment Campaign Resources

ENLACE: Organizing for racial and economic justice

<http://www.enlaceintl.org/#!resources/c1km9>

BDS Divestment Page

BDS movement

<http://www.bdsmovement.net/2010/divestment-2-2417>

TACTIC ELECTORAL GUERRILLA THEATRE

By running for public office as a prank, you can sabotage a particularly ugly policy or candidate, popularize a radical idea, or challenge the limits of the electoral system itself.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Larry Bogad

Larry Bogad is a lifelong creative strategist (guided and goaded by Harpo, Groucho, and Zero), co-founder of the Rebel Clown Army, founding director of the Center for Artistic Activism (West Coast), and professor of political performance at the University of California, Davis. He writes, performs, and strategizes with the Yes Men, Agit-Pop, and La Pocha Nostra.

“GET PEOPLE’S ATTENTION WITH HUMOUR AND FOLLOW UP WITH A FEW SIMPLE YET RADICAL IDEAS — THE-WORLD-WE-WANT-TO-SEE TYPE OF IDEAS.”

“The joke is mightier than the sword.”

—Bassem Youssef

Reverend Billy, an anti-consumerist performance artist, running for mayor of New York City; a drag queen running for the Australian senate as the queer doppelgänger of far-right racist politician Pauline Hanson; and Cacareco the Rhinoceros running — and actually winning — São Paulo city council elections! These are all examples of electoral guerrilla theatre, in which activists creatively disrupt the business-as-usual public office elections to inspire critique of the electoral system or the choices on offer.

The term electoral guerrilla yokes two seemingly incompatible approaches. Electoral activists work within the state’s most conventional avenues in an attempt to reform the system peacefully. Guerrillas, in the military sense, exist on the extreme margins of the social system, launching surprise, swift attacks against the state before disappearing again. This contradiction is what makes electoral guerrilla theatre a wild card in the repertoire of resistance. It is an unstable and problematic combination that can take all players involved by surprise.

Winning is rarely the goal. However, by piggybacking on the massive media attention that elections gather (see: TACTIC: Media-jacking), a clever guerrilla campaign can attract much more public attention than might otherwise be possible. Craft a compelling and funny character that fits your critique, say, a pro-corruption pharaoh

POTENTIAL RISKS

If there is a candidate running that you actually do support, take care to craft your campaign in such a way that it amplifies theirs, or at least doesn’t interfere with it. Don’t let your satire upstage your ally to the point that it detracts from their campaign.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Make it funny

Don’t forget this is a joke. Elections are a seductive power ritual. If you are doing well as an electoral guerrilla, you’ll get a lot of attention due to your clever, critical pranks and incursions into the field of “legitimate” debate. This may lead to you or members of your crew to think, “hey, we might actually win; let’s tone this down and get more

who wants to get in on the easy plunder that national establishments in Cairo have been witnessing, for example. Craft your persona, and start crashing mainstream political events — or make a scene when you are prevented from crashing (see: TACTIC: Creative disruption). Even better, earn more scandalous attention by bringing your absurdity through the front door of the power structure by getting a slot in an “equal time” debate, or getting on the ballot with your silly character name, or getting interviewed by the straight media in character.

When trying this approach, there are a couple of things to keep in mind. First, do what they do but with a critical difference (see: THEORY: Alienation effect). If you’re doing this right, by absurdly aping the clichés of the “proper” candidates you can call attention to the fact that they are just as socially constructed and fake as your pharaoh/witch/rhino/etc. Cut ribbons. Kiss babies. Bring out the empty symbolism of these rituals, and insert your own radical critique.

Second, combine serious and playful elements in your election platform. You should actually have a serious point you’re making, and in the middle of all the absurdity and pranks, while you’ve got people’s attention, make that point. Jello Biafra did a great job illustrating this principle during his run for mayor of San Francisco in 1979. Some of his “if I am elected” platform made folks laugh bitterly; some planks — like suggesting that beat cops be elected by the neighborhoods they patrol — made folks think “hmmm . . . actually that’s not a bad idea.” Get people’s attention with humour and follow up with a few simple yet radical ideas — The-World-We-Want-to-See type of ideas (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics). This way you’re not just talking about what you’re against, but what you’re for.

When done right, electoral guerrilla theatre is serious play at its best.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Colbert Rapport

Larry Bogad, *The Nation*, 2007

<https://www.thenation.com/article/colbert-rapport/>

Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements

Larry Bogad, 2016

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2ovDCwAAQBAJ&dq>

respectable.” The campaign then becomes just like the other boring candidacies, except without the money or insider connections. Yawn. The end. The power of the electoral guerrilla is in great part the fact that you are not trying to win state power but to call its core premises into question.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Panty power

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Legislative theatre
- Media-jacking
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Do the media’s work for them
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny
- Play to the audience that isn’t there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Reframe the issue
- Stay on message
- Turn the tables
- Use others’ prejudices against them
- Use the law, don’t be afraid of it
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Elections,
Humour, Media

TACTIC EVICTION BLOCKADE

A strong show of physical resistance to an unjust eviction.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ryan Acuff

Ryan Acuff grew up in Chicago, Illinois, but has been in Rochester, New York, for the last six years participating in community organizing and pursuing graduate work in psychology (M.A). Currently his organizing is focused on homelessness, foreclosure and affordable housing rights, including work with University of Rochester Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Genesee Valley Earth First!, Food Not Bombs, Rochester Free School, Healthcare Education Project, 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Rochester Police Accountability Coalition, Rochester Copwatch, Occupy Rochester, and Take Back the Land Rochester.

“THE ORGANIZING POTENTIAL FOR SUCH ACTIONS IS AS VAST AS THE INJUSTICE IT SEEKS TO CONFRONT.”

Home is where the heart is.
—Proverb

It was a cold March morning in Rochester, New York, when the city marshal approached 9 Ravenwood Avenue in an attempt to carry out what he thought would be a routine eviction. Instead, he was met with 80 people holding signs and banners protesting the foreclosure and imminent displacement of the Lennon-Griffin family, including grandmother Catherine Lennon, her three daughters, and eight young grandchildren (see: PRINCIPLE: Lead with sympathetic characters). Four people were chained to the stairs of the house. Next to them was a large sign that read, “We shall not be moved.” The eviction blockade had been organized by the anti-poverty group Take Back the Land.

The marshal left as quickly as he came, later saying, “this is not what I signed up for.” He would not return for weeks.

Eviction blockades are as old as evictions themselves, and like evictions, they tend to surge in numbers in times of economic hardship. In response to the Great Depression in the US, for instance, the National Unemployment Council — founded in Chicago in 1930 — formed hundreds of local branches to organize

KEY PRINCIPLE

Put your target in a decision dilemma

Effective eviction blockades create a decision dilemma for banks and local governments. If they call off the eviction, the family stays and the movement grows. If they go ahead with the eviction and break the blockade, they dramatically highlight fundamental injustices in the system and raise awareness of the movement.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Schools of Struggle
- Stripping Power in Uganda

eviction blockades across the country. From January to June 1932, 185,794 families in New York City received eviction notices, and the Unemployment Council helped an estimated 77,000 of those families keep their homes. The eviction blockade can be an extraordinarily effective tactic when it has community support (see: PRINCIPLE: Seek safety in support networks), is embedded within a larger movement or campaign, and is linked to winnable demands.

In the case of the Lennon-Griffin family, mortgage holder Fannie Mae eventually pushed the city of Rochester to conduct a SWAT-like operation to break the blockade and forcibly remove the family. The eviction created a terrifying spectacle: Special Operations officers stormed the house, crime scene tape was wrapped around the area, and traffic enforcement officers blocked access by supporters and media. The police arrested seven people, including an elderly neighbour across the street in her pajamas. Though the eviction went ahead, the family's plight and the actions and goals of the movement were elevated to a new prominence, and more families in the community stepped forward to defend their homes with eviction blockades. The eviction cost the city an estimated \$9,000 — one-third the value of the original mortgage.

The negative publicity of breaking a community-supported eviction blockade tends to make local governments and banks more reticent to repeat violent evictions in the future. For example, just five weeks after Catherine Lennon was evicted, she publicly moved back into her house without the bank's permission and with zero police interference. In November 2013, the Lennon family and Take Back the Land Rochester scored a win by finalizing the terms of an official and permanent settlement in which Catherine was given back the deed of her home without a mortgage.

In the wake of a financial crisis that saw banks bailed out while homeowners were left to fend for themselves, this tactic is an increasingly effective one for social movements everywhere (see: PRINCIPLE: Debtors of the world, unite!). In the summer of 2011 the *indignados* movement in Spain shifted its actions from public squares to neighbourhoods, organizing eviction blockades across the country. Six months later, the Occupy movement followed suit. The organizing potential for such actions is as vast as the injustice it seeks to confront.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

City Life Vida Urbana
<http://www.clvu.org/>

Occupy Our Homes: Resources
<http://occupyournames.org/resources/>

Tactics

- Blockade
- Debt strike
- Occupation

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Build strength through repetition
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Escalate strategically
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Action logic
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Debt revolt
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Poverty
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Community

Capitalism, A Love Story: "You Be Squatters in Your Own Home"

Michael Moore, 2010

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVYIBikzwmk>

building, Direct action, Housing,
State violence, Wealth inequality

The Eviction Stoppers

<https://theevictionstoppers.com/>

TACTIC FLASH MOB

A spontaneous, contagious, and often celebratory protest that often uses social media or word of mouth to gather people on short notice in a particular place at a particular time.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Dave Oswald Mitchell

Dave is the Editorial Director of Beautiful Trouble and a co-editor of Beautiful Rising.

“FLASH MOBS HAVE RECENTLY BECOME A POWERFUL TACTIC FOR POLITICAL PROTEST, PARTICULARLY UNDER REPRESSIVE CONDITIONS.”

A flash mob is an unrehearsed, spontaneous, contagious, and dispersed mass action. Flash mobs first emerged in 2003 as a form of participatory performance art, with groups of people using email, blogs, text messages, and Twitter to arrange to meet and perform some kind of playful activity in a public location. More recently, activists have begun to harness the political potential of flash mobs for organizing spontaneous mass actions on short notice. (The term “flash mob” has also been erroneously used to describe highly-choreographed street dance routines, often used as a tool of corporate guerrilla marketing but do not be fooled).

Flash mobs have become a powerful tactic for political protest, particularly under repressive conditions. In the midst of a harsh crackdown on protests in Belarus in 2011, for instance, dissidents calling themselves “Revolution through the Social Network” began organizing impromptu demonstrations where protesters would simply gather in public spaces and clap their hands in unison. The result was the bewildering sight of secret police brutally arresting people for the simple act of clapping their hands — a powerful challenge to the legitimacy of an increasingly irrational regime.

In 2013, there was another spike in defiant flash mobs in Belarus: on one occasion, 100 people, responding to internet postings, gathered outside the KGB building to read from the Belarusian constitution; on another 200 people gathered in a central square and simultaneously opened copies of an independent newspaper, which they silently read as they walked forward.

The overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt also involved flash-mob-like tactics, with organizers calling for protesters to gather initially in alleys and other protected spaces for safety

KEY PRINCIPLE

Simple rules can have grand results

Whether it’s a mass pillow fight (bring a pillow, hit anyone else carrying a pillow), or a bank shut-down (get in line, ask the teller for your entire account balance in pennies, and be disarmingly polite), the invitation to participate in a flash mob can be very simple and easy to share, but when multiplied by tens or hundreds of people, can lead to robust and powerfully effective actions.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Disrupting Obama’s town hall in Myanmar
- Honk at Parliament

before moving into the streets in larger and larger numbers. Blogger Patrick Meier explains the thinking behind this approach:

“Starting small and away from the main protests is a safe way to pool protesters together. It’s also about creating an iterative approach to a ‘strength in numbers’ dynamic. As more people crowd the smaller streets, this gives a sense of momentum and confidence. Starting in alleyways localizes the initiative. People are likely neighbors and join because they see their friend or sister out in the street.”

Another example of effective use of the flash mob tactic is UK Uncut. In October 2010, one week after the British government announced massive cuts to public services, seventy people occupied a Vodaphone store in London to draw attention to the company’s record of unpaid taxes. The idea quickly went viral: Within three days, over thirty Vodaphone stores had been shut down around the country by flash mobs organizing over Twitter using the hashtag #ukuncut (see: TACTIC: Hashtag campaign).

The revolutionary potential for dispersed, coordinated action using flash mob tactics has only begun to be realized. As Micah White wrote in Adbusters:

“Fun, easy to organize, and resistant to both infiltration and preemption because of their friend-to-friend network topology, flash mobs are positioned to be the next popular tactic with revolutionary potential With flash mobs, activists have the potential to swarm capitalism globally.”

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Flash Mob

Know Your Meme

<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/flash-mob>

Tool: Flash Mob

Global Change Lab, 2014

<http://www.globalchangelab.org/en/trainingbit/smartmob-the-new-flashmob>

Dance Flash Mob Step-by-Step How-To Kit

Backbone Campaign

<https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/backbonecampaign/pages/81/attachments/original/1509496659/FlashmobHowto2.pdf?1509496659>

BDS Song and/or Dance Flash Mob Step-by-Step How-To Kit
End the Occupation

- Orange Alternative
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Round Dance Revolution
- Street Graduation
- Who Would Accept?
- Yomango
- “You’ll never have a home in your f***ing life!”

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Carnival protest
- Creative disruption
- Creative lobbying
- Critical Mass
- Distributed action
- Flotilla
- Guerrilla musical
- Hashtag campaign
- Human banner
- Invisible theatre
- Light Brigade
- Mass street action
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Create many points of entry
- Do the media’s work for them
- Don’t expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Enable, don’t command
- Focus on basic needs
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use others’ prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Ethical spectacle
- Memes
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The social cure

https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/backbonecampaign/pages/81/attachments/original/1509496658/FlashMobHow-To_FirstDraftcopy.pdf?1509496658

Mondo Award Winner, First Runner-Up: Rae Abileah and Colleen Kelly for Flash Mob
Mondoweiss, 2011

<http://mondoweiss.net/2011/03/mondo-award-winner-first-runner-up-rae-abileah-and-colleen-kelly-for-flashmob/>

- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting

TAGS

Action design, Dictatorship,
Humour, Pranks, Social media,
State violence, Street protest

TACTIC FLOTILLA

A flotilla — also known as a boat rally or “kayaktivist” blockade — is an innovative way to attract public attention, demonstrate support for a cause or disrupt a marine target.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Marina Pervin Juthi

Marina Pervin Juthi is a development worker working with Initiative for Right View (IRV) and involved in people’s initiatives to address burning issues in the ecologically vulnerable area of the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh. She is always trying to raise the voice of the community to get their rights.

Many communities live along the water; their livelihoods often depend on boats, their traditions focus on the water. Meanwhile powerful interests, from industrial fishing to fossil fuel extraction, threaten our riverways and coasts. It’s only natural that rallies and blockades — tactics we tend to associate with the land — also happen on the water.

In Bangladesh, boat rallies are a quite common — and effective — form of protest. People arrive on their boats, which are then decorated with placards, flags, colorful paint and cloth. Leaflets are distributed, speeches given, and even press conferences are organized across the boats using a mic and loudspeakers (sound carries well over water!). Colourful, spirited and community-oriented, they tend to capture the attention of both media and policymakers.

In 2010 and 2011, several “Freedom Flotillas” carrying only humanitarian aid and human rights workers attempted to break the Israeli naval blockade of Gaza Strip. They were violently boarded and seized, and the resulting controversy dramatized the plight of Palestinians in Gaza and further isolated Israel on the international stage.

In 2015, Shell Oil was planning to tow a massive offshore oil rig from the Seattle harbor (where it was undergoing repairs) up to the treacherous and ecologically fragile Arctic waters, where it would be used to drill for oil. The people of Seattle were determined to not let them out of the harbor — and a new tactic was born: the kayaktivist blockade. With indigenous kayakers in the lead, hundreds of water-borne blockaders blocked the rig’s path when it tried to leave. Many were arrested by the Coast Guard, but they were able to slow things down and create enough bad publicity that when Shell ran into further mechanical and political difficulties, the

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Blockade
- Creative disruption
- Flash mob
- Visibility action

Principles

- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action

Methodologies

- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Climate justice, Direct action, Environment, Human rights, Indigenous rights, Nonviolence

company pulled the plug on the entire \$7 billion operation.

Whether freedom flotilla, boat rally or kayaktivist blockade, water-borne protest can be a powerful way to attract public attention, demonstrate support for a cause or disrupt a marine target.

LEARN MORE

Gaza "Freedom Flotillas"

Wikipedia, 2010

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007-present_blockade_of_the_Gaza_Strip#Naval_blockade

o98 posts tagged "kayaktivism"

Other98.com, 2015

<http://other98.com/tag/kayaktivism/>

TACTIC FORUM THEATRE

Forum theatre is a tool for exploring and rehearsing possible actions that people can take to transform their world. It's often used both in preparation to taking action and in anti-oppression workshops.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Levana Saxon

Levana Saxon is an organizer and educator with Practicing Freedom who has worked with groups such as the Paulo Freire Institute, Rainforest Action Network, Center for Political Education, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Youth In Focus, El Teatro Campesino, and multiple Oakland Public Schools. She currently co-coordinates the Ruckus Society's Arts Core and facilitates trainings and dialogues with the White Noise Collective, which she co-founded.

"THE POINT IS NOT TO SHOW WHAT WE THINK OTHER PEOPLE SHOULD DO — IT IS NOT THEATRE OF ADVICE. THE POINT IS TO DISCOVER WHAT WE CAN DO."

"Don't ask God to guide your footsteps if you're not willing to move your feet."

—Unknown.

Forum theater is a commonly used tool from Theater of the Oppressed framework. It begins with crafting and performing a short play that dramatizes real situations faced by the participants, and that ends with the protagonist(s) being oppressed. After the first performance, the play or scene is repeated with one crucial difference: The spectators become "spect-actors" and can at any point yell "freeze" and take the place of an actor to attempt to transform the situation or the outcome. Forum theatre is an exercise in democracy in which anyone can speak and [anyone can act]Anyone can act).

One of the first things that spect-actors realize is that, as in life, if they don't intervene, nothing will change. The next thing spect-actors find is that doing "something" is not enough, it must be strategic (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy). The people acting as oppressors on stage will maintain their oppression until they are authentically stopped — and just like in life, stopping them isn't easy. Forum theatre thus becomes a laboratory to experiment with different courses of action.

The protagonists should be characters that all or most of the people

POTENTIAL RISKS

The role of the Joker is a tricky one. It is easy to leave the group with false optimism about what can work, or to run out of time before everyone is satisfied with what has been attempted. The Joker must make many small decisions in every moment, such as whether or not to allow the introduction of additional characters, whether or not to add interventions upon other interventions, how many interventions to allow, when to stop an intervention when it's not going anywhere, and so on.

Another pitfall is to use forum theatre to generate ideas for solutions but then fail to act on, or implement, them. Forum theatre works to the extent that

in the room can identify with, so that when they intervene, they are rehearsing their own action. The point is not to show what we think other people should do — it is not theatre of advice. The point is to discover what we can do.

Forum theater is facilitated by someone called a Joker, who engages the spect-actors both on and off stage in dialogue throughout the process. After an intervention, the Joker may ask, “Did this work? Was this realistic? Can you do this in real life?”

Forum theatre was developed in a context where oppression, the oppressed, and the oppressors were clearly defined. Its originator, Augusto Boal, was living in exile from the Brazilian military dictatorship, and social movements across the continent were struggling against harsh military repression. Since then, the technique has been adapted to countless other contexts around the world, as practitioners seek to grapple with the complicated power relationships of more diverse groups of people. Often interventions will uncover multiple layers of power, dramatizing characters who are simultaneously oppressed and oppressing others.

Forum theatre is an effective tool of creative activism, useful for generating interventions, as an intervention itself, and for building common strategic frameworks for movements.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Forum Theatre
Drama Resource, 2014
<https://dramaresource.com/forum-theatre/>

Forum Theatre for Community Empowerment
Educational Tools Portal, 2016
<http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/en/tools/forum-theatre-community-empowerment>

Theatre of the Oppressed
Augusto Boal, 1979
<https://books.google.com/books?id=2PrIAQAACAAJ&dq>

Games for Actors and Non-Actors
Augusto Boal, 2002
https://books.google.com/books/about/Games_for_Actors_and_Non_actors.html?id=AE2aBAQZKKYC

it prepares participants to actually intervene critically in their own lives and the world around them.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Praxis makes perfect

Forum theatre helps people analyze key moments in a certain situation, reflect on them and then offer an improved avenue of action. This “laboratory” can make activism more effective and reduce the gap between our theoretical strategy and our practical action plan whether for a campaign, or a tactic, or a specific situation that we hope to impact.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Guerrilla theatre
- Image theatre
- Invisible theatre
- Lamentation
- Legislative theatre
- Storytelling
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Praxis makes perfect
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Anti-oppression
- Artivism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Decolonization
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- The Global South
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion

TAGS

Art, Campaign strategy

TACTIC

GENERAL STRIKE

A widespread work shutdown across many industries in a city, region, or country. General strikes are led by workers, often involve entire communities, and can be triggered by unpopular political edicts.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stephen Lerner

Stephen Lerner is architect of the Justice for Janitors campaign and serves on the executive board of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). He has been a labour and community organizer for over thirty years and is working with labour and community groups in campaigns that challenge Wall Street's and big corporations' domination of the political and economic life of the US and global economy.

“INSTEAD OF JUST ENGAGING IN PICKETING AT THEIR WORK SITE, STRIKERS SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BEING LIBERATED FROM WORK BY THE STRIKE AND BECOME FULL-TIME ORGANIZERS.”

“Win or lose, mass strikes reveal the truth.”

—Jeremy Brecher

Strikes can be a powerful weapon for shifting the balance of power in workplaces and points of production. By withholding their labour and stopping work from continuing, generations of workers over the last 150 years have won better wages, improved working conditions, and basic bargaining rights.

One-day general strikes, like those that took place around the world in 2011 from Bangladesh to Oakland, are in essence symbolic protests, more focused on making a political point than creating real economic pressure. To harness the tactic's true potential, general strikes need to escalate from symbolic one-day protests to ongoing actions that last days and potentially weeks, with a clear goal of inflicting both economic and political damage until the strikers' demands are met.

In 2014, the Jordanian General Union for Port Workers launched several open-strike intervals causing real economic chaos and disruption of import operations, which led their employers to heed their demands. The citywide general strikes of janitors in Los Angeles (2000), Boston (2002), and Houston (2006), are another example of how an industry-wide general strike successfully forced

POTENTIAL RISKS

It is too easy to romanticize the idea of a strike. Due to the increasing concentration of transnational corporate power and various laws limiting workers rights, most strikes are now small and rarely successful rearguard actions to resist wage and benefit cuts. Workers need to creatively reinvent the tactic if strikes are again going to be an effective weapon to win justice. In particular, workers need to recognize, and harness, the power of general and cross-industry strikes. Additionally, strikers should be aware of empty promises by their targets only as a counter-tactic to lure them to end the strike. Strikers should be prepared to come back with even stronger

powerful corporations hiding behind cleaning subcontractors to meet the demands of tens of thousands of striking janitors.

In both cases, a wide array of tactics were used, including sit-ins (see: TACTIC: Occupation), street blockades (see: TACTIC: Blockade), and nonviolent civil disobedience (see: TACTIC: Civil disobedience). In Jordan, one of the approaches included slowing down the work rate to the extent that port operations were completely halted. And with the janitor strikes, which won massive public support by pitting poor janitors against rich landlords, striking workers and their supporters effectively shut down business-as-usual in the business districts of the cities.

A key factor to the success of a general strike is to have an escalation plan (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically). Instead of just engaging in picketing at their work site, strikers should take advantage of being liberated from work by the strike and become full-time organizers, campaigning against the corporations and politicians that control and profit from the industry the workers were targeting. That could literally mean thousands of strikers/organizers working full-time day in and day out organizing demonstrations that shut down streets and occupy buildings while simultaneously mobilizing community and ecumenical support. Not one action or tactic will provide enough pressure. There needs to be constant, creative, and courageous escalation.

General strikes can also be effective to achieve political demands, such as the 2012 strike in Nigeria which forced the government to reduce fuel prices, or the 2017 strike in Al-Hoceima, Morocco, which demanded the release of one of the leaders of the popular uprising in the Rif region.

The striking janitors learned firsthand that that isolated strikes are rarely effective, and that going on a citywide or nationwide general strike, even in large numbers, doesn't *alone* lead to victory either. To win, strikers need to have a clear understanding of the target and its vulnerabilities (see: METHODOLOGY: Power mapping), and develop a plan to exploit those vulnerabilities.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Strike!

Jeremy Brecher, 2014

<https://books.google.com/books/about/Strike.html?id=Eh33AwAAQBAJ>

organizing if their target(s) refused to implement the promise it made after the strike ended.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Choose your target wisely

Successful workplace actions depend on choosing the right target and determining how best to apply pressure on that target. The most vulnerable target may not always be the most obvious one

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Justice for Janitors
- Schools of Struggle
- Stop Praver Plan
- Taco Bell Boycott
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- #ThisFlag
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Civil disobedience
- Debt strike
- Hunger strike
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Create many points of entry
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use organizing strategies that

scale

- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Gerontocracy
- Neoliberalism
- Palace Coup
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- The Global South
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Direct action, Labour, Wealth inequality

TACTIC

GUERRIGLIA DEL TEATRINO ELETTORALE

By running for public office as a prank, you can sabotage a particularly ugly policy or candidate, popularize a radical idea, or challenge the limits of the electoral system itself.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Larry Bogad

Larry Bogad is a lifelong creative strategist (guided and goaded by Harpo, Groucho, and Zero), co-founder of the Rebel Clown Army, founding director of the Center for Artistic Activism (West Coast), and professor of political performance at the University of California, Davis. He writes, performs, and strategizes with the Yes Men, Agit-Pop, and La Pocha Nostra.

“GET PEOPLE’S ATTENTION WITH HUMOUR AND FOLLOW UP WITH A FEW SIMPLE YET RADICAL IDEAS — THE-WORLD-WE-WANT-TO-SEE TYPE OF IDEAS.”

“The joke is mightier than the sword.”

—Bassem Youssef

Reverend Billy, an anti-consumerist performance artist, running for mayor of New York City; a drag queen running for the Australian senate as the queer doppelgänger of far-right racist politician Pauline Hanson; and Cacareco the Rhinoceros running — and actually winning — São Paulo city council elections! These are all examples of electoral guerrilla theatre, in which activists creatively disrupt the business-as-usual public office elections to inspire critique of the electoral system or the choices on offer.

The term electoral guerrilla yokes two seemingly incompatible approaches. Electoral activists work within the state’s most conventional avenues in an attempt to reform the system peacefully. Guerrillas, in the military sense, exist on the extreme margins of the social system, launching surprise, swift attacks against the state before disappearing again. This contradiction is what makes electoral guerrilla theatre a wild card in the repertoire of resistance. It is an unstable and problematic combination that can take all players involved by surprise.

Winning is rarely the goal. However, by piggybacking on the massive media attention that elections gather (see: TACTIC: Media-jacking), a clever guerrilla campaign can attract much more public attention than might otherwise be possible. Craft a compelling and funny character that fits your critique, say, a pro-corruption pharaoh

POTENTIAL RISKS

If there is a candidate running that you actually do support, take care to craft your campaign in such a way that it amplifies theirs, or at least doesn’t interfere with it. Don’t let your satire upstage your ally to the point that it detracts from their campaign.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Make it funny

Don’t forget this is a joke. Elections are a seductive power ritual. If you are doing well as an electoral guerrilla, you’ll get a lot of attention due to your clever, critical pranks and incursions into the field of “legitimate” debate. This may lead to you or members of your crew to think, “hey, we might actually win; let’s tone this down and get more

who wants to get in on the easy plunder that national establishments in Cairo have been witnessing, for example. Craft your persona, and start crashing mainstream political events — or make a scene when you are prevented from crashing (see: TACTIC: Creative disruption). Even better, earn more scandalous attention by bringing your absurdity through the front door of the power structure by getting a slot in an “equal time” debate, or getting on the ballot with your silly character name, or getting interviewed by the straight media in character.

When trying this approach, there are a couple of things to keep in mind. First, do what they do but with a critical difference (see: THEORY: Alienation effect). If you’re doing this right, by absurdly aping the clichés of the “proper” candidates you can call attention to the fact that they are just as socially constructed and fake as your pharaoh/witch/rhino/etc. Cut ribbons. Kiss babies. Bring out the empty symbolism of these rituals, and insert your own radical critique.

Second, combine serious and playful elements in your election platform. You should actually have a serious point you’re making, and in the middle of all the absurdity and pranks, while you’ve got people’s attention, make that point. Jello Biafra did a great job illustrating this principle during his run for mayor of San Francisco in 1979. Some of his “if I am elected” platform made folks laugh bitterly; some planks — like suggesting that beat cops be elected by the neighborhoods they patrol — made folks think “hmmm . . . actually that’s not a bad idea.” Get people’s attention with humour and follow up with a few simple yet radical ideas — The-World-We-Want-to-See type of ideas (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics). This way you’re not just talking about what you’re against, but what you’re for.

When done right, electoral guerrilla theatre is serious play at its best.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Colbert Rapport

Larry Bogad, *The Nation*, 2007

<https://www.thenation.com/article/colbert-rapport/>

Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements

Larry Bogad, 2016

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2ovDCwAAQBAJ&dq>

respectable.” The campaign then becomes just like the other boring candidacies, except without the money or insider connections. Yawn. The end. The power of the electoral guerrilla is in great part the fact that you are not trying to win state power but to call its core premises into question.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Legislative theatre
- Media-jacking
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Do the media’s work for them
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny
- Play to the audience that isn’t there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Reframe the issue
- Stay on message
- Turn the tables
- Use the law, don’t be afraid of it
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Elections,
Humour, Media

TACTIC GUERRILLA PROJECTION

With a clever image, a high-powered projector, and a little moxie, you can literally shine a spotlight on your opposition.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mark Read

Mark Read is a filmmaker and professor of Media Studies at NYU, with a focus on video as a tactical tool in community organizing. In other incarnations he has also been a community gardens activist; a Union Square Park defender; a Critical Mass rider and organizer; a coordinator of large spectacles in public spaces such as subway train parties; and a core organizer and propagandist for Reclaim the Streets NYC.

Samantha Corbin

Samantha Corbin is actions director for The Other 98% and national coordinator of the US Uncut network, as well as a nonviolent direct action trainer with The Ruckus Society and a founding member of the New York Action Network. She has coordinated scores of affinity group actions including banner hangs, blockades, and street theater actions; led several large-scale actions including the 5,000-strong Powershift 2011; and developed and delivered countless trainings in creative nonviolent direct action, affinity group organizing, strategic planning, scouting, and high tech action.

“SEEING OUR OWN HANDWRITING SCRAWLED ACROSS A CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS UPENDS THE POWER DYNAMIC.”

Guerrilla projection, pioneered by artists and advertisers, has been increasingly embraced by activists in recent years as a new medium for delivering messages. The advantages are obvious: With a single high-powered projector, you can turn the side of a building into a huge advertisement for your cause, plastering your message on a spot that would otherwise be out of reach. It's legal, relatively cheap, and far less risky than, say, trespassing onto a building's roof to hang a banner off of it. Most importantly, it's visually powerful: You can literally shine a light on the opposition.

Projections can be low-fi or hi-fi; mobile or stable. Two jerry-riggers can do one out of the back of their car to capture a quick hit-and-run photo op, or a professional VJ can project from a more stable plug-in location to entertain a crowd of thousands (see: STORY: 99% Bat Signal). They're also a perfect tactic for rebranding your target. Greenpeace projected a huge cartoon “KABLOOM” onto the side of a nuclear reactor to remind people how dangerous nuclear power can be, and “We have nuclear weapons on board” onto a nuclear-equipped aircraft carrier that was refusing to acknowledge it. In 1993, the Academy Award-winning documentary, “Deadly Deception,” was projected directly onto the San Francisco TV

POTENTIAL RISKS

The technology is very powerful, “spectacular” in nature, and often under the control of one person or a small group who could potentially manipulate a large and impressionable crowd. This power needs to be kept accountable to the broader group, and should be wielded with great care.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Balance art and message

When designing your action, let your imagination range far and wide. Consider, in particular, its site-specific nature, and look for ways the medium itself can highlight your message.

station that was refusing to air it, while hundreds watched, eating popcorn. Under pressure, the station relented and aired the film.

Much of the power of projections is in the medium itself. Unlike hanging a banner, a projection can move and change, and even be interactive. With a medium so versatile, why limit yourself to static slogans? On the eve of the Great American Smokeout in 1994, INFACT hit the Philip Morris building in New York with a running count of the number of children addicted to cigarettes. With simple online tools, your projection can become interactive and crowd-sourced. Supporters on the street — or a continent away — can text, tweet, or email in their own messages to be projected in real time. With a laser pointer, people on the street can write messages to others inside a building, whether they're friends and family in jail or a CEO in his corner office.

Projections help us upend the power dynamic. The buildings of the powerful can feel so big and our voices and protest signs so small. But when a huge "99%" bat signal lights up the night sky, or you see your own handwriting scrawled across a corporate headquarters in real time, it begins to level the playing field. Small voices are writ large.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Illuminator - Tools
The Illuminator
<http://theilluminator.org/tools/>

Consider all the artful elements at work in the 2008 Free Tibet projection on the Chinese consulate in New York: The persecuted Tibetan activist was at that moment literally in hiding a world away, yet was able to speak directly to

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Culture jamming
- Graffiti drone
- Guerrilla marketing
- Light Brigade
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Communications, Direct action,
Media

TACTIC HASHTAG CAMPAIGN

By choosing a strategic hashtag and curating the ensuing conversation, you can use Twitter and other social media platforms to shift the debate and expand your support.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Duncan Meisel

Duncan Meisel is a strategic troublemaker who lives in Brooklyn, where he conspires on how to respond to the impending end of the world. He is particularly interested in trying to stop the warming of the earth, ending the impoverishment of America by corporate power, and putting an end to the prison system as we know it.

Grace Atuhaire

Grace Atuhaire is the Activista Digital Officer for ActionAid Kenya, and an activist and a freelance journalist based in Nairobi, Kenya. Find her on Twitter at @graceseb.

“THE HASHTAG IS A FRAMING DEVICE THAT HELPS SET THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE AND CLARIFY WHAT’S AT STAKE.”

With hundreds of millions of people around the world participating in social networks, activist storytelling strategies increasingly rely on hashtag campaigns to convene and drive conversations.

Wait, what is a hashtag? Twitter hashtags combine a “#” symbol and a keyword that connect posts from different authors (e.g., #BringBackOurGirls for discussion about the 200 Nigerian girls kidnapped by Boko Haram, or #Kony2012 to push for the arrest of indicted war criminal and International Criminal Court fugitive Joseph Kony, or #OWS for Occupy Wall Street). Posts that share a hashtag can be viewed together in a single place, facilitating an ongoing public conversation. And with no preset list of hashtags, Twitter is a democratic medium. You can create your own brand new hashtag at any time. #NowDoAHappyDanceToCelebrate.

Hashtag campaigning is all about using hashtags to strategically frame, convene, and drive key conversations. A well-chosen hashtag will positively define the values associated with your political position, and draw more people to your side of the debate.

Typically, the hashtag that organizes a conversation is a highly polarizing proper noun that inspires people to pick a position in a discussion about it. For instance, in 2011, UK Uncut organizers started staging protests at Vodafone stores, organizing under the hashtag #UKUncut, to reframe the discussion about austerity to focus on corporate tax dodgers rather than public spending. The role of the organizer practicing hashtag politics is to polarize a discussion effectively, and then curate the conversation to make

POTENTIAL RISKS

Hashtag campaigning has its limits. The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls received 2 million retweets, including one from Michelle Obama. But did Boko Haram release the kidnapped children? No. As a stand-alone action, a hashtag can’t change the world. It can only supplement or draw attention to other actions you want to take to create more awareness.

Also, your online security is only as good as the measures you put in place. If you are working in a high-risk political environment, you can create a Twitter account using a pseudonym and make sure you don’t put any of your personal information online. For more general online security tips, check out: Security in a box.

KEY THEORY

your side more compelling.

Your hashtag could be any number of things. Using narrative power analysis as one guide, you could choose to polarize a discussion around a character in your story — either a sympathetic character (like the Nigerian girls seized by Boko Haram) or a villain (like Kony) — or perhaps a scene of conflict that locates the problem we must face (like Wall Street).

The hashtag is a framing device that helps set the terms of the debate and clarify what's at stake. A well-chosen hashtag will positively define the values associated with your political position, and draw more people to your side of the debate.

Adapted from "Hashtag politics," originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Hashtag Politics Training Bit
Global Change Lab

<http://www.globalchangelab.org/en/trainingbit/hashtag-politics>

Hashtag Politics

Duncan Meisel, Beautiful Trouble, 2012

<http://beautifultrouble.org/theory/hashtag-politics/>

Safe Tweeting: The Basics

Twitter

<https://support.twitter.com/articles/76036>

Security in a Box

<https://securityinabox.org/en/guide/secure-communication>

Framing

To win a campaign it's critical to craft a winning frame. And to win in an increasingly socially mediated world, it's increasingly important to strategically and proactively define the hashtag you wish to organize your campaign

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bring Back Our Girls
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Fees Must Fall
- Flower Speech Campaign
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign
- Manich Msamah
- Round Dance Revolution
- Stop Praver Plan
- #ThisFlag
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Guerrilla marketing
- Light Brigade
- Storytelling

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Change a name to change the game
- Consider your audience
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Practice digital self-defence
- Reframe the issue
- Seek safety in support networks
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Stay on message
- Think narratively

- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Community
building, Digital security,
Language, Movement building,
Social media

TACTIC HOAX

By impersonating your target through a fake press release or media event, you can use satire and exaggeration to expose an injustice or demonstrate that another reality is possible.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mike Bonanno

Mike Bonanno (né Igor Vamos) is a guy from Troy, New York, who started the “Barbie Liberation Front” and co-founded the Yes Men. When not involved in tomfoolery, Bonanno is also a professor of media art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

“HOAXES ARE ONE WAY FOR ACTIVISTS TO “BUY” SOME AIRTIME THAT THEY CAN’T AFFORD.”

“Sometimes it takes a lie to expose the truth.”

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

On April 15, 2011, when General Electric announced that the company would return its illegitimate (but legal) \$3.2 billion tax refund, and also lobby to close the sort of corporate tax loopholes that had allowed them to dodge taxes in the first place, it seemed too good to be true. When was the last time a major American corporation took such a moral leadership role?

Um, never! The announcement was a hoax, created by the tax fairness group US Uncut, with some help from The Yes Lab. On this occasion, the core of the action was a simple press release that masqueraded as a real one from General Electric. An Associated Press writer, as eager as the rest of America to believe that such a thing could be true, picked it up and sent it over the wire. It only took minutes to be debunked, but in the media storm it created (including a temporary \$3 billion plunge in GE stock value), US Uncut was able to make their point, at a scale usually only granted to those who can pay for the privilege.

Hoaxes are one way for activists to “buy” some airtime that they can’t afford. Instead of complaining that the press is set up to give voice to the interests of the powerful (see: THEORY: The propaganda model), the hoax puts that bias to work. By speaking as the powerful, and telling a more interesting story than the powerful usually do, one can often commandeer a pretty big soapbox. After the hoax is revealed (usually within minutes or hours) then the activists can explain themselves to the public in their own true voices, with the help of the usually massive numbers of journalists

POTENTIAL RISKS

There is always a certain segment of the population that despises the idea of a lie, regardless of the intent. If you are trying to appeal to this small, sanctimonious, and usually left-wing group, you may want to think twice.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use the Jedi mind trick

With nothing more than a website, a phone line, and some gumption, anyone can be anyone. Just use the Force!

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Couple in the Cage
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Santa Claus Army

all stirred up by the trick that's just been played on the powerful.

It is generally best to reveal a hoax promptly. The ultimate goal here is more truth for more people. At the Yes Lab, we have an ethos: Never leave a lie on the table. This ethos is the opposite modus operandi of those in power. The grand hoaxes they perpetrate on the people — everything from simple greenwashing campaigns to complex conspiracies to subvert democracy — are never meant to be debunked.

For example, in 1991 the PR company Hill and Knowlton created a fake story on behalf of the Kuwaiti government about Iraqi soldiers taking premature babies out of incubators after the invasions of Kuwait. Their story and manufactured "eyewitness accounts" won Bush Sr. the US public support he needed to invade Iraq. That hoax was never meant to be revealed, but thanks to investigative journalists, the truth eventually came out.

Activists, on the other hand, generally reveal their hoaxes at the earliest opportunity. Speaking of which, the epigraph for this entry is not from Sun Tzu. It's from the DVD box of *The Yes Men Fix the World*.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Merry Pranksters and the Art of the Hoax

Mark Dery, New York Times, 1990

<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/23/arts/the-merry-pranksters-and-the-art-of-the-hoax.html?pagewanted=all>

Make Your Own Newspaper Headlines

Destructables

<http://destructables.org/content/make-your-own-newspaper-headlines>

The Yes Lab

www.yeslab.org

Research 11 Pranks

V. Vale and Andrea Juno, 1987

<https://books.google.jo/books?id=lt-5oAEACAAJ&dq=A.+Juno+%26+V.+Vale.+Pranks!&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjqJD M7KrZAhURJuwKHRruDYYQ6AEIJzAA>

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Identity correction
- Image theatre
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make it funny
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Political identity paradox
- Society of the spectacle
- The propaganda model
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Humour, Media, Social media, Pranks

TACTIC

HUMAN BANNER

A political rally arranged into a huge work of human aerial art, composing a single iconic photo that captures what's at stake.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Brad Newsham

Brad Newsham is the author of two round-the-world travel memoirs and is currently the owner/driver of Green Cab #914. His first human mural (one thousand people spelling out "IMPEACH!" in 100-foot lettering) was created on Ocean Beach in San Francisco, on January 6, 2007 — two days after San Francisco's Nancy Pelosi became Speaker of the US House of Representatives.

“YOU WANT VIEWERS TO GET YOUR MESSAGE ON FIRST BLINK, AND GASP AT ITS BEAUTY, AUDACITY, AND CLARITY.”

There's no law saying that the revolution can't be fun — and human banners are excruciatingly fun. No chanting, no harangues; just hundreds of people using their bodies to form enormous words or an image in order to send a message. A human banner can be spur of the moment — a milling crowd can be quickly arranged and photographed from a nearby building or lamppost — but conscientious planning can produce staggering works of aerial art. I've helped create ten human banners, with crowds ranging from 300 to 1,500. Each event was powerful, cathartic, and the feedback was always something along the lines of: "The most enjoyable, most fun, best demonstration I've ever been to!" The human banner is a powerful, expressive tactic. It has some of the political virtues of a rally: It turns out numbers that physically demonstrate public support and the movement's ability to mobilize, but it does so with the elegance of a work of art. Journalists need fresh story angles and compelling visuals, and the human banner delivers: it's unusual, remarkable, notable, people-powered, and made up of a thousand individual human interest stories. And when composed correctly, it delivers the money shot the media is always looking for: a single iconic photo that speaks for itself, that tells the whole story on its own (see: THEORY: Action logic). A human banner can be spur of the moment — a milling crowd can be quickly arranged and photographed from a nearby building or lamppost — but conscientious planning can produce staggering works of aerial art. Here are some things to keep in mind when planning your human banner: **Slogan/image:** Your image needs to communicate your

POTENTIAL RISKS

It's easy to get grandiose in your plans, but complexity doesn't scale well. Keep it simple. Or if you do want to get complicated, test drive a smaller version first, then plan meticulously.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Do the media's work for them

A human banner allows you to tell an entire story in one stunning image, but you'll likely have to deliver that image yourself. Invite the media along, but don't expect them to bring a helicopter. After the event, with aerial photo and press release in hand, you'll have a ready-for-prime-time package.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

message concisely and powerfully. Words and symbols are easiest to lay out, pictures trickier. You want viewers to get your message on first blink, and gasp at its beauty, audacity, and clarity. **Site:** An iconic background anchors your photo to a place. Murals can be created on sand (etch the outlines before the crowd arrives), on grass (mark it with ropes or string), on pavement (chalk). A football field-sized area works well. My preferred font size for lettering is 100 feet tall, ten feet wide. **Photography:** Video is nice, but getting at least one great photo is your goal. A helicopter gives optimal photographic maneuverability, but other possibilities include small planes, tall buildings, cranes, and camera-balloons. **Crowd:** You'll definitely want enough folks to fill in your lettering, plus a cadre of event volunteers. Pre-registration prevents last-minute scrambling — or, worse, a "thin," scraggly image. Focus on designing an event you'd be excited to attend. Nail the details. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

Thousands spell "RESIST!" on San Francisco's Ocean Beach
SF Curbed, 2017

<https://sf.curbed.com/2017/2/13/14600710/trump-resist-sf-beach>

"Giant Melting da Vinci Artwork Recreated on Arctic Sea Ice"

Greenpeace, Youtube, 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olXPh9v8Z08>

Collaborative Art for the Common Good

Spectral Q

<http://spectralq.com>

- Gezi Park iftar
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Enforced appearance
- Flash mob
- Light Brigade
- Public art intervention
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Make new folks welcome
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Show, don't tell
- This ain't the Sistine chapel

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions

TAGS

Action design, Art, Communications, Movement building, Street protest, War and peace, Women's rights

TACTIC HUNGER STRIKE

The deliberate and public refusal of food, and sometimes water, as a moral protest against injustice or abuse of power. A single individual can hold a hunger strike, or hundreds together in solidarity.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Laurinda Goveia

Laurinda Goveia is an Angolan activist who participated in the movement that fought against the dictatorship of José Eduardo dos Santos. She now fights for the rights of vulnerable women through the platform “Ondjango Feminista.”

“A HUNGER STRIKE IS A POWERFUL MORAL AND INDIVIDUAL ACT, BUT IT IS ALSO A TACTIC THAT IS MEANT TO ADVANCE A CAUSE.”

“A hunger strike . . . means you refuse food until you are at death's door, and then the authorities have to choose between letting you die, and letting you go.”

—Emmeline Pankhurst

The hunger strike is a classic nonviolent pressure tactic used for centuries by activists from all corners of the world. In fact, it's so central to the direct action toolbox that it is the only tactic among Gene Sharp's 198 methods of nonviolent action to be broken down into sub-tactics. The gist of it is pretty simple, though: Stop eating.

All people must eat. By refusing to do so until an injustice is corrected you can often exert enough pressure to force a powerful target to concede to your demands.

Used strategically, a hunger strike can not only draw attention to a situation of injustice or violated rights, but also elevate the cause and credibility of those who have chosen to take such a strong and personally risky action, giving hunger strikers more leverage at the negotiating table.

100 years ago, suffragettes in the UK and the US used hunger strikes (often prolonged and from jail) as a pressure tactic in the fight to win women the right to vote. Both governments responded with gruesome force-feeding of prisoners.

For Gandhi, fasting was both a political pressure tactic and a spiritual part of his satyagraha philosophy of nonviolence. He fasted 17 times during the struggle for Indian independence and again

POTENTIAL RISKS

A hunger strike can be an excellent tactic for reversing an apparent power disadvantage, especially from within a prison, where it can be used as a last resort after exhausting other tactics such as refusing to leave your cell, refusing to dress, etc. But, with life in prison already posing numerous health and other challenges, it comes with great risks.

Death, sickness, and force-feeding, to name three. The physical risks are very real, and prolonged dehydration can cause important organs to fail. But the political risks are real, too, because in spite of risking your life, you might still fail to meet your goals.

Yes, a hunger strike is a powerful moral and individual act, but it is also a tactic that is meant to advance a cause. So, it is critical

against the communal violence after Partition. During his longest strike (21 days), the British, worried at the sympathy that might be generated, prohibited any photographs of him to circulate.

In 1981, during a prolonged hunger strike for better conditions and political recognition, 10 imprisoned members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) died, including strike leader Bobby Sands (after 66 days) who was elected MP from prison during the strike. The strike radicalised Irish nationalist politics, elevating Sinn Féin into a mainstream political party.

In 2011, a much-publicized series of hunger strikes outside the administrative headquarters of the Indian Government (some by tax officials turned activists) led to the passage of major anti-corruption measures, and swept the newly-founded Common Man party into power in New Delhi's municipal elections.

In 2016, 17 Angolan political prisoners, including Luaty Beirão (known also by his musician persona Ikonoklasta) protested their detention with a hunger strike of 36 days — one day for every year the then dictator-President Jose Eduardo dos Santos had been in power. The protest (which came to be known as the Angola 15+2 won international visibility and the regime was pressured to release the prisoners. Weakened by this capitulation, and with popular and international opinion polarized against him, dos Santos stepped down the following year.

Sometimes hunger strikes are undertaken by people on the frontline of an injustice (say the 30,000 California prisoners who engaged in a mass hunger strike against solitary confinement in 2013); sometimes by their allies (as with the hunger strikes by prominent religious leaders in solidarity with Florida farmworkers engaged in the Taco Bell Boycott.

A hunger strike works best when it is part of a thoughtful (and strategic) mix of other tactics, such as solidarity fasts and vigils. In some situations, mass mobilization is required to force a ferocious opponent to budge, as in 2012 when The Palestinian Political Prisoners' Movement organized 1800 inmates dispersed across several Israeli prisons to go on a coordinated hunger strike.

Before deciding on a hunger strike, you need to ask basic questions such as: Are you acting alone or as a group? Who are you trying to influence and will this tactic be effective on them? And, also, what is your Plan B?

It's critical to publicize the strike, and especially to escalate pressure (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically) as the stakes rise and public attention grows. In the 1981 IRA hunger strikes, Bobby Sands began first, but other strikers joined one at a time and at staggered intervals to generate maximum pressure and public support.

In addition to such tactical considerations, you must always ask:

to think things through strategically. No matter how brave and well-intentioned you are, if you're not thinking like a movement, you may be making a costly political error. Ask yourself: Are you making a demand that is important to your people? Are you choosing a tactic that strategically corresponds to that demand? You don't want to find yourself in the awkward position of having gone through all the risk and drama of a hunger strike, only to not get any traction, and have to give up with nothing to show for it.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Put your target in a decision dilemma

A hunger strike can be a powerful (and also risky) way to put your opponent in a decision dilemma. If your strike is able to win public sympathy, then you're basically forcing your target to choose between giving in to your demands or being seen as a heartless villain who let a courageous and moral person suffer and die.

Activate international mechanisms

International attention, as well as sympathetic faith leaders, can play a key role in elevating the story of your hunger strike and increasing moral pressure. The UN, human rights organisations like Amnesty International, and even the Red Cross, can be powerful potential allies here.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Taco Bell Boycott

What are *you* prepared to risk and how far are *you* prepared to go? As Ms. Pankhurst said more than 100 years ago: “Only people who feel an intolerable sense of oppression” should adopt such an extreme tactic.

LEARN MORE

How an underground hip hop artist and his book club threatened the

Phil Wilmot, *Waging Nonviolence*, 2016

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/how-an-underground-hip-hop-artist-and-his-book-club-threaten-angolas-regime/>

Rules for (hunger-striking) radicals

Nadine Bloch, *Waging Nonviolence*, 2013

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/2013/09/rules-hunger-striking-radicals/>

Samer Issawi, *Hunger Strikes, and the Palestinian Struggle*

Foreign Policy Journal, 2014

<https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2014/01/01/samer-issawi-hunger-strikes-and-the-palestinian-struggle/>

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Distributed action
- General strike
- Jail solidarity

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Decolonization
- Expressive and instrumental actions

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Nonviolence

TACTIC

IDENTITY CORRECTION

An act of activist ventriloquism in which you momentarily assume the mask of power to speak a little lie that tells a greater truth.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

“OFTEN THE MOST REVEALING MOMENT IN A SUCCESSFUL IDENTITY CORRECTION IS THE REACTION OF THE TARGET.”

“Artists use lies to tell the truth. Yes, I created a lie. But because you believed it, you found something true about yourself.”

—Alan Moore

When trying to understand how a machine works, it helps to expose its guts. The same can be said of powerful people or corporations who enrich themselves at the expense of everyone else. By catching powerful entities off-guard — say, by speaking on their behalf about wonderful things they should do, but in reality won't — you can momentarily expose them to public scrutiny. In this way, everyone gets to see how they work and can figure out how better to oppose them.

This is *identity correction*: exposing an entity's inner workings to public scrutiny. To practice it, find a target — some entity running amok — and think of something true they could say but never would — something that's also lots of fun. What you say can either be something your target would say if its PR department went absent or berserk (modest proposal), or things they would say if by some miracle they decided to do the right thing (honest proposal). Instead of speaking truth to power, as the Quakers suggest, you assume the mask of power to speak a little lie that tells a greater truth.

The *modest proposal* approach — which the Yes Men and others have used on many occasions to impersonate companies and parody them — can be a hit-or-miss affair. It usually involves an

POTENTIAL RISKS

Getting caught by the real folks you are impersonating. Not really a risk, just a plot twist, so well worth preparing for.

KEY PRINCIPLE

The real action is your target's reaction

Often the most revealing moment in a successful identity correction is the reaction of the target. When you identity-correct a major corporation, you force them to react. They can't let the lie-that-tells-the-truth stand in the media. GE had to tell the press it was *not* returning its questionable tax refund to stand in solidarity with struggling Americans. Dow Chemical had to issue a statement indicating it had *not* apologized for the Bhopal disaster and would *not* be compensating the victims.

absurd and extreme — but logical — extension of the entity's current practices, like when the Yes Men suggested that executives of transnational corporations would want to remotely monitor and control workers in factories in Africa via a control panel mounted on a huge golden phallus.

In spite of the emotionally satisfying payoff of antics like those, however, it's the *honest proposal* approach — assuming the identity of a big evildoer and announcing they're doing something wonderful — that has proven to be the more effective way to embarrass a target. When the Yes Men impersonated Dow Chemical on the twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal catastrophe and announced on Dow's behalf that it was finally taking responsibility for the disaster (see: [STORY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal](#)); or when U.S. Uncut activists announced that GE was paying its 2010 taxes after all (see: [TACTIC: Hoax](#)); or when activists impersonating French officials announced that Haiti's debt — which had been imposed when Haiti won independence from France, to compensate French slave owners for their lost "property" — would at long last be forgiven; or when environmental activists impersonated Canada (in one case) or the US Chamber of Commerce (in another) and announced surprising and wonderful things . . . In all these cases, the consequences were immediate: voluminous news reports about the unlikely turn of events (and, in the Dow and GE cases, giant temporary drops in each company's stock value). These in turn provided fodder for a wave of other articles about the whole hoax, providing a media platform for the reform programs of campaigners working on these issues.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Identity Correction: How it Works

The Yes Men

<http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/picture?pic=1862>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Conflict Kitchen
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Mining the Museum
- Santa Claus Army
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yomango

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Hoax
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Be an ethical prankster
- Brand or be branded
- Choose your target wisely
- Do the media's work for them
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Take advantage of unintentional irony
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Turn the tables

- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Capitalism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- The propaganda model

TAGS

Action design, Communications,
Humour, Media, Pranks

TACTIC IMAGE THEATRE

A theatre exercise in which participants form statues that represent an oppressive situation, followed by group reflection to better understand the situation and try out possible solutions.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Levana Saxon

Levana Saxon is an organizer and educator with Practicing Freedom who has worked with groups such as the Paulo Freire Institute, Rainforest Action Network, Center for Political Education, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Youth In Focus, El Teatro Campesino, and multiple Oakland Public Schools. She currently co-coordinates the Ruckus Society's Arts Core and facilitates trainings and dialogues with the White Noise Collective, which she co-founded.

"WHILE IMAGE THEATRE STARTS WITH A FROZEN IMAGE, IT QUICKLY MOVES TOWARD INTERVENTIONS BY PARTICIPANTS."

Image theatre, a social change tool developed by Augusto Boal, is one of the more widely used forms of Theatre of the Oppressed, in which activists, students, or any group are invited to form statues that represent a moment in time of an oppressive situation. The image can then serve as a springboard for critical group reflection in order to both understand the situation better and to try out possible solutions. Through the process of creating and working with the image, participants can decode the situation, dissecting each character's personality, motivation, and range of possible actions. To the extent that the participants identify with the characters, they can explore possible actions that they themselves could take in their lives.

Image theatre is similar to forum theatre in every way, except that everyone is holding still. This allows for faster use of the process: While forum theatre often involves a small team that develops and rehearses a skit for months, image theatre can be created on the spot, collaboratively. In this way, image theatre is an incredibly accessible tool to use in trainings, strategy development, and even direct actions.

For example, at a 2005 rally to support a disruption of a Chevron shareholder meeting in San Rafael, California, all demonstrators present were invited to form an image to depict the entire oil industry, including the characters who benefit from it, are oppressed by it, or are bystanders of it. Portrayed in the image were drivers,

POTENTIAL RISKS

When creating an image that involves representing people who are not present, stereotypes of those people commonly surface. This can cause problems when participants begin manipulating the image and the actor tries to imagine what is going on in that person's head. With oppressor characters, this makes for an unrealistic laboratory in which to experiment with actions. With oppressed characters, it can perpetuate the dehumanizing stereotypes that fuel their oppression in the first place. This pitfall can be avoided by directing the action toward the people in the room, which image theatre is specifically designed to do.

RELATED TOOLS

oil tycoons, media, and impacted communities (people from Nigeria and Ecuador were present to represent themselves). Even water and the Earth were included as characters. Once people were satisfied that the image represented reality, they shared their character's thoughts and motivations. The few people left in the rally who were not part of the image were then asked to take ten seconds each to intervene in the image in an attempt to transform the oil industry by reshaping the characters whom they believed were the critical agents of change. Everyone could see plainly what actions could or could not get us to the "ideal image." Within twenty-five minutes, the group had arrived at goals, possible tactics, and next steps.

While image theatre starts with a frozen image, it quickly moves toward interventions by participants, acting in character, to collaboratively and spontaneously name their oppression and its source, and then explore courses of action. The final stage is to reflect on what happened with participants and, if appropriate, write up the actions that seem most viable.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Games for Actors and Non-Actors

Augusto Boal, 2002

https://books.google.com/books/about/Games_for_Actors_and_Non_actors.html?id=AE2aBAQZKKYC

Theatre of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal, 1979

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2PrIAQAACAAJ&dq>

Image Theatre

David Farmer, 2014

<https://dramaresource.com/image-theatre/>

Stories

- Replacing Cops with Mimes

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Forum theatre
- Hoax
- Invisible theatre
- Legislative theatre
- Storytelling

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message
- Praxis makes perfect
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Anti-oppression
- Critical multiculturalism
- Direct action
- Framing
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Peel the onion

TAGS

Action design, Art, Campaign strategy, Community building, Direct action, Education, Movement building, Street protest

TACTIC INFILTRATION

The people destroying the planet don't just have names and addresses, they also have gatherings. When they gather near you, stop in and see what they're up to.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

“REMEMBER: IT’S NOT THE AUDIENCE THERE IN THE ROOM THAT YOU’RE MOST CONCERNED WITH.”

Cops and other agents of the state are always infiltrating our get-togethers, both for intelligence gathering and in order to disrupt our work. Given how successful this tactic has proven when used against us, it only makes sense that we would respond in kind — and do it with more style.

Why sneak into a meeting or conference? Maybe simply to see what's going on, or to play a trick of some sort. You might not even know in advance what the trick will be. In 2004, Mike Bonnano and I snuck into the Heritage Foundation luncheon for conservative think tanks just to get acquainted with that world, and on the spur of the moment, seeing Ed Meese sitting next to the podium, I stepped up to the unguarded microphone and proceeded to nominate him for President. His reaction on camera is priceless.

Again and again, the Yes Men have successfully impersonated corporate presenters at conferences and pulled off some very revealing stunts.

A completely different approach is to stage a guerrilla musical in the middle of the keynote speech of an evil lobbyist. That's what health care activists did at a major insurance industry conference in 2009 (see: [STORY: Public Option Annie](#)).

Always make sure that one or more of your team is filming your action. Remember: It's not the audience there in the room that you're most concerned with, but the audience who will see your

POTENTIAL RISKS

Depending on the meeting you're infiltrating, this tactic will expose you to different levels of risk. When planning your infiltration, assess the risks you're undertaking and, if the risks feel worth it, do what you can to mitigate them (see: [PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care](#)). Use the buddy system, roleplay de-escalation scenarios, and have someone on-hand to document any confrontation. Try to maintain your composure and a sense of humour, and don't respond in kind to aggression or insults.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Do the media's work for them

No matter what you do when you're inside the conference

RELATED TOOLS

footage, read the press release, or benefit from the secrets you've liberated from behind closed doors (see: PRINCIPLE: Play to the audience that isn't there).

In many cases, at least for run-of-the-mill conferences, the actual sneaking-in is so easy it's almost an afterthought. Simply walk up to the table near the entrance that's full of name badges, choose one, and say it's yours (and, if asked, say you've forgotten your business cards). Take the conference materials you'll be graciously offered along with the badge, and proceed inside, or, if you like, to your nearest copy shop to make a bunch of other badges with other names for your pals. Alternately, come to the table after the initial registration rush is over, perhaps midday (when only a few tags are left, probably belonging to no-shows), observe the name on a tag, and then run out and print a few business cards (a sheet of pre-perforated cards and a copy shop will do the trick). Return and claim your badge.

Happy infiltrating!

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

How to Crash a Conference

Yes Lab, Destructibles, 2011

<http://destructibles.org/destructable/how-crash-conference-yes-lab>

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Hacking Apartheid
- Public Option Annie
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Do the media's work for them
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Make it funny
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Seek common ground
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Action design, Direct action, Humour, Media, Pranks

TACTIC INFLATABLES

An inflatable prop (pneumatic object made of plastic foil, filled with air or helium) with the right symbol can be a great way to frame your action and communicate your message.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Artúr van Balen

Artúr van Balen co-founded the artist group Eclectic Electric Collective (2009-2012) and founded the art-activist platform Tools for Action (2012-present), in which he gives participatory skillshare workshops on how to make inflatables for community building and as a tool for intervention. He is in love with everything that inflates and currently researching the technological evolution of inflatables.

“THERE IS NOTHING AS SAD AND DEMORALIZING AS A LIMP INFLATABLE.”

“My creativity, no matter how poor, is for me a far better guide than all the knowledge with which my head has been crammed. In the night of power, its glimmer keeps the enemy forces at bay.”

—Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*

Inflatable props, or inflatables, can transform a boring protest march into a playful, memorable, and interactive event. Inflatables are pneumatic objects made of thin plastic foil and filled with air or helium. Folded into small bundles, they can be transported in a backpack or suitcase. Once inflated, they mesmerize with their enormous size, softness, and gravity-defying weightlessness.

Inflatables bring a tactical frivolity to protest settings. They can be put to many uses, from engaging the crowd, to ridiculing the police, to providing an iconic meme for the media (see: PRINCIPLE: Do the media’s work for them), to forcing authorities into a decision dilemma (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma). In the same way that protest theatre uses comedy and absurdism as a tactic to get beyond police lines (see: STORY: Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army), the grotesque, goofy nature of inflatables can be used to similarly disarm or ridicule the authorities.

The building of large-scale inflatables is difficult to do alone, so making it a social activity of equal importance to the action that follows is not only crucial, but powerful. There is something poetic and utopian in collaboratively bringing to life lightweight, oversized

POTENTIAL RISKS

Creating inflatables can be technically demanding and, once deployed, they can be easily damaged. There is nothing as sad and demoralizing as a limp inflatable. There are, however, some ways to compensate for these weaknesses: Avoid making holes by working in a clean environment free of sharp objects. For objects that are bigger than 5 metres, you can use a fan that continuously inflates the object. This allows the inflatable to have a few small tears without it looking limp. Bring tape with you to the action to repair the biggest holes.

KEY THEORY

Action logic

As the most visible symbol of your protest, an inflatable prop

structures. The work is ideally suited for engaging people from diverse backgrounds: creatives, bringing artistic skill, as well as activists, bringing energy and strategy. As the big inflatable takes shape, excitement grows over the collectively built sculpture that soon will be shining in public. The inflatable production process is, therefore, the ideal creative space that can foster trust and friendships that go beyond a political mobilization.

One example of a successful inflatable is the 12-metre, silver, inflatable hammer that was built in Berlin and sent in a suitcase to the United Nations Climate Conference in Cancún, Mexico, in 2010. The global march for climate justice stalled at the fences assembled 100 metres in front of the conference complex. A sense of frustration was in the air. Suddenly a group of protesters ran in with a gigantic hammer above their heads and banged the inflatable against the police barriers. In full view of the press, the Mexican police ripped the inflatable to pieces. Within hours, the global media corporations declared the inflatable hammer the symbol of the protests for that day.

Another example is the inflatable cobblestones used in 2012 in Berlin during the May Day protests and in Barcelona against the austerity cuts. These simple cubes, made of silver reflective foil and tape, were easy to build in larger quantities. At the Berlin May Day protests, the inflatables proved very effective in disarming aggressive police and buoying spirits after the crowd got kettled in. Bouncing the inflatables against a phalanx of heavily armed riot cops was a humorous activity, as the police could not help but to bounce them back and were thus unwillingly participating in a game of catch. Videos show the cops struggling with the slippery surface of the material, trying to restore order but in fact engaging in slapstick comedy. The action caused loud laughter and effectively flipped the standard media portrayal of the protest from “stone-throwing troublemakers” to “mean old riot cops destroying a balloon.”

As we can see from both of these examples, inflatables are most powerful when they are not only used as a visual element in a march, but when they are placed into a tactical, performative situation, which might involve blockades (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction). Striking a balance between utter seriousness and a sense of absurdity or humour is key for a compelling story. And of course it is important to have a team of photographers ready to document the situation.

LEARN MORE

Tools for Action
<http://www.toolsforaction.net/>

Inflatables for Protest: An Interview With Artúr van Balen/Tools for

can be a great way to frame your action and communicate your key message or idea. For example, giant inflatable rats have become commonplace at US labour protests of workplaces where the employer is acting like a “rat.” Choose the right symbol, and your message will be clear to everyone who sees the prop, in person and in the media.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Reclaim the Streets

Tactics

- Carnival protest
- Mass street action
- Visibility action

Principles

- Do the media's work for them
- Make friends with the police (unless it's funny not to)
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Say it with props
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively

Theories

- Action logic
- Activism
- Memes

Methodologies

- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Art, Humour, Pranks

Action

Steffi Duarte, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2014

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/disobedient-objects/tools-for-action-interview-with-artur-van-balen>

TACTIC INVISIBLE THEATRE

The public staging of a realistic scene — say, a same-sex couple discriminated against in a restaurant — that poses an ethical dilemma and engages bystanders, who remain unaware they are part of a performance.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Tracey Mitchell

Based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, Tracey uses engaging techniques to help groups establish and accomplish goals, build teams, develop leadership skills, and make decisions together. Tracey is also a campaigner, zinester, organizer, and forum theater practitioner, and has developed plays around issues of poverty and social justice.

“INVISIBLE THEATRE IS THEATRE THAT SEEKS NEVER TO BE RECOGNIZED AS THEATRE, PERFORMED IN A PUBLIC PLACE.”

You're dining in a restaurant when suddenly a lesbian couple and their two children, dining nearby, are accosted by a homophobic server. "These children need a father," she says. "You're making everyone else here uncomfortable." Other customers chime in in agreement, while still others leap to the defense of the family. Some of these people are actors, the rest, including you, are unwittingly participating in an invisible theatre performance.

Invisible theatre is theatre that seeks never to be recognized as theatre, performed in a public place. The goal is to make the intervention as realistic as possible so that it provokes spontaneous responses. The scene must be loud enough to be heard and noticed by people, but not so loud or conspicuous that it appears staged. Bystanders can and will engage with the scene as if it were real life, because for them it is real life. Invisible theatre can thus achieve things that most other theatre cannot, removing barriers between performer and spectator, and creating very accessible conflictual situations in which people can rethink their assumptions and engage with sensitive issues they might otherwise avoid.

Invisible theatre is one of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, and has been used around the world in many different settings. In New York City in 2003, actors posing as tourists made loud comments about the potential terrorist threat posed by two Muslim women in hijab (also actors) who were taking photos of the Empire State Building. This scene sparked important dialogue about racial profiling and the "War on Terror." In other instances, actors

POTENTIAL RISKS

Invisible theatre carries with it significant ethical and safety considerations, which should be explored carefully before choosing this tactic. Actors should rehearse a range of observer reactions, including aggression and abuse, and should be prepared to roll with the punches (sometimes literally!). Having an escape plan or distress signal, and discussing ahead of time if or when to break character, is also advisable (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care).

KEY PRINCIPLE

The real action is your target's reaction

While part of the beauty of invisible theatre is its spontaneity, it is also important to anticipate and rehearse

posing as customers in restaurants and grocery stores have claimed not to be able to afford their bill, sparking a dialogue with the cashier and nearby customers (some of them also actors) about questions of economic justice.

Invisible theatre requires a significant amount of preparation and rehearsal. The form requires actors to remain in character even when the action goes in unexpected and challenging directions. In its pure form, invisible theatre never lets on that it is theatre. Unlike other stealth theatre forms like guerrilla theatre, Yes Men-style hoaxes, or Improv Everywhere pranks, there is never a "reveal." People who encounter an invisible theatre performance should experience it as reality and forever after think it was real.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Invisible Theatre, Ethics and the Adult Educator

Bonnie Burstow, 2008

[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02601370802047775?](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02601370802047775?journalCode=tled20)

journalCode=tled20

potential audience responses. It is a good idea to test out your scene with people who did not participate in its creation to see what responses it provokes. Your invisible theatre performance is only as strong as the reaction or thought process it generates in your audience.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Couple in the Cage
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Santa Claus Army

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Flash mob
- Forum theatre
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla theatre
- Image theatre
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Theatre of the Oppressed

TAGS

Pranks

TACTIC

JAIL SOLIDARITY

Putting pressure on authorities after activists are arrested can create a strong community of resistance, and help deter state violence and the persecution of activists.

CONTRIBUTED BY

McDonald Lewanika

McDonald Lewanika is a social justice activist who has worked with several groups in Zimbabwe's quest for democratization. He was the founding director of the Student's Solidarity Trust, the Executive Director of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, and currently serves as the deputy chair of the Magamba Activist Network, which makes use of spoken word, stand-up comedy, and festivals as vehicles for activism.

"WHILE REVOLUTIONARIES CAN BE IMPRISONED, THE REVOLUTION CAN NOT."

"If you want to know who your friends are, get yourself a jail sentence."

—Charles Bukowski

"I have the people behind me and the people are my strength."

—Huey Newton

Political imprisonment has long been a standard repressive response from state authorities, particularly tyrannical regimes and authoritarian governments, to criminalize dissent, spread fear, break rebellions, and stop the growth of social movements.

Jail solidarity is a tactic for putting pressure on authorities after activists are arrested. By pushing for activists' release, or, failing that, for decent treatment and protection from psychological and physical abuse, it seeks to create a strong community of resistance, based on mutual support and unity of purpose, that can act against harassment, false accusations, selective prosecutions, strategies of isolation and victimization, and other forms of persecution.

The tactic can be applied in two interconnected ways: one, within the prison walls among arrested activists, and two, spanning those walls to connect prisoners with those on the outside who support them. The aim in the first case is to agitate for fair and equal treatment for all activists arrested, protect those who cannot afford to pay their way out of jail, and prevent abuses of the justice system, particularly those targeting the poor, youth, and minorities.

POTENTIAL RISKS

To work, jail solidarity requires, well, solidarity. Differences of strategy can pull a group of arrestees apart; for instance, when some people want to keep resisting inside the jails while others think it's most important to get out and make a stand on the streets. Within a group of arrestees, different individual circumstances, especially different levels of privilege and risk tolerance, can work against solidarity. Some arrestees cannot handle the precarious and unhealthy conditions in the jails; others cannot afford the time jail solidarity demands, as it often takes a long time to force the authorities' hands.

Without jail solidarity among those arrested, however, the power to make decisions is transferred to the judicial system

Withholding names and other forms of identification, and collectively refusing any plea unless it helps to negotiate the dismissal or reduction of charges for everyone, are key components for this tactic to be effective.

In the second case, there are many ways people outside the jail can support prisoners, but visiting with care packages is often the most crucial. Care packages supply food and water for arrested activists, but also create a moment of interaction that often helps to facilitate legal, medical, psychological, social, and spiritual support. These visits have the additional purpose of ensuring the activists are being treated with dignity and are not being abused or tortured. It shows both the jailed and the jailers that there are people on the outside looking out for them, and that they will raise the alarm if they detect any abusive practices.

This public support is important because, if it's organized, it can put massive pressure on the state to release the prisoners. During visiting hours, people can organize to show up all at the same time. By flooding the jail with visitors, organizers show the authorities that arresting activists will not stop them fighting for their causes. While revolutionaries can be arrested, the revolution can never be.

Jail solidarity breaks the fear barrier created by isolation, creates a community of support, and amplifies the message behind the original arrest, helping to raise issues that were invisible prior to the activist's imprisonment. It undermines the state's effort to silence dissent and transforms an otherwise unbearable incarceration into something bearable, even powerful.

LEARN MORE

The Global Justice Movement's Use of "Jail Solidarity" as a Response to Police Repression and Arrest: An Ethnographic Study
Beverly Yuen Thompson, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2007

https://www.academia.edu/775919/The_Global_Justice_Movement_s_Use_of_Jail_Solidarity_As_a_Response_to_Police_Repression_and_Arrest_An_Ethnographic_Study

Jail Support and Solidarity

Midnight Special and Katya Komisaruk, *Organizing for Power*

<http://organizingforpower.org/jail-support-solidarity/>

Jail Solidarity

Civil Disobedience Training, ACT UP

<http://www.actupny.org/documents/CDdocuments/Jailsolid.html>

in a way that is risky for activists — both individually, and for future collective engagements. When an arrested activist decides to break jail solidarity and make a deal to get released, the key question is: How will this decision impact those who stay behind? Once outside, that individual can continue to support those inside by speaking to the media and carrying messages to families and other supporters, but that requires a conscious and often long-term commitment. A final risk: In some countries, jails are legally defined as protected areas, so any protests organized on the inside are considered illegal and can lead to further arrests.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Seek safety in publicity

Abuse of power thrives in the shadows. Sometimes the best way to ensure that the arrested or disappeared person is returned safely is simply to make as much noise as possible as early as possible, identifying the responsible party and ensuring that they will be held accountable for any abuses. Media coverage, phone banking campaigns targeting the responsible authorities, and international action appeals can all help to ensure the safety of those arrested, and help deter further violence.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Fees Must Fall
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Hunger strike
- Mass street action
- Phone banking

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Foster safer spaces
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Seek safety in support networks
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Dunbar's number
- Non-cooperation
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Pillars of power

TAGS

Democracy, Dictatorship, Direct action, Human rights, Immigration, International solidarity, Racial justice, State violence

TACTIC LAMENTATION

Public mourning as protest.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Clotilda Andiensa

Clotilda is a teacher, gender equality activist, and peace advocate. She founded the Center for Advocacy in Gender Equality and Action for Development, and is active in the South West - North West Women's Task Force to restore peace in Anglophone Cameroon.

"MOURNING DOESN'T HAVE TO SURRENDER TO HOPELESSNESS AND DESPAIR. IT CAN ALSO BE A PROACTIVE MOVE AGAINST INJUSTICE."

"The politics of our time is the 'politics of the brokenhearted.'"
—Parker Palmer

Lamentation is the ancient practice of public tears or wailing. Especially in the Global South, it has retained its timeless power to name violence.

Mourning doesn't have to surrender to hopelessness and despair. It can also be a proactive move against injustice, especially extreme injustices that affect a broad segment of a community.

Lamentation is most often used as a *response* to a grave injustice, such as killings, war, or other forms of extreme violence. It garners publicity and evokes empathy. The wails of vulnerable people are heard by those who feel the day-to-day struggle of living under violence or other forms of injustice. This tactic is often most effectively used by women.

When women grieve in public and demand that their cries be addressed with action, they do so with undeniable moral authority and emotional power.

In August and September 2018, Anglophone Cameroonian women gathered in the towns of Buea and Bamenda to sit down together in lament of the civil war pillaging their land and causing the injury and murder of thousands. These interventions reduced the scope of attacks. In May 2019, lamentations were again conducted in these two towns, confronting the Prime Minister who conceded to the lamenters' demands for a peace dialogue.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Lamentation on its own usually achieves very little. It is designed to spur on subsequent action by those with the institutional power to bring about the desired change (e.g. a peace agreement, ceasefire, or reduction of brutality). Campaigners should be prepared for a long-term, persistent effort to achieve their overall goal. All hope should not be placed in this tactic alone (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy).

KEY PRINCIPLE

Use the power of ritual

While ritual may not transform the problem or offer a solution, it often transforms us, reaffirms our commitments, or in this case, calls another party to responsibility. Ritual offers a space for healing *and* for invoking action. Lamentation is one specific ritual that scores of

In many African societies, women take public action only as a last resort. When they do so, it is recognized as an extreme measure, and the entire public, men included, are expected to do something to restore peace or address the injustice at hand. To disregard this responsibility can be understood as deliberate neglect of those in crisis.

Lamentation has been used across Africa with far-reaching results. In 2007, the indigenous Yatui community of the Mt. Elgon moorlands wailed, "Our children are dying" from their mountaintop for eight consecutive hours. Shamed into action, the Ugandan government designated land for their temporary relocation and promised them a permanent settlement, having been previously displaced when their land was included in a new national park.

The tactic of lamentation isn't limited to a one-off eruption of emotion; it can also be applied in a more ongoing and regular way. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, whose loved ones disappeared during the Videla dictatorship, have held weekly vigils (see: TACTIC: Artistic vigil) every Thursday since 1977, becoming a force to be reckoned with in Argentinian society and helping to bring down a dictatorship and expose human rights abuses.

Lamentation is used in times of extreme violence or injustice, particularly when innocent and vulnerable lives are lost or affected. It offers a space for mourning while simultaneously calling upon the community to take action against persistent injustices.

LEARN MORE

Injustice at Mount Elgon
Shua Wilmot, Solidarity Uganda, 2018
<http://solidarityuganda.org/injustice-at-mount-elgon/>

people can practice together, especially in contexts where public mourning is commonplace.

KEY THEORY

Expressive and instrumental actions

Expressive actions offer participants a space to authentically engage their feelings about a cause and remain true to their personal values and commitments. Instrumental actions efficiently move a campaign closer to its overall objective. Many campaigns fail by employing a series of expressive tactics that don't win concrete gains. Well-trained organizers, on the other hand, sometimes lose sight of their own humanity in a quest to be strategic. Lamentation offers the unique power of being simultaneously both expressive *and* instrumental. It offers a space for emotion, healing, and commitment to ending grave injustices while also pushing powerful parties to act.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Lysistrata Project
- Panty power
- Round Dance Revolution
- Stripping Power in Uganda

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Forum theatre
- Mass street action
- Sex strike
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground

- Bring the issue home
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Dictatorship, Human rights, Nonviolence, State violence, War and peace, Women's rights

TACTIC LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

Legislative theatre, a tool for proposing and enacting legislative and policy changes at any level of government, takes Augusto Boal's interactive forum theatre exercises from the stage into the real world.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Tracey Mitchell

Based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, Tracey uses engaging techniques to help groups establish and accomplish goals, build teams, develop leadership skills, and make decisions together. Tracey is also a campaigner, zinester, organizer, and forum theater practitioner, and has developed plays around issues of poverty and social justice.

"THEATRE IS POLITICAL AND POLITICS IS THEATRE."

"Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it."

—Augusto Boal

In 1992, Augusto Boal, the creator of Theatre of the Oppressed, was faced with a dilemma. His theatre work was an international sensation. Centres for the Theatre of the Oppressed were up and running in both France and Brazil, and people all over the world were practicing his ideas. At the same time, he was facing pressure at home in Brazil to run for city council in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Faced with a choice between the two, Boal decided not to choose. Instead, he combined the two possibilities and passions into one — and legislative theatre was born.

To those who say that theatre is nice but has no tangible outcomes, legislative theatre may be the answer.

Legislative theatre is essentially a forum theatre performance — a short play about a particular issue or set of issues that ends in a crisis, which the audience is then invited to help solve by taking the place of one of the characters on stage — but with a key difference. The difference is that the audience interventions are followed by a brainstorm and discussion of policies or laws that could help solve some of the problems that came up in the performance, or that could help bring about some of the solutions "spect-actors" (the engaged audience) had offered during the performance. In some iterations of legislative theatre, a later step involves mock legislatures being created to debate bills drafted based on the laws or policies previously suggested in the theatre exercise.

POTENTIAL RISKS

The version of legislative theatre that Boal developed while he was a city councilor was, understandably, an ideal arrangement that has proven difficult to match since. In his case, the elected official was the main convenor of the process, and was therefore in a position to act on the recommendations that emerged. In other cases, without one or more elected officials directly involved in the project, or without a firm and genuine commitment to the project from elected officials, it may be much harder to achieve such results. Therefore, it is advisable to seek out legislators who are willing to play a role throughout the process, including fighting for the resulting recommendations in the actual legislature.

KEY THEORY

Boal's election campaign literature explained his rationale:

"I want to make politics but I don't want to change my profession — I am a man of the theatre! For me, this was always possible and now it is necessary: Theatre is political and politics is theatre."

Boal was one of 42 city councilors elected from a field of 1,000 candidates. Over the next four years, he developed the methods of legislative theatre, forming 19 permanent Theatre of the Oppressed companies in Rio, and from that work, introducing 30 pieces of legislation. In 13 of these 30 cases, as Boal put it, "desire became law" and laws were changed based on the proposals that emerged from the exercises.

LEARN MORE

The Courage to Be Happy: Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre, and the 7th International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed
Paul Heritage, 1994
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146376>

Augusto Boal, City Councillor: Legislative Theatre and the Chamber in the Streets: An Interview
Richard Schechner, Sudipto Chatterjee, and Augusto Boal, 1998
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/theatre_s/current/postgraduate/maipr/currentstudents/teaching_1112/warwick/st1_reading/sarkar_m_augusto_boal_city_counciller.pdf

Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics
Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston, 2007
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1474474007072821>

Theatre of the Oppressed

Like all Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed practices, legislative theatre trusts the wisdom of the audience, and provides them an opportunity to try out their ideas on stage to see how they might work in real life. Legislative theatre simply takes that process one step further, making a direct connection between the ideas generated in the theatre and the legislative process, which so desperately needs creative approaches to problem solving.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Replacing Cops with Mimes

Tactics

- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Forum theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Image theatre
- Storytelling

Principles

- Enable, don't command
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Take leadership from the most impacted

Theories

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Artstorm

TAGS

Art, Campaign strategy, Democracy, Policy

TACTIC LIGHT BRIGADE

A method for creating visually-striking, illuminated protest messages (that work particularly well in site-specific, nighttime locations).

CONTRIBUTED BY

Lane Hall

Lane Hall is a writer, artist, and educator who blogged the Madison Uprising, where he co-founded the original Overpass Light Brigade with fellow artist and partner, Lisa Moline. They open-sourced the idea from the beginning, and are excited to see it expand into a movement.

“LIGHT BRIGADE COMMUNICATIONS MAKE TWITTER LOOK LIKE LONG-FORM NARRATIVE.”

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”

—Alfred Lord Tennyson

Imagine you’re at a nighttime vigil to protest the latest looming war. Candles are lit, speakers share eloquent messages, and suddenly, from a nearby rise overlooking the public square where you’ve gathered, the words WORK FOR PEACE light up the night, each letter several feet tall and swaying independently of the others, because each letter is held up by a different person. This is a Light Brigade in action.

In a Light Brigade action, people hold illuminated messages composed of large, lighted letters in public spaces at night. Light Brigades are best used in thoroughfare spaces such as highways and overpasses, iconic structures such as seats of government and monuments, or solemn gatherings such as vigils and marches. Light Brigade communications make Twitter look like long-form narrative.

The letters, based on simple DIY technology developed by the Overpass Light Brigade out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, US (with props to Graffiti Research Lab), are lightweight and portable. They consist of off-the-shelf battery-powered LED strings of holiday lights set into corrugated plastic panels, which are then framed for durability.

Once the message is decided and the letters are constructed, an Overpass Light Brigade action begins with a social media or email call to action to mobilize volunteer “Holders of the Lights.”

Because there are real humans holding the letters, the action is no

POTENTIAL RISKS

Physical bodies in public space are always noticed, Light Brigades are highly visible, and public space is increasingly contested. Therefore, it is important to know the laws governing roadways and bridges: what can be held, fastened, positioned (see: PRINCIPLE: Use the law, don’t be afraid of it) and Be prepared to respond with calm and civility to the inevitable police presence at your action — you may want to roleplay this ahead of time.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Stay on message

Message discipline is an underlying concept of all Light Brigade actions. Both letters and volunteer holders are limited, as is bridge space. Succinct and precise messages will resonate best both with live audiences and in media distribution. The messages serve as both text and

longer about simply communicating a message, but becomes an act of bearing witness. Similar to a human banner, but distinct from a banner hang or a guerrilla projection, the visibility and accessibility of Light Brigade participants standing together to share a message brings power to the action as well as a sense of collective empowerment for the participants.

Examples of the Light Brigade tactic in action include holding the message QUESTION AUSTERITY over a busy highway in Milwaukee as part of a coordinated Twitter campaign explaining the failures and falsehood of austerity economic policy. NO BAN was held up in the middle of JFK Airport in New York during the 2017 protest against Trump's Muslim Travel Ban. MONEY ≠ SPEECH was displayed in coordination with Move To Amend and other campaigns seeking to undo the US Supreme Court's "Citizens United" ruling, which gave corporations the legal status of people. Iconic sites have also lent context to messages such as WE HAVE A DREAM and JOBS NOT WAR at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., and I HAVE A DRONE in front of the White House. In front of the capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin, POLICE STATE was held to protest unlawful arrests of activists.

Light Brigades can add depth and focus to vigils and solemn events, as seen with messages such as PRACTICE PEACE at the vigil for slain Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, or WE SHALL OVERCOME at the New York City Times Square rally in support of Trayvon Martin. Environmental messages such as WATER = LIFE displayed near lakes, rivers, mountains, and shorelines can also add weight and beauty to protests of extractive industries.

While it takes some effort to build multiple letters, the recombinant potential of a collection of letters is virtually endless. It's very important to document your action (see: PRINCIPLE: Do the media's work for them), as subsequent social media attention can amplify the reach of the message through pictures, video and blog posts. Therefore, be sure to recruit photographers to your group, or get good at your own night-time photography.

LEARN MORE

Overpass Light Brigade
<http://overpasslightbrigade.org/>

Letter Making with the Overpass Light Brigade
Occupy Riverwest, 2012
<https://vimeo.com/42172384>

The Overpass Light Brigade: Art + Electronics in the Wisconsin Uprising
Nathaniel Stern, Furtherfield, 2012
<http://archive.furtherfield.org/features/interviews/overpass-light-brigade-art-electronics-wisconsin-uprising>

image simultaneously, so there is a tight unity between the action and the photograph. It is also important to connect the message with specific textual possibilities of social media: for instance, hashtag campaigns on Twitter and photographic descriptions on Facebook that can help explicate a terse aphoristic or sloganistic Light Brigade action (see: PRINCIPLE: Create online-offline synergy) and.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Human banner
- Media-jacking
- Visibility action

Principles

- Consider your audience
- Create online-offline synergy
- Do the media's work for them
- Know your cultural terrain
- Reframe the issue
- Stay on message
- Take risks, but take care
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Communications,
Media

TACTIC MASS STREET ACTION

A large public protest that shows the scale of people power behind a cause.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

John Sellers

John Sellers is co-founder of The Other 98%, a founding partner of Agit-Pop Communications, and president of the Ruckus Society. Before leaving to help start Ruckus, John worked for Greenpeace in the early '90s where had the great fortune to be integrally involved in powerful peaceful actions all over the world: from the high seas with the Rainbow Warrior to the streets of Seattle in the uprising against the WTO.

“WHEN THOUSANDS OF FOLKS COLLABORATE IN A MASS STREET ACTION, THAT’S WHEN MAGIC AND MOVEMENTS HAPPEN.”

Everyone has felt the irresistible people-power of a large march or rally. When a crowd is fired up by great musicians or fiery speakers it can rock. There is real strength in numbers. Most of us have also been inspired by a great nonviolent direct action. When individuals or small teams decide to creatively throw themselves upon the gears of the machine, it can detonate powerful mind bombs in our psyches.

But when you bring the two together, and thousands of folks from all walks of life collaborate in a mass street action, that’s when magic and movements happen. Movements do mass actions. And you need a highly functioning and energized movement in order to repeatedly pull off smart mass actions in an escalating struggle for change.

In the spring of 2011, a million Egyptians took to the streets, occupied Tahrir Square, fought off wave after wave of security forces, and after eighteen eventful and often bloody days, forced President Hosni Mubarak from office. In 1999, 70,000 people took to the streets of Seattle and nonviolently shut down the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting, the world’s largest business meeting (see: STORY: Battle in Seattle). In 2010, 3,000 trade unionists and their allies formed a “Citizens’ Posse” and encircled a downtown Washington D.C. hotel full of insurance industry lobbyists for a day in a show of force during the closing weeks of America’s

POTENTIAL RISKS

At their best, mass street actions make for beautifully organized chaos. But provocateurs (theirs or ours) can easily tip the fragile balance toward a nightmarish battle between cops and protesters. Unless this is your agreed-upon goal, you have to have strong agreements, principles, and preparation to ensure the safety of those who have heeded your call to action.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Show, don't tell

Actions speak louder than words. The best mass street actions put a problem on the map by mobilizing thousands of people from all walks of life to congregate and confront a shared injustice. Hopefully you

epic health care reform fight.

In spite of the differences here in scale, duration, political importance, targets, and tactics, all three of these mass street actions succeeded in their goals because they all shared a few key ingredients:

- they disrupted business as usual;
- they had a clear motive and story;
- they used disciplined nonviolence and focused militancy; and
- they offered an easy way for individuals to participate.

A mass street action can't really be choreographed, because it's too big to direct by shouting through a megaphone — instead, it needs to be largely self-organizing. To work, though, it needs a shared framework, mode of action, or rough script to both facilitate self-organizing and maintain the coherence of the overall action (see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results).

Tahrir didn't need a script. All it needed was a call to congregate in public spaces.

The movement that shut down the WTO was built around a loose coalition, held together by a horizontally democratic spokescouncil. It agreed on a broad messaging frame and laid down some tactical ground rules (e.g. an agreement on nonviolence, specific responsibilities for each cluster of affinity groups, etc.). It was not choreographed, it was chaotic; decentralized but connected.

The Citizens' Posse action was tightly scripted. Coalition partners designed and agreed on the action frame up front. It needed a tighter script because the action relied more on theatre and story than on an actual shutdown of the target. Even though it was primarily a communicative action, it felt like a concrete one because the theatre itself was militant, and participants were given a powerful role to play in it (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action).

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Square

Directed by Jehane Noujaim. Noujaim Films., 2013

<http://thesquarefilm.com/about>

This Is What Democracy Looks Like

Directed by Jill Friedberg and Rick Rowley. Big Noise Films., 2000

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0265871/>

can gather right at the scene of the crime or an iconic location of symbolic power and literally show your adversaries (and yourselves) that the people united will never be defeated.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Angola 15+2
- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Citizens' Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Earth First!
- Fees Must Fall
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Justice for Janitors
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Manich Msamah
- Miniskirt March
- Nuit Debout
- Occupy Wall Street
- Orange Alternative
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Schools of Struggle
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan
- Street Graduation
- Streets Into Gardens
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- #ThisFlag
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Civil disobedience
- Flash mob
- General strike
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Inflatables
- Jail solidarity
- Lamentation
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation

Principles

- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Enable, don't command
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Participatory democracy
- Poverty
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- The Global South
- The shock doctrine

- The social cure

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Democracy,
Dictatorship, Direct action,
Movement building,
Nonviolence, State violence,
Street protest

TACTIC MEDIA-JACKING

Hijack your opponent's media event in a way that creatively reframes the issue, while leveraging their media presence to draw attention to your side of the story.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

"SOPHISTICATED MEDIA-JACKING USES YOUR TARGET'S OWN STORY AGAINST THEM."

"Pranks are symbolic warfare."
—Abbie Hoffman

Media-jacking is when you subvert your opponent's spectacle for your own purposes. Politicians, corporations, and lobbyists have much bigger public relations (PR) budgets and name-brand draw to attract press to their staged media events. Through well-planned creative interventions, however, you can refocus things and highlight a different side the story.

There are a few different ways to design a successful media-jacking. The first is simply commandeering the media. One of the most literal (and bold) examples of this occurred in 1991 during the first Gulf War, when the anti-AIDS organization ACT UP burst into a CBS TV studio during a live primetime news broadcast and took over the

POTENTIAL RISKS

Media is an extremely uneven terrain of struggle. Accurate and sympathetic media coverage is often based on having good relationships with journalists, so be careful your action doesn't alienate the very media professionals you will need to cover the next story.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Reframe the issue

set, chanting "Fight AIDS, not Arabs."

Another option is to use your opposition's platform to tell your own story. In 2007, Kleenex ran an expensive PR stunt where they interviewed people on the street for a commercial they were making, getting participants to cry and say, "I need a Kleenex." Greenpeace activists stealthily lined up to be interviewed, crying instead because Kleenex was clear-cutting old growth forests to make their tissues. They successfully shut down the shoot for the rest of the day, and a video of the action went viral.

Sophisticated media-jacking uses your target's own story against them, undermining them at the point of assumption (see: **METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention**). For example, when activists from United for a Fair Economy hijacked the Republican stunt on Tax Day 1998 (see: **STORY: Whose Tea Party?**), they turned the message "taxes = oppression" on its head, to show instead that tax breaks for the rich are sinking working families (see: **PRINCIPLE: Reframe the issue**).

Similarly, in 2006, activists with the Rainforest Action Network made fake press passes, put on suits, and snuck into the Los Angeles Auto Show. Rick Wagoner, the CEO of General Motors, was giving a keynote address about how "environmentally friendly" GM's cars are. The speech was bullshit, but rather than saying it was bullshit, RAN activists stepped on to the stage and up to the mic, pretending to be the emcees (see: **PRINCIPLE: Use the Jedi mind trick**). They congratulated Wagoner, then told the audience that they were pleased to announce that GM was prepared to commit in writing to the promises he'd just made, and unfurled an oversized "pledge" that they asked him to sign. He had two options: 1) sign it, and give the campaigners something in writing to hold him to, or 2) refuse, demonstrating his dishonesty (see: **PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma**). He chose the second option, and the media went nuts. Over 700 media outlets ran stories about GM's greenwashing exposed.

A media-jacking can be as simple as holding up signs snuck into a high profile event, as Burmese students did when Obama visited Myanmar in 2014 (see: **STORY: Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar**), or as dramatic as the enraged Iraqi journalist, Muntazer Zaidi, who courageously threw a pair of shoes (classic symbol of disrespect in Arab culture) at President George Bush in 2008. In the broadest sense, the launch of the Zapatista rebellion on January 1, 1994, the same day the NAFTA treaty went into effect, was a media-jacking on the grandest scale, successfully challenging the dominant neoliberal narrative and reframing the globalization debate at the very highest level.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Media-jacking offers you the unique opportunity to sneak onto your opponent's own playing field and reframe the debate in real-time. By putting your target on the spot in front of the media (see: **PRINCIPLE: Show, don't tell**), you can reshape how the public perceives the "good guys" and "bad guys" and flip your opponent's story on its head, unmasking their spin and putting forward your own narrative.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Stolen Beauty
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla marketing
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Light Brigade
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them

Making the News: A Guide for Activists and Nonprofits

Jason Salzman, 1998

https://books.google.com/books/about/Making_the_News.html?id=RmC4AAAAIAAJ

Greenpeace Hijacks Kleenex PR Stunt in Times Square

Andrew Boyd, 2001

<https://artoftheprank.com/2007/03/31/greenpeace-hijacks-kleenex-pr-stunt-in-times-square/>

- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Reframe the issue
- Seize the means of communication
- Show, don't tell
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Memes
- Society of the spectacle
- The propaganda model
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Media, Pranks

TACTIC

MESSAGGIO NELLA BANCONOTA

Il denaro può parlare molto forte, che ci piaccia ammetterlo o no, quindi perché non trasformarlo in uno strumento per protestare e organizzare, timbrando messaggi sulla valuta locale e trasformando le bollette in volantini?

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ramsey George

Ramsey George works on independent media in the Arab World and lives in Amman, Jordan. He is the co-founder of 7iber.com and the program director of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism.

“Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.”

—P.T. Barnum

Currency hacking, a kind of culture jamming that turns paper money into protest leaflets, has been used by movements across the world to creatively and cost-effectively spread their message.

In 2011, in Occupied Palestine, an activist Facebook group encouraged people to write “Free Palestine” onto shekel paper notes. Eventually Israel’s Central Bank had to put out a statement that any notes marked with “Free Palestine” would not be accepted by the bank — which only further boosted the campaign (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target’s reaction).

Occupy George designed downloadable stamps that treated \$1 US bills as a kind of graph paper to highlight economic disparity in the USA.

Other examples include gay rights activists who stamped “Gay Money” and “Lesbian Money” onto bills to demonstrate the growing consumer clout of the gay community; and Syrian democracy protesters who wrote messages onto bills and threw them into the air (see: TACTIC: Clandestine leafleting).

This tactic is not without risks, as many countries have laws against defacing currency. While it’s a difficult law to enforce, it’s always wise to assess your risks. All legal issues aside, currency hacking is a generally safe, provocative and low-cost way to spread your message.

LEARN MORE

Facebook Campaign Promotes Palestinian Freedom, on Money Haaretz, 2011

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Kubatana’s yellow poster campaign

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Clandestine leafleting
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Guerrilla marketing

Principles

- Balance art and message
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your cultural terrain
- Show, don’t tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The real action is your target’s reaction
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Artivism
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony

<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/facebook-campaign-promotes-palestinian-freedom-on-money-1.347607>

Money Delivers Gays' Message
Orlando Sentinel, 1993

http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/1993-07-07/lifestyle/9307040249_1_gay-money-words-gay-national-gay

- Hacking
- Memes

TAGS

Action design, Art, Capitalism, Colonialism, Communications, Direct action, Humour, Language, Pranks, Social media, Wealth inequality

TACTIC MUSIC VIDEO

Social justice music videos combine the contagious power of music with compelling visuals to expose injustice and inspire potential allies into action.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Emily Hong

Emily Hong is a feminist anthropologist, filmmaker, and co-founder of Rhiza Collective. Emily has directed several collaborative films including *Get By* (2014), *Nobel Nok Dah* (2015), and *For My Art* (2016), which have explored issues of solidarity and labor, womanhood and identity in the refugee experience, and the gendered spectatorship of performance art.

“ROCK AND HIP-HOP PROVIDE RHYTHMIC OPENINGS TO CHANNEL ANGER IN WAYS THAT CAN MOVE HARD-TO-REACH ALLIES AND POWER-HOLDERS.”

Music has long played an important role in generating and sustaining activist communities and social movements. Social justice music videos take this power a step further, combining the contagious power of music with compelling visuals to expose injustice and inspire potential allies into action. Typically a result of collaboration among musicians, activists, and videographers, social justice music videos transform a classic tool — protest music — for 21st-century community organizing and mass mobilization in the Global South.

In high-risk political contexts, social justice music videos can literally break the silence and prepare the ground for local organizing. In northern Myanmar (also known as Burma), rock band BLAST teamed up with All Kachin Students and Youth Union, Kachin Development Networking Group, and Kachin News Group to release a 2010 karaoke music video album highlighting an emergent environmental crisis. Two hit songs, “Aka Law” and “Malikha,” gave voice to the cries of the Mali river, bringing attention to the ecological and cultural havoc wreaked by the Chinese-built Myitsone Dam. Local and national coalitions were able to build on the widespread awareness of the dam’s destructive impacts to mount a successful campaign that saw the dam’s construction suspended in 2011.

In certain instances, a viral music video can turn a small campaign into a transnational sensation — bringing in key new allies that can

KEY PRINCIPLE

Shift the spectrum of allies

A well-planned music video can serve as an impactful organizing tool to activate much-needed allies. For example, “Kodaikanal Won’t” succeeded in mobilizing transnational solidarity for a long-term local campaign. In doing so, the video shifted passive international allies into active ones, mobilizing thousands to take social media actions and boycott Unilever products. The result was a global PR mess that left Unilever no choice but to finally settle with its poisoned former employees.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Manich Msamah
- Public Option Annie
- Stolen Gas Campaign

shift the balance of power. In 2015, South Indian rapper Sofia Ashraf and Vettiver Collective repurposed Nicki Minaj's "Anaconda," calling out Unilever for its mercury contamination in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu. The resulting video, "Kodaikanal Won't," went viral, gaining close to 4 million views and a surge in signatures for an online petition demanding justice for poisoned former employees. The video catapulted 15 years of local organizing efforts onto an international stage, giving the struggle new transnational allies and media coverage. Months of intensified campaigning and a boycott of Unilever products forced the company to do the previously unthinkable: compensate Kodaikanal workers.

Social justice music videos have not only remixed popular songs or genres from the Global North, but have also contributed to the revival of indigenous and traditional languages, music, dance, and storytelling. A stunning video from New York-based art collective Semillas (Seeds), for example, channeled the power of indigenous danza, hip hop, and ballet to tell the story of the 43 disappeared Ayotzinapa students from Mexico.

While high-budget productions with high-profile musicians can certainly command an audience (see MIA's 2015 "Borders" video on the refugee crisis), low-budget videos can be just as powerful. "Kodaikanal Won't" was shot in just one day. In areas with limited or slow internet access, low-resolution karaoke video compact discs (VCDs) can be cheaply reproduced, circulated through underground networks, or sold on street corners.

Music videos can take on a range of issues more effectively than speech alone. Audio-visuals can subvert dominant narratives by contesting government claims with visible, on-the-ground impacts. Such sensory details can work in tandem with powerful lyrics that call out the hypocrisy of power-holders, such as corporations sensitive to consumer power or governments shamed by citizen voices. While activist indignation doesn't often find productive channels, musical genres such as rock and hip-hop provide rhythmic openings to channel anger in ways that can move hard-to-reach allies and power-holders (see: THEORY: Hamoq and hamas).

LEARN MORE

Never Thought "Kodaikanal Won't" Video Could Make Unilever Settle: Rapper Sofia Ashraf
Tushar Kaushik, The New Indian Express
http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil_nadu/Never-Thought-Kodaikanal-Wont-Video-Could-Make-Unilever-Settle-Rapper-Sofia-Ashraf/2016/03/09/article3318386.ece

M.I.A. Talks About the "Borders" Video and Why She's Getting Legal Threats for a Soccer Jersey
Ryan Bassil, Noisey, 2016

Tactics

- Storytelling
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the personal political
- Personalize and polarize
- Reframe the issue
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Artivism
- Hamoq and hamas
- Postcolonialism

Methodologies

- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Art, Communications, Education, Media, Social media

<http://noisy.vice.com/blog/mia-interview-2016>

The Justice Through Music Project

<http://www.jtmp.org/>

TACTIC

NONVIOLENT SEARCH AND SEIZURE

A direct action tactic that involves showing up with a “citizens’ search warrant” and attempting, nonviolently, to liberate important documents that are being kept from the public.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Daniel Hunter

Daniel Hunter is a trainer and organizer with Training for Change, which practices a direct education style rooted in popular education, helping each person find their own wisdom and strategic brilliance. He has trained thousands of activists including ethnic minorities in Burma/Myanmar, pastors in Sierra Leone, independence activists in northeast India, environmentalists in Australia, and Indonesian religious leaders.

“THE TACTIC RESTS ON THE IDEA THAT ANY INFORMATION THAT IMPACTS THE PUBLIC BUT IS BEING HIDDEN FROM THEM SHOULD BE LIBERATED.”

The tactic of nonviolent search and seizure rests on the idea that any information that impacts the public but is being hidden from them should be liberated. It involves taking matters into our own hands by showing up with a “citizens’ search warrant” and attempting, nonviolently, to liberate the documents in question. Even though the tactic is unlikely to succeed directly, the ensuing controversy (and possible arrests) can nonetheless bring the secret documents to the public’s attention. In several high-profile cases, the successful application of the tactic has created enough outcry that the target has been forced to make the documents public.

The tactic originated in 2001, when Philippe Duhamel, a trainer and organizer based in Montréal, Canada, thought back to Gandhi’s strategy of nonviolent raids on colonial salt deposits (see: STORY: The Salt March). Duhamel was working with a campaign to expose the secretive Free Trade Area of Americas (FTAA) trade agreement being negotiated. Even senators and members of parliament could not see the negotiating texts — only key CEOs and the leaders of participating nations. Decrying the anti-democratic nature of the negotiations, Duhamel decided to reinvent Gandhi’s open, transparent raids.

Weeks ahead of the Québec City summit, the campaign announced it would attempt to “liberate” the texts for public scrutiny. On the

KEY PRINCIPLE

Put your target in a decision dilemma

This action places the opponent in a quandary: If they release the documents, your direct action brings meaningful information to light and scores political points. If they don’t, it raises the public’s interest, and ultimately suspicion, over what is being hidden from them. Heads you win, tails they lose.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Citizens’ Posse
- The Salt March

Tactics

- Citizen’s arrest

day of the action, wave after wave of participants approached the police barricades erected (for their benefit) around the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Each wave read aloud a citizens' search warrant: "Hello, my name is _____. Access to information is basic to democracy. Without that information we cannot have a meaningful public debate. We ask the police to do their job and help us search for the texts. Please let me through."

The first wave went over and was promptly arrested. Over several hours, eighty people — some dressed as Robin Hood — climbed over the fence and attempted to liberate the documents. Their action was their message (see: THEORY: Action logic).

As the public saw the lengths the government and corporations were going to hide the texts, public outrage mounted until eventually the Canadian government broke down and released the texts. Exposed to public scrutiny as the corporate coup d'état it was, the FTAA never moved forward.

Nonviolent search and seizure has since been used successfully by other groups and campaigns, including the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and Casino-Free Philadelphia, the latter of which won the release of 95% of the documents they had sought to liberate with only 14 arrests, showing the tactic can be effective on a small scale.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Using A Citizen Search And Seizure Operation To Pressure The Government To Release Public Documents

New Tactics in Human Rights

<https://www.newtactics.org/tactic/using-citizen-search-and-seizure-operation-pressure-gov%2ADernment-release-public-documents>

Not a Hacker or Whistleblower? Here's How You Can Still Liberate Secret Documents

Daniel Hunter, Waging Nonviolence, 2014

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/fbi-files-free-trade-negotiating-texts-liberate-secret-documents/>

- Civil disobedience
- Creative lobbying
- Mass street action

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Be an ethical prankster
- Create a theatrical storyline that keeps the action going
- Get arrested in an intelligent way
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Non-cooperation
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Corruption, Democracy, Direct action, Nonviolence

TACTIC OCCUPATION

Physically occupying contested space to create community and disrupt the functioning of power. Examples include: sit-ins, factory occupations, housing squats, occupations of public squares or at-risk land.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Arun Gupta

Arun Gupta is a founding editor of The Independent and The Occupied Wall Street Journal, and a contributor to the Guardian, Truthout, In These Times, and The Progressive.

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“OCCUPATIONS ARE A POPULAR TACTIC EMPLOYED BY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TO HOLD AND DEFEND SPACE.”

“Lost a job, found an occupation.”
—Occupy Wall Street

The first recorded labor strike was a form of occupation: Over 3,000 years ago, ancient Egyptian tomb builders from the desert village of Deir el-Medina repeatedly occupied temples following the failure of Pharaoh Ramses III to provide adequate provisions. We see other examples of public occupations that have propelled history forward ever since.

In seventeenth-century England, for instance, the Diggers formed a utopian agrarian community on common land. Workers, soldiers and citizens established the Paris Commune in 1871. In the United States, in the Great Upheaval of 1877, striking railway workers and their supporters occupied train yards across the land. A wave of plant occupations in the mid-1930s led to the justly famous Flint sit-down strikes of 1936, which won union recognition for hundreds of thousands of auto workers.

Occupations are a popular tactic employed by social movements to hold and defend space. Other direct action tactics may also be deployed to support the occupation such as sit-ins, blockades, or banner hangs; or in some circumstances full-blown occupations have been known to grow out of a smaller tactic, such as a sit-in.

While the term can refer to an oppressor who has invaded or annexed land from a population (“occupied North America/Turtle Island” or “occupied Palestine”), the tactic of occupation is often

POTENTIAL RISKS

Occupations are difficult to sustain indefinitely. Make sure you have a plan — including an exit plan.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Points of intervention

Different points of intervention will yield different sorts of occupations. An occupation of a factory is an intervention at the point of production that seeks to physically interrupt (or restart) economic activity. Other occupations, say of the Wisconsin State Capitol, occur at the point of decision. Occupy Wall Street began as an intervention at the point of assumption: occupying Zuccotti Park didn't physically inconvenience anyone on Wall Street

RELATED TOOLS

used by those same groups to assert their right to that land: For example, the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969 by Indians of All Tribes, or when the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota community, American Indian Movement, and Earth First! held a sixteen-month occupation to defend Minnehaha State Park from highway construction slated to desecrate sacred land.

The action logic of many of these occupations is that people are reclaiming space that they are entitled to, thereby highlighting a greater theft. This same action logic can be applied to students taking over a building that should be serving them (for instance, in the late 1960s when African-American students occupied university buildings across the US, leading to the creation of many African American/Ethnic Studies departments), or environmentalists defending land that should be held in common, or workers occupying the factory in which they labour.

While occupations can range in style and form, they generally have two key components: 1) a focus on the logistics of maintaining an encampment, semi-permanent rally, or sit-in, which requires meeting needs around food, shelter, defense from police raids, etc., and which can often be a profoundly politicizing experience in its own right, and 2) a public pressure campaign that seeks to put your target in a decision dilemma.

The location chosen for an occupation site often determines its success. A number of considerations may factor into the decision, such as symbolic significance, ability to concretely disrupt a target (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action), a logistical ability to maintain the occupation, as well as public visibility and technicalities of legal ownership. Historically, occupations have lent themselves to spontaneity, but the enduring ones tend to be well planned.

Groups like the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and La Via Campesina support communities of peasants in occupying fallow private land and reclaiming it for common use or basic subsistence. In the US, groups like Take Back the Land apply this same principle to foreclosures, defending housing as a human right (see: TACTIC: Eviction blockade). In the environmental movement, tree-sits are a common example of occupations being used to defend forests from logging. Squatters movements across Europe have "taken back" abandoned buildings and repurposed them as homes and social centers with the intention of flying under the radar of authorities until they can lay legal claim to the space.

Occupations inherently threaten the legitimacy of a target by demonstrating the power-holder's inability to enforce the status quo. They also serve to expose the arbitrary, and often unjust, nature of private property regimes (see: THEORY: The commons).

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Earth First!
- Fees Must Fall
- Gezi Park iftar
- Nuit Debout
- Occupy Wall Street
- PARK(ing) Day
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Mass street action

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Take risks, but take care
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Training for the win
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it
- Would you like some structure

LEARN MORE

Brazil's Landless Workers Movement

Friends of the MST

<http://www.mstbrazil.org>

Take Back the Land

<http://takebacktheland.org>

Occupy Homes

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_Homes

with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Palace Coup
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The commons
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Pillars of power
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action, Democracy, Dictatorship, Land use

TACTIC

PHONE BANKING

Mobilizing the public to call or text a government or corporate target to pressure them into taking an action. It can be a contagious tactic for lobbying decision makers.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nisreen Haj Ahmad

Nisreen Haj Ahmad is a Palestinian activist, organizer, and co-founder of Ahel.org. She trains and coaches people and organizations to run campaigns in the Middle East, using Marshall Ganz' organizing framework.

“THE VERY NOVELTY OF THE ACTION IN UNDEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES MAKES PHONE BANKING A MORE IMPACTFUL TACTIC.”

“Thirty people called me since the morning. Please remove my name from the list and add me to those who oppose the deal. My position is clear.”

—A Jordanian member of Parliament

Phone banking is used to draw a decision maker's attention to the interests and demands of a certain constituency. It involves asking your supporters to call or text your target as a means of pressuring or lobbying them to take an action in line with your campaign goal.

Phone banking is a scalable tactic that can be done from virtually anywhere and by anyone, but it can also be done collectively from one location to boost morale. Results of the calls can be announced while the tactic is taking place to keep momentum and engage the wider public, or those results can be announced at the end of the calling day(s).

This tactic was used by Jordan Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) activists to pressure parliamentarians into taking a firm stance against a proposed deal of importing natural gas from Israel (see: [STORY: Stolen Gas Campaign](#)). Jordan BDS, under the name of Al'urdun Tuqate', organised a series of tactics targeting the Parliament with the goal of mobilizing parliamentarians to prevent the government from signing the gas deal — a deal that the campaigners believed would make every Jordanian citizen a contributor to the Israeli budget of war and occupation.

Jordan BDS activists issued a call to action asking all their followers and members to phone parliamentarians and demand that they announce their position against buying natural gas from Israel. They

POTENTIAL RISKS

Generally, there are not too many risks in this tactic if it was well organized. However, if the tactic is employed only by a small group of people, then perhaps, in a country with tight security or a constituency with high sense of fear, participants could be identified or targeted. So it is wise to design the call to action in a way that ensures participation of large numbers. This is why gathering in one room and having a strong social media reach are both important.

It is important that phone banking is used with tactical clarity and not merely as a nuisance or a cry for help. A factor critical for the success of the tactic is testing and updating the phone number sheet and maintaining a record of responses. In some countries, the parliamentarians don't even answer their phones, so testing

published the parliamentarians' names and numbers with a suggested script and a ten-point factsheet. BDS Jordan members gathered in one place and together started making calls over five days. On the first day, live results of the phone banking sessions were being updated online. As for the remaining days, names of parliamentarians who took a stance against the deal were published at the end of each evening. The tactic was concluded when activists secured pledges from the majority of the house to oppose the deal. As a result, a public hearing was scheduled that took place over two days in the presence of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Energy. Eventually, the Parliament adopted a majority position against the government's attempt to import natural gas from Israel.

In many democratic countries, phone banking your representative or government is a standard practice. In fact, in some countries the representatives' offices use the number of calls for and against to inform their decision on a particular matter. In other countries, however, phone banking is a novelty not just for the citizens engaged but also for the decision-maker receiving the call. The very novelty of the action in undemocratic countries makes phone banking a more impactful tactic (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your community).

In a campaign in which Jordanian teachers are organizing for fair pay, phone banking was used as a powerful tactic to educate teachers about their rights and how to handle employers' manipulation. In this context, phone banking was a safe tactic (see: PRINCIPLE: Foster safer spaces) because other awareness-raising tactics that required teachers to be physically present had failed due to fear of being fired.

LEARN MORE

تحرك معنا واتصل
حركة الأردن تقاطع #غاز العدو احتلال, 2014
http://jordanbds.net/?page_id=367

كيف تصبح قضية ما قضية رأي عام؟
<http://bit.ly/1QrbSr2>

BDS: Freedom, Justice, Equality
Jordan Business, 2015
<http://www.jordanbusinessmagazine.com/features/bds-freedom-justice-equality>

Lobbying 101: Lobbying Techniques
National Trust for Historic Preservation
<http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/law-and-policy/lobbying-101/Lobbying-Techniques.html?referrer=https://www.google.jo/#.Vv5t9xN95E4>

A Guide to Making Get-Out-the-Vote Calls
Local Victory
<http://www.localvictory.com/grassroots/get-out-the-vote-calls.html>

the tactic before publicizing a phone bank is necessary.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Personalize and polarize
Publishing the names of the Parliamentarians with us or against us at the end of every day, puts more pressure on those who have not yet announced a position. It also shows that the tactics is working.

Simple rules can have grand results

Asking people to call and text with a provided script makes joining the movement easy. This tactic also addresses security concerns in a country where taking action in the field is prohibited or restrained by the authorities.

Know your community

The degree of freedom to organize, the practice of democratic governance, the [perceived] role of security apparatus in a community, and the culture of active citizenship are all reasons that make this tactic or others novel, effective, smart or not.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- #GambiaHasDecided
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Stolen Gas Campaign

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Jail solidarity
- Phone blockade

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Choose tactics that support

your strategy

- Focus on basic needs
- Foster safer spaces
- Know your community
- Personalize and polarize
- Seek safety in support networks
- Seize the means of communication
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative

Theories

- Participatory democracy

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Colonialism, Communications, Community building, Democracy, Elections, Education, Movement building, Policy

TACTIC

PHONE BLOCKADE

When large numbers of people repeatedly dial the key phone lines of your target, you can tie up their service, and pressure them to comply with your demands.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Juman Abujbara

An editor of the Beautiful Rising book and toolkit, Juman is an aspiring philosopher, a campaigner for social change, and a human rights defender.

Phones are a vital part of the operation of most business and government offices. If you can deliberately tie-up their phone lines for an hour or two (or a day or two!), they'll be more likely to respond to your campaign's demands.

Not only are you applying economic pressure by interrupting business-as-usual, you are delivering a message with every call. Also, it is a mass democratic tactic and distributed action: it can be done from anywhere, and it's easy for people to participate. This tactic is both a good way to escalate an ongoing campaign, and a quick way to respond in the wake of public outrage.

RELATED TOOLS

Tactics

- Blockade
- Distributed action
- Phone banking

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Personalize and polarize
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Think narratively
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Action logic

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- Theory of change

TAGS

Direct action, Communications, Campaign strategy

TACTIC

PROTESTA A SORPRESA

When protest is illegal, show up in the streets with no warning, leave before police arrive, but film it (and post the video) as if it were “happening now!”

CONTRIBUTED BY

Beautiful Trouble

Beautiful Trouble is a globally dispersed group of activists whose mission is to make nonviolent revolution irresistible by providing strategic tools and trainings to inspire movements for a more just, healthy, and equitable world.

LEARN MORE

How to use this principle
Bill Nye, The Internet Magazine, 2001
<http://www.stuff.com>

TAGS

Corruption, ,

TACTIC

PUBLIC FILIBUSTER

In a public filibuster, a group of people interrupt and seek to shut down a public hearing or government vote by standing and speaking, one after the other. It's confrontational, but polite and constructive.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Daniel Hunter

Daniel Hunter is a trainer and organizer with Training for Change, which practices a direct education style rooted in popular education, helping each person find their own wisdom and strategic brilliance. He has trained thousands of activists including ethnic minorities in Burma/Myanmar, pastors in Sierra Leone, independence activists in northeast India, environmentalists in Australia, and Indonesian religious leaders.

"BE HONEST, EXPRESSIVE, POLITE, AND ON-MESSAGE."

Many people know about the US Senate's procedural filibusters, in which a dissenting senator holds the floor to keep a vote from happening. The people's version, the public filibuster, is no different. When activists face hostile government agencies or hearings that exclude the public, this relatively low-risk tactic injects the public's voice into an otherwise closed-off process. Confrontational but constructive, it has been adapted by a range of citizen groups.

In 2007, for example, a dozen members of Casino-Free Philadelphia decided to use the public filibuster at a Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board (PGCB) meeting. For two years, the PGCB had refused to let members of the public testify at so-called public hearings, but this time the public was going to have its say. One at a time, members stood up and began testifying. Each one was told to be quiet by the chairwoman. A recess was quickly called, and the members who had spoken were escorted out of the building by police and told they would not be allowed to return.

When the board reconvened, the chairwoman warned the remaining members of the group not to interrupt. Naturally, one after another, members stood up and continued the filibuster. They spoke over the banging gavel of the distressed chairwoman and over the "official" testifiers as they coolly tried to continue. Another recess was called, and then another, as the public filibuster rolled on. Finally, the PGCB shut down the entire meeting. The result: Rather than risk another such engagement, the PGCB changed its policy to

KEY PRINCIPLE

Make the invisible visible

Our opponents use bureaucratic delays and restrictions on public hearings to keep their dealings in the shadows. Such delays and restrictions are boring procedural issues that happen quietly and can easily go unnoticed. The public filibuster puts a spotlight on these practices by creating conflict and drama where there was none before, flushing into the open the undemocratic nature of the current process. Then everyone can see the problem for themselves and make up their own mind.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Honk at Parliament
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

allow the public to speak at hearings.

To an unsympathetic eye, disrupting a meeting can come across as mob rule, especially when poorly done (see: TACTIC: Creative disruption). The power of the public filibuster depends on carrying out the action in a dignified manner, as well as framing the tactic properly. Calling the action a “public filibuster” helps lend the kind of legitimacy recognized by reporters and the broader public.

When planning a public filibuster, be sure to stay positive and respectful. Your tone matters a great deal, and your bearing and presentation should be above reproach. Be honest, expressive, polite, and on-message. Focus on the issue at hand, not the person trying to run the meeting. Also, show some compassion for the chairperson, who is used to being in control. This action threatens their power and puts them in an awkward and uncomfortable position. Be gentle with them.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Strategy & Soul: A Campaigner's Tale of Fighting Billionaires, Corrupt Officials, and Philadelphia Casinos

Daniel Hunter, 2013

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0988550806>

Strategy & Soul: Reader's Guide

Daniel Hunter, 2013

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1492835196>

- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Creative lobbying
- Infiltration

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Don't dress like a protester
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Show, don't tell
- Turn the tables

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Hamoq and hamas
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Power mapping
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Direct action, Language, Media

TACTIC

REVERSE GRAFFITI

Instead of spraying paint, clean away grime to make your “reverse graffiti” message. All you need are stencils, a water pump, and some courage.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Naomi Pitcairn

Naomi is a street artist, chalkupier, prankster, whistle-blower advocate, writer at TimesQuotidian.com, and a former Times Square billboard painter, with an MFA from Parsons, New York, in design and technology.

Reverse graffiti is a visually strong and memorable way to make street art or leave a guerrilla message. Instead of spraying paint, you are scraping away grime to make your message. And, conveniently: It’s not vandalism. In fact, you are actually cleaning up the neighborhood as you go! Let the cops arrest you for that.

To scrape your message out of the grime, you can use anything from a toothbrush to a power-washer. One of the more developed methods is called SprayTeam6. It employs stencils, preferably aluminum; a truck containing a power-washer; and a rain barrel full of water with a sump pump in it. Most hoses are long enough so you won’t have to take any equipment out of your truck. But be careful, as pumping water at high pressure can be dangerous. Finally, you may want to dress like a city worker who appears to be on “official business,” as you’re less likely to be noticed by passersby or bothered by the police.

So, go ahead and sanitize a sidewalk to point out that some politician’s hands are dirty! Tarnish a reputation with a mean clean. This tactic can be used wherever there is grimy concrete, and some dirty business to comment on.

LEARN MORE

How to Create Reverse Graffiti with a Pressure Washer
Blue Clean Power Washer, 2014

<http://www.arblueclean.com/bluecleanblog/default.php/how-to-create-reverse-graffiti-with-a-pressure-washer/>

Reverse Graffiti with a Toothbrush
350 Reverse Graffiti, 2009

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qmZVoQynqp0>

Reverse Graffiti — Activism, Art or Vandalism?

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- #YouStink

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Enforced appearance
- Guerrilla marketing
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Keep it positive
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take risks, but take care
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Activism
- Capitalism
- Framing
- The commons

TAGS

Art, Direct action, Humour, Pranks

Landscape Architects Network, 2014

<https://landarchs.com/reverse-graffiti-activism-art-vandalism/>

TACTIC STORYTELLING

Storytelling is far more than telling a tale; it's a way of organizing reality — and political power. A good story can build group solidarity, develop a shared analysis of a social problem, and up participation.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Paul VanDeCarr

Paul VanDeCarr is the managing director of Working Narratives, an organization that collaborates with social justice groups to use stories to create change. Previously, he has worked in such storytelling forms as oral history, theatre, and documentary film.

“STORYTELLING IS NOT JUST A FORM OF PUBLICITY, BUT A MEANS OF ORGANIZING.”

“The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you alter, even by a millimetre, the way . . . people look at reality, then you can change it.”

—James Baldwin

In the last few hours you've probably heard, told, or thought of several dozen stories: a news report, a love song, an online video, a daydream, a piece of gossip among friends. Stories are a fundamental aspect of human consciousness: Through their insights into cause and effect, they are how we make sense of the world around us, and we can tap into that power in our efforts to make social change (see: PRINCIPLE: Think narratively).

In order to bring about social change, people must come together to recognize shared challenges, figure out solutions to those challenges, identify allies and enemies, and build the relationships needed to apply pressure and win. All of that happens in no small part through stories.

Seen in this light, storytelling is not just a form of publicity, but also a means of organizing. Storytelling is never just a top-down transmission of ideas to a passive audience; at its best, storytelling goes in all directions. People respond to your stories; they may contest them or mash them up; they share their own stories in response; or pass your stories on in their own words.

Popular storytelling of this sort changes the storytellers just as much as it changes the audience. When people share their personal stories on a social issue, they become more invested in that issue because it is now theirs.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Storytelling can be fun and creative, but don't get seduced into thinking you're making change when you're just satisfying your own creative impulses. Storytelling, for all its transformative power, also appeals to our narcissistic obsession with technology and media: You make a video, put it online, and get some views and comments. What's not to love? Besides, it seems so much easier to “change the story” than to “change the world.” It's not. Changing the world through stories is as hard as by any other means, and it requires us being generous, courageous, and shrewd with our stories, as well as willing to leave behind stories that no longer serve us, recognize when our stories no longer fit who we are, and write new stories capable of pulling us into our ideal future.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Consider a few uses of popular storytelling:

To learn: GlobalGiving collected narratives from partner communities in Africa as a way of evaluating the needs and strengths of those communities. Those stories influenced GlobalGiving's direction, and the youth they hired to collect stories got more involved in their communities.

To organize: When 2008 Obama campaign volunteers told stories of "self, us and now" to each other, they learned how to speak with voters in personal terms about the issues of the day, and build an ever-growing base of supporters. Now, community groups worldwide use the Public Narrative method developed by organizer and educator Marshall Ganz.

To educate: In the It Gets Better Project, responding to tragically high rates of suicide among LGBTQ youth, tens of thousands of LGBTQ adults and their allies told their personal stories as a way of encouraging LGBTQ young people to stay alive long enough to get to the good stuff. The project reached youth directly, got adults personally involved in suicide prevention, and raised money for a much-needed hotline.

To advocate: Sex workers in South Africa, intellectually disabled people in Moldova, and other groups funded by the OSF Health Media Initiative have told their stories through videos, publications, and other media to persuade policymakers to recognize their rights. People most directly affected became the protagonists of their own stories, rather than being relegated to the status of secondary characters while their helpers or advocates took top billing. The same is true for prisoner families and former prisoners sharing their stories on the Nation Inside platform, as part of the movement to end mass incarceration. For example, the Campaign for Prison Phone Justice, hosted on the Nation Inside platform, used stories as part of a successful effort to pressure the Federal Communications Commission to regulate the exorbitant cost of phone calls from US correctional facilities.

In all these instances, storytelling is a creative endeavor. Every time we tell a story, we create something. In the process of articulating what we can and want to accomplish together, we discover ourselves and each other. When we tell stories about our attempts to correct injustice, we stay hopeful and strong. Telling stories is not just the way we talk about our challenges, it is one of the vital means we have for meeting those challenges.

LEARN MORE

Re-Imagining Change: How to Use Story-Based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World
Doyle Canning and Patrick Reinsborough, 2017, 2nd Edition
https://secure.pmpress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=851

Make new folks welcome

Preaching to the choir is vital

KEY THEORY

Framing

If a frame is a filter for interpreting the world, a story is an embodiment of that interpretation. For example, one conservative frame in the US is "law and order," and that frame can be applied to any number of issues, from crime to immigration to guns. A story that fills that frame might be, say, immigrants coming across the border to steal our jobs and sell drugs. Progressives can use better frames and tell more compelling stories that describe the world as it is, and that also inspire a more hopeful vision to strive for. For example, a more progressive frame might be "a nation of immigrants." Stories about the incredible sacrifices immigrant families make in search of better lives while adding to the rich tapestry of American life, would catalyze that frame

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Citizens' Posse
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- #ThisFlag
- Trail of Dreams

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Forum theatre
- Hashtag campaign
- Image theatre
- Legislative theatre
- Music video
- Street theatre

Storytelling and Social Change: A Strategy Guide

Working Narratives

<http://workingnarratives.org/story-guide/>

Vision, Values and Voice: A Social Justice Communications Toolkit

The Opportunity Agenda

<http://toolkit.opportunityagenda.org/>

Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy

Stephen Duncombe, 2007

http://www.stephenduncombe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Dream_final.pdf

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Think narratively

Theories

- Action logic
- Framing
- Memes
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Prefigurative politics
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Communications, Community building

TACTIC

SUBVERSIVE TRAVEL

Subversive travel seeks to defy and subvert unjust travel restrictions. It can be used to facilitate freedom of movement, challenge militarized borders, break a siege, deliver aid, or attract media attention.

CONTRIBUTED BY

D. 'Alwan

D. 'Alwan is an Iraqi-American born in the United States who has lived, worked, traveled, and studied in the Middle East and North Africa. Her work has included making guerilla public art and culture jamming, documentary video, violence prevention education, facilitating art programs in U.S. prisons, and designing affordable housing.

“BY PUBLICIZING POLITICIZED BARRIERS, SUBVERSIVE TRAVEL CAN MAKE THESE TYPES OF UNJUST RESTRICTIONS VISIBLE TO A BROADER PUBLIC.”

“I was the conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can't say — I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.”
—Harriet Tubman

Subversive travel seeks to defy, subvert, and expose unjust travel restrictions. It can be used to facilitate freedom of movement, challenge militarized borders, break a siege, or deliver aid. Subversive travel may provoke a response by authorities and can garner mainstream media attention, as in the case of travel ban challenges, or lend safety to communities at risk, as in the case of “human shield” delegations.

Important subversive travel antecedents include the Underground Railroad, a network of covert routes and safe houses used by 19th-century enslaved people of African descent in the United States escaping to free states and Canada, and the Kindertransport (Children's Transport), a series of rescue efforts that brought thousands of refugee Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1940.

From El Salvador to Sri Lanka, when facing extreme violence and state repression that seems insurmountable, movement organizers have invited Western activists to join them in solidarity, offering some protection as international observers or human shields, and helping to shine a global news spotlight on the issues (see: PRINCIPLE: Seek safety in support networks). US-based

POTENTIAL RISKS

Risks may include detention, denial of entry, deportation, abuse, and harm. Also, without a clear anti-oppression analysis, the story that emerges from a subversive travel act may focus on the actions of, and potential repercussions on, the Western participants, rather than exposing ongoing repression and lack of freedom of movement for the most impacted population (see: THEORY: Anti-oppression). For example, an activist gets arrested at the Israeli airport in Tel Aviv and, when interviewed by the media, instead of using the spotlight to direct an interview to a Palestinian activist, dramatizes their own experience without acknowledging that indigenous Palestinian people can't enter the country (see: PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from

organizations such as Global Exchange and CODEPINK have coordinated civilian delegations to Cuba, in violation of the US embargo, as a means of protesting the economic strangulation of that country. Women On Waves (WOW), a Netherlands-registered ship, sails to countries where abortions are illegal, in order that WOW medical staff can safely provide early-term abortions aboard the ship, while in international waters.

The Israeli government's strict travel restrictions have made it a frequent target of subversive travel actions. The Free Gaza Movement launched flotillas carrying only humanitarian aid and human rights workers that attempted to break the naval blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip. Birthright Unplugged turned the tables on "Birthright Israel" trips by inviting all people, not just Jews, to travel to Israel and Palestine, while Birthright RePlugged facilitated trips for Palestinian children living in refugee camps to travel through checkpoints without documentation to see Jerusalem and their ancestors' lands (see: STORY: Birthright Unplugged/Replugged). In the cases of the Free Gaza Movement and Birthright RePlugged, this travel is legal under international law but denied by Israel. In such cases, the journey becomes the destination.

Welcome to Palestine is yet another example. In 2011, Palestinian civil society invited internationals to visit Palestine. When asked by Israeli border security, travelers were encouraged to say they were going to Palestine (knowing they would be refused entry). As a result, 130 activists were denied entry, deported, jailed, or coerced into signing documents pledging not to participate in political actions. This action made headlines and helped educate people on Israeli injustices (see: STORY: Welcome to Palestine).

Finally, the UndocuBus tour brought people living in the United States without documentation together to openly tour the country, declaring, "No one is illegal." By outing themselves as undocumented people, these activists courageously exposed themselves to potential arrest or deportation in the name of calling attention to the urgent need for immigration reform.

Diverse acts of subversive travel are ubiquitous in activist practice, both past and present. Not only is it a way to challenge the authorities when they deny the fundamental human right to freedom of movement, but it can also engage the revolutionary imagination to envision what a future state of freedom might look like.

LEARN MORE

The UndocuBus
<http://nopapersnofear.org/>

Women on Waves

the most impacted).

KEY PRINCIPLES

Make the invisible visible

Travel restrictions are not always apparent to those not being restricted. By publicizing politicized barriers, subversive travel can make these types of unjust restrictions visible to a broader public. Increased visibility is often necessary for increased traction on an issue.

If protest is illegal, make daily life a protest

When freedom of movement is restricted and the basic human right to travel is made illegal, just exercising your right to travel, or even simply announcing your intention to defy a travel restriction, becomes an act of protest. In this way, travel becomes a subversive act.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright Unplugged/Replugged
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Civil disobedience

Principles

- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The real action is your target's

reaction

Theories

- Action logic
- Anti-oppression
- Direct action
- Postcolonialism
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Colonialism, Dictatorship, Direct action, Education, Human rights, Immigration, International solidarity, Militarization, Racial justice, State violence, Student activism, War and peace

TACTIC TREK

A long journey (often on foot, though sometimes by bike, bus, or boat) towards a centre of power or other key point of intervention, that rallies geographically dispersed people to a common cause.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

“EACH STEP OF OUR PATH EMBODIES THE MESSAGE.”

“The path is made by walking.”

—Antonio Machado

We learn to walk at a very early age, and almost simultaneously, we learn the power of being able to move ourselves toward places we want to go (that pile of toys) or away from places we want to leave (that plate of smashed peas). Each step of our path embodies the message.

People’s resistance stories are full of walks, treks, sea voyages, and even flights. Over the millennia of human existence, entire communities have packed up and voted with their feet, moving away from untenable situations to more fertile lands. In the last century, treks have been strategically used as a visible, large-scale expression of protest and a way to rally geographically dispersed people to a common cause.

India’s Salt March of 1932 is likely the best-known example of a mass, many-day trek (see: STORY: The Salt March). Gandhi conceived of this march as a living lesson for India, creating a community — literally one step at a time — that both supported and embodied an independent India. Many other treks have followed suit, usually with a commitment to demonstrate an ideal or alternative way of living. The 1986 Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament flourished during its cross-continental trek, arriving in Washington, D.C., with 1,500 marchers and thousands more supporters. In the course of the 3,700 logged miles, the marchers not only educated and agitated for action on nuclear disarmament, but also built a participatory mobile city. Not all treks model alternative social or living structures; some focus on specific strategic functions of the tactic itself. In 2010, four immigrant students embarked on a 1,500-mile march to Washington, D.C., to support immediate passage of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors) Act and a moratorium on

POTENTIAL RISKS

All of these mobile protests require immense amounts of logistical support before, during, and after the action itself. Sometimes this burden can prove too heavy and the logistics can overwhelm the organizers, leaving the strategy unrealized. When things go badly, the physical requirements of the trek or ride can exhaust members and burn out the broader support network. Make sure to allow adequate preparation time and gather appropriate resources to ensure success.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Make the invisible visible

The routes of treks are often strategically chosen to make the invisible visible, by both engaging remote communities, and bringing issues that are currently under the radar into larger public conversation.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bicycle rally for peace

deportations of eligible students. The Trail of Dreams (see: STORY: Trail of Dreams) embodied the impossible hurdles placed on the path to success of immigrants in the US. Many forms of transportation, from bicycles to trains and even sailboats, have been used in treks. In the 1935 On-to-Ottawa trek, hundreds of unemployed Canadian workers boarded boxcars in Vancouver to take their grievances to the national capital. Their basic demands proved so threatening to the government that they were physically stopped from reaching Ottawa. But the unrest that fueled their trek soon brought down the conservative government. In 1989, a citizen diplomatic venture, the Soviet American Sail, navigated a 48-metre schooner from New York City to Leningrad to bring home the peace and environmental message, "We're all in the same boat." The trek tactic is a versatile and potent tool that can take an issue or even a whole movement to the next level. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

Soviet-American Group Plans Voyage for Peace

Richard Severo, New York Times, 1989

<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/03/20/nyregion/soviet-american-group-plans-voyage-for-peace.html>

On-to-Ottawa Trek

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/on-to-ottawa-trek/>

Trail of Dreams

<http://trail2010.org>

- Burmese Students' Long March
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March
- Trail of Dreams
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Creative petition delivery

Principles

- Know your cultural terrain
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make the invisible visible
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Ethical spectacle
- Political identity paradox
- The commons

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Direct action, Immigration

TACTIC

VIAGGIO SOVVERSIVO

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D. 'Alwan

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RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright Unplugged/Replugged
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Civil disobedience

Principles

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- Make the invisible visible
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Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Direct action
- Postcolonialism
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Colonialism, Dictatorship, Direct action, Education, Human rights, Immigration, International solidarity, Militarization, Racial justice, State violence, Student activism, War and peace

PRINCIPLE

ACTIVATE INTERNATIONAL MECHANISMS

While international mechanisms like the United Nations' human rights protocols are no cure-all for correcting abuses, savvy campaigners can use them to put pressure on rogue governments or protect activists.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ben Leather

Ben Leather is a campaigner on human rights and the environment at Global Witness, and also provides training for local activists on how to interact strategically with international human rights mechanisms. He was previously with the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), lobbying for human rights defender protection, corporate accountability, and a stronger UN. Ben also used to live and work in Mexico, providing international accompaniment and support for at-risk human rights defenders with Peace Brigades International (PBI). Follow him at @BenLeather1.

"ONCE YOU'VE GOT THE WORLD'S ATTENTION, HOW WILL YOU USE THE WEIGHT OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO APPLY PRESSURE LOCALLY IN SUPPORT OF YOUR CAMPAIGN?"

Is your government violating human rights and ignoring your calls to stop abuses? Might international pressure be just the thing to persuade them to change? Are you keen to grab the world's attention, but unsure how? Activating international United Nations (UN) mechanisms might be the way to go.

The UN's array of organizations and acronyms can seem far removed from our day-to-day struggles for justice, but there are a number of international mechanisms that exist to support you in pressuring your government and other key actors to protect your rights and defend your work. The trick is to understand what these mechanisms can and can't do, and how you can activate them. Remember: these mechanisms are not a cure-all, just another tool in your toolbox.

First, seek guidance. Find out which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in your country are already interacting with the UN, and ask for their support. The UN's human rights office has a civil society section, with resources and staff to answer your questions, while independent organizations like the International

POTENTIAL RISKS

It is vital not to skip any of the steps laid out here. Analysis and preparation are key to getting results and ensuring you don't waste energy or put yourself at further risk. Each mechanism has its own distinct way of working, so use the suggested resources to find out more and ensure you follow the correct protocols. Finally, some activists have faced threats and reprisals for having activated international mechanisms. Be sure to carry out a security analysis, take precautions, and consult the ISHR's Reprisals Handbook.

Service for Human Rights (ISHR) publish handbooks, produce regular updates, and provide training on how to use the UN to strategically to support grassroots struggles. You can also find out online what the UN has said previously about your country or the issue you work on.

Second, analyze how susceptible your government is – or is not – to UN pressure. Would the voice of international authorities give your local movement the additional weight it needs to be heard in the media? Would local politicians feel compelled to respond to forthright criticism from their peers in the UN sphere? Are local courts likely to reference international guidance and precedents in their decisions? Playing the UN game requires varying amounts of time and trouble, so you should make sure that its outcomes will be worth the effort.

Third, identify which mechanisms to activate and how to do so. A UN expert (or “Special Procedures” as they are officially known) might well speak out about a human rights abuse if short, accurate, and well-documented information is sent in a timely manner. In Australia, for example, local NGOs used a press release by a group of UN experts to tip the scales in their struggle against repressive protest laws favouring big business over grassroots movements.

Alternatively, you might persuade other countries to make recommendations related to your cause when your country comes up for its five-year UN Universal Periodic Review. In 2009, various countries used the Universal Periodic Review to criticize Mexico’s lack of protection for threatened activists. Its government subsequently created a protection program. When this wasn’t properly implemented, civil society ensured that 40 percent of member states spoke out about it, pressuring Mexico at their subsequent review.

If your country has ratified key treaties, it will be regularly assessed as to how well it is implementing its obligations, in regards to, say, women’s equality or children’s rights. In fact, if it has agreed to optional protocols, you might even be able to take a case of an individual violation to one of the UN committees, which will act as a quasi-judicial body tasked with evaluating whether international law has been breached in that specific case.

If you’re working in big international coalitions and have the stamina for protracted advocacy efforts, the UN’s different mechanisms can be used in conjunction — often together with its preeminent but highly politicized human rights body, the Human Rights Council — to really put an issue on the international agenda and propel a range of governments to address it at home. Examples include the push for accountability in Sri Lanka and the gradual but crucial recognition of equal rights for everybody regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

You may also want to evaluate whether regional mechanisms such

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Pyramid of Shoes
- Stop Praver Plan

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Hunger strike
- Jail solidarity

Principles

- Foster safer spaces
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- Use the law, don’t be afraid of it

Theories

- Palace Coup

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Human rights, International solidarity, Indigenous rights, State violence, Education, Dictatorship

as the Inter-American or African Commissions on Human Rights can contribute to your efforts.

Finally, whatever mechanism you pursue to get the world's attention, you'll need to be prepared for your next challenge: How will you use the weight of the United Nations to push for the change you want to see on the ground?

LEARN MORE

Working with the United Nations Human Rights Programme: A Handbook for Civil Society

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008

http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/CivilSociety/Documents/Handbook_en.pdf

Directory of Human Rights Bodies

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx>

Simple Guide to the UN Treaty Bodies

International Service for Human Rights, 2015

<http://www.ishr.ch/news/updated-simple-guide-un-treaty-bodies-guide-simple-sur-les-organes-de-traites-des-nations-unies>

PRINCIPLE

ANGER WORKS BEST WHEN YOU HAVE THE MORAL HIGH GROUND

Anger is a powerful emotion. Use it wisely. If you have the moral high ground and act with dignity, anger is compelling and people will join you. If you don't, you'll seem a little scary, or even crazy.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“WE SHOULD NEVER COME OFF AS MAD-FOR-THE-SAKE-OF-BEING-MAD, BUT RATHER AS RELUCTANTLY, GENUINELY ANGRY IN THE FACE OF OUTRAGEOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.”

“The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off.”

—Gloria Steinem

Anger is a double-edged sword. Or perhaps it's more like a water hose: It's full of force, it's hard to control, and it's important where you aim it.

There is a crucial difference between moral indignation and self-righteousness. Moral indignation channels anger into resolve, courage, and powerful assertions of dignity. Think: the civil rights movement. Self-righteousness, on the other hand, is predictable and easily dismissed. Think: masked 16-year-olds holding a banner that says “SMASH CAPITALISM AND EAT THE RICH.”

Have you seen the scene of the “Malcolm X” movie where an army of outraged people gather and stand in perfect formation, with perfect posture, outside a prison to demand the release of their friend? It was so badass! They were all wearing suits, they stood as one, and their discipline clearly communicated: We're mad as hell, we're right, you're wrong, and you're going to give us what we want.

Integrity gives deep meaning and moral force to anger. We should never come off as mad-for-the-sake-of-being-mad, but rather as reluctantly, genuinely angry in the face of outrageous

POTENTIAL RISKS

Suppressing legitimate anger can be as debilitating as hair-trigger reactions. We sometimes fail to lead because we are afraid to express or channel popular outrage, and if we're unable to tap into large-scale disaffection, we will remain marginal. By contrast, many youth movements self-marginalize precisely because their anger doesn't resonate. Try to find the sweet spot between the two.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Citizens' Posse
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal

circumstances. Rather than reacting, we respond. Rather than lashing out, we stand our ground.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Buddhism and the Occupy Movement: Taking Care of Our Anger
Elephant Journal, 2011

<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2011/10/buddhism-and-the-occupy-movement-taking-care-of-our-anger/>

Occupy Wall Street: Chris Hedges Shuts Down CBC's Kevin O'Leary
CBC, 2011

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAhHPluTQ5k>

- Justice for Janitors
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Occupy Wall Street
- #ThisFlag
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Hunger strike
- Lamentation
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't dress like a protester
- Escalate strategically
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Hamoq and hamas
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Communications, Community building, Movement building, Racial justice

PRINCIPLE ANYONE CAN ACT

Don't worry about being a lousy actor — you're a great one.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

“YOU’LL QUICKLY FIND THAT WHEN EVERYONE IN THE ROOM BELIEVES THAT YOU’RE A PARTICULAR PERSON, A MAGICAL THING HAPPENS: YOU START TO BELIEVE IT AS WELL.”

“Acting is the least mysterious of all crafts. Whenever we want something from somebody or when we want to hide something or pretend, we’re acting. Most people do it all day long.”

—Marlon Brando

If you want to pose as someone you're not — for example, while infiltrating a conference — you don't need to worry about being a lousy actor.

Andy from the Yes Men, for example, is a terrible actor. In college he got kicked out of a play. In high school he did really well in an audition, once, and got a part — but then was atrocious in the actual performance, as he couldn't stay interested in the role. Yes Man Mike, for his part, once played the role of a dinosaur in an elementary school play. He was good at it, but only because you couldn't actually see his expression, which was most likely not the least bit credible.

OK, you'll say, but Andy looks very convincing when he appears on the BBC, posing as a spokesperson for Dow Chemical (see: [STORY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal](#)). Actually, look closely: he's terrified. The whole time (see: [PRINCIPLE: Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel](#)). But after a week of solid rehearsals, he managed to pretty much memorize everything he had to say and spit it out. His terrified look became the look of a nervous public relations flak, which is exactly what he'd turned himself into. Professional PR people are probably terrified too, but they're very,

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Honk at Parliament
- Lysistrata Project
- Street Graduation

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Citizen's arrest
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Forum theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Image theatre
- Infiltration

very rehearsed.

Rehearsing is one of the two keys to successful “acting,” which in this context is basically synonymous with “keeping your shit together.” (Incidentally, here’s how you can become an excellent PR flak yourself: Just memorize the five answers you want to give, and recite them in response to whatever question you’re asked, with appropriate hemming and hawing, which, in the biz, is called “bridging” (see: PRINCIPLE: Stay on message). That’s all there is to it! And it works whether you’re pretending to be Dow Chemical on TV, posing at a conference as the CIA, or speaking as yourself to a reporter about your latest action.)

The second key to keeping your shit together (also known as acting) is to realize that once you’re up there, pretty much anything you do is going to be fine. After all, you’re the most important person in the room!

You’ll quickly find that when everyone in the room believes that you’re a particular person, a magical thing happens: You start to believe it as well. That’s what makes identity correction so much easier than regular acting (see: TACTIC: Identity correction). When you’re a regular actor, everyone in the room knows you’re not actually Hamlet, or Sweeney Todd’s wife, or an elementary-school dinosaur — and they have to work plenty hard to “suspend disbelief.” In hoax-like acting, the audience already believes you are who you’re billed as. It’s suspension of disbelief in reverse: Under the influence of your audience, you end up believing it as well, and acting just right.

A quick way to test the principle: Just put on a suit or business dress, and notice how you act differently. See?

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Truth in Comedy: The Manual of Improvisation

Charna Halpern and Del Close, ed. Kim Johnson, 1994

https://books.google.com/books/about/Truth_in_Comedy.html?id=k2JQAAAAMAAJ

Improv Wisdom: Don’t Prepare, Just Show Up

Patricia Ryan Madison, 2005

[https://books.google.com/books?id=Y-](https://books.google.com/books?id=Y-FGRhD3JboC&dq=Improv+Wisdom:+Don't+Prepare,+Just+Show+Up&source=gbs_n)

[FGRhD3JboC&dq=Improv+Wisdom:+Don’t+Prepare,+Just+Show+Up&source=gbs_n](https://books.google.com/books?id=Y-FGRhD3JboC&dq=Improv+Wisdom:+Don't+Prepare,+Just+Show+Up&source=gbs_n)
[avlinks_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=Y-FGRhD3JboC&dq=Improv+Wisdom:+Don't+Prepare,+Just+Show+Up&source=gbs_n)

Games for Actors and Non-Actors

Augusto Boal, 2002

https://books.google.com/books/about/Games_for_Actors_and_Non_Actors.html?id=AoqCAGAAQBAJ

- Invisible theatre
- Media-jacking
- Phone banking

Principles

- Do the media’s work for them
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Fail forward
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Stay on message
- This ain’t the Sistine chapel
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use others’ prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Theatre of the Oppressed

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Humour, Media, Pranks

PRINCIPLE

BALANCE ART AND MESSAGE

Art seeks to explore deep questions. Politics demands a clear direction and message. The right balance can move both hearts and minds.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Kevin Buckland

Kevin Buckland is an artist, activist organizer and the "Arts Ambassador" for the grassroots global network 350.org. Responding to the call to "make this movement as beautiful as the planet we are fighting to save," he employs comedy, tragedy, farce, satire, and a great deal of cardboard in his attempts to end empire and globalize justice.

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"ART INVITES US TO THINK RATHER THAN TELLING US WHAT TO THINK."

"Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."

—Bertolt Brecht

"Political art." Easy to say, harder to do. Art seeks to explore the deep questions. Politics demands a clear direction and message. That's a tough tension to manage. Sometimes quick gimmicks are called for; sometimes it pays to dig deeper — in our craft and in ourselves — to mobilize the unique powers of art.

"If I could tell you what it meant," Martha Graham once said, "there would be no point in dancing it." Unlike politics, which tends toward plain prose in endless repetition, art goes beyond explicit meanings to connect with that more elusive, soulful dimension of being human — a realm which must be engaged if we are to truly change the world (see: THEORY: Ethical spectacle).

Song has its own special powers. Singing together builds emotional ties and harmonies — literally and figuratively. Song makes us feel powerful and united in a way nothing else can. During the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989, the Estonian liberation movement used the country's traditional songs in resistance work. At one juncture, a

POTENTIAL RISKS

Creative communication can get lots of attention — so make sure to connect that attention to your desired action. Give people the tools to act on your issue, even if it's just a URL, a #hashtag, or a phone number.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Bicycle rally for peace
- Billionaires for Bush
- Conflict Kitchen
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Lysistrata Project

full quarter of the country's population sang together in the streets, facing down Soviet tanks.

Consider the power of Picasso's Guernica. A striking and visceral canvas painted in protest of the first aerial bombing of civilians, its aura as a global symbol of the senseless devastation of war was still strong enough seventy years later that the Bush Administration felt compelled to throw a cloth over a tapestry copy of it when Colin Powell spoke at the UN pushing for war with Iraq. Images from Guernica continue to resurface in anti-war marches the world over.

Advertising is the dominant art form of capitalism, as well as a science of messaging. In the late 1980's Gran Fury, an AIDS activist art collective, used the artistic and messaging power of graphics to bring the AIDS epidemic front and center and move a critical social conversation in a direction it had never gone before. Their "Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do" bus ads featuring same- and mixed-sex couples kissing were not only explicit in their visual content, but beautiful, hip, emotive, and evocative.

Art invites us to think rather than telling us what to think. This is one of its great powers, and if you make your art accessible and beautiful enough, people will want to follow where it goes. And because they themselves are deciding where to go with it, they'll more easily connect it to their own experience.

The right balance of art and message can move both hearts and minds. Striking this balance, however, can be difficult. Think about your audience and your goals. What do you want your art to achieve? Do you want to evoke sympathy? Provoke deep soul-searching? Get people to call their Senator? Art can help you do all of these things, but only when art and message are in balance. You know you've struck gold when you're able to say something so clearly that it hardly needs to be said at all, but is instead embodied in how you've said it.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

AIDS: Making Art and Raising Hell

Queer Arts

<http://www.queer-arts.org/archive/show4/forum/atkins/atkins.html>

AIDS Demo Graphics

Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, 1990

https://books.google.com/books/about/AIDS_Demo_Graphics.html?id=L0xRAAAAMAAJ

The Singing Revolution

<https://singingrevolution.com>

- Manich Msamah
- PARK(ing) Day
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Standing Man
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Artistic vigil
- Clandestine leafleting
- Culture jamming
- Currency hacking
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Flash mob
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Image theatre
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Music video
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Consider your audience
- Don't dress like a protester
- Make the invisible visible
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics

- Temporary autonomous zone
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Artstorm

TAGS

Art, Communications, Language

PRINCIPLE

BEWARE THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS

Sometimes the *least* structured group can be the most tyrannical. Create a participatory and welcoming environment by adopting a transparent decision making process and promoting accountability within the group.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Josh Bolotsky

Josh Bolotsky is a veteran digital campaign strategist, and has served as New Media Director of The Other 98% and as Digital Team Lead for Zephyr Teachout's 2014 campaign for Governor of New York. Since then, Josh has worked as a freelance online and campaign strategy consultant for people and movements doing vital, interesting, and meaningful things.

"ACCOUNTABILITY IS WHAT GIVES PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY ITS BITE, DISTINGUISHING IT FROM A ROTE EXERCISE IN COMMUNICATING PREFERENCES."

"Leadership has a way of always entering into the equation whether you want it or not. The trick is of course to recognise that it will be there and find ways to make it accountable."

—Jo Freeman

Have you ever sat through an interminable meeting where everyone is theoretically on equal footing, and yet a few people are doing most of the talking? Where there's no facilitator, for fear of introducing hierarchy, and so the discussion goes in endless circles, never quite sure when it's finished? Where new members lose patience because their suggestions are ignored and their ideas left to float in the ether? Where those with the best informal clique links are able to run the show from behind the scenes?

Welcome to the tyranny of structurelessness.

Jo Freeman's seminal 1970 essay "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" put a name to a persistent problem that plagues participants in non-hierarchical groups and collectives. Freeman argued that by claiming to eschew hierarchy, or even leadership, people are actually just making it harder to identify and hold accountable the leadership and hierarchy that *de facto* arises anyway. "There is no such thing as a structureless group," Freeman argues, and people who pretend otherwise are, in effect, unilaterally disarming themselves when it comes to identifying and correcting decision-making problems within their group.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Nuit Debout
- Occupy Wall Street

Principles

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Delegate
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Foster safer spaces
- Make new folks welcome
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Structurelessness is often mistakenly conflated with absence of hierarchy, when in fact, effective non-hierarchical forms of organizing actually require a great deal of structure. Anyone who has participated in an effectively facilitated general assembly or spokes-council meeting will well understand this distinction.

To strive for a structureless group is as useful, and as deceptive, as to aim at an "objective" news story, "value-free" social science, or a "free" economy. A "laissez-faire" group is about as realistic as a "laissez faire" society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. Thus, structurelessness becomes a way of masking power. It would be bad enough if structurelessness merely led to bruised feelings and longer meetings, but there is a further problem: It simply doesn't work for long. If you're engaging in any kind of long-term campaign, a lack of accountability and an organized process for incorporating feedback will often prove fatal.

So what's the way out of a structureless organization that is inadvertently oppressive and not working properly? The best cure is prevention: Establish clear decision-making processes from the start. However, if you're already stuck in such an arrangement, and wish to change the culture to something more democratic and participatory, what you want to press for isn't hierarchy per se, but accountability.

Accountability is what gives participatory democracy its bite, distinguishing it from a rote exercise in communicating preferences. It involves the establishment of real consequences when the expressed will of the people is not implemented as promised. (By contrast, structurelessness provides plenty of ways to note collective preferences, but precious few equitable or effective ways to ensure they're acted upon.) Hierarchy is a particular vision of how accountability is carried out, but for the hierarchy-adverse it's by no means the only one.

There are as many organizational structures as there are philosophies of collective action. But they all share one thing in common: For better or worse, they acknowledge their own structure, instead of hiding behind unlikely and obfuscating assertions of structurelessness. That acknowledgment, and the accountability it fosters, is the only way to ensure effective and equitable decision-making.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Tyranny of Structurelessness

Jo Freeman

<http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Critical multiculturalism
- Feminism
- Participatory democracy
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Peel the onion
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Movement building, Community building, Democracy

How to Organize and Facilitate Meetings Effectively

Libcom, 2006

<https://libcom.org/organise/organise-facilitate-meetings-effectively>

PRINCIPLE

BRAND OR BE BRANDED

Though the concept of branding has a negative connotation, especially among anti-corporate activists, it can, and indeed should, be used proactively to amplify your message and persuade your target audience.

“YOU’LL BE BRANDED WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, SO BE PROACTIVE.”

“Success means never letting the competition define you. Instead you have to define yourself based on a point of view you care deeply about.”

—Tom Chappell, Tom’s of Maine

Branding is a dirty word for many activists, but it really just means “the set of expectations, memories, stories, and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer’s decision to choose one product or service over another.” If we take branding out of the realm of consumption and into the interplay of ideas in the public sphere, then we see that the tools of branding can be used for more than just selling soap.

Three important points to keep in mind about branding: * Branding isn’t inherently “corporate.” Branding is really nothing more than a set of proven principles for associating, in the collective imagination, a certain word, phrase, or image with a set of emotions or ideas. There’s nothing inherently capitalist about that. Corporations use branding because it works. Anti-corporate activists can use it and make it work for them, too. * Branding can make the difference between success and failure. Every movement wants its message to be heard, but simply being right won’t sell your ideas. The human mind needs to be persuaded. * There are copious examples of movements using branding effectively. In the ‘90s, for instance, an adherence to a certain aesthetic helped unify the Otpor! youth movement that swept Serbia and ousted Slobodan Milošević.

Whatever the context, if you craft your message for your intended audience, then that audience will want to know more. It’s as simple as engaging people in a dialogue that appeals to them (see: PRINCIPLE: Balance art and message). If they feel you aren’t talking to them, they’ll ignore you — or worse, work against you.

You’ll be branded whether you like it or not, so be proactive. Even conspicuously “unbranded” campaigns have a brand. Despite its efforts to avoid defining itself, the Occupy movement ended up with an effective brand when the “99%” meme organically emerged as the touchstone for people within and outside the movement.

If you decline to brand yourself, you leave an opening for other

POTENTIAL RISKS

Branding, like anything, can be overdone. If people feel like something is being “sold” to them, they’ll respond negatively.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Billionaires for Bush
- Burmese Students’ Long March
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Manich Msamah
- Occupy Wall Street
- Stolen Beauty
- Yomango
- “You’ll never have a home in your f***ing life!”
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Creative petition delivery
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Hashtag campaign
- Human banner
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking
- Music video
- Reverse graffiti
- Storytelling

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Build strength through repetition

people — including enemies — to brand you instead. Operating within someone else's frame is always more difficult than operating within a frame that you yourself have set (see: METHODOLOGY: Battle of the story). Think of your group's brand as water spewing out of a hose. You can either leave the hose on the ground, or you can pick it up and direct its flow. Either way, the water continues to flow — and if you don't pick up the hose, someone else will!

Branding is an opportunity to shape your message and ultimately use the power of that message, its meaning, and its delivery to win the war of ideas. There's no such thing as an unbranded campaign or movement — though there are plenty of examples of poorly branded ones. Brand or be branded.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Adbusters

Adbusters

<http://www.adbusters.org/>

AIDS: Making Art & Raising Hell

Queer Arts, 1988

www.queer-arts.org/archive/show4/forum/atkins/atkins.html.

- Change a name to change the game
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Know your cultural terrain
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Think narratively

Theories

- Artivism
- Capitalism
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Media, Art, Language

PRINCIPLE

BREAKFAST IS PERSUASIVE

Providing a direct service that benefits your community can speak louder than any rhetorical argument. Living out the values of self-reliance can empower the community to engage in deeper organizing.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Beautiful Trouble

Beautiful Trouble is a globally dispersed group of activists whose mission is to make nonviolent revolution irresistible by providing strategic tools and trainings to inspire movements for a more just, healthy, and equitable world.

Rather than try to win people over to your idea by direct argument, it's often more effective to offer a direct service (say, free breakfast or garbage clean-up) that has an immediate, concrete benefit for your intended audience but also has embedded within it the deeper idea (community self-reliance, the right to public services, etc.) that you're trying to win them over to.

In the 1960s the Black Panther Party served free hot breakfasts to young children in African-American neighborhoods. By fulfilling an immediate need, they were not only creating a context for further organizing, but also enacting the values of community self-reliance and empowerment. Breakfast, it turned out, was quite persuasive.

In Jordan, to take another example, many urban areas are not served by municipal water systems, so people buy millions of one-time-use plastic bottles which often end up as trash in the neighborhood streets. Instead of moralizing about the need for recycling, young environmentalists in the community built vertical gardens out of the discarded plastic bottles. People were so inspired, they implemented it on their own in more than 40 other sites. The action spoke by example. By providing a direct and easy-to-implement solution at the exact site of the problem, organizers attracted people from all walks of life to do the same, triggering a paradigm shift in how people think about the issue.

Next time your community is facing a tough problem, instead of trying to win people over by abstract rational argument, enact a living example of your solution to win them over instead.

LEARN MORE

Beautiful Solutions
Beautiful Solutions Gallery, 2014
<http://beautifulsolutions.info>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Conflict Kitchen
- Gezi Park iftar
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Streets Into Gardens

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Eviction blockade
- Guerrilla marketing
- Visibility action

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Create many points of entry
- Focus on basic needs
- Keep it positive
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your community
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Solidarity, not aid
- Start a conversation
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative

The Black Panther's Free Breakfast For School Children

Radical practices of collective care, 2013

<http://radicalcollectivecare.blogspot.com/2013/01/the-blackpanthers-freebreakfast-for.html>

The Black Panthers: Revolutionaries, Free Breakfast Pioneers

Andrea King Collier, National Geographic, 2015

<http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/04/the-black-panthers-revolutionaries-free-breakfast-pioneers/>

Theories

- Action logic
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Decolonization
- Environmental justice
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting

TAGS

Action design, Community building, Direct action, Environment, Food, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

BRING THE ISSUE HOME

By using creative visuals, telling powerful personal narratives, and highlighting local costs, we can make an otherwise abstract, far-away issue personal, visceral, and relevant.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jodie Evans

Jodie Evans has been a peace, environmental, women's rights, and social justice activist for forty years who has traveled to war zones, promoting and learning about peaceful resolution to conflict. She co-founded CODEPINK: Women for Peace, is the board chair of Women's Media Center and sits on many other boards, including Rainforest Action Network, Institute for Policy Studies, and Drug Policy Alliance.

Rae Abileah

Rae is a social change strategist, writer, educator, and advocate for collective liberation and economic justice.

"WHEN THE LOCAL CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBAL POLICIES ARE HIGHLIGHTED, PEOPLE'S CIRCLE OF CONCERN OFTEN WIDENS."

"If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow."

—Rachel Carson

The destruction of a far-off rainforest. The carnage of war thousands of miles away. People care, but usually not enough to act on that concern, at least until they understand viscerally what's at stake. Here are a few ways to "bring the issue home":

Show the human cost

When the Iraq War was raging, mainstream media didn't show the stream of flag-draped caskets coming off planes or images of bombed buildings and dead Iraqis. Most Americans, with the exception of military families, didn't viscerally feel the war's impact. To bring the human cost of war home, Nancy Kricorian, a CODEPINK activist in New York City, stood outside her senator's office and arranged a row of shoes of all sizes tagged with the names of Iraqi civilians who had been killed, and asked passersby to "walk in their shoes." Her gesture was picked up and repeated across the country. In a similar spirit, veterans met on the beach in Santa Monica, California, on Sundays during the Iraq War, to set up a field of white crosses in neat rows across the beach — one for each soldier who had died. It was a powerful reminder of the human

POTENTIAL RISKS

If you're going to highlight the cost of a far-away war, be careful to never focus solely on the financial cost. Imagine if peace advocates only held up signs about the amount of money spent on a war, with no mention of the lives lost. If you want to draw attention to the financial cost, alongside it always give the human cost its due.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Stolen Beauty
- Taco Bell Boycott

cost of war, at once intimate and horrific (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible).

Make it personal

Los Angeles-based Occidental Petroleum was recently planning to expand its operations in the Peruvian Amazon jungle. Well-researched pleas to halt the drilling got nowhere. That all changed when a delegation of native Achuar people (who would have been displaced by the drilling, and their ancestral lands ravaged) traveled to the US to share their story. The issue shifted from stopping an oil project (relatively abstract and impersonal), to defending people's homes (far more concrete and human). Occidental had to cancel the project, and the Achuar are pursuing legal claims against Occidental for environmental damage already done. Bringing forward the names, faces, and stories of your far-away issue (see: PRINCIPLE: Lead with sympathetic characters) makes the consequences of inaction far more real and relevant.

Put a price tag on it

If people don't connect to the human cost of an issue, reaching their pocketbooks is another route. In 2005, when the historic Steinbeck Library in Salinas, California, was threatened with closure due to drastic budget cuts, farm workers and peace advocates joined forces and held a twenty-four-hour read-in to keep the library open, drawing attention to the money spent on waging wars rather than other priorities. Before the read-in, few in Salinas cared enough about the Iraq war to protest it; twenty-four hours later, the entire community understood how the high price of occupation affected them. When the local consequences of global policies are highlighted, people's circle of concern often widens.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Rethink Afghanistan (Part 3): The Cost of War

Rethink Afghanistan

http://rethinkafghanistan.com/part3_full.php

Guide to Creating a "Walk in Their Shoes" Display

CODEPINK, 2012

<https://www.womenoccupy.org/2012/02/guide-to-creating-a-walk-in-their-shoes-display-at-a-bank-of-america-action/>

- Walk a mile in her shoes

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Lamentation
- Public art intervention
- Visibility action

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Think narratively
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Cultural hegemony
- Environmental justice

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Communications, Environment, Indigenous rights, War and peace

PRINCIPLE

BUILD STRENGTH THROUGH REPETITION

An often overlooked aspect of campaigning is the patient work of building a skilled and committed base of support through the repetition of regular events.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Khalil Secker

Khalil Secker worked as the campaigns officer at the University of Manchester Students' Union from 2012/13 and co-founded the Save Our NHS campaign to defend local health services from government cuts. He was formerly one of the London representatives for the doctors' trade union the British Medical Association.

"THE REGULARITY OF THEIR VIGILS SIGNALLED AN UNWAVERING RESILIENCE."

"Happiness is the longing for repetition."
—Milan Kundera

A crucial skill for campaigners is the ability to react quickly to time-sensitive issues. For example, a government threatens to declare war, so peace campaigners respond by organizing an anti-war protest, or an oil and gas company announces a plan to build a pipeline, so activists organize to stop it from being built. However, an equally important, but often overlooked, aspect of campaigning is the patient work of building a skilled and committed base of support through the repetition of regular events. With each iteration of the event, it has the potential to become bigger and better, and grow into a reliable part of a social movement's infrastructure and culture.

This regularity can be both dramatic and prosaic.

On the more dramatic side, consider the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo — a group of Argentine human rights activists formed in response to the campaign of disappearances, torture, and murder carried out during the military junta's 1976–1983 "dirty war." At the same time of day, on the same day of the week, every week for years, the Mothers assembled in the Plaza de Mayo, facing the presidential palace, to protest the disappearance of their children. They wore headscarves with the names of their children and often carried photographs of the disappeared. The regularity of their vigils signalled an unwavering resilience in the face of the junta's repression that played a critical role in the junta's eventual collapse in 1983. And then the Mothers kept marching! They kept holding

POTENTIAL RISKS

If followed too religiously, this principle can lead your organization to become rigid, boring, and disconnected. While stability and repetition are useful for recruiting and building an activist base, it's also important to be able to recognize when it's time to do something different, and to organize one-off events in reaction to timely, pressing issues.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Reclaim the Streets
- #ThisFlag
- Walk a mile in her shoes
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Artistic vigil

their regular weekly vigils — for 40 years now! — to shine a light on continuing injustices in Argentinian society.

On the more prosaic side, consider campaigners who put on a regular annual conference so that supporters can share insights and decide upon their priorities for the coming year. Or a local climate group that holds regular monthly film screenings. Given the vast number of documentaries on climate change, you could screen one a month for several years and still never run out. Every time you run the event, it becomes easier: You gradually build up a network of attendees and supporters who can help distribute posters and flyers to ensure a good turnout. Maybe after a few events, word of mouth points you towards a better or cheaper venue nearby. Other, similar organizations hear about your event and start coming in greater numbers, giving the added benefit of networking. It becomes a reliable part of the local movement infrastructure.

Or consider the monthly Critical Mass bike rides. All over the world, they happen on the same day and at the same time: the end of the work day on the last friday of the month. Not only can people can put it in their calendars far in advance, but this cyclical regularity helps give the event the feeling of a ritual celebration. Or the UK-based group Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JFJFP), which produces an annual newspaper called Palestine at Christmas, featuring accounts of life under the Occupation. JFJFP organizes a network of Palestinian human rights groups to hand these newspapers out at train stations across the country. Hundreds of thousands of copies are distributed, with circulation increasing each year as word spreads and more activist groups volunteer to help out.

In all these examples, the regularity and repetition of the event serves to strengthen the organization's connection to its members and the larger movement culture it's helping to build.

LEARN MORE

How to Plan an Event

The Complete Event Planning Guide

<https://www.wildapricot.com/articles/how-to-plan-an-event>

- Critical Mass
- Distributed action
- Enforced appearance
- Eviction blockade
- Visibility action

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Create many points of entry
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Know your community
- Make new folks welcome
- Praxis makes perfect
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Participatory democracy

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Pillars of power
- SWOT

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Community building, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

BURN BRIGHTLY, BUT DON'T BURN OUT

Taking care of ourselves and having fun in our work for social change are essential to building stronger, more effective, healthier movements.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Tracey Mitchell

Based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, Tracey uses engaging techniques to help groups establish and accomplish goals, build teams, develop leadership skills, and make decisions together. Tracey is also a campaigner, zinester, organizer, and forum theater practitioner, and has developed plays around issues of poverty and social justice.

“GUILT IS A DANGEROUS MOTIVATOR BECAUSE IT WILL NEVER BE SATISFIED, AND IS ROOTED IN A SENSE OF EXTERNAL OBLIGATION RATHER THAN INTERNAL PASSION.”

“Let’s treat each other as if we plan to work side by side in struggle for many, many years to come. Because the task before us will demand nothing less.”

—Naomi Klein

Too often, the people doing the most to take care of the world do the least to take care of themselves. It happens far too frequently that a dedicated activist suddenly (or not so suddenly, for those who know them best) burns out and disappears from public view. This scenario is common enough, and represents a large enough threat to our collective success, that it warrants serious discussion and soul-searching within our movements. Specifically, we need to talk about how to take care of ourselves and each other so we can stay involved for the long haul.

Whether we like it or not, activists are walking advertisements for our movements. If we are exhausted, frustrated, overwhelmed, or unhappy most of the time, we make a life of activism look extremely unattractive to the average person. Virtually every activist has struggled with the question of how to get beyond “preaching to the choir.” A first step is to make “the choir” the sort of place lots more people will want to join.

It is also important to ensure that pragmatic self-care is not seen as selfish or indulgent. If we don’t take time to focus on our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual selves, we will burn out sooner or later. It’s almost guaranteed. Wouldn’t it be better to take regular

POTENTIAL RISKS

Take care of yourself, but don’t be a flake. Often, when people suddenly realize that they need to take better care of themselves or need a break, they flake out on existing commitments and leave comrades in the lurch. Learning to anticipate breaks, plan for them, and not overcommit, is a really important part of pacing. It’s better to sit out a game or two than to drop the ball mid-game.

RELATED TOOLS

Principles

- Delegate
- Foster safer spaces
- Make new folks welcome
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take risks, but take care
- Would you like some structure

breaks to nurture yourself, rather than get to the point where you have to take months or years off because you are too sick or depressed to be involved?

Activists are frequently motivated by guilt, and will unconsciously use guilt to motivate others. Guilt is a dangerous motivator because it will never be satisfied, and is rooted in a sense of external obligation rather than internal passion. A better motivator, for those who have some degree of privilege and feel guilty about that, is gratitude. Coming to this work from gratitude gives us energy without sucking us into despair and self-judgment.

These are deadly serious questions. Long-time Canadian activist Tooker Gombert took his own life in 2004 after a long battle with depression and burn-out. Before he died, he wrote a letter to social change activists. Do the activism, he said, but don't overdo it:

"It's honorable to work to change the world, but do it in balance with other things. Explore and embrace the things you love to do, and you'll be energetic and enthusiastic about the activism. Don't drop hobbies or enjoyments. Be sure to hike and dance and sing. Keeping your spirit alive and healthy is fundamental if you are to keep going."

It is important to take a long view of activism, to remember those who came before us and those who will come after. This can help us build on the work of previous generations and learn from their mistakes and triumphs, so that we are not always starting from scratch. We cannot carry all of the weight of the world's problems on our shoulders; we must simply accept, with gratitude, the opportunity to do what we can today.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

A Love Letter to the Overcommitted

Cheyenna Layne Weber, 2011

<https://www.shareable.net/blog/a-love-letter-to-the-overcommitted>

5 Self Care Tips for Activists — 'Cause Being Woke Shouldn't Mean Your Spirit's Broke

Kim Tran, Everyday Feminism, 2016

<https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/04/self-care-for-woke-folks/>

Coming Back to Life: The Guide to the Work That Reconnects

Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, 2014

https://books.google.com/books/about/Coming_Back_to_Life.html?id=C4GpBAAAQBAJ

with your momentum?

Theories

- Hamoq and hamas
- The social cure

Methodologies

- SWOT

TAGS

Community building, Health, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

CHALLENGE PATRIARCHY AS YOU ORGANIZE

Like all other unjust and arbitrary systems of authority and power, patriarchy must be actively challenged in our daily lives and organizing work if we are to achieve collective liberation.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Harsha Walia

Harsha Walia is a South Asian activist, facilitator, writer, and legal researcher based in Vancouver, occupied Indigenous Coast Salish territories. She has been active in (unpaid) community-based grassroots migrant justice, feminist, anti-racist, Indigenous solidarity, anti-capitalist, Palestinian liberation, and anti-imperialist movements, and her writings have appeared in a number of newspapers, anthologies, and academic journals.

“TRANSFORMING GENDER ROLES IS NOT ABOUT GUILT OR BLAME; IT IS ABOUT A LIFELONG LEARNING PROCESS TO EFFECTIVELY AND HUMBLY CONFRONT OPPRESSION.”

“Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.”
—bell hooks

Patriarchy is a system of unequal power relations that gives men privileges in all areas of our lives — social, economic, institutional, cultural, political, and spiritual — while women and gender non-conforming people are systemically disadvantaged. Feminism is not about man-hating; it is about transforming the socially constructed and hierarchical ideology of patriarchy. Since patriarchy pervades society, it is no surprise that it pervades social movements as well. So a commitment to feminist praxis that challenges the toxic impact of patriarchy in organizing efforts is essential to building inclusive movements.

Given the urgency of confronting big issues like corporate power, militarization, and environmental destruction, patriarchy and sexism within our groups often remain unaddressed. Some male allies feel they are not capable of sexism, but simply believing in gender equality does not erase male privilege. If we want to challenge patriarchy, we must understand how our actions and assumptions

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Fees Must Fall

Tactics

- Lamentation

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Change is the only constant
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Focus on basic needs
- Foster safer spaces
- Make the invisible visible

are influenced by the prevalence of sexism in our consciousness and social relations.

There are five key ways in which sexism manifests itself in our social movements: 1. Women face an uphill battle to prove their intelligence and commitment as political activists. 2. Political meetings are dominated by male speakers and leaders, while secretarial work, cooking, childcare, and the emotional labour of supporting community well-being are largely borne by women. This gendered division of labour is a frequently reproduced patriarchal pattern. 3. Women continue to be sexually objectified. Women of colour and femme women in particular are fetishized, obscuring the dynamics of racism, fatphobia, ability, and hetero-patriarchy behind "personal preferences." 4. Women are more likely to challenge men on sexist comments than men are. Given the particular socialization of women under patriarchy, seemingly minor comments or incidents can leave women and gender non-conforming people feeling humiliated, angry, or upset; yet such comments are often dismissed as harmless. Women discussing sexism are often characterized as divisive or overreactive and women's concerns are belittled unless validated by other men. This highlights disrespect for women's voices in discussing their own oppression. 5. Feminism is not seen as central to revolutionary or collective struggle, instead it is relegated to a special interest issue. This results in the trivialization of women's issues, particularly violence against women and reproductive justice. Transforming gender roles is not about guilt or blame; it is about a lifelong learning process to effectively and humbly confront oppression. Some ways to build pro-feminist communities include: a shared division of labour; encouraging women's voices and leadership in non-tokenizing ways; respecting self-identification by using preferred names and pronouns; being proactive in breaking the silence around sexual violence within broader society and activist communities; making our groups safe spaces in which to raise and address issues; and not marginalizing women's issues or placing the sole responsibility for fighting oppression on the oppressed. We must also realize that we do not just want more women's representation; rather, we must actively facilitate and highlight women's own analyses and experiences of capitalism and oppression, especially those of women of colour. Though patriarchy affects women much more severely, it distorts the humanity of all genders and reduces our ability to be in kinship with one another. Smashing patriarchy is not just a collective responsibility — it is ultimately about personal and interpersonal growth and collective liberation. *This is an abridged version of a lengthier piece available on the Colours of Resistance website. Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color
Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, editors, 2015

- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Training for the win
- Use others' prejudices against them
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Capitalism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Dunbar's number
- Environmental justice
- Feminism
- Gerontocracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed

TAGS

Gender and sexuality, Women's rights

<https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=0j2fBgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&ots=7cljtquEwY&sig=HDxJz4PBre1aaulINJUmlLefvmWI#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation

Silvia Federici, 2004

[https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4-PvMvdVqp0C&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=Silvia+Federici,+Caliban+and+the+Witch:+Women,+The+Body,+and+Primitive+Accumulation,+ \(Brooklyn,+NY:+Autonomedia,+2004\)&ots=0WbwCy70rF&sig=TCJg0VEPR9ZxZBUUCs zK_0ENFW8#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=4-PvMvdVqp0C&oi=fnd&pg=PA7&dq=Silvia+Federici,+Caliban+and+the+Witch:+Women,+The+Body,+and+Primitive+Accumulation,+ (Brooklyn,+NY:+Autonomedia,+2004)&ots=0WbwCy70rF&sig=TCJg0VEPR9ZxZBUUCs zK_0ENFW8#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity

Edited by Jessica Yee, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2011

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/ourschools-ourselves/feminism-real>

Tools for White Guys who are Working for Social Change and Other People Socialized in a Society Based on Domination

Chris Crass, Colours of Resistance Archive

<http://www.coloursofresistance.org/734/tools-for-white-guys-who-are-working-for-social-change-and-other-people-socialized-in-a-society-based-on-domination/>

The Male Privilege Checklist

Barry Deutsch

<https://cpt.org//files/US%20-%20Male%20Privilege%20Checklist.pdf>

Shit MANarchists Say

YouTube, 2012

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nucx1L1MkPo>

PRINCIPLE

CHANGE A NAME TO CHANGE THE GAME

Translate complex terms into simple, everyday language, so that people can more easily discuss and confront unjust and oppressive systems.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Hellenah Okiring

Hellenah Okiring is a social activist, storyteller and facilitator from Uganda who is passionate about transforming community and enabling positive change for humanity. She is the founder of the Dream Initiative for the Global Advancement of Social Arts, an organization dedicated to promoting active citizenship, leadership development, and economic justice through the use of social art and new media platforms.

“WHEN YOU STRIP DOWN THE POLITICAL MEANING OF CORRUPTION TO ITS SIMPLEST FORM, YOU REALIZE IT SIMPLY MEANS *THEFT*.”

The primary filter through which people understand new ideas and concepts is in the vernacular of their first language, their mother tongue. It is important, therefore, for changemakers to unpack complex theories and translate abstract, bureaucratic terms into simple, everyday language, so people can more easily identify, discuss, and confront unjust and oppressive systems.

For example, in Uganda, the term *corruption* does not have an equivalent term in any of the country's ethnic languages. The word itself is quite broad and figurative, as its Latin root means simply to *break down*. When you strip down the political meaning of corruption to its simplest form, you realize it simply means *theft*.

In a 2012 campaign against widespread misuse of public resources in Uganda, civil society organizations decided to address corruption as *theft* and corrupt officials as *thieves*. If corruption is robbery, then the corrupt are thieves — and every local language in Uganda has a word for thieves.

The impact of this small change in the language of the campaign was phenomenal. People could suddenly understand what corruption really meant: Someone was stealing resources from everyone else, particularly from those who most needed these resources. It is easy to miss the impact of corruption when one gets lost in all the legal terms that surround this form of injustice. By

POTENTIAL RISKS

When you're using simpler language to empower your community to better understand an abstract or complex term, you run the risk of oversimplifying the issue. Oversimplifying your issue can detract from its seriousness, making you look like you are overreacting or fussing over little matters. Instead, stay focused on helping people to recognize the gravity or impact of a form of oppression or exploitation by using words in their own language that they can easily relate to. Once people have a more vivid understanding of the problem, they are empowered to better relate to its impacts and organize strategically to confront it. This applies particularly to highly

calling corruption robbery, the campaign exposed the actual impacts of corruption — for example, the 16 mothers who die everyday because they can't access maternal care, the thousands of rural schools that could have been built if resources had not been stolen for private gain, the farmers who could have had access to better equipment, and the poor who could have had better healthcare, if one public official had not funnelled these resources to a personal bank account.

By changing the name of the problem, the campaign empowered everyday people to identify what was wrong and push for solutions. People knew how to deal with thieves in their communities, and now it was easy to see how they should deal with thieves in government, too. Suddenly, they were no longer powerless before an abstract injustice; the problem had local names, faces, and consequences. And once the problem was set in a more meaningful cultural context, people could more easily imagine appropriate remedies.

The response from the thieves themselves was also unprecedented. Given the embarrassment and shame that comes from being associated with an act as despicable as robbery, government officials panicked and tried to disassociate themselves from their crimes. Some guilty officials were prosecuted and had to return stolen funds. An anti-corruption bill was passed in 2013. Furthermore, the media picked up the term and began to refer to corruption as theft. The new language spread to most media outlets, who still use the term to this day.

In 2012 in Uganda, savvy campaigners changed a name and it changed the game. That was just one struggle in one country, but the principle applies around the world. What name might you change to change your game? Victory might be just one word away.

LEARN MORE

Civil Society Mourns the Uganda Lives Lost to Corruption
Black Monday Movement Newsletter, 2012

<http://www.actionaid.org/uganda/publications/black-monday-movement-newsletter>

Theft of Public Resources and Lack of Proper Maternal Care
Save Woman 16, 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOiJDdknsyE>

sophisticated and amorphous theories that have so many forms and dimensions that it becomes easy to get lost in definitions, enabling perpetrators of injustice (and even, sometimes, our allies!) to hide behind the language they use, and blame and shame their victims into silence.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Black Monday movement
- Earth First!
- Fees Must Fall
- Ghana ThinkTank
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Hashtag campaign

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Make the invisible visible
- Personalize and polarize
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Stay on message

Theories

- Corruption
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Postcolonialism

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Corruption, Communications, Campaign strategy

PRINCIPLE

CHANGE IS THE ONLY CONSTANT

It's not just the status quo that needs to change, but the status quo inside our own heads. How can we expect to change the world without also changing how we change the world?

CONTRIBUTED BY

Juman Abujbara

An editor of the Beautiful Rising book and toolkit, Juman is an aspiring philosopher, a campaigner for social change, and a human rights defender.

"THIS ACTION-REFLECTION PROCESS IS AN ONGOING JOURNEY OF LEARNING THAT, LIKE A CIRCLE, HAS NO BEGINNING OR END."

"Nothing endures but change."
—Heraclitus

Activists seek justice under circumstances of tyranny, truth under circumstances of domination, and freedom under circumstances of oppression. We seek change because we deplore the status quo — but also because we recognize the need for continuous improvement. Yet, when it come to ourselves and the ways we've grown accustomed to doing things, we often enter a stage of forgetfulness about the most obvious and basic thing we know and call for: change.

Change begins with self. Not only must our social, political, environmental, and economic circumstances change, so must we be the change you want to see in the world. In order to be effective, our approaches and methods must always be reviewed, assessed, and adjusted. We must be willing to recognize and shift our own obsolete mindsets and abandon all constants. If we truly want to change the world, we must recognize that change is the only constant.

Acting from the premise that change is the only constant, you soon realize that there is not a single "right" way to engage in collective action, but rather many right ways. For change to materialize, such action must remain in a state of continuous development. This action-reflection process is an ongoing journey of learning that, like a circle, has no beginning or end (see: PRINCIPLE: Praxis makes perfect).

For example, when a movement or campaign is first launched, it may start with a group of five and a particular decision-making

POTENTIAL RISKS

When applying this principle, organizers must be conscious of three risks: *tyranny of the majority*, *groupthink*, and *the hermeneutic circle*. Groups characterized by groupthink and a tyranny of the majority tend to marginalize the voices that do not align with the majority. And yet it's these dissenting voices that are often the ones that offer the most insightful perspectives or that tend to avoid collectively earned disasters. (Studies have shown that groups dominated by men are particularly prone to this risk.) Groups stuck in a hermeneutic circle tend to indulge in endless theoretical discussions and feedback sessions. If the improvements, ideas, and possibilities being discussed are not applied in practice, then the discussion itself will be no more than ink on paper.

RELATED TOOLS

process. Over time this group becomes comfortable with their mode of operation, but when your group grows to 50 organizers, your situation will be drastically different, and you need to accept the fact that your decision-making process will need to change. This applies to many elements of campaigning, from recruitment to tactics to organization and more.

Embracing the principle that change is the only constant helps us be more open to others' feedback and ideas. Just because a new perspective is not in accord with your own, or even if it negates a deeply held belief by the larger group, this does not mean it should be discarded. On the contrary, it is in this moment that the group must pause and rethink their mindsets. Let go of your ego, be humble and appreciate others' insight and perspectives. Look for new and effective approaches to your campaign.

Also, just because a tactic works once, that doesn't mean we should use it over and over (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't fall in love with your tactics). We should become comfortable with experimentation and the possibility of failure (see: PRINCIPLE: Fail forward); only in this way will you enrich your learning and improve.

Finally, be aware of your broader context (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your cultural terrain) as well as your local circumstances (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your community). The socio-political dynamics of our world today are vibrant and complex, requiring us to always be on the lookout, analysing what's happening and understanding how such changes in dynamics might affect our campaigning.

LEARN MORE

How Diversity Makes Us Smarter

Katherine W. Phillips, Scientific American, 2014

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire

<http://ls.poly.edu/~jbain/socphil/texts/15.Freire.pdf>

Concepts Used

Paulo Freire

<http://www.freire.org/paulo-freire/concepts-used-by-paulo-freire>

Stories

- Angola 15+2

Tactics

- Forum theatre

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Consider your audience
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Enable, don't command
- Fail forward
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make new folks welcome
- Praxis makes perfect
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Framing
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Story of self, us, and now
- SWOT
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Democracy, Gender and sexuality, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

CHOOSE TACTICS THAT SUPPORT YOUR STRATEGY

Strategy is your overall plan; tactics are those actions you do to implement it — a critical distinction for effective campaigning. Don't organize a rally before you know whether it serves your larger gameplan.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Janice Fine

Janice Fine is associate professor of labour studies and employment relations at the School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University where she teaches and writes about low wage immigrant labor in the US, historical and contemporary debates regarding federal immigration policy, dilemmas of labour standards enforcement, and innovative union and community organizing strategies. Before becoming a professor, Fine worked as a community, labour, coalition, and electoral organizer for more than twenty-five years.

“ONCE WE UNDERSTAND THE FORMS OF POWER WE CAN DEPLOY, WE ARE READY TO DEVELOP OUR CAMPAIGN PLAN.”

“If you don't have a strategy, you're part of someone else's strategy.”

—Alvin Toffler

Strategy involves identifying your group's power and then finding specific ways to concentrate it in order to achieve your goals. Organizing a rally, for example, should never be thought of as a strategy. It's a tactic. Before you can identify appropriate tactics, you need to identify your target (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose your target wisely) and figure out what power(s) you can bring to bear against it (see: METHODOLOGY: Theory of change).

Developing a strategy requires: * analyzing the problem; * identifying your goal/formulating your demands (see: METHODOLOGY: SMART objectives); * understanding your target — who holds the power to meet your demands (see: METHODOLOGY: Power mapping); and * identifying specific forms of power you have over your target and how to concentrate that power to maximal effect.

If your target is a city councilor whose vote you need in order to pass a living wage ordinance, your tactics should involve or influence voters in her district in some way. If your target is a bank that is carrying out foreclosures, your tactics should involve or

POTENTIAL RISKS

Many tend to think that embarrassment or tarnishing a target's reputation is a form of power. However, embarrassment in and of itself isn't a form of power. The power to embarrass a politician or negatively impact a corporation's reputation is only effective if it costs your target money, votes, or something essential to the power they hold. For this approach to be effective in leveraging power, it must make voters and donors question the moral legitimacy of a political target, and customers and shareholders to question the economic benefit of a corporate target.

RELATED TOOLS

influence their customers or regulators.

Also consider that it's often important to identify "secondary targets." These are individuals or corporations who have significant power over your target and over whom you may have more power than you have over your primary target (see: STORY: Dump Veolia Campaign) and (see: TACTIC: Consumer boycott).

Within this framework, tactics are specific actions that: * mobilize a specific type and amount of power; * are directed at a specific target; and * are intended to achieve a specific objective.

Tactics can be more effective when they're scalable, i.e. capable of being reproduced anywhere and by anyone like Distributed action or Phone banking.

In choosing a tactic you must always be able to answer the questions: "What is the power behind the tactic?" In other words, how does the tactic give you leverage over your target? And how can you build on this tactic in implementing your overall strategy (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically)?

We use tactics to demonstrate a certain form of power. For example, when we carry out an action against a particular company, our underlying power is economic — it must cost them time or customers. That's why disruption matters. If we target an elected official, our underlying power is political — our tactic must cost them contributions or votes.

In community organizing, power can be broken down into two broad categories: * Strategic power: Power that is sufficiently strong to win the issue. * Tactical power: Power that can move you along toward a goal and help you gain ground, but is itself not decisive.

Once we understand the forms of power we can deploy, we are ready to develop our campaign plan.

A campaign is a series of tactics deployed over a specified period, each of which builds the strength of the organization and puts increasing pressure on the target until it gives in on your specific demands. A campaign is not a series of events on a common theme; it is a series of tactics, each one carefully selected for its power to ratchet up pressure on a target over time. All tactics are connected, and each one is chosen on the basis of how much work it requires to pull off and how much pressure it will bring to bear.

Finally, a strategic campaign is never endless; it has a beginning, middle, and end. It ends, ideally, in a specific victory achieving the demands of the campaign.

The author wishes to acknowledge Midwest Academy and Northeast Action, both of whom assisted in developing the curriculum that this module is based on.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle in Seattle
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- No vote, no sex
- Québec Student Strike
- Taco Bell Boycott

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Creative petition delivery
- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Forum theatre
- General strike
- Hunger strike
- Occupation
- Phone banking

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Fail forward
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Think narratively

Theories

- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Palace Coup
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Action star

LEARN MORE

Leading Change Network

<http://leadingchangenetwork.org/>

Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals

Saul Alinsky, 1971

https://books.google.com/books/about/Rules_for_Radicals.html?id=VIH0UbZ8qU4C

Reveille for Radicals

Saul Alinsky, 1969

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Seeds of Change: The Story of ACORN, America's Most Controversial Antipoverty Community Organizing Group

John Atlas, 2010

https://books.google.com/books/about/Seeds_of_Change.html?id=07PGjOsdSkgC

Organizing the Movement: The Roots and Growth of ACORN by

Gary Delgado

Gary Delgado, 1986

https://books.google.com/books/about/Organizing_the_Movement.html?id=QcOLQgAACAAJ

Going Public: An Organizer's Guide to Citizen Action

Michael Gecan, 2004

https://books.google.com/books/about/Going_Public.html?id=wka7AAAAIAAJ

Cold Anger: A Story of Faith and Power Politics

Mary Beth Rogers, 1990

https://books.google.com/books/about/Cold_Anger.html?id=wyxNke5u5KYC

Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy

Mark Warren, 2001

https://books.google.com/books/about/Dry_Bones_Rattling.html?id=-uE9i5cDLAC

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Community building

PRINCIPLE

CHOOSE YOUR TARGET WISELY

A campaign's success or failure often hinges on correctly identifying your target — the specific person or entity with the institutional power to meet your demands — and then going after them strategically.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Yutaka Dirks

Yutaka Dirks is a tenant and community organizer and writer who is active in anti-poverty, workers rights, and international solidarity movements, as well as offering legal support to social justice movements through the Movement Defence Committee of the Law Union of Ontario. His writing has appeared in Upping the Anti and Briarpatch Magazine as well as Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine.

"TO WIN, YOU'VE GOT TO FIGHT. BUT THE POINT ISN'T TO FIGHT; THE POINT IS TO WIN."

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

—Frederick Douglass

Since the early 2000s, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), a radical anti-poverty organization based in Toronto, Canada, has organized under the slogan "Fight to Win." It's a simple slogan packed with meaning: To win, you've got to fight. But the point isn't to fight; the point is to win.

An organization run by and for the poor, OCAP has proven extremely effective in compelling politicians, welfare workers, and employers to grant the concrete gains they seek. In one of many successful actions, OCAP prevented a gas station from pumping gas until the employer came up with money owed to a former employee. Similarly, mass delegations by OCAP to welfare offices have led to the reinstatement of benefits for low-income members. OCAP has been effective because it recognizes that social change comes through struggle, which involves articulating clear demands and applying targeted pressure on those in power to comply with those demands.

Nothing is more demoralizing to folks who have put many long hours into a fun and creative action than to hear the target of the action say: "I don't have the power to do that for you, even if I wanted to. The guy you want is next door." (And actually have that be a true statement rather than a blow-off line.)

POTENTIAL RISKS

It's not unusual that those in power would issue false statements as a blow-off line with the purpose of disrupting your campaign's momentum. Stay focused on your target once you've done the necessary due diligence that they hold the power to meet your demand.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Justice for Janitors
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stolen Beauty
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March

Tactics

When we plan our actions and campaigns, we have to understand our targets and what makes them tick (see: METHODOLOGY: Power mapping), taking care to focus on the person with the power to meet our demands: to sign the check, to introduce the legislation, or to cancel the contract. In an example from Uganda (see: STORY: Stripping Power in Uganda), analyzing the political and cultural power dynamics between the government, military, investors, and people, enabled locals in Apaa Village to develop a winning strategy to prevent massive land grabs planned by the regime.

It's important to note that not every target is vulnerable in the same way. A blockade, occupation, or creative disruption may be effective against one target but not against another. What works once may not work a second time (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't fall in love with your tactics). We need to figure out where our target is weakest, and where we are strongest (see: METHODOLOGY: Pillars of power). What actions can we take that are outside their experience? Nothing rattles a target more than something they aren't prepared to deal with.

You might not have enough power to push your primary target at first, but your actions may help you identify a secondary target — an individual or group that can be pressured to leverage their influence on the primary target. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, for instance, won their battle by identifying and pressuring a secondary target (fast-food corporations) when their primary target (tomato growers) proved immovable (see: TACTIC: Consumer boycott). Similarly, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement applies the same logic against international companies (secondary targets) that are complicit in the Israeli regime of occupation, colonialism, and apartheid (primary target), and have forced many companies to withdraw from business activities that profit from human rights violations (see: STORY: Dump Veolia Campaign).

We are creative folks. If we're smart about where and how we apply pressure, there's nothing we can't accomplish.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

From the Jaws of Defeat: Four Thoughts on Social Change Strategy
Briarpatch Magazine, 2011
<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/from-the-jaws-of-defeat>

Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals
Vintage Publishing, 1989
https://books.google.jo/books/about/Rules_for_Radicals.html?id=VIH0UbZ8qU4C&redir_esc=y

- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Consumer boycott
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- General strike
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Music video
- Occupation
- Phone blockade

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Consider your audience
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Focus on basic needs
- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Neoliberalism
- Palace Coup
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action, Communications, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

CONSENSUS IS A MEANS, NOT AN END

The two foundational values of consensus decision making, which are more important than the form itself, are empowering every person's full participation, and respecting and accommodating diverse opinions.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Harsha Walia

Harsha Walia is a South Asian activist, facilitator, writer, and legal researcher based in Vancouver, occupied Indigenous Coast Salish territories. She has been active in (unpaid) community-based grassroots migrant justice, feminist, anti-racist, Indigenous solidarity, anti-capitalist, Palestinian liberation, and anti-imperialist movements, and her writings have appeared in a number of newspapers, anthologies, and academic journals.

"REMEMBER, CONSENSUS IS A MEANS TO AN END, NOT AN END UNTO ITSELF."

"The problem is not that of taking power, but rather who exercises it."

—Subcomandante Marcos

Consensus decision making is an egalitarian and inclusive method of reaching agreement based on the active participation and consent of group members to collectively reach a decision. Consensus decision making focuses as much on the underlying processes and values as the decision itself. The word consensus has its roots in the Latin word *consentire*, meaning "to experience or feel together."

Consensus is rooted in many decentralized models of direct democracy practiced across the world — from village *panchayats* in India to the indigenous Haudenosaunee Confederacy (aka Iroquois), from Quaker meetings to anarchist spokescouncils.

Consensus stands in stark contrast to simple voting procedures or Robert's Rules of Order, in which proposals are debated and then voted on, with majority rule. Consensus, on the other hand, is a prefigurative affirmation of our power to organize ourselves in accordance with the principles of direct democracy: horizontal, participatory, inclusive, cooperative, and non-coercive (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics). As author David Graeber has written of consensus, "Ultimately it aspires to reinvent daily life as whole."

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Nuit Debout
- Occupy Wall Street

Tactics

- General assembly
- General strike
- Mass street action

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Change is the only constant
- Delegate
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves

A common abuse of consensus, however, is a dogmatic attachment to the structures and forms with which it is associated, which can sometimes be as exclusive and alienating as the systems it seeks to replace. If this is happening, the response should not be “Well this is how consensus works!” Instead, it is our collective responsibility to delve into the dynamics that might be creating these negative reactions (see: PRINCIPLE: Change is the only constant).

There are five common problems with consensus that can create frustration. First, consensus often reproduces majoritarian rule by creating sectarian camps of those in agreement versus those who are blocking. Contrary to popular belief, consensus does not necessarily mean unanimous agreement. This misconception causes us to wrongly view dissent as a distraction or obstacle, and increases the pressure toward homogenizing opinions. Second, a few voices can dominate the discussion (see: PRINCIPLE: Beware the tyranny of structurelessness), a problem that tends to perpetuate power imbalances around race, class, gender, and education level. Third, there is often a faulty assumption that silence implies consent, which can end up stifling broader discussion and the consideration of alternative proposals. Fourth, facilitators have an unfortunate tendency to exercise covert forms of power-over rather than power-with by steering the conversation based on their own biases.

The fifth problem with consensus is more fundamental and structural. Ironically, the seemingly benign notion that all voices are equal can hide the uncomfortable truth of systemic inequality. Almost inherently, the consensus process can absolve us of actively examining how privilege and oppression shape our spaces.

In an effort to address these problems, many communities and collectives use modified forms of consensus — for example, prioritizing and taking leadership from women, people of colour, and those directly affected by the decisions being made (see: PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from the most impacted); facilitating small break-out groups to ensure more engaged participation; encouraging more debate and discussion rather than just asking for blocks; and actively incorporating anti-oppression (see: THEORY: Anti-oppression) principles to prevent harmful opinions from further marginalizing historically disadvantaged peoples.

Consensus can be beautiful and transformative, but only when the structures and processes are meeting the needs and desires of those engaging in it. Otherwise, it can be just as shackling as more conventionally authoritative decision-making systems. Remember, consensus is a means to an end, not an end unto itself.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

- Make new folks welcome
- Praxis makes perfect
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Political identity paradox
- Prefigurative politics
- Strategic nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Communications, Movement building

Consensus Decision Making

Andreas Speck, War Resisters International

<https://www.wri-irg.org/en/node/5165>

The Empowerment Manual. A Guide for Collaborative Groups

Starhawk, 2011

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Empowerment_Manual.html?id=lhHNo-Wm7RQC

Articles on Consensus and Group Facilitation

<http://www.consensusdecisionmaking.org/articles-consensus/>

Haudenosaunee - Government

<http://www.kahnawakelonghouse.com/index.php?mid=1>

PRINCIPLE

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

Don't expect your audience to choose you. Instead, identify the constituencies you need to win your campaign, and strategically design your actions to move them in the right direction.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Sally Kohn

Sally is a grassroots strategist actively engaged in movement building for equality and justice. She is a regular on Fox News and MSNBC, and her writing has appeared in the Washington Post, USA Today, CNN.com, FoxNews.com, Reuters, The Guardian, and The American Prospect, among other outlets.

"TRY THIS BASIC FORMULA: WE CAN GET A TO DO B IF THEY BELIEVE C."

When evaluating the success of a particular action, it doesn't matter what you think about your creative poster or press release or civil disobedience. All that matters is what your audience thinks. Protesting solely for the sake of self-expression and self-gratification? That's the political equivalent of masturbation. Political action that is carefully and thoughtfully designed and executed to cause a reaction or response from a targeted audience? Now that is making love!

If you've already thought up some awesome, off-the-wall action and are now trying to figure out who you want to reach with it, you're doing it backwards. The point of creative political action isn't simply to be creative, but to have a desired impact on a particular audience. First identify your target audience and then brainstorm actions to effectively convey your message. A guerrilla musical performance of the latest Justin Bieber hit would be awesome — unless you're trying to influence the members of the American Association of Retired Persons.

Remember that there is no right audience, just the audience that is right for your particular goals. Try this basic formula: we can get A to do B if they believe C. A is your audience, B is your objective, and C is your message. Design your action or actions toward getting A to believe C.

If your core tactics and actions aren't explicitly and strategically designed to get the desired impact on your target audience, you're not being strategic. That Bieber number may be fun and the hits on YouTube astronomical, but will it reach your senior citizen target

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Conflict Kitchen
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- The Salt March
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Citizen's arrest
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Distributed action
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Hoax
- Human banner
- Light Brigade

audience? Baby, quit playin'.

Traditional artists don't necessarily worry about their audience's experience. For them, creative self-expression may suffice. But for political artists, the audience is everything. The purpose of political art is the reaction of those who experience it. When you push over your tree in a grand act of theatrics, make sure the right people are watching, and that they hear one heckuva loud noise.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Making the News: A Guide for Activists and Nonprofits

Jason Salzman, 2003

https://books.google.com/books/about/Making_the_News.html?id=jDhHAAAAMAAJ

Re:Imagining Change: How to use story-based strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world (2nd Edition)

Center for Story-Based Strategy, 2017

<https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/blog-full/2017/9/12/reimagining-change-updated-with-a-2nd-edition>

- Media-jacking
- Music video
- Storytelling

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The real action is your target's reaction
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Think narratively
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Action star
- Artstorm
- Baraza
- Battle of the story
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Art,
Communications, Media, Pranks,
Social media

PRINCIPLE

DEBTORS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

The burden of debt unites millions in common struggle. Together, we can build a movement that challenges not just debt, but the entire capitalist system and its drive to profit from imposed scarcity.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Dmytri Kleiner

Dmytri Kleiner is the author of *The Telekommunist Manifesto*, and a contributing artist to the "Miscommunication Technologies" continuing series of artworks in collaboration with the Telekommunisten Network. Most recently, Dmytri has started an initiative to create an International Debtors' Party.

"WE CAN BUILD A MOVEMENT THAT ASPIRES TO FAR MORE THAN SMALL REFORMS TO BANKING AND BANKRUPTCY RULES."

From 2009 to the present, countries from the UK to Chile have seen an upsurge of student strikes and school occupations to protest rising tuition fees. The 2011 Spanish *indignados* uprising began under the slogan "we are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers." A few months later, encampment protests began in Tel Aviv's Rothschild Boulevard demanding public housing. Student debt and housing debt are central themes in the Occupy movement, which from a few tents in New York City spread worldwide.

These movements were able to build popular support because they focused on specific conditions. Many people are unable to afford education, health care, housing, and child care. These conditions all reflect the growing debt burden that many carry. Essential goods like housing, education, and health care have relatively inelastic demand, which means the limit to their price is basically everything you have plus everything you can borrow. Meanwhile, consumer spending, the engine of the economy, is increasingly fuelled not by rising wages, but by cheap credit, resulting in greater and greater levels of consumer debt. Today the issue of debt unites millions in a common struggle.

Building a mass movement around debt, like building any mass movement, is a consciousness-raising process. For the people to be united in a movement, they must possess a consciousness of their common interests and their common enemies. There must be a consciousness of class, and a willingness to understand that the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Occupy Wall Street
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade

Theories

- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Debt revolt
- Neoliberalism
- The commons

Methodologies

- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Austerity, Campaign strategy, Capitalism, Labour, Movement

only way to change class conditions is to unite and fight. Major social changes occur when people unite around a common cause.

building, Privatization, Wealth inequality

Debt is at the core of the market system itself, and the solution is not better terms alone, but alternatives to that system. Instead of the conservative motto “fair financial terms from honest bankers,” we must paint our banners with the words “Abolition of the debt system.” Debtors of the world, unite!

New forms of struggle require new forms of organization to directly fight for changes. Debtors’ unions are one such form: organizing debtors to collectively bargain for favorable terms for existing debtors. Just as labour unions bargain for improved wages and working conditions through the threat of refusal to work, debtors unions could use organized refusals to pay debts to bargain.

Drawing on mass support from millions of people struggling to pay their bills, we can build a movement that aspires to far more than small reforms to banking and bankruptcy rules, but that challenges the entire capitalist system and its drive to profit from imposing scarcity on essential goods like education, housing, child care, and health care. As we find our way across this new terrain, we must keep our eyes on the big prize: not better terms alone, but alternatives to the market system.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

“Unsustainable Levels of Debt”

John Ralston Saul, *The Doubter’s Companion*, 1994

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Q2WN0VGG0G0C&pg=PA1&ots=-IY0fPml4G&lr&pg=PA88#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Why Iceland Should Be in the News, But Is Not

Deena Stryker, 2011

<http://sacsis.org.za/site/article/728.1>

PRINCIPLE

DEFINE “HARDCORE” STRATEGICALLY

When movements heat up, there’s a tendency to become so extreme that you lose touch with your base. Good leaders will define that “extreme” in constructive ways, and escalate their campaigns strategically.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

“GOOD LEADERS ANTICIPATE THE EMERGENT DESIRE FOR HARDCORE — FOR ESCALATION — AND THEY OWN IT.”

There is a tendency within highly cohesive political groups to want to turn up the heat. It seems to be written into the social DNA of oppositional political groups: When group members’ level of commitment increases, they want to go further. They want to be a little more hardcore. This tendency toward escalation and increased militancy can be a good thing — but not inevitably. It all depends on how *hardcore* is defined within the culture of the group. It can either move a cause forward — or send it into a dangerous or dysfunctional downward spiral.

Compare the trajectories of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) — two of the most important radical youth organizations in US history. Students for a Democratic Society imploded in 1969 and the Weather Underground was born because some leaders succeeded in defining hardcore to mean immediate armed guerrilla struggle against the US government — an absurd prospect for their context. In the case of the SNCC, on the other hand, some very astute leaders defined hardcore to mean acts such as going into the most segregated areas in the south and organizing some of the poorest, least educated, and most disenfranchised people in the entire country. SNCC engaged in other, more visible hardcore tactics as well.

In both cases, hardcore really was HARDCORE. (You can’t satiate the desire for hardcore with anything less!) Members of both groups demonstrated overwhelming levels of commitment to the values of

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Earth First!
- Justice for Janitors
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Streets Into Gardens
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- General strike
- Hunger strike
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

the groups they belonged to. Members of both groups risked their lives, were imprisoned and brutalized, and some lost their lives. But hardcore was defined strategically in the case of SNCC, and tragically in the case of the Weather Underground.

Good leaders anticipate the emergent desire for hardcore — for escalation — and they own it. They model it themselves. And they make sure that the expression of hardcore is designed to strengthen bonds between the group's core members and its broader political base. It should feel hardcore to the participants, and it should look like moral leadership to the political base and to a broader public.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Canvas Core Curriculum: A Guide to Nonviolent Struggle
<http://canvasopedia.org/project/canvas-core-curriculum/>

On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking about the Fundamentals
Robert L. Helvey, The Albert Einstein Institution, 2004
<http://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/OSNC.pdf>

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Political identity paradox
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Power mapping

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Movement building

PRINCIPLE DELEGATE

Things get done only when the task is clearly defined and on someone's to-do list. Delegate!

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Josh Bolotsky

Josh Bolotsky is a veteran digital campaign strategist, and has served as New Media Director of The Other 98% and as Digital Team Lead for Zephyr Teachout's 2014 campaign for Governor of New York. Since then, Josh has worked as a freelance online and campaign strategy consultant for people and movements doing vital, interesting, and meaningful things.

"THINGS GET DONE ONLY WHEN THE TASK IS CLEARLY DEFINED AND ON SOMEONE'S TO-DO LIST."

"Leadership is getting people to want to do what you want them to do."

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

One flaw of group work is that it's easy to walk out of a meeting with no assigned tasks, thinking "someone else is going to do that." Obviously, if everyone thinks that, nothing gets done. Just because the group comes to consensus on the need for something to get done doesn't mean anyone is necessarily going to do it. Things get done only when the task is clearly defined and on someone's to-do list.

This principle may sound simple and obvious, but you'd be shocked how often we forget it.

Make sure every group meeting has a note-taker who records all tasks and who's agreed to do them, and then shares that task list with the whole group soon after the meeting (same day, if possible). To ensure effective follow-through, have people explicitly commit to their tasks in front of the group, and begin each meeting by reviewing the last meeting's task list.

Some responsibilities are limited to a single action item, such as, "reserve a room for next week's meeting." But other responsibilities — say, "organize a press conference" — often involve a whole complex of tasks and the contributions of a number of people over many days. That's when you may need someone to "bottom-line" a particular project. A bottom-liner doesn't do everything herself, but takes responsibility for ensuring everything gets done. If people on

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Occupy Wall Street

Tactics

- Distributed action

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- We are all leaders

Theories

her team don't come through, it's her responsibility to find someone else, triage, or do it herself. It doesn't ultimately matter how the job gets done, just that she is accountable to the larger group for ensuring that it does, or explaining why it didn't.

Proper delegation and sharing of tasks is also one of the best ways to prevent burn-out (see: PRINCIPLE: Burn brightly, but don't burn out).

Regardless of whether your group has a more vertical or horizontal leadership structure, delegation is key. Good leaders know how to delegate tasks, how to identify and support bottom-liners (some of the best people won't step up unless they're asked), and how to make sure everyone knows their role. Be explicit. People don't want vague responsibilities. They want to know what their role is and why it's important.

Volunteer-driven organizations and grassroots groups often struggle with participants who commit to doing something but then never follow through. You have to factor that in upfront. Be careful when giving critical tasks to an untested volunteer. Here's the standard conversation one of the authors has with new volunteers:

"Do you know the most important word in a volunteer's vocabulary?" "Um, no." "Exactly."
"Huh?" "'No' is the most important word you can say. Use it. A lot. If you say 'Yes I can do it' out of guilt or an over-enthusiasm that you can't follow through on, then we're screwed. I'd much prefer a 'No.' Then we can assign the task to someone whose 'Yes' means yes."

Far from being onerous, this is actually empowering — and honouring. You're saying: Your work is valuable enough that we need to have a solid commitment and the specifics nailed down. That's a principle, by the way, that's not just true for volunteers but for the whole team.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity

David Allen, 2015

[https://books.google.com/books?](https://books.google.com/books?id=7PoYBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Getting+Things+Done:+The+Art+of+Stress-Free+Productivity&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjEh8OqysnaAhWM8oMKHVliDosQ6AEILzAB#v=onepage&q&f=false)

[id=7PoYBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Getting+Things+Done:+The+Art+of+Stress-Free+Productivity&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjEh8OqysnaAhWM8oMKHVliDosQ6AEILzAB#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=7PoYBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Getting+Things+Done:+The+Art+of+Stress-Free+Productivity&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjEh8OqysnaAhWM8oMKHVliDosQ6AEILzAB#v=onepage&q&f=false)

The Principles of Democratic Structuring, in The Tyranny of Structurelessness

Jo Freeman

- Dunbar's number

TAGS

Action design, Movement building, Student activism

<http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>

Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements

Francesca Polletta, 2004

<https://books.google.com/books?>

[id=snugO8KeC2EC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=snugO8KeC2EC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false)

PRINCIPLE

DO THE MEDIA'S WORK FOR THEM

Entice journalists to cover your issue by providing them with print and video materials that do half their job for them, while giving you more control of the story you're trying to create.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

"IF YOU WANT MEDIA COVERAGE OF YOUR EVENT, GIVE THEM A STORY THEY CAN'T REFUSE: ONE THAT MAKES YOUR POINT VERY CLEARLY, WITH GREAT VISUALS, AN UNEXPECTED TWIST, OR A LOT OF HUMOUR."

"Don't hate the media, become the media."

—Jello Biafra

If you want media coverage of your event, give them a story they can't refuse: one that makes your point very clearly, with great visuals, an unexpected twist, or a lot of humour. If a journalist already wants to cover an issue, this assist will give them the excuse or extra ammunition they need to sell their editor on it.

Don't worry about squeezing all the relevant information into the stunt or hoax itself. If you can, great, but most of the key info can be conveyed via an accompanying press release. The action itself just needs to provide a hook or entry point by lifting the veil on a black-and-white situation and pointing out obvious but seldom discussed truths. If your action does this well, journalists will enjoy writing about it and public opinion (along with a well-orchestrated activist campaign) can do the rest. When the Yes Men announced that the Chamber of Commerce was supporting climate change legislation, or that Dow was going to accept its responsibility for Bhopal (see: [STORY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal](#)), or that General Electric was giving back its \$3.2 billion tax credit, these were just funny actions pointing to simple, undeniable realities: The Chamber was mad to not support climate-change legislation, Dow should clean up Bhopal, GE should pay its taxes. Many journalists

POTENTIAL RISKS

Many journalists will be loath to directly use footage that has a strong editorial slant, but it might still prompt them to do their own story.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Lysistrata Project
- Manich Msamah
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante

want to write about these obvious truths, but for editorial reasons, cannot. Creating a funny, spectacular action that's all about an issue allows them to cover it. Make the journalists' job as simple as possible. Provide them with what they need: a concise press release, photo with clear permissions, or a good video news release, replete with the facts, figures, and soundbites that illustrate your point. It's imperative to document your action yourself and make your photos and footage available. The glitter-bombing of Newt Gingrich (see: TACTIC: Creative disruption) wouldn't have gone viral if there hadn't been an accomplice videotaping it. When Brad Newsham organizes human banner actions, he hires a helicopter and professional photographer to fly overhead, then passes those photos to interested media outlets that couldn't make it out there themselves. The stealthier the action, the more important it is to document it yourself. Nobody but the organizers of flash mobs or guerrilla musicals know when and where they're going to occur, so you have to integrate photographers and videographers into those actions. But afterwards, don't just post your stuff on Flickr and YouTube and hope for the best. Instead, have a plan for getting those visuals out to the media. When Agit-Pop carried out the (see: STORY: Public Option Annie) guerrilla musical, they did a lightning edit of their footage immediately after the action and got it out to key outlets within the day's news cycle. MSNBC, CNN, and Comedy Central all built stories around that footage. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

Spin Works: A Media Guidebook for Communicating Values and Shaping Opinion

Independent Media Institute, 2000

<https://www.amazon.com/SPIN-Works-Robert-Bray/dp/0963368796>

Making the News: A Guide For Activists And Nonprofits

Jason Salzman, 2003

<https://www.amazon.com/Making-News-Guide-Activists-Nonprofits/dp/0813340950>

- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Creative disruption
- Distributed action
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Flash mob
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hoax
- Human banner
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Inflatables
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use humour to undermine authority

Theories

- Artivism
- Society of the spectacle
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Action star

TAGS

Action design, Communications,
Humour, Media, Pranks

PRINCIPLE

DON'T DRESS LIKE A PROTESTER

If you look like a stereotypical protester, it's easy for people to write you off, but if you look like the girl next door, people just might sympathize with you instead.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

"IF YOU'RE PLANNING AN ACTION, CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN UNDERMINE PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT PROTESTERS."

"Dress like a Republican so you can talk like an anarchist."
—Colman McCarthy

People don't care about protesters. Oh, there go those silly protesters again. What are they protesting this time? Look: The police are hitting them over the head! Well, they must have done something to deserve it.

It's not quite that bad, but you get the idea. Based on what they see in the media, folks get a fairly fixed idea of what "protesters" look like — and the stereotype doesn't usually lend itself to immediate sympathy for your cause. If you're planning an action (see: TACTIC: Mass street action) and want to reach out to people who may not already agree with you, consider how you can undermine their expectations and stereotypes about protesters. Remember: protest is *what* you are doing; not your *identity* (see: THEORY: Political identity paradox).

If you want schoolteachers, seniors, and office workers to care about your issue (or get angry that a cop is hitting you over the head for taking that issue to the streets), dress like you're on your way over to their house for dinner. Make it easy for them to imagine themselves, or their kids, in your position.

Consider the aura conveyed by what you wear, whether that's the civility and seriousness of civil rights marchers in suit and tie or the calculated absurdity of "Billionaires" in tuxedos. In all ten years that Billionaires for Bush protested in the streets, including in the midst of some running street battles with police, never did a single one of us get arrested. It undoubtedly helped that most of us happened to have white skin color, but it also helped that most of us were

POTENTIAL RISKS

Excessive concern with presenting yourself in a way that is appealing or non-threatening to some imagined "respectable" social norm can lead to a kind of self-censorship and self-policing that surrenders too much of our power, voice, and subjectivity. Recent debates within the Movement for Black Lives Policy Table, in particular, have called attention to the trap of "Respectability Politics." Black Lives Matter has often contrasted itself to the decorum and classic "church best" attire of the mid-century civil rights movement, a distinction well captured here: 7 Ways #BlackLivesMatter Improves on the Civil Rights Movement.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel

wearing tuxedos. In New York, we had a one-liner: "New York's Finest would never arrest New York's finest dressed." And it was true. They never did.

Of course, the action you're involved in may not afford the luxury of tuxedos, or generally leave you a lot of room to not dress like a protester. It may require protective gear: bandanas or gas masks to protect from tear gas; heavy clothing or even shields to protect yourself from billy clubs and rubber bullets. Even then, creativity can show the human and beautiful side of dissent. At the Battle in Seattle, many blockades were works of art, and many blockaders were creatively costumed. Or consider the Masquerade Project in New York, who decorated gas masks with multicolored sequins and feathers, or the Tute Bianche in Italy, or the Prêt à Révolter collective in Spain, or the Book Bloc in the UK, all of which wore creative yet protective protest gear into battle, thereby subverting the official media narrative that protesters are violent, scary, and (worst of all!) humourless.

Often the most effective protests are those that don't look like protests. Perhaps to be effective — to quote a character in Peter Carey's novel *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* — "you will have to make yourself into something beyond anyone's capacity to imagine you."

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Suits for Wall Street

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/suits-for-wall-street#/>

Someone Wants To Solve Occupy Wall Street's 'Dirty Hippie' Problem

Business Insider, 2011

<http://www.businessinsider.com/occupy-wall-street-suits-fashion-2011-10>

Clown Army

- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Miniskirt March
- Occupy Wall Street
- Orange Alternative
- PARK(ing) Day
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Walk a mile in her shoes

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Mass street action
- Nudity
- Public filibuster
- Street theatre
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Action star
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Campaign
strategy, Humour, Street protest

PRINCIPLE

DON'T EXPECT A CONCRETE OUTCOME FROM A SYMBOLIC ACTION

Concrete actions have measurable goals and are designed to have a direct physical impact. Communicative actions tend to have more symbolic goals. Know the difference and plan accordingly.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

"PEOPLE OFTEN GET DISCOURAGED WHEN THEY TAKE PART IN A COMMUNICATIVE ACTION WHILE EXPECTING A CONCRETE OUTCOME."

Any given tactic — say, a blockade — can be both *concrete* and *communicative*. One isn't better than the other; the trick is understand the difference, so you don't expect a concrete outcome from a mostly symbolic action, or vice versa.

A tactic is *concrete* to the degree that it seeks to achieve a specific, quantifiable objective. For example, anti-war organizers may seek to blockade a port to keep a shipment of weapons from passing through. There is a specific goal, a tangible cost for the port and the companies that use it, and a way to evaluate success: Either we stop the weapons or we don't.

A tactic is *communicative* when it communicates a political position, set of values, or worldview. A mass march in response to an injustice can fall into this category. Communicative tactics can be useful for exciting our base, building networks, seeking to sway public opinion, or scaring a target, but often do not have a *specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound* (S.M.A.R.T.) goal. Success is more qualitative.

To succeed, concrete tactics must force a response from the target (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma). Communicative tactics might have a target, but can also work without one.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Citizens' Posse
- Occupy Wall Street
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- Cultural disobedience
- Flash mob
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

While some actions can be both communicative and concrete, it is important to understand the difference. People often get discouraged when they take part in a communicative action and expect a concrete outcome. It's best to be clear from the outset what kind of action it is, so that everyone knows how to measure — and contribute to — the action's impact.

It is also important to remember that "concrete" and "communicative" are ways to measure the *instrumental* outcome of an action, as opposed to its *expressive* dimension (see: THEORY: Expressive and instrumental actions). The expressive part of your action is focused on the self-expression of participants, while the instrumental outcome of an action is concerned with your action's more direct goal-oriented impacts (both concrete and communicative).

Imagine an economic justice group aiming to blockade the entrance to the offices of the banking firm Goldman Sachs. At the action planning meeting, because there was a lack of clarity about whether the action was communicative or concrete, the discussion was at first circular and unproductive. Some wanted to lock arms in a simple human blockade, others wanted to up the ante by using chains and other "hard gear." Using gear has the benefit of staying power (it's more difficult for the police to remove you), but it carries much greater risk and is more difficult to deploy. It became clear the group had neither time nor numbers to blockade every single exit. Therefore, if the action was conceived as concrete (trying to shut down Goldman Sachs), it would fail because it could not achieve a realistic instrumental outcome. If it was communicative, however — a symbolic act to amplify a message — it could be successful. Furthermore, a communicative action might have a powerful expressive outcome by building the resolve, connection, and commitment of participants by offering them a cathartic, transformative experience. When participants agreed to carry out a communicative action, the staying power of the blockade gear was no longer needed: There was no tactical advantage to holding the space longer. Instead, the group decided to go with a human blockade, which played better in the media (a main indicator of success for them in this action). If activists hadn't assessed the purpose of their action and understood their goals (particularly, to what degree their goals were communicative rather than concrete) they likely would have made less strategic choices.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

A Tiny Blockades Book

The Ruckus Society, 2005

<http://risingtideseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/a-tiny-little-blockades-booklet-reduced.pdf>

- Consider your audience
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Turn the tables
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Non-cooperation
- Palace Coup
- Society of the spectacle

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Direct action

PRINCIPLE

DON'T FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR TACTICS

Just because an action succeeds once and is a big hit, doesn't mean that same tactic will succeed again and again. While planning your campaign, employ creative tactics that take your target by surprise.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Juman Abujbara

An editor of the Beautiful Rising book and toolkit, Juman is an aspiring philosopher, a campaigner for social change, and a human rights defender.

Just because your tactic succeeded once, that doesn't mean it will gain the same traction every time you use it. For one thing, your target will learn from their failures and respond differently if confronted with the same action. For another thing, people get bored of repetition and the media will more often than not avoid coverage of repetitive actions. Therefore, while you're devising actions that directly serve your campaign objective and are in line with your strategy (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy), try to be creative and original. Repetition can make your target immune to your actions, while an element of surprise can almost guarantee you a bigger impact. In other words, don't become paralyzed by your success, or you'll go down in history as just another one-hit wonder.

For example, the tactics used to bring down Mubarak's regime in the Egyptian revolution may not work again when another uprising takes place against the current regime. There is as much to learn from the successes of the Egyptian revolution as from its setbacks. Success is less a recipe for future success, as it is an opportunity to reflect upon what worked, extract lessons learnt and best practices, and assess what to do differently next time.

LEARN MORE

198 Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion - summary

Gene Sharp, 1973

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org/sites/default/files/files/HongKongHandout4.pdf>

Rules for Radicals - summary

Saul Alinsky, 1971

<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/rules.html>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Honk at Parliament
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Street Graduation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative petition delivery
- Culture jamming
- Hoax

Principles

- Build strength through repetition
- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Create many points of entry
- Escalate strategically
- Fail forward
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Art, Campaign strategy, Movement building, Media

PRINCIPLE

DON'T MISTAKE YOUR GROUP FOR SOCIETY

We want society to be democratic. But to be effective, your small group may need to operate more like the crew of a small ship, with a strict division of roles. That's OK, because your little group isn't society.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

"IF YOU'RE IN A GROUP THAT WORKS, AT SOME POINT YOU MAY FIGURE OUT THE HIDDEN INTERPERSONAL RULES THAT ENABLE THE WHOLE THING TO CRANK ALONG. DON'T BE APPALLED WHEN YOU DO."

Sure, we should all try to be the change you want to see in the world. We should also think hard about who we are, what we're fighting for, and why we're fighting for it. We should mull over the future society we want and how we can best model it in the here and now. We should even read books about it. But no matter how much we get absorbed in thinking about society, we should never mistake our activist groups *for* society.

For example, we want society to be democratic, but our small working groups cannot always be models of the sort of democracy we're fighting for. Like families and rebel units, affinity groups aren't always models for how society should be. Even a well-functioning, happy group may have unelected leaders. Decisions may be taken without fully consulting all members — or even any members. These would be odious practices if extended to society as a whole, but can be perfectly acceptable in a small group, where formal mechanisms are unnecessary because all members share a basic level of trust.

We obviously don't want society to be a place where everyone must follow orders punctually and without complaint; we want real freedom, which is why turbo-capitalism is anathema to many of us. Yet to operate effectively, a small group may need to operate like an army battalion, or, more poetically, like the crew of a small ship,

POTENTIAL RISKS

This is a case in which the opposite is often equally true, especially in larger groups! See almost any of the related principles.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Earth First!
- Nuit Debout

Principles

- Be an ethical prankster
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize

with clear divisions of roles and responsibilities. And there may be dictators: While one or two people can't usually do all the work, it may be that one or two people must make all the decisions, especially in the heat of action, so that things happen quickly.

If you're in a group that works, at some point you may figure out the hidden interpersonal rules that enable the whole thing to crank along. Don't be appalled when you do. Those rules probably have nothing to do with democratic principles or consensus, but are based on intuitive navigation of face-to-face relationships. Often, whoever has the most energy simply makes things happen, and ends up making most of the decisions. Even when the starting model is consensus, the formal consensus process often gets jettisoned and the active members simply coordinate informally to get it all done. Why not take a shortcut and skip the formal consensus step, period?

If your group has been working well and then ceases to, could it be that you've complicated the decision-making process through "openness," and, to put it brutally, the wrong people have taken control?

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

"Do-ocracy" Definition

Noisebridge

<https://www.noisebridge.net/wiki/Do-ocracy>

How Small Teams Get Shit Done

Jess Eddy, Medium

<https://medium.com/@jesseddy/how-small-teams-get-shit-done-97227164dcd4>

- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Delegate
- Enable, don't command
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Dunbar's number

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Community building, Movement building, Policy

PRINCIPLE

ENABLE, DON'T COMMAND

Whereas efforts led by commanding leaders are often dependent on that one person's energy and presence, enabling leaders awaken the creative potential of all participants, helping to grow the broader cause.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Kathryn Blume

She is co-founder of the radio show Earth on the Air, and the Lysistrata Project, the first worldwide theatrical event for peace. Kathryn has had essays published in numerous books, blogs, and magazines and she is also solo performer, climate activist, yoga teacher, wedding officiant, haphazard gardener, and irresponsible cat owner.

“THE VALUE OF THE “SUPPORTIVE, ENABLING LEADER” APPROACH IS THAT IT UNLOCKS THE CREATIVITY, INGENUITY, AND INNOVATION OF EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT OR CAUSE.”

“Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people — they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.”
—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

There's one style of leadership in which a charismatic, commanding leader serves as the public face of a project, sets up a vertical organizational structure, and then brings a whole lot of people along for the ride. The job of everyone else is to serve, support, and follow the commands of the charismatic, commanding leader. It's a very top-down approach. Conversely, there's a style of leadership which is far more bottom-up, in which the job of the supportive, enabling leader is to set up a lateral organizational structure with a compelling, inspiring vision, and then spend his/her time encouraging others to participate and assisting them in maximizing their creative contributions.

The value of the “supportive, enabling leader” approach is that it unlocks the creativity, ingenuity, and innovation of everyone involved in the project or cause. Participants are inspired to engage because of the positive vision, and then encouraged to learn new skills, take on new challenges, and become supportive, enabling leaders in their own right. The long-term success of the project or cause isn't dependent on one person's energy and presence. Rather,

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Honk at Parliament
- Lysistrata Project
- PARK(ing) Day
- Taco Bell Boycott

Tactics

- Carnival protest
- Critical Mass
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Legislative theatre
- Mass street action

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize

it's a combination of the beautiful juiciness of the vision and the creative synergy of large numbers of people working together to realize that vision.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Movement Net Lab

<https://movementnetlab.org/>

Here Comes Everyone: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations

Clay Shirky, 2008

https://books.google.com/books/about/Here_Comes_Everybody.html?id=mafZyckH_bAC

The Network Is the Leader

Curtis Ogden, The Interaction Institute, 2014

<http://interactioninstitute.org/the-network-is-the-leader/>

- Change is the only constant
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Create many points of entry
- Delegate
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves
- Make new folks welcome
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Solidarity, not aid
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use state power to build people power
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Dunbar's number
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Community building, Movement building, Democracy

PRINCIPLE ESCALATE STRATEGICALLY

Since a target rarely gives in after one action, it is often necessary to strategically increase the pressure on them in a step-by-step escalation that draws upon a diverse mix of tactics.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phionah Kyokusiima

Phionah Kyokusiima is the Western Uganda Coordinator for Solidarity Uganda and has done community organizing against corruption for many years. She hails from Bushenyi, and is a member of a citizen action team known as Make Bushenyi Great Again.

“EACH NEW ACTION RE-EMPHASIZES THE LARGER DEMAND AND BUILDS YOUR STRENGTH TO TAKE THE NEXT ESCALATED STEP.”

When authorities ignore the demands of the people, people can pressure them to listen and act. But to win, people must keep up the pressure. A target rarely gives in after one action, so it is often necessary to strategically increase the pressure on them in a step-by-step escalation that draws upon a diverse mix of tactics (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose tactics that support your strategy). The target will try to wait each pressure tactic out, but a well-organized campaign will then up the pressure in a new way. Each new action re-emphasizes the larger demand, builds strength to take the next escalated step, and reminds the target that the people are not going to leave them alone until they give in.

The 2017 Make Bushenyi Great Again (MBUGA) campaign in Western Uganda offers one great example of a campaign that used stage-by-stage strategic escalation to win their demands. Their target: the elected District Chairperson. Their demand: Institute a service commission (an office that handles government worker-related issues) for Bushenyi District.

First, they presented their grievances to the elected chairperson through a **table dialogue**; he promised they were working on it. One month later, nothing changed, so they opted to **file a lawsuit** against the local government. The Chairperson laughed at it and mocked the citizens for wasting their time and money. For the next five months, the case went back and forth; at every hearing it was postponed. Local citizens became angry, and escalated the pressure. First, they chose a **march and demonstration** to capture the attention of higher-up leaders who could pressure the court to

POTENTIAL RISKS

It requires a lot of patience and strategic focus to keep your team together. When you are less strategic you can lose people's support. Participants need to understand why each additional step is needed, and at what level or time it will be useful so they are willing to take that additional risk with you.

If your campaign does not escalate fast enough, it is likely to become boring and reduce the morale of those who stand for your cause. If your campaign escalates too fast, you might take on well-equipped opponents that are prepared to delegitimize your position or discredit you for lack of public support.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Define “hardcore” strategically

take the case. And then, a month later, they instituted a **direct action** that shut down the District Headquarters. Citizens left behind placards demanding a service commission. MBUGA also told the judiciary that unless there was action, when they came back, they would **shut down** the court house, too. Seeing the determination of the people, and worried about an escalating scandal, the judiciary acted quickly. The case was heard in court in July, 2017 and citizens won the case. Victory! The MBUGA campaign escalated from dialogue to legal action to street protest to a building take-over to a credible threat to come back and shut it all down. The campaign escalated not just the militancy of the tactic, but also the scale and number of participants in the action. And, wisely, organizers only escalated once the majority of participants realized it was necessary and were on board to take the next step.

Specific escalation steps may vary from campaign to campaign. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers won higher wages for farmworkers in Florida by very strategically escalating from **grassroots organizing**, to **community-wide work stoppages** against local growers, to **hunger strikes**, and eventually to a **nationwide boycott** against a global brand.

Wangari Maathai's Greenbelt Movement in Kenya escalated through a strategic series of steps from planting trees all the way to catalyzing a resistance that forced a dictator out of office:

1) Planting trees with rural women. 2) Placing political meaning on these trees. 3) Writing letters against the privatization of public parks and forests. 4) Going on hunger strike. 5) Occupying the parks to prevent their closure. 6) Stripping naked to demand release of political prisoners. 7) Mass actions to end Moi dictatorship.

Whatever the specific steps, the principle is the same, and summed up nicely by Saul Alinsky in *Rules for Radicals*: "Keep the pressure on. Never let up." Creativity and agility are key here. As Alinsky says: "Keep trying new things to keep the opposition off balance. As the opposition masters one approach, hit them from the flank with something new. A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag. Don't become old news."

LEARN MORE

Rules for Radicals
Open Culture

<http://www.openculture.com/2017/02/13-rules-for-radicals.html>

When Not to March

Waging Nonviolence, 2014

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/march-rally/>

Taking Root

Sometimes the escalation needs to be bigger than an individual campaign. It is a social movement-wide shift

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Earth First!
- Justice for Janitors
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Santa Claus Army
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Streets Into Gardens
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Citizen's arrest
- Creative petition delivery
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Hunger strike
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Build people power, then negotiate
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't fall in love with your

tactics

- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Simple rules can have grand results
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Palace Coup
- Political identity paradox
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Corruption, Direct action, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

EVERYONE HAS BALLS/OVARIES OF STEEL

A need to follow through on crazy ideas, and friends who will goad you on to do so, can take you far. You're braver than you think!

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

““HE’S A REAL NERVOUS NELLIE,” SAYS LONGTIME FRIEND-OF-ANDY, JOSEPH R. WOLIN.”

Many people over the years have said to the Yes Men (and many other activists) that they have balls or ovaries of steel, an impolite way of saying that they are courageous. This is simply not so.

Watch any pre-prank footage in the documentary film *The Yes Men Fix the World* and you will see a great deal of nervousness. It has even been said that Andy, one of the Yes Men, is a good bit more nervous than the average person. “He’s a real nervous nellie,” says longtime friend-of-Andy, Joseph R. Wolin. This is even more remarkable because the contexts in which the Yes Men operate are entirely without threat, populated mainly by timid, polite men in suits who would never endanger their reputation by hitting someone.

What the Yes Men have, which is mistaken for courage, is a need to follow through on crazy ideas (single-mindedness), and an ability to goad each other on to do so (peer pressure). Really, this formula can be reproduced by anyone.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Hijinks

The Yes Men

<http://theyesmen.org/projects>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Miniskirt March
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Trail of Dreams
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yomango

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Nudity
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anyone can act
- The real action is your target's reaction
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Expressive and instrumental actions
- The social cure

TAGS

Action design, Direct action, Pranks, Student activism

PRINCIPLE

EXPOSE INEQUALITY WITH A VIRAL GESTURE

A simple, defiant gesture (say, thousands of stone-broke people turning their pockets inside-out as they go about their day) can bring economic inequality to the surface and make oppressive institutions panic.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Robson Chere

Robson Chere is the Secretary General of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe.

"ALL OF THESE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF INEQUALITY WERE LOW-RISK, SIMPLE, AND SCALABLE."

"Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children."

—Amilcar Cabral

Poverty — and the suffering that comes with it — can often remain invisible. Likewise, wealth can be hidden in offshore bank accounts or through the manipulation of trusts. A simple, yet defiant gesture that makes this economic inequality visible — and helps overcome the stigmas associated with it — can quickly scale up to include thousands of people. Such a gesture is most likely to spread and succeed when it's public, symbolically powerful, easy to replicate, and visually striking (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible).

In 2017, Zimbabwe faced a severe cash crisis. Banks often had little or no money, and the withdrawal limit was set at USD \$30, which especially affected rural dwellers who have no banks in their localities, and have to travel long distances to make cash withdrawals. Tired of this situation, members of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ) decided to go to work with the inside of their pockets pulled out as part of a massive protest named #PocketsOut (*#HomwePanze* in the Shona language; and *#IzikhwamaPhandle* in the IsiNdebele language).

This creative and low-risk tactic provided an avenue for thousands of others to easily join in, including a former government minister, musicians, and school children. The popularity of #PocketsOut forced the governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to call for an emergency meeting with the Union and increase the weekly withdrawal limit to USD \$300.

In a similarly harmless manner during the Arab Spring in 2011, and

POTENTIAL RISKS

Such actions can be seen as symbolic gestures that do not offer clear alternatives, making them look like querulous objections. Thus, supporting our actions with analysis and proposals makes our case stronger and helps us turn our legitimate objections into constructive objectives.

It's also important for activists organizing mass actions to be aware that anyone can join and identify as part of the movement. Some people or groups join for different motives and can potentially become counter-productive. This can happen especially if they are planted into these actions by the regime or other bodies aligned against the movement to undermine its efforts or disrupt its momentum.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Gezi Park iftar
- Nuit Debout

again in the 2018 anti-austerity national strike, protesters in Jordan held pita bread with phrases such as "where are you my dear" and "corruption = poverty" written on it to exhibit how unaffordable basic goods, such as bread, had become.

And in protests against high commodity prices in Kenya in 2011, activists affiliated to the "Unga (maize flour) Revolution" organized a series of demonstrations in which empty plates and spoons were carried to symbolize high prices that made food unaffordable for the majority.

All of these public displays of inequality were low-risk, simple, and scalable. They were rebellious in spirit, yet broke no actual law, enabling many more citizens to embrace them. Ironically, it was often the simplicity of these tactics (and their capacity to rapidly spread) that made the targets of the tactic panic (see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results).

Another approach to display economic disparity in a powerful and concentrated manner is through depicting it against a symbol of inequality (say, a corporate office) or a decision-making point such as a city hall (see: METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention). In 2018, homeless activists in Berkeley, California, established an encampment on the front lawn outside the City Hall demanding fair housing policies for all. Such encampments were seen across dozens of cities around the world from Vancouver to Dublin and beyond.

LEARN MORE

What is the Unga Revolution?

Pambazuka News, 2011

<https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/what-unga-revolution>

- Street Graduation
- Who Would Accept?
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Debt strike
- Distributed action
- Eviction blockade
- Storytelling

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Poverty
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Austerity, Capitalism, Street protest, Wealth inequality

PRINCIPLE FAIL FORWARD

“Fall seven times, stand up eight,” a Japanese proverb says. Only when you experiment, execute and iterate will you be able to learn from your mistakes and turn your stories of failure into valuable lessons.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Juman Abujbara

An editor of the Beautiful Rising book and toolkit, Juman is an aspiring philosopher, a campaigner for social change, and a human rights defender.

Lao Tzu once said that “failure is the foundation of success, and the means by which it is achieved.” This testament to the power of persistence is as old as time itself, but recently it has become more than a platitude, as various strands of social science, software development and management theory have elevated it to a guiding principle for success. As business expert Bryan Babineaux puts it:

Failing quickly in order to learn fast — or what tech developers commonly call *failing forward* — is at the heart of many innovative businesses. The idea is to push ahead with a product as soon as possible to gather feedback and learn about opportunities and constraints so that you can take the next step.

A similar approach can sometimes work for campaigners and activist artists. Jump in. Experiment. Connect. You can sometimes only find out what you’re doing, or even what needs doing, by beginning to do it. Take failure as an opportunity to reach out and discuss challenges with new people who may offer new insight or give you access to a different network or audience.

Given limited resources and imperfect circumstances, we will fail and stumble much of the time. That’s OK. If we accept that up front, it gives us the freedom of honest self-reflection; it allows us to give the work our all. Organizing is a constant process of learning, adjusting and iterating; a constant cycle of praxis and renewal (see: PRINCIPLE: Praxis makes perfect).

It may seem like a paradox, but it is only by making mistakes that you hit on the right path; only through failure that you succeed. Do not let your failures stop you. Indeed, make them your stairway to success.

LEARN MORE

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Burmese Students’ Long March
- Earth First!
- No vote, no sex
- Nuit Debout
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Create many points of entry
- Don’t fall in love with your tactics
- Praxis makes perfect
- Start a conversation
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Hacking
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- SWOT

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action, Humour,

Fail Fast, Fail Often: How Losing Can Help You Win

The Daily Beast, 2014

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/01/05/fail-fast-fail-often-how-losing-can-help-you-win.html>

تعلمنا وتأملنا

Mujtama3i

<http://mujtama3i.org/ta2molat/>

If you have to fail - and you do - fail forward

Forbes, 2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemaddock/2012/10/10/if-you-have-to-fail-and-you-do-fail-forward/#4d45a4857a9a>

The unsexy truth about why the Arab spring failed

Vox, 2016

<http://www.vox.com/2016/1/27/10845114/arab-spring-failure>

Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success

Amazon, 2007

<http://www.amazon.com/Failing-Forward-Turning-Mistakes-Stepping/dp/0785288570>

Movement building, Social
media

PRINCIPLE

FOCUS ON BASIC NEEDS

In repressive regimes, directly criticizing the authorities can be dangerous. One lower-risk way to challenge the legitimacy of the regime is to focus attention on everyday economic struggles, e.g. high prices.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Asmaa Aboyousof

Asmaa Aboyousof is a political researcher and trainer pursuing a PhD in international relations. As a trainer, her interests include democratic transition, empowerment of women, women's role in conflict resolution, political campaigning, and civil and political rights.

Living under the rule of a repressive regime can be very dangerous for people who are working for social justice. Openly criticizing the authorities or speaking out on political issues can get you harassed, monitored, threatened, jailed or worse.

For those who are determined not to be silenced or intimidated, focusing criticisms on obvious challenges that touch the lives of almost every person in the street carries a lower risk of retaliation. For example, it is safer to criticise the regime indirectly by highlighting facts like bread shortages, sewage problems, electricity blackouts or high fuel prices than to directly denounce the corruption or lawbreaking of those in power.

Furthermore, addressing day-to-day concerns is more likely to attract public support for your cause, compared to the apathy, or sometimes fear and anger, that directly political demands might provoke. Choosing a theme so obvious and basic that hardly any could argue against the logic behind it — like food and health — not to mention affordable and functioning electricity — can be helpful in such circumstances.

LEARN MORE

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs

Bringing the Salt March to Wall Street

Tikkun, 2011

<http://www.tikkun.org/tikkundaily/2011/10/11/bringing-the-salt-march-to-wall-street/>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Fees Must Fall
- Gezi Park iftar
- Manich Msamah
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Street Graduation
- Taco Bell Boycott
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Who Would Accept?
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Eviction blockade
- Flash mob
- Phone banking
- Visibility action

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize

- Choose your target wisely
- Foster safer spaces
- Know your community
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take leadership from the most impacted

Theories

- Action logic
- Anti-oppression
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Corruption
- Decolonization
- Framing
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Poverty
- The commons
- The NGO-ization of resistance

TAGS

Austerity, Corruption, Democracy, Dictatorship, Human rights, State violence

PRINCIPLE

FOSTER SAFER SPACES

Whether in our meetings or on our streets, we can advance our struggle for justice by creating safer spaces for everyone, and by challenging the norms and power dynamics that make spaces unsafe for some people.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Vimbai Nyika

Vimbai Nyika lives in Zhombe, Zimbabwe, where she is working with the organization Katswe. After studying in Botswana she is looking forward to enrolling in university in 2016, and will specialize in creative writing and formal documentation.

“We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.”

—Malala Yousafzai

A safe space is where everyone feels fully able to express themselves without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of their identity or background. In short, a safe space is a forum that enables the free exchange of ideas and experiences without the fear of judgment or intimidation. Whether in our own meetings or in the streets of our cities, we can advance our struggles for justice by creating safer spaces for everyone, and by challenging the norms and power dynamics that make spaces unsafe for some people.

LEARN MORE

What’s a ‘safe space’? A look at the phrase’s 50-year history

By Malcolm Harris, Fusion, 2015

<http://fusion.net/story/231089/safe-space-history/>

Safe Cities for Women: from reality to rights

ActionAid, 2014

<http://global.safecitiesforwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2014/02/safe-cities.pdf>

Creating safe spaces for GLBT youth: A toolkit

Girl’s Best Friend Foundation and Advocates for Youth, 2005

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/safespace.pdf>

POTENTIAL RISKS

Safer spaces are not created overnight. The process of creating them can be draining due to diversity and willingness to compromise values and ethics that one might have held on to for a certain space of time. However, for the sake of progress within a movement, consensus is always important in decision making, and that must not be confused for a safe space because it just means reaching a point of agreement for the sake of progress.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bicycle rally for peace
- Miniskirt March
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Anonymous suggestion box
- Clandestine leafleting
- Jail solidarity
- Phone banking

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Focus on basic needs
- Kill them with kindness
- Make new folks welcome
- Make the personal political
- Practice digital self-defence
- Seek safety in support networks
- Take risks, but take care

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Decolonization
- Feminism
- Intersectionality
- Prefigurative politics
- Social model of disability
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Baraza

TAGS

Community building, Digital security, Gender and sexuality, Movement building, Nonviolence, Social media, State violence, Street protest, Student activism, Women's rights

PRINCIPLE

GIVE VOICE TO THOSE THAT CAN'T SPEAK

Trees can't speak, right? Wrong! There are many creative ways to give voice to those that can't speak — be it trees, animals, or archeological artifacts — so humans can hear their plight loud and clear.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Desmond Alugnoa

Desmond Alugnoa is a passionate advocate for environmental sustainability, rural innovation, and youth empowerment. As an entrepreneur and a landscape governance enthusiast, Desmond is focused on protecting the environment in order to protect indigenous and local occupations from a world enthused by capitalism.

"IN PURSUIT OF PROFIT, CAPITALISM RENDERS NON-HUMAN LIVING BEINGS INVISIBLE AND DISPENSABLE."

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

—Iroquois Confederacy maxim

If we were to truly follow the moral demand that those most affected by an issue should get to shape the laws and policies surrounding it (see: PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from the most impacted), trees should basically be running all human governments right now! But, that's not going to happen any time soon. So, our next best bet is to find creative ways to bring their voices into the halls of power.

In 2017-18, forest defenders in Ghana used this principle to great effect in their efforts to protect the Atewa Forest, one of the most diverse ecosystems in West Africa. Along all major paths in the forest, trees were hung with placards as if they were speaking for themselves: "I absorb 30 tons of CO2 a day" and "Your children may never know I existed." By personifying these trees, activists made them the leading face of the campaign (see: PRINCIPLE: Lead with sympathetic characters).

In pursuit of profit, capitalism renders non-human living beings invisible and dispensable. They have no voice in decisions that lead to their own annihilation. By giving them a voice, we can create a paradigm shift in our human-centrism.

However, speaking on behalf of anyone or anything is a potentially arrogant act of power which should be approached with great responsibility and humility. To transform this power into an

POTENTIAL RISKS

The responsibility of speaking on behalf of those that have no voice must not be taken lightly. The biggest risk when exercising this principle is arrogance. We could easily fall into the trap of simplifying or assuming to know well, what trees, animals, rivers, artifacts, or others need.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Earth First!
- PARK(ing) Day
- Stolen Gas Campaign

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Culture jamming
- Infiltration
- Lamentation
- Legislative theatre

opportunity, we must engage our empathy and moral imagination. We must step into the “shoes” of non-humans and attempt to form an intimate understanding of what their needs may be. We may immediately think of the most basic and apparent needs such as water, sunlight, and survival. But, we need to dig deeper . . . Trees have been around for literally a billion years. Science has only recently learned that trees communicate, share resources, and warn each other of approaching dangers. What should we do when speaking on their behalf to respect their cosmic uniqueness, intelligence, and emotions that we have shun? To promote respect for all life, as well as our own historical treasures, we must give those that can’t speak for themselves not just a voice, but even rights. In 2008, Ecuador enshrined nature rights in its constitution, the first country to do so. Others soon followed suit. In 2012, New Zealand granted legal personhood to the (Whanganui river) [<https://solutions.thischangeeverything.org/module/the-river-with-the-rights-of-a-person>), and in 2019, voters in Toledo, Ohio granted “irrevocable rights” to Lake Erie. Now, these critical bodies of water have actual legal rights in human forums.

Indigenous societies regard the natural world as a sacred source of wisdom. They have long understood that we humans are but one strand in an interconnected web of life. We moderns must walk out of our ego, re-learn to revere our fellow beings, and bring their voices (and rights) into our halls of power. Not doing so is not just killing them, but will eventually kill us, too.

LEARN MORE

Creating Legal Rights for Rivers: Lessons from Australia, New Zealand, and India
Ecology and Society Journal, 2018
<https://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol23/iss1/art7/>

Environmental Personhood
Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_personhood

Save Atewa Forest Official Website
Save Atewa Forest, 2018
<https://atewa.org/>

- Public filibuster

Principles

- Change a name to change the game
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Memes

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story

TAGS

Capitalism, Climate justice, Environment, Land use, Privatization, Language

PRINCIPLE

IF PROTEST IS MADE ILLEGAL, MAKE DAILY LIFE A PROTEST

When repression makes protest too risky, turn ordinary acts — driving slowly, clapping, wearing black, or laughing — into protests, thereby ridiculing the authorities and forcing them into a decision dilemma.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

“WHEN MASS GATHERINGS AND PUBLIC PROTESTS BECOME TOO DANGEROUS, SIMPLE EVERYDAY ACTIONS DONE EN MASSE CAN BE USED TO ILLUSTRATE THE RIDICULOUS NATURE OF REPRESSIVE AUTHORITY.”

In July 2011, public frustration in Belarus over a deepening economic crisis reached a boiling point. The authoritarian regime of President Alexander Lukashenko had outlawed any political protest, and police were cracking down on any vocal expression of dissent. In response, organizers calling themselves “Revolution Through Social Networks” began calling on people to gather in public and clap their hands, or set their cell phones to ring all at once, thereby turning these simple everyday actions into surprisingly profound public expressions of dissent.

As the non-protests spread, the police cracked down hard. The regime rightly recognized that the clapping was serving to undermine their authority. If they did nothing and continued to allow people to gather and clap without punishment, then the population could openly oppose the regime in other ways. Instead, the world saw the absurd sight of large numbers of Belarus citizens arrested for clapping. The crackdown exposed the government’s deep irrationality, a perception only strengthened when it submitted to Parliament a bill to make “the organized inaction” of silent protesters illegal.

Many years earlier, in 1983, organized labour in Chile planned to kick off new resistance to the ten-year-old Pinochet dictatorship with a massive strike in the copper mines, the backbone of Chile’s economy. Before the strike could occur, the mines were surrounded by the military and it seemed a bloodbath was certain to follow if the miners went through with this plan. Instead, the leadership brilliantly switched gears to a National Day of Protest made of decentralized actions, calling on those who supported them to drive slowly, turn their lights on and off at night, and at 8 pm to bang

POTENTIAL RISKS

When it’s time to escalate, don’t miss your chance. From the beginning, it is important to have a strategic trajectory in mind for your campaign: focus on activities that build toward bigger and bolder actions.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Gezi Park iftar
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Miniskirt March
- Orange Alternative
- Panty power
- Québec Student Strike
- Standing Man
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making)

pots and pans (see: TACTIC: Cacerolazo [noise-making protest]). Many participated, and these mini-protests helped to rebuild the confidence of the beaten-down opposition movement as people overcame their fear of taking action.

As both of these actions dramatize, when mass gatherings and public protests become too dangerous, simple everyday actions done en masse can be used to signal dissent, gather crowds, get the word out, illustrate the ridiculous nature of repressive authority, and force your foe into a decision dilemma (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma), all the while avoiding or deferring violent repression.

This principle doesn't only apply to repressive regimes, but to situations in supposedly more open societies where daily life has been criminalized for certain segments of the population. Think of the two queer women who kissed in front of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake City until they were hurriedly pushed off the grounds by security. Or the Dance Liberation Front, which organized dances in the streets and unlicensed spaces of Giuliani's New York to flout repressive 1920s era "cabaret laws" still on the books.

LEARN MORE

The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle
T.V. Reed, 2005
<http://art-of-protest.net/>

Chile: Struggle Against A Military Dictator
Lester Kurtz, 2009
<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/index.php/movements-and-campaigns/movements-and-campaigns-summaries?sobi2Task=sobi2Details&sobi2Id=25>

- protest)
- Clandestine leafleting
 - Currency hacking
 - Distributed action
 - Flash mob
 - Invisible theatre
 - Jail solidarity
 - Messaggio nella banconota
 - Public filibuster
 - Subversive travel
 - Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Know your cultural terrain
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Non-cooperation
- Strategic nonviolence
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Community building, Democracy, Dictatorship, Direct

action, Human rights, Humour,
Movement building, Pranks,
State violence, Street protest

PRINCIPLE

KILL THEM WITH KINDNESS

Kindness is sometimes harder for the authorities to rebuff than anger. When done with true compassion and some artfulness, a kind gesture can win over the public, and even help to humanize an inhuman situation.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

"IT'S A CORE ELEMENT OF NONVIOLENT PHILOSOPHY TO RECOGNIZE THE HUMANITY IN EVERYONE AND SEEK TO CONNECT WITH IT."

"Above all, be kind."
—Kurt Vonnegut

There's a time to be angry (see: PRINCIPLE: Anger works best when you have the moral high ground). There's a time to be reverent (see: PRINCIPLE: Use the power of ritual). There's a time to be funny (see: PRINCIPLE: Make it funny). And there's also a time to be sweet, charming, and generous. In fact, that time is often.

A 2011 foreclosure auction in Brooklyn, US, for instance, was movingly disrupted by protesters breaking into song. The song wasn't angry, it wasn't agitated; it was sweet, beautiful, and compassionate — even toward the auctioneer. That's what made it so powerful: the protesters were grounded and determined. They kept singing their sweet song even as the cops led them away.

When you lead with kindness, you're more likely to be seen as the sympathetic character in the story (see: PRINCIPLE: Lead with sympathetic characters). You've come in good faith. You're trying to make things better. You come with smiles, gifts, and an open heart, and you are met with stony-faced indifference, scorn or abuse. In the eyes of the public and the media, you are the good guys. You are the reasonable ones. This is not only good tactics (see: PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target's reaction), it's an assertion of your basic humanity against unjust and inhumane structures.

Just think of the iconic anti-Vietnam War protester putting a flower in the soldier's gun-barrel in 1967. Or more recently, the "99%ers" from Occupy the Boardroom who set up online "pen pal" relationships with the country's top bankers. When they were

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Conflict Kitchen
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Gezi Park iftar
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Orange Alternative
- Public Option Annie
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Santa Claus Army
- Standing Man
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Trail of Dreams
- Walk a mile in her shoes

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Artistic vigil
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Occupation
- Public filibuster

stopped by security from delivering their heartfelt stories in person, they folded up their letters into paper airplanes and sailed them over the heads of the cops toward the bank headquarters. For some, cars parked in bike lanes would be reason enough to slash some tires, but not for the Bike Lane Liberation Clowns, who instead will approach drivers and kindly implore them to leave. Those who remain are given fake "this could have been a real ticket" tickets warning them they're in violation of New York City parking rules.

It's naïve to think that power will change its ways because of a sweet appeal or a considerate gesture or a paper airplane. But at the same time, it's a core element of nonviolent philosophy to recognize the humanity in everyone and seek to connect with it. The more we humanize politics, the more likely we are to win. The bureaucrat who secretly agrees with you is more likely to quit, and lend his skills to the revolution. The cop who's been given cupcakes and coffee by a Granny Against the War is that much closer to refusing an order to pepper spray a group of college students linking arms. The foreclosure auctioneer, touched by song, isn't going to slam that gavel down quite so hard the next time. And the public, witnessing all of these actions, is more likely to be moved to action themselves. All of these things don't interrupt the workings of power on their own, but at a human level they matter, and over time they add up, sowing seeds of beautiful trouble, and creating allies in the most unexpected places.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Strong Kindness: How Can We Respond Skillfully To Dominating Behavior?

Zuzana Žilková; Center for Partnership Studies, 2017

<https://centerforpartnership.org/news-events/strongkindness/>

35 Powerful Images of Kindness Found Within Conflict

The Kindness Blog, Huffington Post, 2017

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/35-powerful-images-of-kin_b_6013278.html

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Foster safer spaces
- Keep it positive
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Make it funny
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Framing
- Hamoq and hamas
- Human rights
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Peel the onion

TAGS

Action design, Nonviolence

PRINCIPLE

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

The more you know about the culture and psychology of your community, the more successful your campaign will be.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mohammad Shazed

Mohammad Shazed is a Bangladeshi activist working on climate change, disaster management, food security, tax justice, democratic budget movement, and human rights.

The more you know about the culture of the community you want to reach — how they tend to react, how they receive new information, and the things that are important to them — the more likely it is that your message will resonate.

For example, if you want to call a meeting with youth on Facebook in Bangladesh — or with youth pretty much anywhere — you might call it at 11:00 pm because the percentage of people active on Facebook will be high at that time and your post will get lots of engagement. Or, when community organizers in African-American neighborhoods in Los Angeles wanted to distribute key health information, they chose to do it through barbershops and beautyshops because they were “trusted community settings”.

Sometimes the best approach is obvious, sometimes it requires research and creativity; in either case, when organizing in a community setting, the better you understand people’s culture, beliefs, traditions and psychology, the more effective your campaign will be.

LEARN MORE

Consider your audience

Beautiful Trouble, 2012

<http://beautifultrouble.org/principle/consider-your-audience/>

Telling Stories to Change the World: Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims by Rickie Solinger (Editor), Madeline Fox (Editor), Kayhan Irani (Editor), 2008

<http://www.amazon.com/Telling-Stories-Change-World-Narrative/dp/0415960800%3FSubscriptionId%3D0ENGV10E9K9QDNSJ5C82%26tag%3Dflatwave-20%26linkCode%3Dxm2%26camp%3D2025%26creative%3D165953%26creativeASIN%3D0415960800>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Fees Must Fall
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Gezi Park iftar
- Honk at Parliament
- Kubatana’s yellow poster campaign
- No vote, no sex
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Stop Prayer Plan
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Clandestine leafleting
- Guerrilla marketing
- Hashtag campaign
- Music video
- Phone banking

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Build strength through repetition
- Change is the only constant
- Consider your audience
- Focus on basic needs
- Know your cultural terrain
- Seek common ground

Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy

The Culture Group, 2013

<http://theculturegroup.org/2013/08/31/making-waves/>

- Start a conversation
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Comunalidad (communality)
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Memes
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Baraza
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now
- Theory of change

TAGS

Communications, Community building, Language

PRINCIPLE

KNOW YOUR CULTURAL TERRAIN

The first rule of guerrilla warfare is to know your terrain and use it to your advantage. This rule also holds true in the cultural jungle of words, images, memes, and pop songs.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stephen Duncombe

Stephen Duncombe teaches the history and politics of media at New York University and is a lifelong political activist, co-founding a community-based advocacy group in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and working as an organizer for the NYC chapter of the international direct action group, Reclaim the Streets. He co-created the School for Creative Activism in 2011 and is presently co-director of the Center for Artistic Activism.

“MOSES WAS A SPECTACULAR LEADER, MOHAMMED A MASTER POET, AND JESUS A CRACKERJACK CREATIVE ACTIVIST.”

“What the world’s governments should really fear is an expert in communication technologies.”

—Subcomandante Marcos

Those of us engaged in creative activism need to be able to navigate the broader cultural landscape in which we wage our campaigns, and use it to our advantage. In the twenty-first century, this terrain includes viral video sensations, hashtag campaigns, guerrilla advertising, celebrity gossip, sports spectacles, religious iconography, and other cultural detritus.

But how is an activist supposed to survive, much less thrive, in a cultural environment focused on commodifying everything of value or fostering obedience to authority?

All cultural artifacts contain contradictions. Marketing campaigns, for instance, are developed to exploit emotion in order to sell product, but to do this they need to tap into the deep-seated dreams and nightmares of large numbers of people. Sometimes these desires are scary and reactionary (brush with Pepsodent or you will die a spinster), but they also tap into positive, often Utopian dreams (drink this beer and you will be surrounded by a beloved, albeit tipsy, community).

Or consider religion: Progressive activists often think of religion as

POTENTIAL RISKS

The mass culture we seek to appropriate and repurpose is often rooted in deeply regressive ideas and ideologies. Use it carefully and creatively, or its original purpose might prevail.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Lysistrata Project
- Panty power
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Street Graduation
- The Teddy Bear Catapult

an institution designed to enforce the status quo. There's certainly much to condemn in religion, but it's also a system of ethics and a code of behaviour that can be used to critique the norms and ideals of consumer capitalism. The world's great religions extol such virtues as love, community, and responsibility for others — surely good material for an astute organizer to work with. Moses was a spectacular leader, Mohammed a master poet, and Jesus, chasing the money-changers out of the temple and spinning engaging parables, was a crackerjack creative activist.

In 1906, the great philosopher, psychologist, and pacifist William James told a group of American students that if they wanted to reach a wider public with their pacifist message, they needed to understand that war, no matter how bloody and barbaric, also tapped into worthy sentiments like honour and sacrifice, and that these values needed to first be recognized and then redirected. Instead of rejecting war outright, he concluded, the activists needed to articulate a "moral equivalent of war" to take its place in the culture's value system. The trick, according to James' insight, is to tap into what's potentially positive in the surrounding culture and then redirect those dreams, desires, images, and impulses into more progressive and creative social ends.

Today's cultural terrain is multilayered and extremely varied. Unlike the guerrilla in the jungle, who pretty much only needs to know his own local terrain, we twenty-first century cultural guerrillas need to range far and wide. You may not like or be familiar with professional sports, reality TV, or superhero movies, but they are all fertile arenas of culture to work with. It may take an open mind and a bit of personal courage, but it behooves us to immerse ourselves in, learn about, and respect the world of the cultural "Other" — which, for many of us counter-culture types, ironically, is mass culture.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Cultural Resistance Reader

Stephen Duncombe, 2002

<https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1859846599>

Dream

Stephen Duncombe, 2007

<https://books.google.jo/books?id=TY2IAAAAMAAJ&q=Dream+by+Stephen+Duncombe&dq=Dream+by+Stephen+Duncombe&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiBvZbm1KrZAhVSJIAKHf7sAPoQ6AEIJTAA>

- Yomango
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Currency hacking
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Hoax
- Lamentation
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Music video
- Reverse graffiti
- Trek

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Change is the only constant
- Consider your audience
- Don't dress like a protester
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your community
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make it funny
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Comunalidad (communality)
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Memes
- Political identity paradox
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Capitalism, Communications,
Media

PRINCIPLE

LEAD WITH SYMPATHETIC CHARACTERS

Good actions tell a good story. Good stories revolve around sympathetic characters. The most sympathetic characters are members of the impacted community that outsiders can easily relate to.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

“AN AUDIENCE WILL CARE MUCH MORE ABOUT INJUSTICE IF THEY CAN RELATE TO THE PEOPLE AFFECTED.”

Assembling a compelling cast of characters is a critical strategic consideration for any action designer. Actions tend to be strong on identifying and vilifying the antagonists of the narrative, but an audience will care much more about injustice if they can relate to the people affected. Successful actions are often those that present strong protagonists and other sympathetic characters.

The role of the messenger who delivers the story of an action is key. Messengers embody the message by putting a human face on conflict and placing the action within a larger context. Those most impacted by the issue tend to make for more sympathetic and compelling messengers. For instance, if the action is about farm workers, it can be more effective to amplify the voices of a small group of farm workers who are taking action than to have a larger group of non-farm workers to speak up on their behalf. (Of course, solidarity actions certainly have their place: see Taco Bell Boycott.)

Power holders understand the importance of deploying sympathetic characters. For instance, welfare cuts get presented as benefiting working mothers, and corporate tax cuts are sold as job-creation tools to help the unemployed. Time and again, the powerful play one group of sympathetic characters off against another, or argue with Orwellian duplicity that the victims of a policy will actually benefit from it.

In these cases, a campaign becomes a contest over who gets to speak for those suffering. With whom do we sympathize, and are

POTENTIAL RISKS

The dynamics of who gets to speak, how the speakers are portrayed, and who is cast as the heroes, victims, and villains are deeply entwined in questions of power and privilege. Activists should take care not to play into disempowering narratives of victimization that plague marginalized communities. Navigating these dynamics skillfully and authentically is essential to successful actions and campaigns.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Citizens' Posse
- Conflict Kitchen

those characters actually given space to speak for themselves? A showdown results between messengers jockeying to represent themselves as the authentic representatives of the impacted constituencies.

In recent years, we have seen several uprisings against repressive governments framed explicitly around sympathetic characters. In Myanmar, monks became the new face of the pro-democracy movement, replacing the students of the 1988 mobilizations as the primary messengers. Obviously, many factions of society supported the movement, but with the monks at the front of the marches it was clear that the pro-democracy movement spoke for the conscience of the nation. Similarly, in Pakistan lawyers became the face of the fight against government impunity. Who better to embody the message of a need to respect the rule of law than lawyers?

It's important to ensure that the faces of the action are not just representative of the relevant impacted community, but also are easily recognizable to outsiders as key characters in the story. This can come down to the crude but important dynamics of costuming: A single religious leader wearing religious sacraments will communicate that people of faith are involved in the action better than twenty religious leaders wearing jeans and sweatshirts (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't dress like a protester).

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Tools and Resources

Center for Story-Based Strategy

<https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/tools-and-resources#intro-to-sbs-link>

- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- No vote, no sex
- Santa Claus Army
- Stolen Beauty
- Streets Into Gardens
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Trail of Dreams
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Civil disobedience
- Eviction blockade
- Forum theatre
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Hunger strike
- Identity correction
- Invisible theatre
- Lamentation
- Media-jacking
- Storytelling

Principles

- Bring the issue home
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Prefigurative politics
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Communications

PRINCIPLE

MAINTAIN NONVIOLENT DISCIPLINE

Time and again, unarmed masses of people have triumphed over armed-to-the-teeth forces using humble techniques like strikes, occupations, boycotts, and sit-ins. But only because people have remained nonviolent.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nathan Schneider

Nathan Schneider is an editor of *Waging Nonviolence*, a blog about nonviolent conflict and militarism, as well as of *Killing the Buddha*, an online literary magazine about religion and culture. He has written for *Harper's*, *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Catholic Worker*, *the Boston Review*, *The Guardian*, *Religion Dispatches*, and elsewhere.

“NONVIOLENT METHODS PUT THE OPPRESSOR IN A DECISION DILEMMA: EITHER RAIN PAIN ON A BUNCH OF UNARMED RESISTERS, OR CAPITULATE.”

“We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protests to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It's amazing to think that unarmed masses of people have defeated armed-to-the-teeth forces using humble techniques as strikes, occupations, boycotts, and sit-ins. One way of understanding why this can happen is that nonviolent methods put the oppressor in a decision dilemma: either rain pain on a bunch of unarmed resisters, or capitulate. The former can turn public opinion toward the protesters and undermine the legitimacy upon which the oppressor's power rests. If the resistance persists, escalating crackdowns can start to backfire, even to the point that the police or military refuse to participate. Eventually the sovereign has no choice but to capitulate.

This basic logic frays, however, as soon as the resisters start meeting violence with violence. If the opponent succeeds in portraying resisters as a threat to peace and order, it escapes the decision dilemma, reasserting its legitimacy by playing the part of protector, of securer, of stabilizer. Unless you can scrounge up enough guns to match the military's firepower, your movement is toast.

POTENTIAL RISKS

When a given nonviolent tactic doesn't work, it's tempting to conclude that nonviolence has failed and the only recourse is violence. That's incredibly hasty. There is an enormous range of nonviolent tactics — Gene Sharp famously listed 198 of them, and that's just for starters — varying from purely symbolic acts to direct action designed to disrupt the smooth operation of oppressive systems. There is no one-tactic-fits-all solution: when one nonviolent tactic isn't doing the trick, try another, or more than one at once!

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle in Seattle

Political scientist Erica Chenoweth and sociologist Kurt Schock examined the data of past resistance movements and found that having an armed flank dramatically reduces the ability of an uprising to attract widespread participation. Most people aren't interested in getting martyred in a firefight, so they'll stay home. Rather than merely representing one wing of a "diversity of tactics," therefore, undisciplined violence in a movement tends to lessen the effectiveness of nonviolent mass movements (see: THEORY: Strategic nonviolence). That's why oppressors love to insert provocateurs into resistance movements to push them into violence and then discredit them.

Many people keep nonviolent discipline for mainly strategic reasons: They do it because it's effective, rather than as a matter of principle. In practice, though, maintaining nonviolent discipline in the face of provocation can be difficult if you don't consider it at least partly as an end in itself. Fortunately, almost everybody aspires to build the least violent society possible. To the extent that we build our movements as models of the world we'd like to see, nonviolent discipline should come naturally.

The practice of maintaining nonviolent discipline should never be confused with passivity or acquiescence in the face of injustice.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Politics of Nonviolent Action, vols 1-3

Gene Sharp, Porter Sargent, 1973

http://www.everydayrebellion.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/198_methods-1.pdf

Why Civil Resistance Works

Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan, 2011

http://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/IS3301_pp007-044_Stephan_Chenoweth.pdf

The Trifecta of Civil Resistance: Unity, Planning, Discipline

Hardy Merriman, 2010

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/hardy-merriman/trifecta-of-civil-resistance-unity-planning-discipline>

- Battle of the Camel
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Gezi Park iftar
- Justice for Janitors
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Occupy Wall Street
- Reclaim the Streets
- Schools of Struggle
- Standing Man
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Salt March
- Welcome to Palestine
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Eviction blockade
- Flotilla
- General strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Hunger strike
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation
- Public filibuster
- Trek

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't dress like a protester
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's

reaction

Theories

- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Palace Coup
- Revolutionary nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Nonviolence

PRINCIPLE

MAKE NEW FOLKS WELCOME

The more the merrier! But if new folks are going to stick around, you'll need to put work into making sure they feel welcome.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

"IF YOU EXPECT PEOPLE TO PRIORITIZE YOUR GROUP OVER AIKIDO CLASSES, CONTRA DANCING, OR ADVANCED ORIGAMI, YOU GOTTA TREAT 'EM RIGHT."

"You are invited. By anyone, to do anything. You are invited, for all time. You are so needed, by everyone, to do everything. You are invited, for all time."

—The Dismemberment Plan, "You Are Invited"

Bringing in new participants is essential to any activist group that wants to grow in size and capacity — but recruiting is only the first step. Integrating people into an established group can be a much bigger challenge, and it helps to be intentional about it. Getting good at involving people requires some deliberate attention and probably the establishment of some basic procedures to make new folks welcome.

For starters, when someone says they're interested in finding out more or getting involved in your group, don't just invite them to come to your next meeting and leave it at that. Even the most welcoming and inclusive groups tend to develop their own meeting culture that can unintentionally make new folks feel like outsiders. To increase your new member retention rates, schedule one-on-one intake interviews with new folks before they come to a group meeting. Get to know the person. Find out what attracted them to the group, what kinds of tasks they enjoy or are good at, and how much time they have. Then tell them more about the group and discuss what their involvement could look like. While this level of orientation requires more time up front, it saves time in the long

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Lysistrata Project
- Nuit Debout
- Round Dance Revolution

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Distributed action
- Human banner

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Build strength through repetition
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out

run: people tend to plug into the work faster and stick around longer. It may make sense for one or two members of your group to take on this responsibility as an ongoing role.

Secondly, if you want to inspire people to stay involved, you need to make them feel valued and appreciated. People like to be around people who treat them well. Most of us have no shortage of things we can do with a finite amount of free time: If you expect people to prioritize your group over aikido classes, contra dancing, or advanced origami, you gotta treat 'em right. Notice and acknowledge new folks' contributions, however small. Make time to check in with them outside of meetings. Ask their opinions often: What did they think about the meeting? The event? The action? Bounce your ideas off of them and ask for their feedback.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

3 Tips for Plugging People In — An Organizing Tool

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, *Beyond the Choir*, 2016

<https://beyondthechoir.org/2016/11/16/3-tips-plugging-people-organizing-tool/>

How to Welcome New People

wikiHow

<https://www.wikihow.com/Welcome-New-People>

- Change is the only constant
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Enable, don't command
- Foster safer spaces
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Gerontocracy
- Political identity paradox
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Community building

PRINCIPLE

MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

Many injustices (and toxins!) are invisible due to distance, ideology, or simple chemistry. If you can't see it, you can't change it. So, the first task of an activist is often to make the invisible visible.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"IF YOU CAN'T SEE IT, YOU CAN'T CHANGE IT, SO THE FIRST TASK OF AN ACTIVIST IS OFTEN TO MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE."

"We who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

Social problems are often obscured by *distance*, *ideology*, or *simple chemistry* (when was the last time you noticed PCBs in your drinking water?). If you can't see it, you can't change it, so the first task of an activist is often to make the invisible visible.

There are several kinds of "invisibility." Which one you're dealing with will shape the approach you take.

Distance

Climate chaos might be stranding polar bears in the Arctic or submerging small island nations in the Pacific, but for most people in the global north it's out of sight, out of mind. Countless artful interventions have sought to make accelerating climate changes more visible, whether by painting anticipated future sea levels on city streets and buildings or mock-drowning a polar bear in the fountain outside the Department of the Interior in D.C., as Greenpeace did in 2009.

People with privilege often have the luxury of putting distance between themselves and the consequences of their actions. When tackling an issue that seems distant, it helps to bring the issue home by highlighting the human cost.

Ideology

People who have the luxury of not seeing an uncomfortable truth often simply won't, even if it's in front of their faces. Privileged

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Bicycle rally for peace
- Billionaires for Bush
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Conflict Kitchen
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Couple in the Cage
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Mining the Museum
- Miniskirt March
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Round Dance Revolution
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in

whites easily ignored the everyday injustices inflicted during the Jim Crow era until blacks organized and took action, sitting in the “wrong” seats in diners and on buses, marching in the streets, and so on.

Injustices made invisible by ideology can be brought to light by judicious reframing (see: PRINCIPLE: Reframe the issue). A frame defines what is part of the story and, more importantly, what is not. Actions that target the point of assumption (the simple question of who can sit where on a bus, for instance) can focus attention on what was previously “outside the frame.”

Chemistry, and other easily overlooked facts of life

Many pollutants cannot be seen by the naked eye, yet cause great harm. The key is to bring that harm into public view. Consider the makers of the movie *Gasland*, who lit some Pennsylvania tap water on fire, powerfully refuting years of industry denial with a single powerful visual demonstration. Or the forest activists who filled several city intersections with the stumps of cut-down trees. When Kodak was caught discharging toxins from its manufacturing plant in upstate New York, Greenpeace created a public fountain that brought the effluent from the pipe — normally out of site below the water surface — cascading into public view. These kind of actions are particularly effective when the corporation has worked hard to hide or deny the damage, or simply done it far away from consumers.

The role of the activist often resembles that of the child in the Hans Christian Andersen story: Even if everyone knows the emperor has no clothes, saying as much in public can have revolutionary consequences. Exposing previously hidden problems can be the first and most important step in resolving them.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Making the Invisible Visible

Amnesty International

<http://www.thedailydogooder.com/2012/01/24/daily-dogooder-making-the-invisible-visible/>

- Stolen Beauty
- Stop Praver Plan
- Street Graduation
- Streets Into Gardens
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- Yomango
- #YouStink
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Creative petition delivery
- Culture jamming
- Eviction blockade
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Identity correction
- Invisible theatre
- Jail solidarity
- Public filibuster
- Reverse graffiti
- Subversive travel
- Trek
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Change a name to change the game
- Do the media’s work for them
- Give voice to those that can’t speak
- Know your cultural terrain
- Reframe the issue
- Show, don’t tell
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use others’ prejudices against them

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect

- Anti-oppression
- Artivism
- Commodity fetishism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Feminism
- Framing
- Neoliberalism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Communications

PRINCIPLE

NO ONE WANTS TO WATCH A DRUM CIRCLE

Participating in a drum circle is amazing, transformative, and fun. Watching a drum circle, on the other hand, is torture. Don't ask people to watch you have fun — get them involved!

CONTRIBUTED BY

Steve Lambert

Steve co-founded the Center for Artistic Activism, was a senior fellow at New York's Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology from 2006-2010, developed workshops for Creative Capital Foundation, and is a faculty member at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Steve's parents, former clergy members, imbued in him the qualities which prepared him for life as an artist.

"COME UP WITH WAYS FOR OBSERVERS TO MEANINGFULLY INVOLVE THEMSELVES, INSTEAD OF EXPECTING THEM TO STAND MUTE BEFORE YOUR EXPRESSIVE OUTBURSTS OF CREATIVITY."

Drum circles are incredible! Hanging out in the park with a mix of friends and strangers, making rhythms together, communicating intuitively, adding your own rhythm, and making a big and beautiful sound that fills the park. It's an amazing thing.

Or so I've heard.

My actual experiences with drum circles are entirely different. At best, they're tolerable, but more often they're torture. I'm trying to hang out in the park with my friends, but these self-indulgent dipshits won't stop banging on their goat skins. No one else cares except someone in a tie-dyed sarong who will apparently jump at any opportunity to sway with their arms in the air.

Being part of a drum circle is one thing. Experiencing it from the outside is quite another.

Way too often, activism is like a drum circle. Viewed from the outside, it can be painfully unimaginative, solipsistic, and quite simply annoying. For the people involved in the creation of an action, however, the experience can be rewarding and transformative — even if everyone else walks away confused or annoyed. If that happens and it doesn't bother you, you may have fallen prey to the political identity paradox.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Billionaires for Bush
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Honk at Parliament
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Reclaim the Streets
- Round Dance Revolution
- Streets Into Gardens
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Carnival protest
- Critical Mass
- Flash mob

One way to reach your audience is to entice them to become participants by expanding the creative part of the action to include as many people as possible. Come up with ways for observers to meaningfully involve themselves, instead of expecting them to stand mute before your expressive outbursts of creativity.

Instead of strictly planning an action, think of creating rules to a game — one that is rewarding and fun to play (see: PRINCIPLE: Simple rules can have grand results). How can you create parameters within which large numbers of participants can meaningfully contribute, act, and create? An open framework that allows participants the freedom to bring in their own ideas and solutions?

The call to occupy Wall Street operated in this way, offering only a date, a core slogan, and the instruction *Bring tent*. (Of course, Occupy Wall Street went on to attract its share of drum circles). Flash mobs are no different: set a time, location, and a few basic rules, and let things take their course. These actions have simple rules that can expand to include thousands of participants and still deliver a provocative experience to participant and observer alike.

Whatever the nature of your action, it's worth looking for ways to make passersby feel that it's more about them than about you. No matter how good a drummer you are.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Weapons Lab Conversion Proposal

Steve Lambert, 2005

<https://visitsteve.com/made/lawrence-livermore-conversion-plans/>

Say Something Nice

Improv Everywhere, 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwEYYI-AGWs&feature=youtu.be>

- Street theatre

Principles

- Consider your audience
- Create many points of entry
- Make it funny
- Make new folks welcome
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Political identity paradox
- The social cure
- Theatre of the Oppressed

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Community building, Direct action, Humour, Street protest

PRINCIPLE

PLAY TO THE AUDIENCE THAT ISN'T THERE

In a media-saturated world, the audience you care about is rarely the one witnessing your action, but rather the one you'll reach through mass media and social media. Design your action with them in mind.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

"THE IDEA THAT YOU CAN CHANGE EVILDOERS' MINDS BY GATHERING EN MASSE OUTSIDE THEIR STRONGHOLD IS NOT EXACTLY SUPPORTED BY THE HISTORICAL RECORD."

When you're pulling off a prank or staging some kind of media spectacle, it's important to keep in mind that those you're directly confronting are often not your main audience. When Occupy Wall Street activists swarm Manhattan's financial district or Bhopal activists camp out on the lawn of the CEO of Union Carbide, there's no reason to think that the *immediate* audience will change their minds based on what they're observing. Rather, the idea is to use the immediate audience as unwitting actors in a theatre piece that is being performed for a secondary audience. That secondary audience consists of filmgoers or YouTube viewers or TV watchers or press-release readers — and they're the ones you care most about. Design your intervention with them in mind.

If reporters are going to be present, consider how things will look through their eyes. Regardless, however, make sure to document your own action (see: PRINCIPLE: Do the media's work for them). Choreograph the action so you create and capture the moments you need to tell the story you want to tell. When Agit-Pop pulled off their Public Option Annie guerrilla musical, they snuck more videographers into the conference than singers.

Obviously, the secondary audience is not always your focus. At a rally, say, the key audience might actually be the participants themselves. With most strikes or sit-ins, the key audience is the actual target — a CEO or public official — and your aim is to

POTENTIAL RISKS

Sometimes this principle does not apply. Sometimes the media and the public will see right through an action that is too heavy-handedly crafted for TV. Sometimes the best way to connect with the indirect audience is just to be your unvarnished, authentic self, warts and all (see: STORY: Occupy Wall Street).

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Manich Msamah
- Occupy Wall Street
- Public Option Annie
- Santa Claus Army

disrupt business as usual and exact a cost that will pressure your target to accede to your demands.

But even with some of these more disruptive actions, the key audience is not in the room. When Tim DeChristopher disrupted a Utah oil and gas auction in 2008, he was not tempted to address the other bidders directly. His action was for a much larger audience — as well as for the land itself that he helped to save.

Sometimes activists think they're out to change the minds of the bankers, CEOs, or others they're ostensibly targeting. It's one thing to *pretend* you're out to change their minds — in order to stage a theatrically effective action, that is often necessary — but it's another thing to believe it yourself. The idea that you can change evildoers' minds by gathering en masse outside their stronghold is not exactly supported by the historical record. Instead, think of your target and your immediate audience as unwitting actors in the theatre piece you're concocting for another audience they're not even aware of.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Making the News: A Guide for Activists and Nonprofits

Jason Salzman, 2003

https://books.google.com/books/about/Making_the_News.html?id=jDhHAAAAMAAJ

SPIN Works!

The SPIN Project, 2002

<https://spinacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/SPIN-Works.pdf>

Strategic Communications Planning

The SPIN Project, 2005

<http://www.panna.org/sites/default/files/StrategicCommunicationsSPIN.pdf>

How To Live Tweet A Direct Action

CounterAct, 2015

<http://counteract.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Live-tweeting-some-simple-tips-CounterAct-short-version.pdf>

- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Cultural disobedience
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Hoax
- Human banner
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation
- Public filibuster
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- The real action is your target's reaction

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Media, Social media

PRINCIPLE PRAXIS MAKES PERFECT

Theory without action goes nowhere. Action without reflection is ineffective. That's why we have *praxis*: a cycle of theory, action and reflection that helps us analyse our efforts so we can be more effective.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

"PRAXIS REQUIRES US TO BE STUDENTS OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE AND CONTEXT."

Effective activism follows a cycle. We start with our theory of how change happens. Then we take action based on our theory. Then we take a step back and reflect on how the action went, which re-shapes our theory. Basically, praxis means "learning." It may seem simple, but few activists actually *do* it.

Praxis requires us to be students of our own experience and context. It's not just about being smart and reflecting. It's also about building specific *behaviours* and *group norms* that promote habits of strategy, debrief, and revision. It's about your group's meeting style, organizational structure, and leadership dynamics.

Here's the difference that praxis can make:

Let's say we're in a student group at a college. If our group lacks praxis, we may say: "Let's bring Radical Thinker X to speak at our campus!" We think that the event will be "good." Then we have the event. It's somewhat well-attended, but afterwards our group has mixed feelings about it. We decide to keep moving forward and host another event.

That's a bit directionless. There was no actual theory, and no basis for reflection.

The Praxis Wheel. Art by Joshua Kahn Russell.

Instead, let's start with a theory. We start our group meeting by saying "Bringing Radical Thinker X to campus will help our

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- #GambiaHasDecided

Tactics

- Forum theatre
- Image theatre

Principles

- Build strength through repetition
- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Fail forward
- Pick battles big enough to matter, small enough to win
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Training for the win

campaign. They can talk about why activism is powerful, and it will reach a new audience of people who are not yet engaged in our campaign. Let's post flyers in our favorite coffee shops. Three hundred people will attend, fifty will sign up, and five of those people will show up at our next meeting."

Now that's a real theory. It has an explicit logic, a process of how you will carry out your action, and concrete measurable *outcomes* that you expect.

The event happens. Only one hundred people attend and most of them already work with your group, so only a few sign your list, and nobody new comes to your next meeting.

You now have a real *basis for reflection*. You can debrief your event, and instead of subjectively talking about whether you thought it was "good" or not, you can have a conversation about why it didn't measure up to your success indicators, and what to do next time. These lessons shape how you organize your next event.

Organizers should have the praxis cycle spinning in their heads all the time. We are always learning from what's going on around us. The point of building a *culture of praxis* in your group, however, is so your *whole group* can learn, not just a couple of organizers. When you develop your theory (your plan and your goals) with your group, and then have a real debrief after, the lessons are available to all.

If you don't take real time out to name your theories, and then reflect, revise, and learn lessons, you will be left spinning your wheels, with fewer and fewer people understanding how to do the work of your group.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Organizing Cools the Planet: Tools and Reflections on Navigating the Climate Crisis

Hilary Moore and Joshua Kahn Russell, 2011

<https://books.google.com/books?id=uYpeyD1n7XgC&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Praxis Makes Perfect

<https://joshuakahnruessell.wordpress.com/about/>

Beyond the Choir

<https://beyondthechoir.org/>

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Revolutionary reform
- The tactics of everyday life
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- SMART objectives
- SWOT

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

PUT YOUR TARGET IN A DECISION DILEMMA

Design your action so that your target is forced to make a decision, and all their available options play to your advantage. This is known as a *decision dilemma*.

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Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

If you design your action well, you can force your target into a situation where they have no good options: where they're "damned if they do, and damned if they don't." This is known as a decision dilemma.

Gandhi's 1930 (see: STORY: The Salt March) presented the British authorities with a classic decision dilemma: either beat up and arrest Gandhi and his supporters and turn them into martyrs for the movement, or let them march to the sea in open defiance of British authority and the hated Salt Act.

Many actions with concrete goals (such as a blockade or a sit-in) require a decision dilemma in order to be successful. A sit-in at a corporate HQ, for instance, should leave your target with only two options, if they are not willing to meet your demands: 1) evict your forcibly and face the negative public attention this would cause, or 2) wait you out, allowing you to gather more attention and support while business as usual grinds to a halt.

When done skillfully, decision dilemmas can help win major concessions from powerful targets.

LEARN MORE

Put your target in a decision dilemma

Andrew Boyd & Joshua Kahn Russell, Beautiful Trouble, 2012
<http://beautifultrouble.org/principle/put-your-target-in-a-decision-dilemma/>

The Dilemma Demonstration: Using nonviolent civil disobedience to put the government between a rock and a hard place
Philippe Duhamel, New Tactics in Human Rights

POTENTIAL RISKS

In a repressive environment, or against a powerful target, you need to be sure that your action *actually* puts them in a decision dilemma, or you may just put yourself at serious risk. If a powerful target would face no negative repercussions for attacking you, then there is no decision dilemma keeping them from doing so. In such a case, either use a less direct method, or find a way to change the context (get celebrity or international supporters to accompany you, have major media witnessing, etc.), so that your target *would* pay a big price for responding violently.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Daycare Centre Sit-In

- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Gezi Park iftar
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Santa Claus Army
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Salt March
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Debt strike
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Eviction blockade
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Hunger strike
- Identity correction
- Inflatables
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Focus on basic needs

- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Personalize and polarize
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Turn the tables
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Non-cooperation
- Palace Coup
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action, Nonviolence, State violence, Street protest

PRINCIPLE

RECAPTURE THE FLAG

We can't deny that the symbols of one's nation provide a meaningful feeling of social solidarity. To be effective as change agents, we need to engage, claim, and contest the meanings of these symbols.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

"TELL STORIES THAT INVITE PEOPLE TO STEP INTO THEIR BEST SELVES AND THEIR MOST BELOVED ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR COUNTRY."

"Even the most elementary grasp of the fundamental idea that one communicates within the experience of his audience — and gives full respect to the other's values — would have ruled out attacks on the American flag. The responsible organizer would have known that it is the establishment that has betrayed the flag, while the flag itself remains the glorious symbol of America's hopes and aspirations, and he would have conveyed this message to his audience."

—Saul Alinsky

"I'm a patriot. I love my decadent, cosmopolitan, self-indulgent, racially mixed, godless, intellectually dilettante, drug-abusing, promiscuous, queer-loving country. And its flag is the Stars and Stripes."

—Patrick Nielsen Hayden

Samuel Johnson did not mean patriotism per se when he famously called patriotism the last refuge of a scoundrel. He meant false patriotism. The uncritical, unthinking, "Love it or leave it" variety of patriotism. Unfortunately, because this kind of patriotism is louder, angrier, more shameless, and often used deliberately to squash dissent and debate, it often becomes the only recognized form of patriotism.

Progressives, who tend to have a more nuanced, "Love it and fix it" kind of patriotism, often have a harder time finding their full-

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Stolen Gas Campaign
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Trail of Dreams
- Who Would Accept?
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Identity correction

Principles

- Consider your audience
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground

throated patriotic voice. And, indeed, there are some excellent reasons to be ambivalent about wielding the symbols of our nation. One is the fact that slavery, genocide, war, and other horrors have been carried out in the name of, and with the symbols of, most nations with a colonial or imperial history, including the United States, Canada, Australia, and most of western Europe. Another is the conviction that progressives' greatest strength is a solidarity narrative based on shared class interest and a common humanity that transcends the boundaries of nation states.

Yet we can't deny that the idea and symbols of one's nation move many people deeply and provide a meaningful feeling of social solidarity. If we are to be effective as change agents, we need to engage, claim, and contest the meanings of these symbols. To shun the flag out of an understandable distaste for nationalism is to let our opponents monopolize it. It allows them to use these powerful symbols uncontested. It lets them shape the collective story for their purposes.

The meaning of a given symbol like the flag is not a fixed thing (see: THEORY: Floating signifier). Immigrants and their allies who wave the American flag at immigration reform rallies are claiming their rightful share to its meaning. They seek to imbue the flag with meanings of inclusivity and social justice while their opponents wield the symbol for exclusionary, oppressive, xenophobic purposes. Yes, progressives can raise all sorts of factually true points about how the United States is not and has never been a very welcoming or liberating nation. And if you're a history teacher, that's at least part of what you should tell your students. But if you're trying to build a mass movement for change, then you need to tell stories that invite people to step into their best selves and their most beloved aspirations for their country.

We must, in other words, recapture the flag. We need to dig into our nation's history to discover "allies" — the people, principles, and stories that speak to our goals of a better world. Without claiming these stories as part of our history, we are left to engage in head-on attacks against the national institutions we want to change.

Recapturing the flag allows us to challenge the worst parts of nationalism, while also infusing our struggles with a broad appeal to the common values and symbols that move us most.

LEARN MORE

Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism

Benedict Anderson, 2006

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagined_Communities

Rules for Radicals, Prologue

Saul Alinsky, 1971

- Turn the tables
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- "Democracy promotion"
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes
- Political identity paradox

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Colonialism, Democracy, Immigration, International solidarity, Militarization, Racial justice, Social media, State violence

<https://books.google.com/books?id=VIH0UbZ8qU4C&lpg=PP1&pg=PR13#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Is It Ever Acceptable to Burn The American Flag as a Show Of Protest?

www.debate.org

<http://www.debate.org/opinions/is-it-ever-acceptable-to-burn-the-american-flag-as-a-show-of-protest>

Patriotism Done Right

New York Times, 2019

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/11/opinion/megan-rapinoe-nike-flag.html>

PRINCIPLE

REFRAME THE ISSUE

The surest way to win an argument is to redefine the terms of the debate — by highlighting voices, values, and solutions that have been left out of the dominant story.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

“REFRAMING IS OFTEN A CRITICAL STEP TO WINNING A CAMPAIGN AND MAKING REAL CHANGE.”

“There is a basic truth about framing. If you accept the other guy’s frame, you lose.”

—George Lakoff

Reframing is a process of replacing an old story with a new one by widening the frame, narrowing the frame, or shifting the frame to another scene entirely. The powers-that-be usually go to great lengths to frame their agenda in a way that is favorable for their interests — think *nanny state*, *tax relief*, *death panels*. Like a camera’s viewfinder, the frame of a narrative focuses the public on specific information that reflects the interests of the framers. How do you reframe an issue? The first step is to conduct a narrative power analysis — a study of how the issue is currently framed, which seeks to identify its underlying assumptions — for example, “there is no alternative,” or “a rising tide lifts all boats,” or “the US brings democracy to the Third World.” Following from your narrative power analysis, come up with another story that exposes the faulty assumptions of the status quo. For instance, cast new characters who previously haven’t been heard from, or redefine the problem by introducing a different set of values, or pose a new solution that is more compelling than what is currently on offer. Reframing often involves making the invisible visible by highlighting aspects of the story that have been left out of the dominant story. Next, design a reframing action that seeks to relocate the story. Redirect the public’s focus to the scene of the crime to reveal a villain, whether it’s a corporate boardroom or a CEO’s seventh home. Use an

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Citizens’ Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Manich Msamah
- Mining the Museum
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- PARK(ing) Day
- Public Option Annie
- Stolen Beauty
- Streets Into Gardens
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Creative disruption
- Cultural disobedience

emblematic location tied to an historical narrative, like a monument or a park with a name that is significant in the story (Liberty Plaza Park or a Christopher Columbus statue for instance). Tie your action to high-profile events or dates that are soon to follow, framing and foreshadowing the public conversation around those celebrations. For instance, on Tax Day posing as tax collectors at the headquarters of the big banks and trying to get them to pay their proper share might reframe the public discussion of tax evasion. If you expand your reframing action into a campaign, you might succeed in injecting powerful new memes into the media and policy discourse. Adam Kader of the Arise Workers Center in Chicago offers this example: "Institutions like the Department of Labor and the mainstream media referred to the phenomena of worker exploitation as "non-payment of wages." Then, several years ago, worker centers designed the "wage theft" meme. This meme overthrows the dominant assumption that wages are the property of the boss, to be shared with workers. Rather, in this new narrative, wages are the property of workers, and have been stolen by the boss The media has begun to use the meme when they report on our campaigns and legislators have incorporated the phrase "wage theft" in the names of bills." Effective creative action should serve the larger strategic goal of provoking a shift in the public conversation. Reframing is often a critical step to winning a campaign and making real change. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

Storytelling as Organizing: How to Rescue the Left from its Crisis of Imagination

Adam Kader, 2011

<http://www.inthesetimes.com/working/entry/6824/>

The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation

Drew Weston, 2008

<https://books.google.com/books?id=71NYEEaMb4oC>

Re:Imagining Change: An Introduction to Story-Based Strategy

Doyle Canning and Patrick Reinsborough, 2009

<http://www.walkingbutterfly.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/smartMeme.ReImaginingChange.pdf>

Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing

Charlotte Ryan, 1991

https://books.google.com/books/about/Prime_Time_Activism.html?id=kWcoBAVDLMC

Fair Game: A Strategy for Racial Justice Communications in the Obama Era

The Praxis Project, 2011

https://books.google.com/books?id=V7aYSQAACAAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s

- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Music video
- Storytelling

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Change a name to change the game
- Consider your audience
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Solidarity, not aid
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes
- Palace Coup
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Don't think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate

George Lakoff, 2004

<https://books.google.com/books?>

[id=dovUAqAAQBAJ&dq=editions:W0dlraZFTzkC&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiLrL716sjVAhWCQiYKHceJBRYQ6AEIMjAC](https://books.google.com/books?id=dovUAqAAQBAJ&dq=editions:W0dlraZFTzkC&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiLrL716sjVAhWCQiYKHceJBRYQ6AEIMjAC)

Campaign strategy,
Communications

PRINCIPLE

SEEK COMMON GROUND

To transform a political culture, we must seek out common ground with those we disagree with.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

“A CHANGE AGENT LEARNS THE INTRICACIES OF CULTURAL NARRATIVES NOT TO DECEIVE PEOPLE, BUT TO COMMUNICATE COMMON VALUES IN A LANGUAGE THAT HOLDS MEANING FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE.”

When disagreeing with someone else’s ideas, it can be tempting to engage in narrative attack; to make a direct attack on one narrative from the vantage point, and in the language, of your opponent’s narrative. For example, when someone wraps climate change denial in the rhetoric of creationist beliefs, it is tempting to directly attack the climate change denier’s whole belief system. Once a narrative attack is made, persuasion becomes nearly impossible because the attacked person feels that their whole belief system is under siege. Change becomes impossible.

A *narrative insurgency* approach, on the other hand, examines the other’s narrative framework, learns the component parts, and looks for points of connection. Rather than directly attack a creationist’s whole belief system, for instance, a narrative insurgent looks to foment homegrown insurgency against the most problematic beliefs by identifying ally beliefs under the opponent’s tent and seeking to reinforce them. When speaking to creationists about environmental issues, for example, emphasizing humanity’s mandate to care for God’s creation can be an effective point of entry.

If we are to transform our political culture, we need to think not in terms of attacking opponents’ views head-on, but rather in terms of fomenting homegrown insurgency. The root of the word insurgency is “rise up.” Insurgencies rise up from within. Narrative insurgency rises up from within a cultural narrative, transforming that culture

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Conflict Kitchen
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- Santa Claus Army
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Hoax
- Infiltration
- Lamentation
- Storytelling

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Change a name to change the game
- Consider your audience
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Meet people where they’re at

from the inside out.

The narrative insurgent's approach, well executed, can be very effective for identifying and drawing out allies: in this case, creationists who care about the environment and are uneasy seeing it ravaged for the sake of private profit. By repeating and positively reinforcing this message in the context of ongoing engagement, the belief that we should care for the earth can be strengthened within the given community's complex collective belief system.

Narrative insurgents do not reject problematic narratives wholesale, but distinguish between those components that are allied, hostile, or neutral to their cause. They embrace as much of a cultural narrative as possible — the allied and neutral components — and encourage the further development of the allied components, using these as the foundations for their organizing efforts with and within the given community.

This approach doesn't mean always avoiding direct confrontation with harmful narratives and beliefs. It's more like a preference for finding common ground and utilizing positive reinforcement whenever possible. Ultimately there comes a time when a destructive narrative becomes untenable to a critical mass of people, and when a new polarization will be useful (e.g. during a revolutionary moment). The strategy here is to lay the groundwork that necessarily precedes such a moment: to feed the allied components within a narrative until they are strong enough to burst out of the old framework.

Narrative insurgency only works if applied in the context of accountable relationships with reliable feedback loops. A change agent learns the intricacies of cultural narratives not to deceive people, but to communicate common values in a language that holds meaning for large numbers of people. While she may often disagree with others, she still values and even empathizes with their perspectives. She is forgiving toward shortcomings, always rooting for people, always finding something worthy of praise. Over time, narrative insurgency becomes second nature: We seek out identification with the allied and neutral components within another community's narrative or culture, because our orientation is to connect with people wherever and whenever possible.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Narrative Insurgency | Grassroots Communications Tips pt.3

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2011

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2011/01/31/narrative-insurgency-grassroots-communications-tips-pt3/>

Speak the Truth, Tell a Story | Building a Successful Antiwar

- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Start a conversation
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Prefigurative politics
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Communications, Community building, Language, Movement building

Movement

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2011

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2011/01/25/speak-the-truth-tell-a-story-building-a-successful-antiwar-movement-role-1-interpretive/>

PRINCIPLE

SEEK SAFETY IN SUPPORT NETWORKS

When activists are threatened, it's important to harness national or international networks that can provide support and deter violence.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ben Leather

Ben Leather is a campaigner on human rights and the environment at Global Witness, and also provides training for local activists on how to interact strategically with international human rights mechanisms. He was previously with the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), lobbying for human rights defender protection, corporate accountability, and a stronger UN. Ben also used to live and work in Mexico, providing international accompaniment and support for at-risk human rights defenders with Peace Brigades International (PBI). Follow him at @BenLeather1.

“IMPUNITY MAKES POTENTIAL AGGRESSORS MORE LIKELY TO ACT, SO YOU MUST DO WHAT YOU CAN TO CHALLENGE THAT IMPUNITY.”

You're an activist, you want change, but powerful people are threatening violence to stop you from achieving your goals. It is vital that you put in place measures to keep you and your colleagues safe. One proven mechanism is to develop national and international support networks that can be activated at times of heightened risk, harnessing public and/or international support to deter violence against you. This is a strategy that groups like Peace Brigades International have been using to keep human rights defenders safe for over 30 years.

You need to be aware why and how you might be at risk. Whose interests are you threatening? What or who might influence the behaviour of that individual or institution to deter them from hurting you or locking you up?

To effectively deter violence against you, you need to be able to create a *political cost* that those threatening you would pay if they attacked, and make sure that they are aware of that cost. What would make those people think twice before attacking you? Is it the threat of public uproar? Is it the possibility of a diplomatic sanction? Damage to their international reputation?

POTENTIAL RISKS

Remember that your security situation is constantly evolving in response to the activities you carry out, the interests you threaten, and the victories you achieve. Don't rely upon any single strategy to keep you safe. Rather, keep analysing and evaluating. Document any incident that might be perceived as a threat and be aware that, at some point, the only way to keep safe might be to physically relocate for a while.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2

Based on this analysis, you can begin to assemble a support network of citizens, NGOs, journalists, embassies, politicians, or United Nations (UN) experts who are attentive to your situation, primed to take action in the case of any threats to you and your colleagues, and capable of exacting a political cost against those who might attack you. You will need to make sure your adversaries are aware of the network, its weight, and its willingness to react.

Support networks should seek to prevent as well as respond to risks. You will likely face efforts to discredit or demonize your activism, thus making you more vulnerable to attack. To avoid this, you might ask organizations in your network to take actions that will legitimize your work, either publicly, or in private with those who would do you harm. Impunity makes potential aggressors more likely to act, so ensure that your network is vigorous in demanding justice and accountability for any and all attacks.

Your potential aggressors need to understand that the world is watching and their image is at stake.

Peace Brigades International, for example, takes a very hands-on approach to creating this deterrent. When invited by threatened human rights defenders, they will arrange for international volunteers to accompany the defenders in their daily work and embody that international concern. However, this is just one way to make your support network visible. A respected newspaper may publish a story based upon an urgent action issued by an NGO, an important diplomat may meet directly with the government agency or business that opposes your demands, a solidarity caravan may visit your community, or a UN Committee may speak out about your case.

You are the best positioned to know what will really keep you safe, choosing from a range of practical and political measures. But ensure you take the time to do the analysis necessary before you start to campaign, and look for opportunities to use support networks as part of your security strategy.

LEARN MORE

Peace Brigades International
<http://www.peacebrigades.org>

Frontline Defenders
<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org>

International Service for Human Rights
<http://www.ishr.ch/>

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders
<https://www.protecting-defenders.org/>

- Burmese Students' Long March
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Hacking Apartheid
- Schools of Struggle
- Street Graduation
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- #ThisFlag
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Hashtag campaign
- Hunger strike
- Jail solidarity
- Phone banking
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo
- Visibility action

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Foster safer spaces
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Practice digital self-defence
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Cultural hegemony
- Human rights
- The social cure

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Communications, Community building, Human rights, International solidarity, Media

Amnesty International

<https://www.amnesty.org>

Nonviolent Peaceforce

<http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org>

Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the
Protection of Human Rights

Liam Mahony and Luis Enrique Eguren, Kumarian Press, 1997

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The Accompaniment Model in Practice

Liam Mahoney, Fellowship of Reconciliation, 2013

<http://forusa.org/fellowship/2013/summer/accompaniment-model-practice/12385>

The Need for Protection Networks for Women Human Rights
Defenders

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Peace Brigades International, 2014

<https://vimeo.com/73793085>

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Defensoras de Derechos Humanos - Guía de facilitación

Brigadas Internacionales de Paz, Proyecto México, 2014

http://www.pbi-mexico.org/fileadmin/user_files/projects/mexico/images/News/Reducido_GuiaFacilitacion.pdf

PRINCIPLE

SHAME THE AUTHORITIES BY DOING THEIR JOB

Fix a problem as best you can in order to pressure authorities to fix it properly.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Gui Bueno

Gui Bueno is a native of Brazil and completely crazy for theoretical discussions about the media, its central role in capitalism, its disadvantages and (why not?) benefits. He works for Open Knowledge Foundation Brazil where he takes care of communications (but learns much more than he communicates).

“IT’S A GREAT TRICK: TEMPORARILY SOLVING A PROBLEM WITH A QUICK, LITTLE FIX THAT CAN BUILD SUPPORT FOR BIGGER AND BETTER SOLUTIONS.”

“Egg whites are good for a lot of things — lemon meringue pie, angel food cake, and clogging up radiators.”

—MacGyver

Imagine a problem that you, as a regular citizen, can’t solve alone. Let’s say your city had decided to privatize road repair, and now your street, paved with poor materials, has lots of potholes. You could complain about it, you could create a petition to pressure local authorities and the paving company, or you could stand idly by waiting for someone else to take action.

Or . . . you could choose to fix it yourself! Of course, there’s a huge gap in quality between what you and your friends can do with a limited amount of time, money, and expertise, and what a professional fix would look like. But if you fill the potholes temporarily with cement, traffic would immediately move better and you could use the action to gather support and build pressure against the privatization of public services. It’s a great trick: temporarily solving a problem with a quick, little fix that can build support for bigger and better solutions. You could even put a sign on each patched-up pothole saying “citizens, not politicians, fixed this mess.” It might just embarrass the city administration into living up to its responsibility to provide public services.

The Black Panther Party made excellent use of this tactic in the 1960s. Sick of waiting for the City of Oakland to install a traffic light at a busy intersection near a school where several children had been killed and injured by vehicles, the Panthers set up an armed crossing guard to escort children across the intersection. No further

POTENTIAL RISKS

1) Remember: this is all about temporary solutions. So, be clear to keep the focus on the actual, lasting change that you are fighting for. You don’t want your ad hoc solution to let the authorities off the hook from fulfilling their responsibilities. 2) Don’t make a DIY fix that could break and hurt someone. D’oh! (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care) 3) Be clear about whether you want to make a temporary fix, or fix the problem for real. Sometimes what you actually want is to have the community solve its own problems in a way the state never could.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal

deaths or injuries were reported until the traffic light was finally installed — more than a year ahead of schedule.

In another, more recent, example, the Rolling Jubilee campaign bought off hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of average Americans' bad debts for pennies on the dollar, and then forgave that debt. While the project does indeed help a few people facing bankruptcy, it was never conceived as a silver bullet for people's debt problems at large. Of equal or greater importance was the message it sent about the arbitrary and unfair nature of the entire banking system. It's an ad hoc fix that underscores just how broken the entire banking system is, and how easy and beneficial it would be to simply erase that crippling debt.

Similarly, in a city such as São Paulo, Brazil, which has no recycling policies, citizens can't create selective garbage collection by themselves, but they can bring visibility and respect to the informal workers that make their living — and take care of 90 percent of São Paulo's recycling — through their own DIY solution (see: STORY: Pimp My . . . Carroça!). What society can do is celebrate them as heroes, improve their work conditions, and galvanize support for city-wide recycling and trash collection.

Or take the Max Feffer tunnel in São Paulo, whose walls were totally covered by grime and soot from engine exhaust. Alexandre Orion chose to selectively clean some parts of it through reverse graffiti — erasing some of the soot to expose the wall beneath, rather than drawing over it. No police officer could ever arrest him for cleaning a public space, so local authorities had no choice but to clean all the walls in the tunnel, which is what Orion wanted in the first place!

When citizens are able to fix something completely, but opt only for an ad hoc DIY solution, that's bad. But an ad hoc solution can be used as a provocative first step towards bolder and more lasting solutions (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically). All it takes to devise a clever, unconventional solution that will attract attention to your cause, and pressure the authorities into action, is a little creativity and a willingness to get your hands dirty.

LEARN MORE

Strike Debt — Debt Resistance for the 99%!
<http://strikedebt.org/>

Rolling Jubilee
<http://rollingjubilee.org/>

Rolling Jubilee Is a Spark, Not the Solution
Andrew Ross and Astra Taylor, *The Nation*, 2012
<http://www.thenation.com/article/rolling-jubilee-spark-not-solution/>

- Orange Alternative
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Reclaim the Streets
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Schools of Struggle
- Streets Into Gardens
- The Salt March

Tactics

- Anonymous suggestion box
- Citizen's arrest
- Identity correction
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Focus on basic needs
- Kill them with kindness
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take risks, but take care
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- The real action is your target's reaction
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Turn the tables

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Gerontocracy
- Hacking
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Art, Communications, Direct action

Alexandre Orion's Photostream

Flickr

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alexandreorion/>

Daycare Center Sit-In

Beautiful Trouble

<http://beautifultrouble.org/case/day-care-center-sit-in/>

PRINCIPLE

SHOW, DON'T TELL

Use metaphor, visuals, and action to show your message rather than falling into preaching, hectoring, or otherwise telling your audience what to think.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

Kevin Buckland

Kevin Buckland is an artist, activist organizer and the "Arts Ambassador" for the grassroots global network 350.org. Responding to the call to "make this movement as beautiful as the planet we are fighting to save," he employs comedy, tragedy, farce, satire, and a great deal of cardboard in his attempts to end empire and globalize justice.

"A WELL-DESIGNED ACTION EXPLAINS ITSELF, AND IDEALLY OFFERS MULTIPLE WAYS INTO THE ISSUE. YOU WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO REACH THEIR OWN CONCLUSION, RATHER THAN FEELING LIKE THEY ARE BEING TOLD WHAT TO THINK."

"Example moves the world more than doctrine."
—Henry Miller

A picture is worth a thousand words. In today's image-driven news cycle and mass media culture, this is truer than ever. Effective creative campaigns must be image-driven, too. In other words, *show, don't tell*. And there are a lot of ways to do it. Lead with story, not facts. Facts rarely speak for themselves. While the factual accuracy of your message is essential, facts should only serve as the supporting details for the story, not the hook that makes the story compelling. If you want to convey the devastation of unemployment, don't lead with statistics. Tell us a compelling story

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Conflict Kitchen
- Couple in the Cage
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Honk at Parliament

about one person. Then tell us there are ten million more like her out there. Make it visual. A lot of important stuff is hard to talk about — it's too big, far away, abstract, or complex. Props, visuals, and concrete language can help bring things down to human scale. Take economic inequality, for example. You can easily get lost in the finer points of the US tax code, but when billionaire Warren Buffet says that his secretary pays more taxes than he does, and that that's wrong, it's hard to argue with. To draw attention to the increasing disparity between CEO and worker pay, one group unveiled a tiny replica of the Washington Monument that was 419 times smaller than the actual one they were holding their press conference in front of. Use powerful metaphors. With metaphor you can show something for what it is, rather than have to explain it. To find your compelling metaphor, look for something that embodies what you are trying to communicate. Recently, the immigration debate in the US has been usefully engaged via the metaphor of migratory birds ("Do migrating birds need passports too?"), neatly pointing up the absurdity of the situation, without focusing on any specific policy or piece of legislation. Speak with actions. Instead of telling, act out what it is that you want to say. At protests, whenever there are lines of police protecting a bank, a metaphor is being enacted that reflects the reality of the situation: The state defends the wealthy from the rest of us. Sometimes it's enough to just point that out — or you can ham it up (see: *STORY: The Teddy Bear Catapult*). A well-designed action explains itself, and ideally offers multiple ways into the issue. You want your audience to reach their own conclusion, rather than feeling like they are being told what to think. Preachy isn't persuasive. Whether we're telling a story, conjuring a scene, offering up a metaphor, leading by example, or letting our actions speak volumes, there are millions of ways to convey our message and values without launching into a political diatribe. Let's do ourselves and our audience a favour: Show, don't tell. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

The Sound of Wealth Inequality
Institute for Policy Studies, 2009
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_AhucAN6G00

- Mining the Museum
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- Orange Alternative
- PARK(ing) Day
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Round Dance Revolution
- Standing Man
- Stolen Beauty
- Street Graduation
- Streets Into Gardens
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Advanced leafletting
- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Currency hacking
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Identity correction
- Lamentation
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there

- Reframe the issue
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Turn the tables
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Art, Campaign strategy, Communications, Direct action, Humour, Language, Media, Movement building, Nonviolence, Pranks, Social media, Street protest, Student activism

PRINCIPLE

SIMPLE RULES CAN HAVE GRAND RESULTS

Rather than trying to script everything out, often a few simple rules — say, “come to Wall St; bring a tent,” or “bang your pots and pans at noon” — are enough to spark a surprisingly effective mass action.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“IF YOU HIT ON THE RIGHT RULES, THEY CAN LEAD TO A SURPRISINGLY ROBUST, EFFECTIVE, AND BEAUTIFUL HAPPENING.”

“Sept 17. Wall Street. Bring tent.”
—Adbusters

In 1986, computer scientists did an experiment on “emergence — where complex global behaviour can arise,” unplanned and unprogrammed, “from the interaction of simple local rules.” They created virtual birds called “boids.” (The computer scientists must have been from Brooklyn.) They put these boids in a virtual environment and threw in a few virtual obstacles. They assigned every boid the same three simple rules: fly forwards, stay a certain distance from any other boids near you, and don’t bang into obstacles. Then they threw the switch. The boids flocked together. As the flock approached a cloud, it would break up into smaller flocks to either side, and then reform — all without the idea of flocking ever being programmed into the system.

This experiment was a stripped-down demonstration of something we experience in nature and society all the time — and something activists can put to good use.

If you’re trying to organize a participatory art piece, a mass action, or a viral campaign, you don’t need to script it all out — even if you could. All you need are a few simple rules that participants can sign on to. If you hit on the right rules, they can lead to a surprisingly robust, effective, and beautiful happening.

Think of Critical Mass, the monthly mass bike rides that take place in cities across the world. The rules are simple: Gather after work on the last Friday of the month. Stick together. If you’re at the front, you decide where the mass goes next. If you’re at the back, help stragglers keep up. If you’re in the middle, just ride, or, if you want,

POTENTIAL RISKS

Simple rules, no matter how well chosen, won’t magically do all the work on their own. Often, conveners (folks who make the invitation and set the rules) have to stage manage all along the way to keep the seemingly organic process going. The right set of simple rules can get you most of the way there, though, and the “there” might be somewhere you never could have planned or imagined.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil’s Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Citizens’ Posse
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Honk at Parliament
- Lysistrata Project
- Miniskirt March
- Orange Alternative
- Panty power
- Pyramid of Shoes

protect other bikers from cross-traffic. No one and everyone is in charge. It's an "organized coincidence." And it works.

Flash mobs operate by the same logic. The call for a 2008 flash mob pillow fight on Wall Street consisted of two rules: Bring a pillow, and don't hit anybody who doesn't also have a pillow. Enough said!

These kind of efforts work well on social media as well. A key means of building the Occupy movement was the "we are the 99%" tumblr. The invitation was simple: Take a picture of yourself holding a sign that describes your situation — for example, "I am a student with \$25,000 in debt." Below that, write "I am the 99 percent." The resulting tapestry of voices became an eloquent statement of solidarity.

A carnival protest might succeed with an "anything goes" rule set, because, well, it's a carnival. A more politically focused mass street action (see: STORY: Citizens' Posse) or viral campaign of distributed actions (see: STORY: Billionaires for Bush), however, often needs a stronger framework. The nature of your action, its complexity, and the degree of risk will determine the exact rules required.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

We Are the 99%

<http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com>

Otpor!

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otpor!>

- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Round Dance Revolution
- Schools of Struggle
- Standing Man
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Critical Mass
- Currency hacking
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Occupation
- Phone banking
- Phone blockade

Principles

- Bring the issue home
- Build strength through repetition
- Delegate
- Enable, don't command
- Escalate strategically
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use the power of ritual
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Memes
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting

TAGS

Action design

PRINCIPLE SOLIDARITY, NOT AID

Grassroots leaders across the world are increasingly critiquing foreign aid as a new form of neo-colonial dependence, insisting that “solidarity not aid” be the basis of any NGO-grassroots partnerships.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Micha K. Ben-David

Micha K. Ben-David is a community organizer with Palestinian and Israeli activists in Jerusalem. He is a founder of Breaking the Silence and Grassroots AIQuds, and a founder of Global Jewish Network for Justice. He supports the development of platforms for political community mobilization.

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

“THE GLOBAL NORTH IS CRUSHING THE GLOBAL SOUTH BY TRYING TO HELP IT.”

“The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”
—Proverb

The Global North is crushing the Global South by trying to help it.

Grassroots progressive organizations, unions, local coalitions, and communities are losing their autonomy as political agendas are increasingly being set by international donors. Arundhati Roy has described this phenomenon as “the NGO-ization of resistance”. NGOs, she says, are “what botanists would call an indicator species. It’s almost as though the greater the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the greater the outbreak of NGOs.”

This reality is a central topic of conversation even among those NGOs and government ministries that perpetuate dependency economies. Movements of the Global South are particularly affected by this phenomenon, as civil society and NGOs monopolize a kind of “social change economy” built on the capitalistic methods it claims to fight.

Grassroots leaders across the world (as well as some leading-edge NGOs), under the banner of “solidarity, not aid,” are taking steps to rebalance this asymmetric relationship, including:

Principles of solidarity that set out core values and practices for democratic, grassroots-empowered, and sustainable partnerships to which NGOs and donors can be held accountable.

Bottom-up vetting that flips the script on the funding power imbalance. Essentially, it’s a way for grassroots groups to evaluate a

POTENTIAL RISKS

While the principle of offering solidarity instead of charity can only strengthen radical initiatives, the way solidarity takes shape will vary based on the unique social, economic, political, and cultural elements of any given community. Building local infrastructure for a solidarity economy takes time and skills. No one system can be applied to any context without deliberate adaptation to specific community needs.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright Unplugged/Replugged
- Conflict Kitchen
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Hacking Apartheid
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

prospective NGO partnership to ensure a strategically beneficial and empowering contract (or none at all). In several Palestinian villages, local banking infrastructure has been developed so that democratically elected councils can regulate how funds are received and used. Tindouf, the world's second-oldest refugee camp inhabited by exiled Saharawis in Algeria, has a similar system for local governance of external funds.

Terms of ~Reference~ Freedom are being developed by grassroots organizations and movements to enable them to receive foreign financial support without unnecessary strings attached. #Anataban, a collective of South Sudanese political artists, rejects any funding that requires circulation of donor names and logos.

Dignified grantmaking is being championed by increasing numbers of small and middle-level private foundations like The Pollination Project and American Jewish World Service, who have experimented with various methods to make grants in a more egalitarian manner.

Strategic plans can help grassroots organizations in the South avoid meandering too far in the direction of foreign donor agendas, and instead only seek outside financial support directly related to their specific goals and objectives.

These five innovations are just a few of the ways the principle of "solidarity, not aid" is taking tangible form. In the years to come, additional creative efforts by both grassroots organizers and the NGOs that fund them will hopefully continue to tilt the power dynamics of international humanitarian work in a more egalitarian direction.

LEARN MORE

NGOs losing the war against poverty and climate change, says Civicus head

Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, The Guardian, 2014

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/aug/11/civicus-open-letter-civil-society-professionalisation>

Why do expats earn more than the rest of us?

The Guardian, 2016

<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/29/secret-aid-worker-why-do-expats-earn-more-than-the-rest-of-us>

Are INGOs ready to give up power?

Open Democracy, 2019

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/transformation/are-ingos-ready-give-power/>

- Cultural disobedience
- Divestment
- Eviction blockade
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Enable, don't command
- Reframe the issue
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Turn the tables

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- "Democracy promotion"
- Intersectionality
- Neoliberalism
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism
- Poverty
- The commons
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance
- The shock doctrine

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Battle of the story
- SWOT

TAGS

Austerity, Campaign strategy, Capitalism, Colonialism, Community building, Democracy, International solidarity, Movement building, Policy, Privatization, Wealth inequality

PRINCIPLE

STAY ON MESSAGE

When we exercise *message discipline*, we stay focused on our core message; create harmony between our words, visuals, and actions; and communicate exactly what we want our audience to know.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Celia Alario

Celia Alario is a communications strategist, spokesperson coach, and seasoned troublemaker. She enjoys collaborating with grassroots organizations, filmmakers, artists, and authors, and scheming about how to engage key audiences and change the world with stories, while tapping both traditional media/marketing and new media/web 2.0 tools.

“MESSAGE DISCIPLINE IS NOT THE ENEMY OF CREATIVITY. FAR FROM IT.”

“A disciplined mind leads to happiness, and an undisciplined mind leads to suffering.”

—Dalai Lama XIV

Message discipline is the art of communicating what you set out to communicate, clearly, memorably, and consistently. Everything from your talking points for an interview to the slogans on your banner to the visuals you create for an event should all align to support your core message.

WHY MESSAGE DISCIPLINE MATTERS: **It works:** When you're on message, you're more likely to reach your audience and move them to action.

It honors your group process: You've worked hard with your group to determine what needs to be communicated. Staying on message honors that hard work and strategic thinking, communicating only what all of you have agreed is the right message.

It sticks: Say one thing and say it well. The average person needs exposure to multiple sensory impressions of a message before it sinks in. When you practice message discipline, the consistency of your message helps make it stick.

It avoids static in the channel: Anything you say or do can be used against you in the court of public opinion, so make sure your words and actions are in sync with your group's message. Strip away any of the clutter that could be static in the channel. Remember: Less is

POTENTIAL RISKS

A sound bite will never cover everything you want to say. It may be true that decades of financial irresponsibility or hundreds of years of colonial oppression got us into this mess, but part of the art of message discipline is taming the urge to unpack all those details each time you speak. Keep your core message simple and crisp, and recognize that it's just the opening volley in your work on this issue.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Every Heartbeat Counts

more.

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT:

In interviews: Spokesfolks should practice the ABC's: *acknowledge* the question; *build a bridge* from the question to your talking points; and *communicate* your message.

For example:

A "That's a great question," or "I'm glad you asked that."

B "I think the important issue is . . . " or "The real question is"

C Insert your clear, concise, powerfully worded message.

In visuals and actions: When designing your action, imagine a photo of it — image only, no caption. Could that photo communicate your message? If your audience could see you from afar but not hear you, would they get your message? How can you increase that possibility (see: THEORY: Action logic)?

In events: Everything your audience sees or hears at your action is inevitably a part of your message, so pay attention to details. What are your spokesfolks wearing? Are they drinking out of a Styrofoam cup? A bit of mindfulness as your event unfolds can ensure the impact you desire.

Message discipline is not the enemy of creativity. Far from it. Placards can have different messages. Each spokesperson can share a sound bite that reflects their own unique experience. But when you are "on message," all elements reinforce your core message. Each action element or interview response stands on its own, successfully delivering a strong message to your audience with clarity, consistency, and credibility.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

SPIN Works!

Robert Bray, 2000

<https://spinacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/SPIN-Works.pdf>

Stay on Message

Paul Ritchie, 2010

<http://www.vividpublishing.com.au/stayonmessage/index.html>

Grassroots Communications Tips - Part 1

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2011

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2011/01/25/how-to-pitch-reporters-grassroots-communications-tips-pt1/>

Grassroots Communications Tips - Part 2

- Justice for Janitors
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Schools of Struggle
- Street Graduation
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Advanced leafletting
- Distributed action
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Light Brigade
- Music video
- Visibility action

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Change a name to change the game
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Seek common ground
- Show, don't tell
- Think narratively

Theories

- Action logic
- Framing
- Memes
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- SMART objectives
- Story of self, us, and now

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2011

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2011/01/26/hooks-messages-grassroots-communications-tips-pt2/>

TAGS

Action design, Communications,
Language, Media, Social media

PRINCIPLE

TAKE LEADERSHIP FROM THE MOST IMPACTED

It is both good ethics and good politics to take direction from, and provide appropriate support to, those who have the most at stake in your cause.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“CULTIVATE HUMILITY AND TAKE DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP FROM THOSE MOST AFFECTED BY AN ISSUE.”

We're all familiar with liberal do-gooder arrogance — the kind that stems from having the luxury of choosing from a salad bar of causes because none are immediately impacting their lives, or assuming that because you studied an issue in a university, you're an expert. Avoid being that person: Cultivate humility and take direction and leadership from those most affected by an issue.

Because people on the receiving end of great injustices have to live with the consequences of campaigns that seek to address those injustices, they have the most to gain from victory — and the most to lose if something goes wrong. They're also the best equipped to know, and to articulate, workable solutions to their problems. A campaign that ignores or minimizes their knowledge and voices could easily do more harm than good.

Accepting guidance from another isn't always easy for people who already think of themselves as leaders. Self-identified “leaders” sometimes rush in too quickly, confident they've got the answer while their preconceptions and prejudices blind them to the organic answers all around them. We can mitigate these blind spots by being intentional about respecting the process and cultivating *accountability*.

Accountability can be a scary concept for activists, but it's best to think of it as a proactive process that we walk together, rather than a standard that is either achieved or not.

The booklet *Organizing Cools the Planet* outlines four basic

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bring Back Our Girls
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Hacking Apartheid
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- No vote, no sex
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Round Dance Revolution
- Stop Praver Plan
- Taco Bell Boycott
- Trail of Dreams
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade
- Consumer boycott
- Debt strike

principles for cultivating accountability:

Transparency means being clear about your politics, organizational structure, goals, desires, and weaknesses. The point here is to be as open as possible about your perspectives and motivations.

Participation is about actively and equitably engaging with folks about the decisions that affect them.

Reflection and deliberation means that we actively open up conversation to re-evaluate where we're headed. It happens after participation, but once it's begun, it is a continuous thread that is woven throughout the experience.

Response is the ability to make amendments and adjustments to issues raised by *reflection and deliberation*.

However, accountability is not our goal; collaboration is our goal. Accountability is the pathway we walk. The cycle above moves us toward increasingly successful collaborations. Don't be discouraged if collaboration is difficult at first. Trust takes time. Be forgiving of yourself and others; we all make mistakes (see: THEORY: Anti-oppression).

The Ruckus Society's experience with this principle is instructive. Ruckus is a North America-based network of direct action trainers and coordinators. After years of grappling with the problematic dynamic of "parachuters" coming into people's communities from the outside, Ruckus developed a protocol where they prioritize long-term relationship building and only go where they're asked. Their "Ruckus Action Framework" is a great reference tool to use when building a similar protocol within your group.

Taking leadership from the most impacted is a great opportunity to learn from and support impacted groups in their struggles. It can be one of the most profound and rewarding experiences of activism.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Native Leadership

Yes! Magazine

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/native-leadership>

Organizing Cools the Planet

Hilary Moore and Joshua Kahn Russell, 2011

<https://organizingcoolstheplanet.wordpress.com>

Ruckus Action Framework

The Ruckus Society

<http://ruckus.org/action-framework/>

- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Jail solidarity
- Legislative theatre
- Subversive travel
- Trek
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Consider your audience
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Focus on basic needs
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Praxis makes perfect
- Solidarity, not aid
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Debt revolt
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Gerontocracy
- Neoliberalism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism
- Poverty
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance
- The tactics of everyday life
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Bridge Conversations: People Who Live and Work in Multiple Worlds

Arts and Democracy Project, edited by Caron Atlas, 2011

https://books.google.com/books/about/Bridge_Conversations.html?id=aTQOMwEACAAJ

Taking Responsibility, Taking Direction: White Anti-Racism in Canada

Sheila Wilmot, 2006

https://books.google.com/books/about/Taking_Responsibility_Taking_Direction.html?id=gNERAQAIAAJ

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Battle of the story
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Colonialism, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

TAKE RISKS, BUT TAKE CARE

Direct action is inherently risky. The point is to minimize the risk, not needlessly (or unilaterally) endanger your safety or that of the people around you by trying to prove that you are “hardcore.”

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“WHEN COMMUNITIES DON’T HAVE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO SPEND, THEY LEVERAGE *RISK*. THEY PUT THEIR BODIES, FREEDOM, AND SAFETY ON THE LINE.”

“Martyrdom is a fascist tendency.”

—Gopal Dayanenni

Direct action is a tool that oppressed people have used to build their power throughout history. When communities don’t have billions of dollars to spend, they leverage *risk*. They put their bodies, freedom, and safety on the line.

Direct action carries some inherent risk. That’s the whole idea. Designing an action is therefore about *minimizing* that risk in a way that is *accountable* to participants, the community, yourself, and the movement. When activists let the romance of confrontation overshadow meticulous care in action planning, they may put others in harm’s way, or may leave the movement to deal with the consequences of their risky behaviour.

A good action planner distinguishes between the risks she can (and should) control and the ones she cannot, and clarifies to all participants what the potential consequences may be. Thorough action planning is a responsibility you have to the people around you. Even if you plan well, if action-day comes and the situation is not what you expected, don’t be afraid to call it off. Better to hold off and execute the action well another day than get into something your group is unprepared for.

The Ruckus Society pamphlet, *A Tiny Blockades Book*, outlines a number of key considerations you should keep in mind in planning

POTENTIAL RISKS

Some schools of civil disobedience (for example, Gandhian civil disobedience) emphasize that “our suffering can touch the hearts of our adversaries,” and therefore build prolonged jail sentences or physical harm into their action logic. This is a planned orientation to the action, and not a licence for recklessness or martyrdom.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Disrupting Obama’s town hall in Myanmar
- Hacking Apartheid
- Occupy Wall Street
- Trail of Dreams
- Who Would Accept?
- Yomango

your action:

- Not everyone is taking the same risks. Race, class, gender identity (real and perceived), age, appearance, immigration status, physical ability, being perceived as a “leader,” all change your relationship to the action; i.e. the risks of violence and arrest by the police and the potential legal and economic consequences of the action. Also remember that there are power dynamics within your action group. Pretending that they do not exist or ignoring them “for the good of the action,” can compromise your ability to execute well, which increases risk.
- Some devices increase the risk of injury simply by design: U-locking your neck to a fifty-five gallon drum filled with concrete means that any attempt to move the drum could snap your neck. *That is the point — you create this situation on purpose, or not at all.*
- This kind of gear increases the “staying power” of your action by creating a deep decision dilemma for the opposition. But if you are lying down in front of a truck and the driver is not aware that you are there, then there is no decision dilemma, and no action logic. That is not direct action, it is an accident waiting to happen.
- The best actions are the ones where we get to stay as long as we want and the action *ends on our terms*— not in arrest or injury.
- Practice. Practice. Practice. The more you practice, the safer you will be and the more effective your action will be.

Some tactics should *never* be attempted without a thorough safety plan and skill-level assessment, such as a technical (climbing) banner hang where a fall can often prove fatal. Direct action is not a game.

Be humble. Understand that *Beautiful Trouble* is intended to be a broad toolkit, *not a direct action training manual*. If you want to design a direct action, get the proper training.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

RANT Organizing Manual
RANT Collective

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14FlcOGzsUi0POCCKCYhiaylkjNZNSNaDOC4ayRal8M/edit>

Nonviolence Training: Nonviolent Action Preparation
War Resisters League

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Debt strike
- Distributed action
- Eviction blockade
- Flotilla
- Hunger strike
- Invisible theatre
- Jail solidarity
- Light Brigade
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Foster safer spaces
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Anti-oppression
- Direct action
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star

TAGS

Action design, Direct action, Nonviolence, State violence, Street protest

<https://www.warresisters.org/sites/default/files/Nonviolent%20Training%20Agenda%20-%204-5%20hours.pdf>

Resources

Alliance of Community Trainers

<http://trainersalliance.org/allies/>

A Tiny Little Blockades Booklet

<http://risingtideseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/a-tiny-little-blockades-booklet-reduced.pdf>

Copwatch: Know Your Rights! Three Downloadable Pamphlets

Destructables, 2011

<http://destructables.org/node/85>

Affinity Groups

Destructables, 2011

<http://destructables.org/node/54>

PRINCIPLE

THE REAL ACTION IS YOUR TARGET'S REACTION

When challenging a more powerful target, the key to success often isn't what you do, but how your target reacts to what you do. Therefore, anticipate your target's response and write it into your script.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Mike Bonanno

Mike Bonanno (né Igor Vamos) is a guy from Troy, New York, who started the "Barbie Liberation Front" and co-founded the Yes Men. When not involved in tomfoolery, Bonanno is also a professor of media art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

"A GOOD WAY TO ENSURE YOU GET A STRATEGICALLY USEFUL REACTION FROM YOUR TARGET IS TO FORCE THEM INTO A "DECISION DILEMMA," WHERE ALL OF THEIR AVAILABLE OPTIONS PLAY TO YOUR ADVANTAGE."

"The real action is in the enemy's reaction."

—Saul Alinsky

During the Salt March of 1930, Indian independence activists famously kept walking, unarmed and undeterred, into the brutal blows of British police (see: [STORY: The Salt March](#)). Importantly, the press were there — activists made sure of it — to document the colonial government playing the villain in predictably despicable fashion. The Indian nation rallied to the cause. World public opinion followed.

Organizer Saul Alinsky later coined the term "political jiu-jitsu" to describe actions like this. Confrontations like the Salt March enable under-resourced activist groups to use a powerful opponent's momentum against them by provoking a reaction, and then watching them fall flat, literally or figuratively, in front of the cameras.

When applying this principle, it's important to understand that you can't just hope the target reacts in a way that spotlights the injustice. You want to anticipate your target's likely reactions, and design your action to provoke the reaction you want, and then incorporate it into your action. If it doesn't work the first time, adjust and try again.

A good way to ensure you get a strategically useful reaction from your target is to force them into a "decision dilemma" (see:

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Couple in the Cage
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Orange Alternative
- Public Option Annie
- Québec Student Strike
- Santa Claus Army
- Standing Man
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Creative disruption
- Cultural disobedience

PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma), where all of their available options play to your advantage. When the Yes Men, impersonating a spokesperson for Dow Chemical, announced on BBC TV that Dow was apologizing for the Bhopal disaster and allocating \$12 billion to compensate the victims (see: STORY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal), Dow's stock plummeted and they were forced to react. Dow had to issue a statement saying they were NOT apologizing for the Bhopal disaster and would NOT be compensating the victims. And that was the big tell. Here, once again, the action (happily and by design) was dwarfed by the target's reaction.

As the Dow Chemical case illustrates, you don't need a physical confrontation to make good theatre. In 2000, the Bush for President campaign sued activist Zack Exley and tried to shut down his prank website, GWBush.com (a domain Exley had managed to buy before the campaign had). The press picked up the story, and with each new legal attack (Bush at one point saying "there ought to be limits to freedom"), there was another wave of press sympathetic to the site and combative towards a hapless dolt who somehow ended up being President for eight years. (A sorry reminder that even the cleverest one-off tactic does not a successful campaign make.)

Contrary to popular belief, when one of the big boys threatens you (and if you use a company's trademark in an action, for example, you can count on a cease and desist letter), you should celebrate! You are the David to their Goliath, and now you have the upper hand! Take their best quotes, weave them into a press release, and voila, you've cast them in your play. In the timeless logic of jiu-jitsu, you have borrowed some of their power, and if coverage goes your way, you have used their offensive momentum to flip them on their backs. Everyone loves it when Goliath bites the dust.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Saul Alinsky's 12 Rules for Radicals Cheat Sheet
Cheat Sheet

<https://www.cheatography.com/davidpol/cheat-sheets/saul-alinsky-s-12-rules-for-radicals/>

Saul Alinsky, Community Organizing and Rules for Radicals
Mike Seal, 2008

<http://infed.org/mobi/saul-alinsky-community-organizing-and-rules-for-radicals/>

- Currency hacking
- Eviction blockade
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Inflatables
- Invisible theatre
- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Personalize and polarize
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Take risks, but take care
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Hamoq and hamas

- Strategic nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Action star

TAGS

Action design, Communications,
Humour, Pranks

PRINCIPLE

THE THREAT IS USUALLY MORE TERRIFYING THAN THE THING ITSELF

What's better than waging a campaign and winning? Not waging a campaign and still winning! You can do that by making a (credible) threat your opponent gives into without a fight (or even calling your bluff).

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

"TO INTIMIDATE AN OPPONENT WITH AN IMPENDING ACTION AGAINST THEM OFTEN CAUSES THEM TO CONCEDE TO YOUR DEMANDS."

"If you can successfully make the other players at the table believe you have better cards than they do, they'll fold from fear of losing."
—Saul Alinsky

One of famed 20th century organizer Saul Alinsky's most well known adages is *the threat of the thing is usually more terrifying than the thing itself*. To intimidate an opponent with an impending action against them often causes them to concede to your demands.

In 1964, when Chicago O'Hare Airport was sucking the lifeblood of black and other oppressed Chicagoans, Alinsky and the Woodlawn Organization in turn threatened a "shit-in." Thousands of activists would pay a dime to access all potties throughout the airport, and stage queues behind those users, to clog up the bathrooms and force passengers to turn the airport into one giant toilet. The Woodlawns team never had to pull off the action. As soon as news of it leaked, city hall called the organizers to meet and yielded to their demands on O'Hare Airport.

We learn this principle from a young age. A father raises a hand to slap his baby's fingers when she wants to touch fire. The parental gesture is cause enough for her to recoil. Threatening to do something can be a more powerful act than actually doing it.

In Busia, Uganda, users of Masafu Hospital, which is supposed to offer free health care services for all local residents, had spent

POTENTIAL RISKS

Humans are easily distracted. If you issue a warning for an action that involves other people, many are likely to get bored, discouraged, or fearful, and drop out as the time draws near. If such a scenario unfolds, your campaign is likely to lose credibility.

Campaigns evolve with political drama all the time. Offering an opponent a long duration ultimatum may enable them to strategize moves during this period you had not considered, thus putting your team on the back foot.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Kisangani Demands Electric

nearly a decade without a functioning X-ray machine. The previous one had broken down, and the hospital administration had not bothered to repair it or procure a new one. Rumours that administrators wanted to embezzle funds instead of spend them on taxpayers spread throughout Busia. In August 2017, a citizen delegation organized by Frank Kasumba and other activists issued a letter to the district's accounting officer, giving a one-month ultimatum to procure a new X-ray machine. If they failed, residents would invade their office premises and occupy it indefinitely. In a week's time, Member of Parliament Nabulindo Jane Kwoba donated about \$5000, and the district passed a supplemental budget of about \$3000 to repair the machine.

In 2015, in response to private sector complicity in Israeli crimes, the Egyptian wing of the BDS movement announced a boycott of Mobinil, the then national franchise of telecom giant Orange, which had 30 million Egyptian users. Before the boycott even began, Orange CEO Stephane Richard flew from Paris to Cairo to pledge Orange's withdrawal from Israel.

Organizations like Rainforest Action Network have used similar strategies. For example, during RAN's circa-2000 campaign to get North American forest-product companies to NOT source lumber from old-growth forests, instead of going after every little company, they set their sights on the very biggest player in the market (Home Depot), and once they'd won that fight, they were then able to go to the next several biggest companies and (very credibly) threaten to do the same to them. They all quickly caved without a fight.

Exercising Alinsky's principle is not for the faint of heart. Individuals and groups that issue threats usually must be willing and able to carry them out, should such a need arise. Then again, Jack London wrote, "Life is not always a matter of holding good cards, but sometimes playing a poor hand well."

LEARN MORE

Rules for Radicals

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rules_for_Radicals

Adapting Alinsky's Rules for Radicals: The Importance of Follow-Through

Grassroots Leadership Academy. (Who are a front group of Americans for Prosperity, which itself is a front group for the evil oligarchical Koch Brothers, but they do a good job of adapting Alinsky. Go figure! Hey, they stole it from us — we can steal it back, right?), 2018

<https://gla.americansforprosperityfoundation.org/adapting-alinskys-rules-for-radicals-the-importance-of-follow-through/>

Rules for Radicals

Power

- No vote, no sex
- Standing Man

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Divestment
- Occupation

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Consider your audience
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action

Saul Alinsky, 1971

<https://chisineu.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/saul-alinsky-rules-for-radicals-1989.pdf>

PRINCIPLE THINK NARRATIVELY

Sometimes the best response to a powerful enemy is a powerful story.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

“EVERY STORY IS BUILT ON UNSTATED ASSUMPTIONS.”

As much as we'd like to believe that human beings are rational actors who make decisions based on a sober weighing of the facts, cognitive science reminds us that we are narrative animals who apprehend the world through stories. We make decisions more with our guts than our heads, and the facts alone are seldom enough to move public opinion. Therefore, social actors are constantly waging a “battle of the story” to shape public perception.

The unequal nature of our media and communications systems (see: THEORY: The propaganda model) means that moneyed interests will always have more access to the airwaves — but that doesn't mean their story will be more creative or compelling. We can make up some of that difference, not just by becoming master storytellers, but by *thinking* narratively. By paying attention to how story and power are always interwoven, we can better understand how political power operates, and also how we can contest it.

Thinking narratively means we're also strategizing narratively and listening narratively. When designing our actions and campaigns, we need to step outside our own perspective to analyze how the issue is perceived by others who don't share our assumptions. (Remember, people respond to a story not so much because it is true, but because they find it meaningful.) We need to consider our audience, and build our campaign narrative out of the core building blocks that make for a good story.

Here are five to keep in mind:

Conflict

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Citizens' Posse
- Conflict Kitchen
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- Trail of Dreams
- Who Would Accept?
- Whose Tea Party?
- “You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!”

Tactics

- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Hoax
- Inflatables
- Media-jacking

What is the problem or conflict being addressed? How is it framed, and what does that frame leave out?

Characters

This can be a profound organizing question: Who are “we”? Who are the other characters in the story? Do the characters speak for themselves or is someone speaking on their behalf (see: PRINCIPLE: Lead with sympathetic characters)?

Imagery

What powerful images can help convey the story? Is there a metaphor or analogy that could describe the issue? A good story uses imagery and evocative language to show us what’s at stake rather than tell the audience what to think (see: PRINCIPLE: Show, don’t tell).

Foreshadowing

What is our vision of resolution to the conflict? What is our solution to the problem? How do we evoke that desired resolution without, as it were, giving the ending away? (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics).

Assumptions

Every story is built on unstated assumptions. Sometimes the best way to challenge a competing story is to expose and challenge its unstated assumptions (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible).

These five elements of story can be used together to construct a narrative of change. Fleshing out these elements as we plan out our campaigns can also give us insights into strategic opportunities for action or intervention.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Battle of the Story Worksheet
Center for Story-based Strategy
http://www.stopthefrackattack.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/CSS_BattleOfTheStoryWorksheet_2012.pdf

Intro to Story-based Strategy
Center for Story-based Strategy
<https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/intro-to-sbs>

Re:Imagining Change
Center for Story-based Strategy, 2010
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59b848d980bd5ee35b495f6e/t/59e0e5a63e00be03e1cff908/1507911101187/CSS-ReimaginingChange-1stEd+EBOOK.pdf>

- Music video
- Phone blockade
- Storytelling

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Consider your audience
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Show, don’t tell
- Stay on message
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Communications, Language, Media, Social media

PRINCIPLE

THIS AIN'T THE SISTINE CHAPEL

If the pursuit of perfection is undermining the effectiveness of your action or campaign, then do only what is strategically warranted, and save your sanity and energy.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"IF PAINTING THE SISTINE CHAPEL UNDERMINES YOUR EFFECTIVENESS, THEN DO ONLY WHAT IS STRATEGICALLY WARRANTED, AND SAVE YOUR SANITY AND ENERGY."

"We have no art. We do everything as well as we can."

—Balinese saying

As artists, we often have the desire to produce the most beautiful, provocative, and breathtaking piece of art we can. This can be a wonderful thing — sometimes. Other times, it's more important to get something out into the world that's just beautiful enough to do the job, and then move on to strategic necessities.

Here are a few cases when seeking perfection could backfire on you:

- When building community is a key goal of your project, creating a high bar of perfection can discourage broad participation.
- When you have that "Oh shit, it has to be done in 24 hours!" or "We need a small army to get all this done!" moment of panic, it might be better to wrap it up and move on to other tasks.
- When you are out of money or other resources, or on the verge of depriving other essential parts of your action of being funded or resourced.
- When the banner or prop will be viewed from hundreds of feet away or is not the centrepiece of the action.
- When the prop is likely to be smashed as part of the action or taken into custody by the cops.

In short, if it's in your strategic interest to spend all your time and/or money on the "artfulness" of your action, then go right

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are times when quality really does matter, and an appropriate attention to detail will get you the respect and the response you desire.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Option Annie
- Reclaim the Streets
- The Teddy Bear Catapult

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Distributed action
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Mass street action
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message

ahead and do it. But if metaphorically painting the Sistine Chapel undermines your effectiveness, then do only what is strategically warranted, and save your sanity and energy.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Creative Direct Action Visuals Manual

Ruckus Society

<https://ruckus.org/training-manuals/manuals-checklists/creative-direct-action-visuals-manual/>

Wise Fool Basics: A Handbook of Our Core Techniques

K. Ruby, 1999

<http://www.rogueruby.com/wfca/handbook.html>

- Bring the issue home
- Enable, don't command
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results

Theories

- Hacking
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Action design, Art, Campaign strategy

PRINCIPLE

TRAINING FOR THE WIN

Training is not a distraction from the struggle; in fact, it's critical for cultivating three key elements of social movement success: unity, strategic planning, and nonviolent discipline.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"In times of change, the learners will inherit the earth, while the knowers will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

—Eric Hoffer

Some people say you are born an activist or organizer, and training is just a distraction from the real work. In reality, training in social movement settings is critical to achieving real change. It's especially useful in developing the three key strategic components of movement success: adherence to nonviolent discipline, unity of participants and organizations, and active planning.

Training also supports long-term transformational work, providing learning and rehearsal time for new forms of governance and collective decisionmaking, as well as the personal growth and anti-oppression awareness of participants.

Social movement trainings span a wildly diverse spectrum of activities and formats — everything from deep political education work; to strategic planning, analysis, and theory development; to specific skill and capacity building sessions, including: nonviolent action trainings, leadership and team development activities, logistics exploration, cultural and arts work, anti-oppression education, media skills development, medical and safety sessions, even boat driver or climbing trainings. Depending on the campaign's goals, needs, and organizational resources, a training could be a 45-minute action prep for 300 people prior to a mass arrest at a coal mine, or a multi-day strategic planning session with six people in an NGO conference room to frame a new campaign.

The best trainings — especially for campaigns dedicated to transformational work — are typically experiential. Here, Paulo Freire's popular education framework is a frequent inspiration. When done right, participatory and experiential training can function as both the theory and practice of transformational campaigns, helping to build capacity to win major victories.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Occupation

Principles

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Create many points of entry
- Praxis makes perfect
- Start a conversation
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Decolonization
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Community building, Digital security, Education, Movement building, Nonviolence

LEARN MORE

Beautiful Trouble Trainer's Library

Beautiful Trouble, 2013+

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/0BwOTpLpIsKkdbVhaSlRKSjdJaGs>

A Guide to Effective Nonviolent Struggle

Srdja Popovic, Ivan Marovic, and others from the Center for Applied

Nonviolent Action and Strategies, 2007

<http://canvasopedia.org/project/canvas-core-curriculum/>

The Beautiful Trouble Study Guide

Beautiful Trouble, 2016

<http://beautifultrouble.org/studyguide/>

Global Change Lab: A training hub for global activists

ActionAid

<http://www.globalchangelab.org/>

The People Power Manual

The Change Agency, 2015

<http://www.thechangeagency.org/campaigners-toolkit/training-resources/people-power-manual/>

The Mobilisation Cookbook: A Greenpeace guide to cooking up
people-powered campaigns

The MobLab — Mobilisation Lab for Greenpeace and its Allies,
2015

<http://www.mobilisationlab.org/mobilisation-tools/the-mobilisation-cookbook/>

The 350.org organizing toolbox

<http://trainings.350.org/>

PRINCIPLE

TURN THE TABLES

Sometimes the most compelling way to expose an injustice is to flip it around and theatrically re-visit it upon the perpetrator (say, by dumping sewage outside the company that's polluting your community).

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mark Read

Mark Read is a filmmaker and professor of Media Studies at NYU, with a focus on video as a tactical tool in community organizing. In other incarnations he has also been a community gardens activist; a Union Square Park defender; a Critical Mass rider and organizer; a coordinator of large spectacles in public spaces such as subway train parties; and a core organizer and propagandist for Reclaim the Streets NYC.

“PEOPLE HAVE AN INNATE SENSE OF FAIRNESS, BUT DON’T ALWAYS SEE THE INJUSTICES HAPPENING AROUND THEM.”

“Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.”
—Saul Alinsky

Remember the great scene from *Erin Brockovich* where the hero brings a glass of contaminated water to a meeting with the companies her clients have accused of contaminating their drinking water. “You claim this water is perfectly safe to drink?” she says. “Okay, drink this,” and she places the glass of water before them. When they refuse, the injustice of the situation is laid bare for all to see. She has “turned the tables.”

People have an innate sense of fairness, but don’t always see the injustices happening around them. By taking an existing unjust situation and dramatically flipping it back upon its source, you can highlight the inherent asymmetry and activate people’s sense of fairness. Turning the tables like this can be an effective means of garnering public support as well as undercutting the moral authority of your target.

Consider how New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani was attempting to sell off community gardens to developers, an action that would have displaced community groups and left the city with fewer places for children to play (see: STORY: Streets Into Gardens). Community members were rightly outraged, though initially they had a hard time gaining public support. To turn the tables, the activists took over a city block in Manhattan’s Lower East Side and

POTENTIAL RISKS

An attempt to turn the tables can backfire on you if your analogy is inaccurate, indirect, or insincere. Sometimes even a clear analogy may be undermined by powerful cultural assumptions. For instance, police have broad cultural legitimacy as ethical agents of authority. Whether it’s deserved or not, this is the reality within which we operate. Trying to turn the tables by building an equation around police violence vs. protester violence is going to be an uphill climb. Turning the tables must always take into account cultural context and existing frames of understanding.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

turned it into a vibrant civic space for conversation, education, and celebration. Their message was "Okay, if you can kick us out of our gardens, then we can kick you off your streets."

Greenpeace has consistently made use of this tactic to shed light on toxic dumping. In 2003 they partnered with families and victims of the massive chemical plant disaster in Bhopal, India and attempted, unsuccessfully, to deliver seven barrels of that toxic waste to the Dow Chemical Company headquarters in Amsterdam. The action spoke directly to basic questions of fairness and power: "If you can dump this toxic sludge on the people of India, then we can dump it back on you." Why is one act illegal while its analogue goes unpunished?

Turning the tables poses this question in a pointed, common sense way, exposing hypocrisy and injustice for all to see. It's an easy frame for mainstream media to grasp, and difficult for them to distort. For all these reasons, it has the potential to generate support for your cause, increase pressure on your target, and enable you to win concessions.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Streets Into Gardens
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yomango
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Carnival protest
- Citizen's arrest
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Solidarity, not aid
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Direct action
- Framing
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy

PRINCIPLE

USE HUMOUR TO UNDERMINE AUTHORITY

Especially when the powerful rule through fear and intimidation, it is often humour, laughter, and absurdity that can help to undermine power and embolden dissent.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Elspeth Tilley

Elspeth teaches theatre and creative activism, writes (occasionally funny) plays about climate change, and lives in New Zealand.

"EFFECTIVE HUMOUR DELIVERS AN AUDIENCE THE JUSTICE THEY CRAVE."

"The human race has only one really effective weapon and that is laughter."

—Mark Twain

Humour has been used throughout history to give hope to the subjugated, rile oppressors, and encourage resistance. It can be a powerful weapon, psychologically cutting an oppressor down to size and undermining their social legitimacy — no wonder anti-Nazi jokes were banned during the Third Reich. Humour can also nourish resistance, showing that despite bitter odds, the spirit is unbreakable — hence Antonin Obrdlik's observation, "gallows humor is an index of strength . . . on the part of oppressed peoples."

Sigmund Freud identified three kinds of humour: *body humour*, *mind humour*, and *spirit humour*. All three can be used to undermine power and buoy the spirits of the oppressed.

Bodies are funny because they are uncontrollable: Even the powerful fart, hiccup, and fall, and we can subvert their authority by pointing that out. Pictures of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe tripping went viral on the internet, and his futile efforts to control the situation by demanding photographers delete images that had already gone worldwide only fueled the hilarity. Seeing the powerful try and fail to wield absolute control makes us laugh.

Mind humour is useful when freedom of speech is restricted, or direct confrontation with authority is made illegal. Satire, irony, wordplay, puns, and double entendre can communicate at multiple levels, subtly signalling an insult or joke to one audience but being difficult to pin down as offensive or illegal (and thus difficult to punish) by those in power. Plus, we laugh with pleasure at the sheer cleverness of a creative wordplay. The subversive power of such

POTENTIAL RISKS

If taking aim at a real person, be sure that a reasonable bystander would recognize your material as clearly satirical, rather than mistake it for actual facts that could be considered defamatory. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan tried in 2016 to have German poet Jan Böhmermann prosecuted over a satirical poem, but German prosecutors called the poem "characteristic of the art form of satire and caricature" due to its characteristics of "exaggeration, distortion, and disassociation," and refused to press charges.

Secondly, humour is very time and place specific. It often does not cross cultures well, and even within a cultural group there will be distinct subgroups with shifting understandings of what is socially acceptable, so it's essential to know your audience. One of the best ways to reduce this risk is to bring in diverse voices, incorporate members of your intended audience into your creative team, and get lots of

forms of humour was on full display in a recent decision by Chinese officials to ban puns and wordplay in news media.

Spirit humour, finally, refers to our joy in seeing an underdog triumph, particularly if they use the oppressor's own weapon against them. A great example of this is Anna Gensler's Instagram art project *Instagranniepants*. Tired of being the victim of online sexual harassment, Gensler started incorporating the harassing messages she received into funny naked caricatures she drew of the harassers, and posting the results online, where they quickly became a popular comic meme.

Troublemaking figures like the trickster, fool, and clown can also be used to unsettle authority figures and reclaim a sense of agency in the face of suffocating institutional strictures. Tricksters have a long tradition of ignoring social rules, mischievously deceiving authority figures, and turning serious activities into fun. Their position outside the expectations of "normal" society means they can flip oppression simply by playfully refusing its mechanisms of control, and often they can express ideas others are afraid to voice.

Effective humour delivers the audience the justice they crave, so setting up the premise of a superior or conceited character on a pedestal, who is then fodder for the "fool" to disrupt, is important. The pleasure that people experience witnessing a disruption of power they aren't sure they can achieve themselves can either be a release valve, providing the only safe way to defy authority, or serve as a model, motivating the public to seek justice in the real world.

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) is a great contemporary example of trickster humour in action. CIRCA has shown up at protest marches throughout Europe to undermine the macho posturing of police (as well as some of the more aggro protesters) and generally add a carnivalesque, anti-authoritarian atmosphere. At an anti-war protest at a UK army recruitment office, for example, CIRCA members used feather dusters to "clean" soldiers and police cars, and clever mimicry to parrot officers' walks and gestures, leaving even the officers struggling not to laugh. Once police had removed them from the building, the recruitment office closed early, so the clowns put a "sign up here" table outside the door and began signing people up to the clown army, instead of the regular army.

Finally, we're more likely to remember something — and share it — if it makes us laugh. We are hardwired to be more likely to post something funny on social media than something newsy and informative. "Social Justice Comedian" Negin Farsad's comic ads satirizing Muslim stereotypes went viral on the internet, garnering hundreds of thousands of views. (See the whole story of the campaign in the 2012 comedy documentary *The Muslims Are Coming!*)

feedback on your work as you develop it.

Thirdly, being the butt of a joke can hurt. If you are already vulnerable, it can be devastating. Use humour to redress power imbalances, not exacerbate them: "punch up," not down.

A final risk comes when those with power harness the guise of a trickster, playing at irreverence or setting themselves up as a maverick, even though they are actually part of the establishment. It is tough to successfully satirize a figure who has already styled themselves as a parody of or disrupter to authority, however artificial that facade may be. In that circumstance, responding with humour probably won't work, and you may need to focus on exposing the extent of the target's actual authority and control through rational information. (Once the extent of their privilege is clearly re-established, humour might again be effective. Remember, anti-authoritarian humour is about justly disrupting hierarchies, so your audience first needs to clearly see the hierarchy that's there.)

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- CryptoRally in Mexico City
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Kubatana's yellow poster campaign
- Lysistrata Project

LEARN MORE

Humour in Political Activism

Majken Sørensen, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016

<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137573452#aboutAuthors>

Serious Play: Modern Clown Performance

Louise Peacock, Intellect Books, 2009

https://books.google.com/books/about/Serious_Play.html?id=rNeM9SRK24kC

And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World

Anne Bogart, Taylor and Francis, 2007

https://books.google.com/books/about/And_Then_You_Act.html?id=3nboN2izyT8C

Colbert's America: Satire and Democracy

Sophia A. McClennen, Springer, 2011

https://books.google.com/books/about/Colbert_s_America.html?id=jRzrNAeXkC8C

Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre

<https://books.google.com/books/about/Impro.html?id=EVmminvaWDQC>

- Manich Msamah
- Orange Alternative
- Panty power
- Public Option Annie
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Street Graduation
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Currency hacking
- Hashtag campaign
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Music video

Principles

- Consider your audience
- Do the media's work for them
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism

TAGS

Action design, Art, Climate justice, Communications, Humour, Militarization, Nonviolence, Pranks, Social media, State violence

PRINCIPLE

USE ORGANIZING STRATEGIES THAT SCALE

Once your movement has a clear story, structure and strategy, you can scale up quickly by finding ways for people to start organizing using the resources already available to them in their daily lives.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

“MOVEMENTS THAT ARE “OPEN SOURCE” ARE EFFECTIVELY SELF-RECRUITING.”

Movements often win because they have more players than the other team. Rather than recruiting these players manually, core members of a movement can “hack the system” by using scalable organizing strategies and tailoring mobilization tactics to where people are at. This allows movements to recruit “by multiplication” instead of just “by addition.” The Occupy Wall Street movement spread organically around the world because people everywhere were enraged by corporate power, and they all could find a place of local significance to occupy.

Movements that are “open source” — that allow people everywhere to form structures and take action without direct permission from a central body — are effectively self-recruiting. Unity and discipline come less from a top-down leadership structure, and more from a shared set of ethical and operating principles, or “movement DNA.” The National Land Defense League (NLDL) in Uganda grew quickly in size and power once they switched from centralized meetings to a strategy of decentralized chapter formation grounded in eating together. The idea was simple and accessible to the poorest farmers across Uganda. Using millet bread as the NLDL’s national symbol, any farmer could easily call neighbors to a dinner to discuss strategies for collective resistance to local land grabbing. This strategy is not only good for growing a movement but for helping movements become more resilient. When 200 Ugandan farmers occupied a United Nations office to protest militarized evictions, chapters of the NLDL that had already self-formed among farmers in other areas of the country raised local donations of produce and brought them to the occupiers. After Denmark’s 2016 austerity

POTENTIAL RISKS

Not all movements should be accessible to the voluntary leadership of anyone. Particularly in highly repressive environments, riddled with espionage and extreme consequences for public dissent, organizers will have to be strategic and careful about what degree of decentralization is appropriate. It may be safer in certain contexts to start small, and/or work underground.

Opening up a movement to people everywhere also risks diluting the mission and values of a movement. Giving autonomy to a broad group of people may cause a movement to descend into unfocused chaos or insignificance, especially if the DNA of the movement hasn’t already been set.

RELATED TOOLS

measures made it more difficult to access their benefits, disabled folks and their allies built support teams in towns across the country under the banner of Næstehjælperne (“next helper”). Via Facebook pages and face-to-face meetings, communities of support formed among those who felt alone in their quest to secure benefits. These networks of self-affiliating disabled people began to show up in large numbers to welfare interviews of individual members, building alliances with social workers, and securing more successful benefits interviews for members. By following the decentralized Momentum organizing model, the young climate organizers from Sunrise in the US have been able to create a “movement whirlwind” around the Green New Deal. How does Sunrise recruit? Any three people anywhere in the country who speak aloud the Sunrise statement of principles, are automatically part of Sunrise :-). Sunrise follows a three-phase “Cycle of Momentum” theory of movement building, from Escalation to Activating Public Support to Absorption of that new support into the growing movement. In that third Absorption phase, in particular, decentralized self-recruiting is key:

In order to get to scale, movements need to decentralize to have the capacity to absorb new members during critical moments of public attention. In order to decentralize without collapsing into chaos, movements must “frontload” their story, strategy, and structure. A scalable organizing strategy is one that is at once decentralized across a vast geographic or demographic reach, yet still gathers people together locally in accessible ways that build community, and has enough shared movement DNA (aka “story, strategy, and structure”) to maintain unity and focus. And using strategies accessible to people in their everyday lives not only allows for organic recruitment, but also builds a culture of solidarity and support within the movement.

LEARN MORE

Næstehjælperne
Næstehjælperne
<http://naestehjaelperne.org/>

How Networked Social Movements Can Scale-Up Exponentially
Movement Net-Lab
<https://movementnetlab.org/category/learn/>

Resources for Scaling-up Movements Quickly and Effectively
Momentum Community
<https://www.momentumcommunity.org/resources>

Mass Protest, the Cycle of Momentum and Moments of the

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Fees Must Fall
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Lysistrata Project
- PARK(ing) Day
- Round Dance Revolution
- Schools of Struggle
- Street Graduation
- The Salt March

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Distributed action
- General strike
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Phone blockade
- Trek

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Build strength through repetition
- Delegate
- Enable, don't command
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your community
- Make new folks welcome
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Seek safety in support networks
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

Whirlwind

The Ayni Institute

<https://ayni.institute/massprotest/>

Decentralized Organization — a flexible, dynamic structure that can bring thousands of people while maintaining discipline and movement integrity.

The Ayni Institute

<https://ayni.institute/socialchange/#decentralizedorganization>

- Comunalidad (communality)
- Dunbar's number
- Floating signifier
- Memes
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Baraza
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Communications, Community building, Democracy, Digital organizing, International solidarity, Movement building

PRINCIPLE USE OTHERS' PREJUDICES AGAINST THEM

Your opponent's prejudices against you are a weakness that you can exploit to your advantage.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

"BEWARE OF SIMPLY REINFORCING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES."

A prejudice is a mental shortcut that leads a person to make assumptions about others — assumptions that are often false in predictable, and therefore useful, ways. Sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism — all the -isms and associated stereotypes held by your target can be used in one way or another to your campaign's advantage.

For example:

Sexism Need to distract a security guard so you can complete your action? Activists in Washington D.C. planned to dump a ton of bloodied scallop shells on the doorstep of Shell Oil (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible) to commemorate the anniversary of Ken Saro-Wiwa's death and pressure the company to withdraw from Ogoniland, Nigeria. One cute young woman posing as a lost tourist was all it took to distract the guard and provide enough time for the truck to position itself, dump its load, and drive off.

Ageism Need to get information through enemy lines? During the First Intifada (uprising) in Palestine, 1987–1993, the Israeli regime tried to quash the nonviolent resistance in many ways, including cutting communication and restricting travel between Palestinian cities. In order to get the word out to coordinate strikes, boycotts, and other actions, youth were enlisted to carry memorized information between cities. The Israeli soldiers let the kids through, never imagining they were doing the real work of connecting the resistance.

Racism Need to put more pressure on a target from unexpected directions? Saul Alinsky, in his book *Rules for Radicals*, relates a classic example of using racism to win in Chicago in the 1950s: In a campaign to improve slum conditions in an organized black ghetto, organizers took the fight beyond their neighborhoods into the lily-white suburb where the slumlord lived (see: METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention). The presence of black men and women

POTENTIAL RISKS

Beware of simply reinforcing negative stereotypes. Try to only deploy stereotypes in situations where the bigot eventually realizes that it was his own prejudices that put him in a compromised position (see: PRINCIPLE: Turn the tables). Also, try to be transparent within your own work group about what forces are at play.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Justice for Janitors
- Mining the Museum
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- No vote, no sex
- Panty power
- Public Option Annie
- Stripping Power in Uganda

Tactics

- Advanced leafletting
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre

picketing outside his house led to a flood of phone calls from the neighbors who didn't care at all about the slums and would not have gotten involved otherwise, but wanted to keep their own neighborhood segregated, and so pressured the slumlord into capitulating.

Classism Need to find your way into a corporate office or exclusive event? Many a time the most radical, hairy, and scruffily adorned activists have shaved, ironed, and primped their way into a situation that would have been off limits to those in scrappy activist garb (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't dress like a protester). You know you are hardcore when you will cut your hair, or wear pantyhose, to insure the success of an action!

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Salt of the Earth

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047443/>

A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Resistance

Mary Elizabeth King, 2007

<https://books.google.com/books?id=IYztAAAAMAAJ>

- Flash mob
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Identity correction
- Invisible theatre
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Don't dress like a protester
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Turn the tables
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Action logic
- Anti-oppression
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Feminism
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Gender and sexuality, Indigenous rights, Climate justice, Racial justice, Wealth inequality, Women's rights

PRINCIPLE

USE THE JEDI MIND TRICK

The Jedi mind trick worked for Obi-Wan Kenobi, and it can work for you, too. Believe in yourself hard enough, and others will too. “Act like you belong,” and most people — even the police — will assume you do.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Samantha Corbin

Samantha Corbin is actions director for The Other 98% and national coordinator of the US Uncut network, as well as a nonviolent direct action trainer with The Ruckus Society and a founding member of the New York Action Network. She has coordinated scores of affinity group actions including banner hangs, blockades, and street theater actions; led several large-scale actions including the 5,000-strong Powershift 2011; and developed and delivered countless trainings in creative nonviolent direct action, affinity group organizing, strategic planning, scouting, and high tech action.

“WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE, MUCH MORE BECOMES POSSIBLE THAN YOU MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT.”

“Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t — you’re right.”
—Henry Ford

Aside from being able to move objects with your mind and having a retractable sword made out of freaking light (how cool is that??), the best thing about being a Jedi has got to be the mind trick. The ability to persuade with a calm voice and a finger wave, “These aren’t the droids you’re looking for,” could prove indispensable in any number of beautiful trouble-making situations.

Good news: This hypnotic power of persuasion is actually within your reach. It springs from an innate authority, an irrational confidence that mystically bends the world to your will. Though this may not work on your bill collector (“I’m not the deadbeat you’re looking for”), it may work in convincing the mainstream media to cover your event or the police to leave you alone. You might even pass unchallenged through the front gate of a nuclear power plant, or take charge of a closed-door meeting to which you weren’t invited. With the right attitude, much more becomes possible than you might have thought.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Beware the backlash. The Jedi mind trick wears off quickly, and tends to leave the unsuspecting dupe it was used on angry and embarrassed. No one likes to feel like they got tricked. Use this tactic only with people you’re unlikely to see again. To avoid unnecessary backlash, tell the truth as much as possible and let other people fill in their own assumptions.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)

With nothing more than confidence, an activist adept at the Jedi mind trick can make a security guard look the other way, or convince thousands of people, including a BBC news anchor, that he is a Dow Chemical Company spokesperson (see: [STORY: Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal](#)), or that it's perfectly normal to wear a climbing helmet in the middle of a convention center and start climbing the scaffolding.

Here are a couple of things to keep in mind as you prepare to break out the Jedi mind trick on an unsuspecting low-level functionary:

Know the rules, suspend the rules. Camus said the person who is ready to die is the most powerful person in the world. But the other most powerful person is one who has the ability to transgress, trespass, or otherwise do what they shouldn't with complete self-assurance, especially if challenged. Cultivate and use that power.

Act like you belong (a.k.a. fake it 'till you get kicked out). Authority is more performed than innate. We constantly interact with, and respond to, coded indicators of status and authority, making assumptions based on attitude, manner, dress, accent, friendliness, sexiness, and other cues. By understanding and playing on these indicators we can also co-opt the authority attached to them.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Mind Trick

Wookieepedia

http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Mind_trick

Evasion

Destructables

<http://destructables.org/node/62>

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Public Option Annie
- Streets Into Gardens
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Creative disruption
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Hoax
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking
- Nudity
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Direct action
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Action design, Pranks

PRINCIPLE USE THE LAW, DON'T BE AFRAID OF IT

So you've received a threatening letter from a corporate lawyer. Congratulations!

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andy Bichlbaum

Andy Bichlbaum (AKA Jacques Servin) got his start as an activist when, as a computer programmer, he inserted a swarm of kissing boys in a shoot-'em-up video game just before it shipped to store shelves, and found himself fired, famous, and hugely amused. Now, Andy helps run the Yes Lab for Creative Activism as part of his job as professor of subversion at New York University.

"DON'T BE AFRAID OF SUITS, LAW- OR OTHERWISE."

The law is a funny thing. Sometimes the Yes Men ask lawyers before we do anything particularly dangerous. We get one of two answers: "Don't do it! It's illegal. You'll get sued!" or "Awesome! It's probably legal, and besides, you're righteous in the court of public opinion." The "awesomes" are almost always right for two reasons: 1) In the US at least, the law does in fact protect freedom of speech to a very high degree (which is not always a good thing: corporate lobbying is also considered free speech), and 2) corporations don't sue you because they know how it can blow back on them and they want to avoid having yet more egg on their big, blank, mechanical faces. In the Yes Men's many years of activism, we've only been sued once.

Corporations won't sue you, but they may send you a cease-and-desist letter. Rather than a cause for worry, this can be a great boon. C&D letters are letters from lawyers that threaten you with a lawsuit, usually in highfalutin' legal language. They carry absolutely no legal weight and can be ignored — though of course you then take the risk that the lawyers will follow through. Almost always, however, the C&D letter, while not exactly a bluff, is a formality. For example, companies have trademarks, and in order to keep them they have to demonstrate that they're making efforts to defend them — and a C&D letter qualifies as evidence of such an effort.

If you receive a C&D letter, it's a tremendous opportunity to stretch out the story and get an additional wave of news coverage for your action. First thing we do when we receive a C&D letter is reach out to a lawyer we trust and see what she thinks (though we're always prepared to ignore her advice). Then, we consider whether there's

POTENTIAL RISKS

Sometimes corporations do sue activists, especially those with limited resources to defend themselves. That's called a SLAPP (Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation) suit. However, usually, all you really need to do to avoid any such corporate shenanigans is be ready to widely publicize the brouhaha, and hurl the aforementioned egg smack dab onto the corporate face.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Stolen Beauty
- Trail of Dreams
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

anything funny we can do with the letter. For example, after we put up the coalcares.org site, we received a C&D letter from Peabody Energy, the largest coal producer in the US. Instead of taking down the site, we responded in a way that enlarged the issue. It's not just Peabody that's giving kids asthma, we noted, but all American coal companies. So we removed Peabody's name from the site and added the names of all the other coal companies. We subsequently received three more C&D letters, which we also ignored.

Lawyers are not to be feared, though the same can't always be said for the law. If you are, for example, pretending to be ExxonMobil at a petroleum conference, there is no need to break character when the conference's private security lock you in a small room and cross-examine you (trust us on this one). But when the real police arrive, you may as well tell them honestly what you are up to. They may even turn out to be on your side, especially if you seem reasonable in contrast to the exasperated conference organizer or private security goon. In general, you should avoid lying to the police unless you have a *really really* good reason (see: PRINCIPLE: Get arrested in an intelligent way).

Don't be afraid of suits, law- or otherwise.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Know Your Rights for Activists
Civil Liberties Defence Center

<https://cldc.org/know-your-rights/know-your-rights-for-activists/>

Resources

Black Movement Law Project

<https://bmlp.org/#resources>

Resources

Community Activism Law Alliance

<http://www.calachicago.org/>

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Light Brigade
- Occupation

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Make it funny
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Environmental justice
- Ethical spectacle

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action, Humour, Media, Pranks

PRINCIPLE

USE THE POWER OF RITUAL

Rituals like weddings, vigils, and pilgrimages are powerful experiences for participants, and familiar narratives for observers. You can use their symbolic power to give actions greater depth and resonance.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“AT ITS BEST, A RITUAL IS A CATHARTIC, TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE.”

“Ritual and ceremony in their due times kept the world under the sky and the stars in their courses.”

—Terry Pratchett

Rituals can connect us to the deepest truths of why politics matters. As anyone who has participated in a candlelight vigil will know, sometimes the act of quietly bearing witness to an injustice in the presence of others can carry more moral force than railing against it. A ritual can also give an otherwise mundane political gathering a stronger storyline, such as the 2011 protest of mortgage fraud at Chase Bank in New York City, where hundreds of members of faith communities and several ministers performed an exorcism on a bank “possessed by the demons of selfishness and avarice.”

The ritual you choose need not be elaborate for it to have a powerful impact. You can imbue your political street theatre with some of the power of ritual just by borrowing its rhythms. Imagine two characters on the street: a military general and a politician, slowly tossing a huge sack of money back and forth across a wide expanse. In between, a regular Joe, sitting forlornly, watches the sack sail back and forth. Nearby, a spokesperson hands out a fact sheet that tells the rest of the story. Often this kind of nonverbal, ritual-like performance, which repeats a simple but visually arresting motion, can be more powerful and effective than a full-length skit crammed with facts and figures. Ghost Bike shrines — old bikes whitewashed and decked with flowers stationed as memorials at urban crossroads where cyclists have been killed — are a haunting presence, protest sculpture, and fitting memorial all rolled into one. Because they are such well-worn forms, rituals are ripe for mockery and comic adaptation, whether it’s the Billionaires for Bush doing a vigil for corporate welfare, or Reverend Billy brandishing a stuffed Mickey Mouse on a cross while doing an exorcism inside the Times

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Citizens’ Posse
- Conflict Kitchen
- Gezi Park iftar
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Round Dance Revolution
- Standing Man
- The Salt March
- Trail of Dreams

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Distributed action
- Image theatre
- Lamentation
- Trek

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Build strength through repetition
- Consider your audience

Square Disney Store. In 1967, antiwar prankster Abbie Hoffman led 20,000 protesters in an attempt to levitate the Pentagon — the National Guard was under strict orders to never allow an unbroken chain of hands around the building. Our familiarity with ritual makes it a great format for self-organizing. A ritual provides a natural script and symbolism. Even complete strangers naturally fall into a rhythm around it. This is even true for recently invented rituals such as monthly Critical Mass bike rides or the yearly ritual of Buy Nothing Day. In more repressive environments, the sacredness of a ritual offers protection, or at least courage. Think of Catholic Mass in Stalinist Poland or death squad-era El Salvador. In the Iranian Revolution (of 1979, as well as the revolts in 2010), the funerals of martyrs killed at the last protest fueled the next round of protests in an accelerating cycle. At its best, a ritual is a cathartic, transformative experience. At a bat mitzvah, a child crosses over into adulthood. At a funeral, mourners grieve and find closure. A ritual harnessed to a political purpose should have an equally powerful effect, whether it is helping people recommit to a cause, find courage, voice dissent, or build trust. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

Memorial Ritual and Art: A Case Study and Exploration of the Potential for Healing

Cinder Hypki with Rhonda S. Cooper and Louise Knight, Maryland Institute College of Art

https://www.mica.edu/About_MICA/Departments_and_Services/The_Center_for_Art_Education/Community_Arts_Journal/Memorial_Ritual_and_Art.html

- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your cultural terrain
- Recapture the flag
- Show, don't tell
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Activism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier

TAGS

Action design

PRINCIPLE

USE YOUR CULTURAL ASSETS

By drawing on the traditional practices, rituals, and symbols of the community, organizers can deepen the involvement of participants, disorient opponents, and shift the cultural terrain in their favour.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Paul Kuttner

Paul Kuttner is an educator and researcher who works at the intersection of art, culture, education, and social change. He has taught theater, creative writing, and civic engagement in schools and community organizations, is a co-author of *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organizing as a Catalyst for School Reform*, and serves as Minister of Cultural Scholarship for the US Department of Arts and Culture.

“ALL COMMUNITIES DEVELOP SHARED CULTURES — STORIES, SYMBOLS, ART FORMS, KNOWLEDGE, NORMS, AND PRACTICES THAT HOLD THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER AND SHAPE ITS IDENTITY. THESE CULTURES OFFER RICH RESOURCES FOR ACTION.”

“Never go outside the experience of your people. . . . Wherever possible go outside the experience of the enemy.”
—Saul Alinsky

Radical social change groups can rarely compete with their opponents in terms of financial resources or institutional power. Instead, they must draw on what they do have: passionate, committed people willing to take action. The same is true in the cultural arena: Opponents of social change efforts often have powerful cultural tools at their disposal, from dominant paradigms and frames to control of mass media (see: THEORY: Cultural hegemony). To combat this, groups working for justice must recognize and build upon their own cultural strengths.

All communities develop shared cultures — stories, symbols, art forms, knowledge, norms, and practices that hold the community together and shape its identity. These cultures offer rich resources for action, whether it’s youth organizers performing hip-hop street theater; Japanese-American activists repurposing traditional Taiko drumming; or Harry Potter fans drawing on the narratives of Rowling’s books to address an array of social justice issues (see: STORY: Harry Potter Alliance).

POTENTIAL RISKS

Exclusion: When drawing on culturally specific practices, there is always a risk of alienating not just opponents, but also people you would like to welcome into your effort. Then again, this is true of any cultural practice: protest marches, press conferences, sit-ins, and other organizing staples all energize some folks while making others feel excluded (see: THEORY: Political identity paradox) and (see: PRINCIPLE: Make new folks welcome). If exclusion is an issue, it can be moderated by adapting or combining practices from different cultural communities; educating allies on the meaning of the practices; or

If social change efforts are to be led by those most affected by injustice (see: PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from the most impacted), then this principle calls for a particular focus on the cultural strengths of marginalized communities, or what researcher Tara Yosso calls “community cultural wealth.” In the face of ongoing oppression, communities develop many ways of strengthening themselves and resisting domination. They hone storytelling and communication skills, share counter-stories that challenge dominant narratives, create new art forms, and develop practices of mutual support. Many of the most powerful social change efforts, from the African-American civil rights movement in the US to the environmental justice movements throughout the world, have relied heavily on the cultural wealth of participating communities.

When communities draw on their own cultural assets to carry out actions, they strengthen their own membership while simultaneously disorienting and discomfiting opponents. They are playing by their own rules rather than accepting the existing terms of engagement. By inserting their own stories, perspectives, and practices into the broader dialogue, they are not just operating within a familiar experience, but actively shifting the cultural terrain (see: PRINCIPLE: Know your cultural terrain).

Culturally specific practices can serve as a statement of cultural pride, and can strengthen collective identity. When the Idle No More protests spread across Canada and the US beginning in 2012, organizers utilized Indigenous music, dance, and language as a way to assert the power and continued relevance of Indigenous culture (see: STORY: Round Dance Revolution). Utilizing shared cultural assets can also help to draw in others who are not yet inside politically, but who relate culturally. For example, given hip-hop’s worldwide cache with young people, many see it as an effective tool for organizing across racial, ethnic, and national lines.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth

Tara Yosso, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 2005

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B39QOsm78N4pcFUtQjhTX3NVZXM/edit>

Cultural Organizing: Experiences at the Intersection of Art and Activism

Javiera Benavente with Rebecca Lena Richardson, 2012

<http://animatingdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/JBenavente%20Trend%20Paper.pdf>

carefully selecting practices that are welcoming. For example, the freedom songs of the African-American civil rights movement combined Black spirituals and white folk music as a way to assist in organizing across racial lines. *Appropriation*: Organizers must also be aware of the dangers of simplification and appropriation. Cultures are complex and dynamic, with blurry boundaries and lots of internal diversity. They cannot be reduced to a small set of symbols or art forms. Those who are not directly involved in a cultural community may have a particularly difficult time understanding this complexity. Beware of appropriating aspects of a culture you do not fully appreciate or understand, no matter how pure your intentions.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Conflict Kitchen
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Flower Speech Campaign
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Gezi Park iftar
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Honk at Parliament
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Reclaim the Streets
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Round Dance Revolution
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Cultural disobedience
- Lamentation
- Music video

- Public art intervention

Principles

- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make new folks welcome
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Recapture the flag
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Think narratively
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Artivism
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Cultural hegemony
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Political identity paradox
- Postcolonialism
- Prefigurative politics
- Temporary autonomous zone
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Art, Campaign strategy,
Community building, Movement
building, Communications

PRINCIPLE

USE YOUR RADICAL FRINGE TO SHIFT THE OVERTON WINDOW

By strategically pushing the far edge of what is considered acceptable within a range of policy options, you can slide public opinion in your direction, making what was once fringe, seem like common sense.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Josh Bolotsky

Josh Bolotsky is a veteran digital campaign strategist, and has served as New Media Director of The Other 98% and as Digital Team Lead for Zephyr Teachout's 2014 campaign for Governor of New York. Since then, Josh has worked as a freelance online and campaign strategy consultant for people and movements doing vital, interesting, and meaningful things.

“THE CHALLENGE FOR ACTIVISTS AND ADVOCATES IS TO MOVE THE WINDOW IN THE DIRECTION OF THEIR PREFERRED OUTCOMES, SO THEIR DESIRED OUTCOME MOVES CLOSER AND CLOSER TO “COMMON SENSE.””

The various policy options available on a given issue can be roughly plotted on a spectrum of public acceptability, from unthinkable, to fringe, to acceptable, to common sense, to policy. The Overton window, named after Joseph Overton, a staffer for the center-right Mackinac Center for Public Policy, designates the range of points on the spectrum that are considered part of a “sensible” conversation within public opinion and/or traditional mass media.

The most important thing about the Overton window, however, is that it can be shifted to the left or the right, with the once merely “acceptable” becoming “popular” or even imminent policy, and formerly “unthinkable” positions becoming the open position of a partisan base. The challenge for activists and advocates is to move the window in the direction of their preferred outcomes, so their desired outcome moves closer and closer to “common sense.”

There are two ways to do this: the long, hard way, and the short, easy way. The long, hard way is to continue making your actual case persistently and persuasively until your position becomes more politically mainstream, whether it be due to the strength of your rhetoric or a long-term shift in societal values. By contrast, the short, easy way is to amplify and echo the voices of those who take a position a few notches more radical than what you really want.

For example, if what you actually want is a public health care option

POTENTIAL RISKS

Not all radical positions are effective in shifting the Overton window, so don't just reach for any old radical idea. Ideally, the position you promote should carry logical and moral force, and must include some common ground with your own position — it needs to be along the same continuum of belief if it is to be effective. It also must not be so far out of the mainstream that it becomes toxic for anyone vaguely associated with it, or the backlash will in fact push the Window in the opposite of the desired direction.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle

in the United States, coordinate with and promote those pushing for single-payer, universal health care. If the single-payer approach constitutes the “acceptable left” flank of the discourse, then the public option looks, by comparison, like the conservative option it was once considered back when it was first proposed by Orrin Hatch in 1994.

This is Negotiating 101. Unfortunately, the right has been far ahead of the left in moving the Overton window in their desired direction for a long time. If anything, the left often plays it in the exact wrong way, actively policing and seeking to silence its radicals for fear that strong left positions will serve to discredit moderate left positions. The irony is that the Overton window should actually be easier for progressives to play: If you look at the polling on issue after issue, from education to jobs to foreign policy, the actual majority stances tend to be to the left of the range of policy proposals on offer.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals
Saul Alinsky, 1971

<https://books.google.com/books?id=VIH0UbZ8qU4C&pg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Occupy Wall Street Can Shake Up A City — But Can it Create Lasting Change?

Greg Hanscom, Grist, 2011

<https://grist.org/politics/2011-11-18-occupy-wall-street-can-shake-up-a-city-but-can-it-create-lasting/>

Wall Street Demonstrators Challenge Centrist Consensus
Will Rubenstein, 2011

<https://oberlinreview.org/3855/opinions/wall-street-demonstrators-challenge-centrist-consensus/>

- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Honk at Parliament
- Nuit Debout
- Round Dance Revolution
- Santa Claus Army
- The Salt March
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yomango

Tactics

- Debt strike
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale

Principles

- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Reframe the issue
- Turn the tables
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing
- Political identity paradox
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- The propaganda model

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Communications, Community building, Humour, Language, Media, Movement building,

PRINCIPLE

WE ARE ALL LEADERS

Let's all be leaders. Let's be leaderful, not leaderless.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

"LET'S BE LEADERFUL, NOT LEADERLESS."

"They surrounded the boat, and when they lowered the gangplank, Sheriff McGray walked to the end of it and said, 'Who are your leaders here?' And they shouted back with one voice: 'We are all leaders here!' Well, that scared the tar out of the law, you know . . ."

—Utah Phillips

What is the difference between saying "none of us is a leader" and saying "we are all leaders"? At first glance these two phrases may seem like two ways of saying the same thing, which is essentially, "We believe in organizing in a way that is more horizontal than vertical. We believe in equalizing participation and resisting social hierarchies." But the word *leadership* can mean a lot of things, and not all involve the creation of hierarchies. *Taking leadership* can mean *taking initiative* on moving a project or task forward, or *taking responsibility* for recognizing what is needed, and stepping up individually or collectively to do that thing.

It is important, in other words, to distinguish between *horizontal* organization and *disorganization*, and to foster models of dispersed leadership that promote responsibility, accountability, and effectiveness.

This is not just a matter of semantics. If we are part of a group that boasts of having no leaders, participants may be overly hesitant about stepping up to take initiative for fear of being seen as a "leader", which would be a bad thing. If we really want to change the world, we need more people stepping up to take initiative, not less. The more initiative we each take in our work together, the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Justice for Janitors
- Lysistrata Project
- Nuit Debout
- Occupy Wall Street
- Québec Student Strike
- Standing Man
- #ThisFlag
- Trail of Dreams
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Distributed action
- Forum theatre
- General strike

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Change is the only constant
- Consensus is a means, not an

greater our collective capacity will be. Building our collective power is one of the most important challenges of grassroots organizing.

We need to build a culture where we're all invited to step up. This means stepping up in ways that make space for *others* to step up — where others feel invited to step up and take initiative, too.

"Stepping up" can mean actively listening to and learning from others. It can mean taking time to recognize and value many different forms of leadership in the group. And it can mean looking for and nurturing leadership potential in others, who may not feel entitled to step forward uninvited or unsupported.

A culture that values healthy leadership is one that also prizes accountability, in which we are responsible for and accountable to one another. But this focus on accountability must go hand-in-hand with a group culture that values leadership. Otherwise we may develop a "circular firing squad" mentality in which we waste our energy cutting each other down for taking initiative.

We need a movement where we are constantly encouraging each other to step into our full potential and shine as a collective of leaders working together for a better world. Let's all be leaders. Let's be leaderful, not leaderless.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Empowerment Manual
Starhawk, 2011

<https://books.google.com/books?id=JTz0AgAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership: A Guide for Organizations in Changing Times

Berit Lakey, George Lakey, Rob Napier, Janice Robinson, 1995
<http://a.co/6uC6uGy>

Resource Manual For A Living Revolution

Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser & Christopher Moore, 1977

<https://www.amazon.com/Resource-Manual-Living-Revolution-Virginia/dp/B000JWGH8I>

end

- Delegate
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Fail forward
- Make new folks welcome
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Training for the win
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Dunbar's number
- Gerontocracy
- Palace Coup
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Temporary autonomous zone
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Baraza
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Community building, Democracy, Movement building

PRINCIPLE

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME STRUCTURE WITH YOUR MOMENTUM?

Success comes from incorporating the strengths of both mass protests and structure-based organizing — so that outbreaks of widespread revolt complement long-term organizing.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mark Engler

Mark Engler, a writer based in Philadelphia, is an editorial board member at *Dissent*, and a contributing editor at *Yes! Magazine*. He is co-author, with Paul Engler, of *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (Nation Books).

Paul Engler

Paul Engler is founding director of the Center for the Working Poor, based in Los Angeles, and cofounder of Momentum Training, which trains hundreds of activists each year in the principles of "momentum" driven organizing. He is co-author, with Mark Engler, of *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (Nation Books).

“THE CHALLENGE HERE IS HOW TO COMBINE EXPLOSIVE SHORT-TERM UPRISINGS WITH LONG-TERM ORGANIZING TO MAKE MOVEMENTS MORE SUSTAINABLE.”

“You don’t organize movements; you build organizations, and if movements emerge, you may catch their energy and grow. Occupy Wall Street moved the ball farther in three months than a lot of us did in three decades.”

—Dan Cantor

Over time, a gulf has emerged between two different approaches to creating social change.

Organizers in the labour movement and in community-based organizations typically focus on person-by-person recruitment, careful leadership development, and the creation of stable institutional bodies that can leverage the power of their members over time. As an organizing tradition, this approach can be described as one based on *structure*.

In contrast, broad-based revolts like those that rocked the world in 2011 were marked by unruly and widespread disobedience, undertaken outside the confines of any formal organization. This approach emphasizes the disruptive power of mass mobilizations that coalesce quickly, draw in participants not previously involved in organizing, and leave elites scrambling to adjust to a new political landscape. This tradition can be dubbed *mass protest*.

The divide between *structure* and *mass protest* or between long-

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil’s Free Fare Movement
- Honk at Parliament
- Nuit Debout
- Schools of Struggle
- Stop Praver Plan
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Distributed action
- General strike
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Burn brightly, but don’t burn

term organization and disruptive uprisings, runs deep through social movement history. It's not that one of these approaches is right and the other wrong; both have their strengths and weaknesses. The trick for organizers is to figure out how their strengths can be used in tandem — so that long-term organizing and outbreaks of widespread revolt build off one another.

Unfortunately, there's often distrust in both directions that must first be overcome. Advocates of mass protest are wary of the transactional politics of structure-based organizing and the tactical accommodations with power-holders that such politics tend to promote. They wonder how even a long string of incremental victories will ever add up to any meaningful change in the rules of the game. Meanwhile, structure-based organizers are typically wary of movement mobilizations because disruptive power is hard to understand and even harder to direct. Can outbreaks of mass defiance really be intentionally triggered and magnified? If so, how, exactly?

Fortunately, the world of social movement thinking is now experiencing a renaissance on this front, with traditions of strategic nonviolence providing critical practical insights into how to orchestrate disruptive protest. It's not just about ripe or unripe *conditions* over which organizers have little control, but about the *skills* organizers can bring to help shape mass mobilization. These skills include the ability to recognize when the terrain for protest is fertile, the talent for staging creative and provocative acts of civil disobedience, the capacity for intelligently escalating (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically) once a mobilization is under way, and the foresight to make sure that short-term cycles of disruption contribute to furthering longer-term goals.

Many new activists are drawn into politics through the energy of a mass mobilization but are disappointed when these movements suddenly decline, as they inevitably do. The challenge here is how to combine explosive short-term uprisings with long-term organizing to make movements more sustainable. Coming from the opposite perspective, veteran community organizers who have recently experienced the tremendous momentum that disruptive outbreaks can generate — even if much of it is fleeting — have been willing to reconsider their focus on organizations at the expense of movements.

A focus on mass protest need not deny the importance of building organizational structures, just as an appreciation of structure does not preclude support for widespread mobilization during periods of peak activity. An organizing model that integrates the two asks: *What can organizers do to maximize the long-term impact of disruptive power?*

LEARN MORE

out

- Create many points of entry
- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use state power to build people power
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Palace Coup
- Participatory democracy
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- The NGO-ization of resistance

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Capitalism, Community building, Democracy, Dictatorship, Direct action, Elections, , Movement building, Nonviolence, Street protest

This is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt is Shaping the 21st
Century

ThisIsAnUprising.org, 2016

<http://thisisanuprising.org/>

Dan Cantor's Machine

The American Prospect, January/February 2014

<http://prospect.org/article/meet-working-families-party-whose-ballot-line-play-new-york>

Movement Net Lab

<http://movementnetlab.org/about-us/>

THEORY ACTION LOGIC

Your action should speak for itself. Its inner logic should be obvious to the outside eye. When a protest has good action logic, its dramatic challenge to power tells a clear and compelling story.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“IT MAY SOUND PARADOXICAL, BUT IT OFTEN REQUIRES LOTS OF THOUGHT AND CARE TO DESIGN ACTIONS THAT MAKE INTUITIVE SENSE.”

“Actions speak louder than words.”
—Ruckus Society motto

Have you ever looked at a protest and wondered what the heck these people were so angry about? Perhaps it was a bunch of kids blockading an intersection. Who are they? What do they want?

With good action logic, nobody needs to ask those questions; an outsider can look at what you’re doing and immediately understand why you’re doing it. For example, people doing a tree-sit so the forest cannot be cut down — the logic is clear and obvious. The action speaks for itself.

Action logic creates powerful stories that move hearts and change minds. Not only is it true that actions speak louder than words, but, particularly in a hostile media climate where activists are often flagrantly misrepresented, it’s important that our actions speak for themselves. It may sound paradoxical, but it often requires lots of thought and care to design actions that make intuitive sense.

Civil disobedience actions — for example the lunch counter sit-ins of the American civil rights movement — tend to have inherent action logic because their purpose is to violate an unjust law in order to highlight exactly that injustice. However, other forms of direct action, which sometimes break laws unrelated to their goal, often need to do some extra work to achieve clear action logic.

Communicative actions (see: THEORY: Expressive and instrumental actions) also need to foster action logic. The pedestrian death puppets action, in which student activists hung full-sized human foam core cut-outs over a dangerous highway in Beirut to draw

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil’s Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Citizens’ Posse
- Couple in the Cage
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Disrupting Obama’s town hall in Myanmar
- Flower Speech Campaign
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Honk at Parliament
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Lysistrata Project
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Round Dance Revolution
- Schools of Struggle
- Standing Man
- Stolen Beauty

attention to pedestrian fatalities, had powerful action logic. So did the single moms in Rhode Island, US, who pressured a public housing official for a day care centre by not just sitting-in at his office, but bringing their kids with them and, for a few hours, turning his office into the daycare centre they needed (see: [STORY: Daycare Centre Sit-In](#)).

Most successful actions have this kind of inherent, transparent logic. They speak for themselves. When your action has this kind of clarity at its core, then no matter how the target responds or how things play out, the action will continue to make your point and make sense to observers.

Most famous application: The lunch counter sit-ins during the civil rights movement had remarkable action logic. When legal segregation was enforced, black and white students violated the law by sitting at lunch counters and waiting to be served. Any outsider looking at the act immediately knew why they were there. They didn't need to carry signs. In fact, their action foreshadowed victory and prefigured the world they wanted to live in: They were living the integration they wanted.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Re:Imagining Change — How to Use Story-based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World

PM Press, 2010

http://secure.pmpress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=199

- Stop Praver Plan
- Streets Into Gardens
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Trail of Dreams
- Who Would Accept?
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- Yomango

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Cultural disobedience
- Eviction blockade
- Flotilla
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Hunger strike
- Identity correction
- Infiltration
- Inflatables
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Media-jacking
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation
- Phone blockade
- Public filibuster
- Storytelling
- Subversive travel
- Trek

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Bring the issue home
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Don't fall in love with your tactics

- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make the invisible visible
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Stay on message
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Think narratively
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing
- Hamoq and hamas
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Art,

Communications, Direct action,
Media, Social media, Street
protest

THEORY

AL FAZA'A (A SURGE OF SOLIDARITY)

A key segment of your supporters will only join at peak moments of your campaign — usually in response to an external event — and then disappear again. To win, you must be ready to make the most of this surge.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Safa' Al Jayoussi

Safa' Al Jayoussi is a leading environmentalist and an activist in the field of climate and energy campaigns in the Arab world. She has launched and implemented major campaigns including an anti-nuclear campaign in Jordan and a major campaign during and prior to COP21 to advocate and mobilize for a new climate agreement signed by Arab leaders.

“LIFTED BY A HUGE SURGE OF SUPPORT, YOU CAN TRANSFORM YOUR CAMPAIGN.”

“Beware the level-headed person if they're angry.”
—Arabic proverb

Most people do not feel the need to act in circumstances they see as normal. However, a specific event — a brave act of resistance; or a disputed election, corruption scandal, or police beating — can serve as an emotional trigger, moving people to respond en masse and join actions to address the problem. They come in large numbers, with new ideas and energy, and boost your campaign for a brief while. These moments are often amplified by media, particularly social media, as trending topics generate even more attention and interest in the campaign. People's enthusiasm is often momentary, however, which can make it difficult to retain their support once the external element of emergency that drew them to act recedes.

An example of this phenomenon is Greenpeace's "Jordan Is Not Nuclear" campaign, which sought to stop the construction of a nuclear facility in Jordan in 2011. The number of people who were active in the campaign prior to the Fukushima disaster of 2011, which saw the partial meltdown of a nuclear reactor in Japan following a major earthquake and tidal wave, was very small compared to the number of people who were inspired to act immediately following the disaster. Thirty thousand Jordanians, including many Jordanian tribes, joined the movement in the aftermath of the disaster. They joined *al faza'a* (a surge of solidarity) to save their country out of fear that a similar nuclear disaster might

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Earth First!
- Fees Must Fall
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Honk at Parliament
- Manich Msamah
- Nuit Debout
- Québec Student Strike
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Welcome to Palestine
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink

Tactics

befall them if the facility were built.

There are many other examples in recent history, including the public outcry at the 2012 gang rape in Delhi, the mass outrage after the self-immolation of the Tunisian street vendor that sparked that country's revolution and set off the Arab Spring, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US, and so many others.

Al faza'a, in its traditional sense, is perceived as a positive trait among Arabs because it implies solidarity and friendship. Nonetheless, it presents challenges to modern campaigns because the vast majority of supporters are drawn by external events, and therefore may not share the strategic vision or values of your campaign. The key is to know what to expect and to make the most of the skills and talents that are suddenly available to you.

Lifted by a huge surge of support, you can transform your campaign from a specialist discussion going on behind closed doors among a small number of activists into a matter of public opinion (see: STORY: Stolen Gas Campaign). Use your strength of numbers to shift the balance of power and pressure decision makers to heed your demands. Also, seize the opportunity to identify potential leaders and activists and recruit them to your campaign.

Eventually, the surge dissipates, so it's wise to set your expectations early on. Instead of being disappointed when the momentum wanes, take advantage of the opportunity to build connections with those who have specific skills or networks that may support you later on (see: PRINCIPLE: Would you like some structure with your momentum?).

LEARN MORE

Arab Spring: A Research and Study Guide
Cornell University Library, 2011
<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31688&p=200748>

Solidarity with the Palestinian Popular Resistance
Mondoweiss, 2015
<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/10/solidarity-palestinian-resistance/>

Occupy Wall Street
<http://occupywallst.org/about/>

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- General strike
- Hashtag campaign
- Hunger strike
- Lamentation
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Anyone can act
- Create many points of entry
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Foster safer spaces
- Make new folks welcome
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Training for the win
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Hamoq and hamas
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Palace Coup
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- The Global South
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies
- SWOT

TAGS

Austerity, Climate justice, Colonialism, War and peace, Human rights, International

| solidarity, Corruption, Racial
justice

THEORY

ALIENATION EFFECT

Bertolt Brecht's method for using innovative theatrical techniques to "make the familiar strange" in order to provoke a social analysis and a critical response from the audience.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Larry Bogad

Larry Bogad is a lifelong creative strategist (guided and goaded by Harpo, Groucho, and Zero), co-founder of the Rebel Clown Army, founding director of the Center for Artistic Activism (West Coast), and professor of political performance at the University of California, Davis. He writes, performs, and strategizes with the Yes Men, Agit-Pop, and La Pocha Nostra.

"THE ALIENATION EFFECT ATTEMPTS TO COMBAT EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION IN THE THEATER, REPLACING IT WITH AN ENTERTAINING OR SURPRISING JOLT."

"Sometimes it's more important to be human than to have good taste."

—Bertolt Brecht

Bertolt Brecht, German leftist playwright and director, had nothing but disdain for the conventional, commercial, "bourgeois" theater of his time. He considered it a "branch of the narcotics business." Why? The theater of his time, like most Hollywood movies now, relied on emotional manipulation to bring about a suspension of disbelief for the audience, along with an emotional identification with the main character. Audience members were taken on an uncritical emotional roller coaster ride, crying when the main character cried, laughing when s/he laughed — identifying with him/her even when the character had nothing in common with them or their interests (working-class audiences swooningly identifying with a Prince of Denmark, for example).

Brecht saw that these audiences were manipulated by theater technology — beautiful and realistic sets, cleverly naturalistic lighting, the imaginary fourth wall, and most importantly, emotionally effusive acting techniques. He soon watched with horror as the Nazi movement gained popular support in his country with its racist, xenophobic demagoguery, relying on similar emotional manipulation. Emotional manipulation was, to him, Enemy Number One of human decency.

It was in this context that Brecht developed his theory of

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Billionaires for Bush
- Couple in the Cage
- Honk at Parliament
- Mining the Museum
- Santa Claus Army
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Creative disruption
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Forum theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Identity correction
- Image theatre
- Media-jacking

Principles

Verfremdungseffekt, also known as V-effekt, alienation effect, or distantiating effect. (Important disclaimer: There is compelling evidence that many of Brecht's greatest ideas were developed in uncredited cooperation with his artistic partners).

The alienation effect attempts to combat emotional manipulation in the theater, replacing it with an entertaining or surprising jolt. For instance, rather than investing in or "becoming" their characters, actors might emotionally step away and demonstrate them with cool, witty, and skillful self-critique. The director could "break the fourth wall" and expose the technology of the theater to the audience in amusing ways. Or a technique known as the "social gest" could be used to expose unjust social power relationships so the audience sees these relationships in a new way. The social gest is an exaggerated gesture or action that is not to be taken literally but which critically demonstrates a social relationship or power imbalance. For example, workers in a corporate office may suddenly and quickly drop to the floor and kowtow to the CEO, or the women in a household may suddenly start to move in fast-motion, cleaning the house, while the men slowly yawn and loaf around.

By showing the instruments of theater and how they can be manipulative — for example, the actor calling out "Cue the angry red spotlight!" before he shrieks with rage, or "Time for the gleeful violin" before dancing happily as the violinist joins him on stage, or visibly dabbing water on his eyes when he is supposed to cry — the audience can be entertained without being manipulated. Many of Brecht's techniques have been co-opted and incorporated into contemporary bourgeois theater and film, though his challenge remains relevant: how to confront the problem of emotional manipulation while creating a stimulating, surprising, entertaining, radically critical, popularly appealing, and accessible social art practice.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic

Bertolt Brecht, trans. John Willett, 1964

https://books.google.com/books/about/Brecht_on_Theatre.html?id=shBEabmZMrcC

Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice (entry on Brecht, Bertolt)

Gary L. Anderson, Kathryn G. Herr, 2007

<https://books.google.com/books?id=fy11AwAAQBAJ&q=Brecht%2C+#v=snippet&q=Brecht%2C&f=false>

- Balance art and message
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Capitalism
- Ethical spectacle
- Framing
- Postcolonialism
- Society of the spectacle
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Art, Humour, Communications, Education

THEORY

ANTI-OPPRESSION

Anti-oppression practice provides a framework for constructively addressing and transforming oppressive dynamics as they play out in our organizing.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Dave Oswald Mitchell

Dave is the Editorial Director of Beautiful Trouble and a co-editor of Beautiful Rising.

Lisa Fithian

Lisa Fithian has organized since 1975, weaving together strategic creative nonviolent actions, anti-oppression work, and sustainable practices in student, environmental justice, workers rights, and peace and global justice struggles. Whether it was shutting down the CIA, White House, Supreme Court or the WTO, or working on Justice of Janitors, Camp Casey, Common Ground Relief or Wall Street banks, Lisa has supported tens of thousands of people in accessing their power and gaining the experience and skills they need to fight for justice, no matter how great or small the cause.

“OUR OPPRESSIVE ACTIONS DIMINISH US, DIVIDE US, AND INHIBIT OUR ABILITY TO ORGANIZE BROAD-BASED, EMANCIPATORY MOVEMENTS.”

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up in mine, then let us work together.”

—Lila Watson

Activist groups sometimes make the mistake of assuming that challenging oppression (the unjust exercise of power or authority) is what they naturally do; that we are inherently anti-oppressive merely because of our intention to do away with oppressive structures. Unfortunately the situation is much more complex, and we often ignore that complexity at our peril.

We have been socialized in cultures founded upon multiple forms and overlapping layers of oppression, often leading us to inadvertently perpetuate dehumanizing behaviors, situations, and structures. Our oppressive actions diminish us, divide us, and inhibit our ability to organize broad-based, emancipatory movements.

In order to build a domination-free world, we propose for discussion the following tenets and practices hoping they can provide a solid foundation for advancing our work and deepening our interpersonal relationships (see: PRINCIPLE: Foster safer

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Mining the Museum
- Taco Bell Boycott

Tactics

- Forum theatre
- Image theatre
- Invisible theatre
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Beware the tyranny of

spaces).

Tenets * Power and privilege can play out in our group dynamics in destructive ways. For the good of all, we must challenge words and actions that marginalize, exclude, or dehumanize others. * We can only identify the ways that power and privilege play out when we are conscious and committed to understanding how white supremacy, patriarchy, classism, heterosexism, and other embedded systems of oppression affect us all. * Until we are clearly committed to anti-oppression practice, all forms of oppression will continue to divide and weaken our movements. * Developing anti-oppression practices is life-long work (see: PRINCIPLE: Change is the only constant). No single workshop is sufficient for unlearning our socialization within a culture built on multiple forms of oppression. * Dialogue, discussion, and reflection are some of the tools through which we overcome oppressive attitudes, behaviours, and situations in our groups. Anti-oppression work requires active listening, non-defensiveness, and respectful communication.

Personal practices * Challenge yourself to be courageously honest and open, and willing to take risks and make yourself vulnerable in order to address racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressive dynamics head-on. * When you witness, experience, or commit an abuse of power or oppression, address it as proactively as the situation permits, either one-on-one or with a few allies, keeping in mind that the goal is to encourage positive change. * Challenge the behaviour, not the person. Be sensitive and promote open dialogue. * When someone offers criticism in an oppressive framework, treat it as a gift rather than an attack. Give people the benefit of the doubt. * Be willing to lose a friend, but try not to “throw away” people who mess up. Help them take responsibility for making reparations for their behaviour, and be willing to extend forgiveness in return. * Take on the grunt work that often falls on women, especially women of colour. This includes the work of cooking, cleaning, set up, clean up, phone calls, e-mail, taking notes, doing support work, sending mailings. * Understand that you will feel discomfort as you face your part in oppression, and realize that this is a necessary part of the process. We must support each other and be gentle with each other in this process (see: PRINCIPLE: Seek safety in support networks). * Don't feel guilty, feel responsible. Being part of the problem doesn't mean you can't be an active part of the solution. * Contribute time and energy to building healthy relationships, both personal and political.

Organizational practices * Commit time to facilitated discussions on discrimination and oppression. * Set anti-oppression goals and continually evaluate whether or not you are meeting them. * Create opportunities for people to develop anti-oppression skills and practices. * Promote egalitarian group development by prioritizing skill shares and an equitable division of roles, responsibilities, and recognition. * Respect different styles of leadership and

structurelessness

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Change is the only constant
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Focus on basic needs
- Foster safer spaces
- Make new folks welcome
- Make the invisible visible
- Praxis makes perfect
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Take risks, but take care
- Training for the win
- Use others' prejudices against them
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Ethical spectacle
- Feminism
- Gerontocracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Community building, Movement building, Gender and sexuality, Racial justice, Wealth inequality, Women's rights

communication. * Don't push historically marginalized people to do things because of their oppressed group (tokenism); base it on their work, experience, and skills. * Make a collective commitment to hold everyone accountable for their behaviour so that the organization can be a safe and nurturing place for all.

The work outlined here, learned over time from many teachers, is adapted from "Anti-Oppression Principles & Practices" by Lisa Fithian, itself compiled from the "Anti-Racism Principles and Practices" by RiseUp DAN-LA, "Overcoming Masculine Oppression" by Bill Moyers, and the FEMMAFESTO by a women's affinity group in Philadelphia.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Anti-oppression Resources and Exercises

Alliance of Community Trainers

<https://organizingforpower.wordpress.com/power/anti-oppression-resources-exercises/>

Colours of Resistance Archive

<http://www.coloursofresistance.org/>

Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit

Race Forward, 2013

<https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>

THEORY ARTIVISM

Artivism, the intersection of art and activism, harnesses the critical imagination to design events and strategies that provoke new questions and new meaning in pursuit of more respectful ways of being.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Gabriela León

Gabriela León works with different media normally in collaboration with others. She is interested in the interaction between her art practices and the political and social reality of her community. She has co-created and currently co-directs projects like [La Perrera] (The Doghouse), Pájaros en el Alambre (Birds on the Wire) and Cochera en Servicio (Garage in Service).

Artivism = art + activism is a formula that raises more questions than answers. Are we talking about a fuller understanding of activism? About socially responsible art? About direct action done in a fun, happy, and peaceful way that speaks to the heart as well as the head?

Artivism, as I understand it, operates from the intersection of the “expanded fields” (a term coined by critic and contemporary art theorist Rosalind Krauss in relation to sculpture, and is a concept widely explored in contemporary art) of art and activism to create scenarios that advance social criticism. Working from this intersection allows for the creation of “liminal scenarios, events when life and art, the ethical condition and aesthetic creation, cross paths,” in order to put forward other forms of political activity. Artist actions began to be popular in the late 90s, though they have obvious precedents throughout the history of social and artistic movements, including the situationism interwoven with the revolutionary movements of May 1968, “zapatismo” in Mexico, the uprising of 2006 in Oaxaca, and the Occupy movements in Madrid and Wall Street in 2011.

The forms artivism takes change according to its historical context, and its use of technology and media. But in general, artivism harnesses the critical imagination to design events and strategies that provoke new questions and new meaning in pursuit of more respectful ways of being.

LEARN MORE

Artist Guide

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Conflict Kitchen
- Couple in the Cage
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Lysistrata Project
- Mining the Museum
- Orange Alternative
- PARK(ing) Day
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Standing Man
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament

Tactics

- Creative petition delivery
- Culture jamming

Kevin Buckland, 350.org, 2011

[https://issuu.com/350.org/docs/activist-guide-formatted?
backgroundColor=%2523222222](https://issuu.com/350.org/docs/activist-guide-formatted?backgroundColor=%2523222222)

- Currency hacking
- Enforced appearance
- Forum theatre
- Graffiti drone
- Guerrilla marketing
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Inflatables
- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Music video
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Do the media's work for them
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Use humour to undermine authority
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Critical multiculturalism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Postcolonialism

Methodologies

- Artstorm
- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Art, Humour,
Nonviolence, Pranks

THEORY

BALTAJIAH (THUGS)

A common political formation shows up across the Arab World: an often marginalized grouping of individuals that the government can call on to momentarily disrupt movements seeking change.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ahmad Kassawneh

Ahmad Kassawneh is a campaign and advocacy expert, and the founder and vice secretary general of the Jordanian National Youth political party. In recent years he has managed several humanitarian and political campaigns in the Middle East and Europe, including several multi-million-dollar humanitarian fundraisers.

“BY UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVES OF *BALTAJIAH* AND STRATEGIZING WAYS TO ENGAGE THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS WITH OUR KINDNESS AND CREATIVITY, WE MIGHT COMPEL THEM TO RETHINK THEIR BLIND OBEDIENCE, AND NEUTRALIZE THEIR WORST TENDENCIES.”

“And so now . . . [the despot] collects 10,000 loafers who are to impersonate the people as Snug the Joiner does the lion.”

—Karl Marx

Across the Middle East and North Africa, tribes often maintain loyalty and close ties to protect themselves from oppression. The state cunningly takes advantage of this defence-mechanism dynamic to transform blind loyalty into an instrument of oppression they can use for their own purposes.

Baltajiah, which is derived from the Arabic word *balta* meaning axe, is the name Egyptians give to pro-regime supporters used by the state to uphold its apparatus. In other countries they are called different names. In Syria: *shabiha*, which is derived from the word *shabah*, meaning ghost, because the thugs dress as normal civilians and emerge anonymously from within the crowd to cause a disruption. In Jordan and Palestine: *sahijieh*, from the root word *sahja*, or clapping, originating from a type of bedouin dance, and referring to the act of mindlessly applauding the regime despite its faults.

These groups can be manipulated to take advantage of the internal conflicts and social divisions among different ideologies, religions, and sects within a society. They are mostly unorganized and marginalized, and come together temporarily to disrupt people

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle of the Camel
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Foster safer spaces
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Seek safety in support networks
- Turn the tables
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Cultural hegemony

seeking change. In turn, they are supported and empowered by the state, and thus become its blind followers regardless of its merit or broader legitimacy.

In some countries, the state rewards such groups with monetary and non-monetary benefits in order to maintain their loyalty and to be able to mobilize them as they wish. The thugs are particularly useful to these governments, because it's a way for them to use force and violence to disrupt change and deter activism without being held accountable by the broader society, the international community, human rights organizations, or other relevant bodies. (The crimes, after all, were committed by the baltajiah, not by anyone in a government uniform.)

The widespread use of these groups was starkly evident in the way states responded to the uprisings that swept the Arab world in 2011. Regime after regime used thugs to deter, or at least attempt to deter, people from joining the protests. But under the hot glare of media coverage (especially social media), the tactic backfired, instead increasing sympathy for the protesters and drawing yet more people into the streets. This was most true in Egypt and Tunisia. Unfortunately, however, things turned out quite differently in Syria, where the violence of the state proved stronger than the power of free speech, leading to civil war, or in Jordan, where the state successfully used thugs and other tactics to dissolve the popular movement.

Activists in the Middle East/North Africa region need to be aware of how the state uses thugs as an instrument of control; we need to better understand the risks, develop preemptive strategies to confront and disarm them (literally or figuratively), and learn how to spot thugs and avoid colliding with them. By understanding the motives of baltajiah and strategizing ways to engage their hearts and minds with our kindness and creativity, we might compel them to rethink their blind obedience, and neutralize their worst tendencies. Furthermore, if the tactic backfires on the state, we should be ready to take advantage of that moment by mobilizing people who share our principles but are not yet active in our campaign (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies).

LEARN MORE

Baltajiah

Information International, 2011

<http://www.information-international.com/index.php/editorials/jawad-adra/622-baltajiah>

Shabiha

Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabiha>

This Is Just a Warning: Pro-Regime Gunmen Break Syrian

- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Hamoq and hamas
- Palace Coup
- Strategic nonviolence
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Corruption, Dictatorship, State violence, Street protest

Cartoonist's Hands

The Star, 2011

http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2011/08/25/this_is_just_a_warning_proregime_gunmen_break_syrian_cartoonists_hands.html

Pro-Regime Thugs Attack Hong Kong Protesters

Socialist Alternative

<http://www.socialistalternative.org/2014/10/06/pro-regime-thugs-attack-hong-kong-protesters/>

Jordan Revolt Renewed

Socialist Review, 2012

<http://socialistreview.org.uk/375/jordan-revolt-renewed>

Egypt Revolution Turns Ugly as Mubarak Fights Back

The Guardian, 2011

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/02/egypt-revolution-turns-ugly>

THEORY CAPITALISM

Capitalism is a profit-driven economic system that, in spite of its supposed material benefits, is rooted in inequality, exploitation, dispossession, and environmental destruction.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jeffery R. Webber

Jeffery R. Webber teaches politics at Queen Mary, University of London, is a socialist activist, and sits on the editorial boards of *Historical Materialism*, *Latin American Perspectives*, and *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*. He is the author of *Red October: Left-Indigenous Struggles in Modern Bolivia* (Brill), and *From Rebellion to Reform in Bolivia: Class Struggle, Indigenous Liberation and the Politics of Evo Morales* (Haymarket, 2011).

“FOR THE SAKE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND ECOLOGICAL SANITY IT NEEDS TO BE OVERTHROWN”

“Capitalism turns men and women into economic cannibals, and having done so, mistakes economic cannibalism for human nature.”
—Edward Hyman

“Capitalists don’t control capital; capital controls capitalists.”
—Unknown

The cause of the economic crisis that began in 2008 is not inadequate regulation of the free market, but runs far deeper. The global slump we are living through is the predictable manifestation of a crisis-prone economic system rooted in production for profit rather than for human need. That economic system is called capitalism, and for the sake of human development and ecological sanity it needs to be overthrown. But to be overthrown, it must first be understood.

Capitalism is an economic system in which almost anything we need or want must be bought on the market, and in which most of us have nothing to sell but our labour. Capitalism is not a thing, but a social relation between capital and labour that divides humanity into two principal social classes: the capitalist class, or bourgeoisie, which owns the means of production (tools, resources, land), and the working class, or proletariat, which does not have access to the means of production and therefore must sell its own labour power, or ability to work.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Billionaires for Bush
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Fees Must Fall
- Gezi Park iftar
- Manich Msamah
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- Nuit Debout
- Occupy Wall Street
- Santa Claus Army
- Street Graduation
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March
- Who Would Accept?
- Yomango
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Currency hacking
- Debt strike

The laws of competition and profit-maximization govern the capitalist market. Each enterprise exists alongside many others that are all producing similar products or services. Each needs to outperform the others, minimizing costs and maximizing profit, or they will be driven into bankruptcy. Technological innovation is one way to cut costs. Compelling employees to work harder and longer for less is another.

Capitalists' drive to expand propels economic growth, but at a certain point, production exceeds demand, and there are too many factories and mills producing the same thing for every firm to be profitable. This is the recurring crisis of overaccumulation and profitability into which capitalism enters. While profits during the expansive phase are privatized in the pockets of owners, the costs of crisis are socialized through austerity measures, unemployment, and poverty (see: THEORY: Neoliberalism).

Capitalists are indifferent to the commodities they produce so long as the need to generate profit is fulfilled (see: THEORY: Commodity fetishism). Solar energy or tar sands oil, cluster bombs or malaria medication, it does not matter what is produced or what purpose it serves, so long as it is profitable. Capitalism in this sense means production for exchange (profit) instead of production for use (human need and ecological sustainability). The moral perversity of this dynamic is played out daily in an economy that produces luxury cars and gourmet pet food for a few, while allowing the reproduction of almost unthinkable levels of global hunger and poverty (see: THEORY: Poverty), with more than one billion people living on less than USD \$1 per day, and another billion and a half on under USD \$2.

In sum, capitalism means waste, poverty, ecological degradation, dispossession, inequality, exploitation, imperialism, war, and violence. We need to build mass movements to replace it with an economic system based on production for human need and ecological sustainability, with participatory and democratic planning, worker and community self-management, and international solidarity.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Video: Crises of Capitalism
YouTube, animated lecture by David Harvey, 2010
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOP2V_np2c0

Sex, Race and Class
Selma James, 1975
<http://libcom.org/library/sex-race-class-james-selma>

Capitalism vs. the Climate

- Divestment
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Identity correction
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Reverse graffiti

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Solidarity, not aid

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony
- Debt revolt
- Decolonization
- Environmental justice
- Framing
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Africanism
- Poverty
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Society of the spectacle
- The commons
- The Global South
- The shock doctrine

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Colonialism, Corruption, Environment, Housing, Labour, Land use, Privatization, Policy, War and peace, Wealth

THEORY

COMMODITY FETISHISM

Money, debt, property rights, and markets are not unchangeable facts, but symbolic systems based in social relationships. Activists should inspire radical hope by exposing that they can and should be changed.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Zack Malitz

Zack Malitz, a New Yorker, thinks that fossil fuels belong underground.

“FOR MARX, THE IMPORTANT TRUTHS OF ECONOMICS COULD ALL BE FOUND IN THE GRITTY PROCESS OF PRODUCTION, IN THE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ACTUALLY WORKED AND LIVED.”

Commodity fetishism is the collective belief that it is natural and inevitable to measure the value of useful things with money. Marx coined the term to mock political economists who believed that carefully studying economic systems would eventually yield a set of natural laws comparable to those found in physics or chemistry.

In a regrettably racist outburst in *Capital*, Marx compared the political economists of his day to “primitive” people who attributed magical powers to ordinary objects — stones, wood carvings, weapons, or, in the case of the economists, physical currency. Their theories, Marx fumed, amounted to little more than a superstitious belief that animal spirits lurked in commodities, and moved markets by magic.

Marx was convinced that most economists barely scratch the surface of economic reality because they were entranced by its elaborate symbolism: money, debt, property rights, prices, and, in our time, ever more complicated methods for computing risk. For Marx, the important truths of economics could all be found in the gritty process of production, in the places where people actually worked and lived. From the roaring machinery of the factory to the rat-infested hovels of the urban proletariat, from the collapse of rural social life to the actual distribution of natural resources, the most important aspects of capitalist society were all traceable back to political domination by a small class of property owners. What really mattered about the economy, in Marx’s view, was that the ruling class could rely on its military and police forces to resolve conflicts over ownership with violence.

Marx’s point remains relevant. By the middle of the twentieth century, orthodox economics had become a heavily quantitative discipline that took pride in its alleged scientific objectivity. At the heart of modern economics is the desire to devise models capable

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil’s Free Fare Movement
- Gezi Park iftar
- Occupy Wall Street
- Reclaim the Streets
- Streets Into Gardens
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation

Tactics

- Currency hacking
- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Messaggio nella banconota

Principles

- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Focus on basic needs
- Give voice to those that can’t speak
- Make the invisible visible

Theories

- Capitalism
- Debt revolt

of making accurate predictions about economic reality.

Consequently, economists are still dissecting the commodity market and studying it under a microscope to discern its secrets. They tend to be skeptical of collective decision-making and favorably disposed toward markets because they mistakenly attribute agency to money and markets, in effect believing that the market is moved by mysterious forces that, whether they are natural laws or animal spirits, humans simply cannot control.

The challenge for anyone who wants to radically change the world is to dispel the magical aura of the market and the attendant myth of human impotence. Markets don't have power or agency, people do. Think of what happens during a revolutionary general strike. People refuse to work or perform even basic social rituals. The state dissolves overnight and, for a miraculous instant, anything is possible. Banks could be public property, roads could be pedestrian thoroughfares, shopping districts could be spaces for political deliberation, and the government could really be for the people.

Anyone who asserts that there is something inevitable in the historical process has not studied the subject. The beginning of radical hope is the recognition that social relationships are arbitrary and mutable — and need not be mediated through monetary transactions.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Economy Grinds To Halt As Nation Realizes Money Is An Illusion
Ritholtz (originally published on *The Onion*), 2010
<http://ritholtz.com/2010/02/51920/>

- Direct action
- Framing
- Neoliberalism
- Prefigurative politics
- Society of the spectacle
- The commons

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Capitalism, Labour, Wealth inequality

THEORY

COMUNALIDAD (COMMUNALITY)

Comunalidad is a way of naming and describing the daily practice of coexistence in an autonomous collectivity, in the service of everyone, as practiced in the indigenous communities of Oaxaca, Mexico.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Melquiades (Kiado) Cruz

Kiado Cruz is a Zapotec activist and communications specialist from Yagavila, Oaxaca. He is the cofounder of Servicios Universitarios y Redes de Conocimiento en Oaxaca (SURCO A.C.).

"In the community there is no individual statement, only collective conglomerate producers of communal statements."

—Xtobako (Pablo Cruz), Yagavila, Oaxaca

Comunalidad (communality) is an autonomous community expression of the life of the Zapotec peoples in the Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico, and of numerous other non-indigenous rural communities. Communal life in these places is not just a coercive connection to a territory, but the real and symbolic process of a community exercising its political autonomy.

Communal life takes place in a territory considered sacred, composed of people, nature and supernatural forces whose relations are based on myths and other ritually mediated narratives. This territory, as a common good, is where one learns the sense of *comunalidad*, and the oral storytelling that describes it is what allows anyone to be able to understand and discuss issues related to the community.

The practice of *comunalidad* centers around four pillars of communal life: communal governance via the popular assembly; communal territory, or land held in common; communal celebration, or feast days; and communal work for the benefit of the whole. *Comunalidad* originates from the history of dispossession and extreme colonial exploitation of land, but its defense right now, as a form of production and life, stands as a real alternative of resistance against the new cycle of neoliberal capitalist accumulation.

LEARN MORE

New World of Indigenous Resistance
Edited by Noam Chomsky, Lois Meyer, and Benjamín Maldonado,
2010
<http://www.citylights.com/book/?GCOI=87286100162960>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Stripping Power in Uganda

Tactics

- Blockade
- Occupation

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Focus on basic needs
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Decolonization
- Dunbar's number

The Fourth Principle: Comunalidad

Chapter from *New World of Indigenous Resistance*, by Jaime Martinez Luna, 2010

http://realitysandwich.com/55644/the_fourth_principle_comunalidad/

Interweaving People and the Land: Choba-choba and Comunalidad

Kelly Teamey, Enlivened Learning, 2013

<http://enlivenedlearning.com/2013/02/28/inter-weaving-people-and-the-land-choba-choba-and-comunalidad/>

- Neoliberalism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Baraza

TAGS

Community building, Indigenous rights

THEORY

CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM

Critical multiculturalism disrupts power structures by challenging the subjugation of marginalized cultures, questioning power and privilege, and acknowledging knowledge as a process.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Graduate students at The Ohio State University

Michelle Attias, Youngaah Koh, Kate Bryant Nordstrom, Audrey Reeves, and Katie Owens Uelk are graduate students in The Ohio State University's program in Arts Administration, Education, and Policy. They collaboratively researched and wrote this piece as part of a "Critical Analysis of Multicultural Art Education" class, instructed by Joni Acuff.

"CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM DISRUPTS DOMINANT NARRATIVES THAT PRIVILEGE A SELECT GROUP, FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING A MORE JUST AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY."

"Until the story of the hunt is told by the lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

—Ewe/Mina proverb

If you grew up in the United States, did you celebrate Black History Month by reading stories about Harriet Tubman and eating "soul food" in the cafeteria for lunch? Did your teacher ever teach you about Native Americans, then proceed to help you make an intricately woven dreamcatcher that would filter out all of your bad dreams?

Liberal multiculturalism, illustrated by the above examples, has provided us with a framework for understanding both our unity and our diversity as members of the human race. However, the liberal approach to multiculturalism is limited by its focus on surface-level inclusion of superficial/exoticized aspects of a culture, without questioning structural systems of injustice and power. By failing to recognize embedded power structures and institutional inequities, liberal multiculturalism helps maintain the supremacy of dominant groups.

By contrast, *critical* multiculturalism seeks to acknowledge, question, and ultimately disrupt embedded power structures. At its core, critical multiculturalism highlights structural inequities for the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Fees Must Fall
- Gezi Park iftar
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Mining the Museum
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- Walk a mile in her shoes
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Forum theatre
- Identity correction
- Image theatre
- Invisible theatre

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Beware the tyranny of

purpose of redistributing power more equitably across society. It confronts race, class, gender, and other normative biases in order to improve educational, economic, and social outcomes for everyone, not just the dominant group.

Although there are many facets of critical multiculturalism, here are three core tenets that educators can use to challenge existing narratives built into standard curricula, and to equip students to critically question and transform societal inequities:

Culture and subjugation Subjugation of cultures occurs when the cultural values and beliefs of dominant groups are considered the norm, while the values and beliefs of non-dominant groups are “othered” and deemed inferior. Critical multiculturalism rejects the othering of marginalized groups by deconstructing the dominant narrative and amplifying voices that have historically been de-legitimized.

Power and domination Critical multiculturalism strives to shine a light on power and domination through the process of critical questioning (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible). This begins by asking what ideologies, beliefs, and grand narratives support and reinforce the power and privilege of a select group. Inequities around race, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and gender (any category of difference) can be identified when analyzing these master narratives. Critical multiculturalism encourages us to identify ways in which power and privilege shape our realities within education and society.

Knowledge and process Critical multiculturalism is not a packaged solution, but a process of asking questions as a way of being in the world. There is not one way of approaching critical multiculturalism; it emerges in dialogue with the changing world in which it is situated. Knowledge acquisition occurs when critical multiculturalists ask questions like, *For whom is the narrative written, whom does it serve, and who is omitted?*

There are many artist collectives, as well as individual artists whose work is illustrative of a practice of critical multiculturalism. For example, the Guerilla Girls, a feminist activist artist organization, expose and challenge the gender and racial biases reproduced within art museums by adding facts about racial and gender inequities to their billboard advertisements (see: TACTIC: Culture jamming). The artist known as Banksy fills cities with stenciled graffiti about contemporary racial and political injustices, while Ai Weiwei’s artwork challenges government cover-up and corruption. Each of these artists are exemplars of critical multiculturalism, as they all initiate conversations about voice, power, and equity.

Critical multiculturalism is essential for a democratic society because it calls upon people to consider, critique, and destabilize deep-rooted institutional structures that breed inequities. In essence, critical multiculturalism provides a framework of thinking

structurelessness

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Artivism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Intersectionality
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Gender and sexuality, Racial justice, Wealth inequality

that leads to a more just and equitable society.

LEARN MORE

Latino/a Art: Race and the Illusion of Equality

Art 21 Magazine, 2016

<http://blog.art21.org/2016/06/20/latinoa-art-race-and-the-illusion-of-equality/#.WEI5y6lrL-Y>

Beyond Multiculturalism

David E. Kirkland, A Will to Love, 2013

<https://davidekirkland.wordpress.com/2013/03/25/beyond-multiculturalism/>

Unpacking the Knapsack

Peggy McIntosh, Peace and Freedom Magazine, 1989

<http://code.ucsd.edu/pcosman/Backpack.pdf>

Teaching Tolerance

The Southern Poverty Law Center

<http://www.tolerance.org/>

Multicultural Learning

The National Association for Multicultural Education

<http://nameorg.org/learn/>

THEORY

CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Capital maintains hegemony not just through raw power (violence, laws, and property) but through culture, by shaping what feels like “common sense.” To create a new society, we must create a new common sense.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stephen Duncombe

Stephen Duncombe teaches the history and politics of media at New York University and is a lifelong political activist, co-founding a community-based advocacy group in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and working as an organizer for the NYC chapter of the international direct action group, Reclaim the Streets. He co-created the School for Creative Activism in 2011 and is presently co-director of the Center for Artistic Activism.

“WRAPPED IN STORIES AND IMAGES AND FIGURES OF SPEECH, CULTURE IS A POLITICS THAT DOESN’T LOOK LIKE POLITICS AND IS THEREFORE A LOT HARDER TO NOTICE, MUCH LESS RESIST.”

“The most obvious, important realities are often the ones that are hardest to see and talk about. Stated as an English sentence, of course, this is just a banal platitude, but the fact is that in the day to day trenches of adult existence, banal platitudes can have a life or death importance.”

—David Foster Wallace

Cultural hegemony is a term developed by Antonio Gramsci, activist, theorist, and founder of the Italian Communist party. Writing while imprisoned in a Fascist jail, Gramsci was concerned with how power works: how it is wielded by those in power and how it is won by those who want to change the system. The dominant idea at the time amongst Marxist radicals like himself was that in order to attain power you needed to seize the means of production and administration — that is, take over the factories and the state. But Gramsci recognized that this was not sufficient. In his youth, he had witnessed workers take over factories in Turin, only to hand them back within weeks because they were unsure what to do with the factories, or themselves. Gramsci had also observed the skill of the Catholic Church in exercising its power and retaining the population’s allegiance. Gramsci realized that in order to create and maintain a new society, you also needed to create and maintain a new consciousness. The repository of consciousness is culture. This

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Battle of the Camel
- Conflict Kitchen
- Countering Homophobic Policing
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Gezi Park iftar
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Honk at Parliament
- Mining the Museum
- Occupy Wall Street
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Santa Claus Army
- The Salt March
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- “You’ll never have a home in your f***ing life!”

includes both big-C Culture, culture in an aesthetic sense, and small-c culture, culture in an anthropological sense: the norms and mores and discourses that make up our everyday lives. Culture, in this sense, is what allows us to navigate our world, guiding our ideas of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, possible and impossible. You may be able to seize a factory or storm a palace, but unless this material power is backed up by a culture that reinforces the notion that what you are doing is good and beautiful and just and possible, then any gains on the economic, military, and political fronts are likely to be short-lived. Part of the power of cultural hegemony lies in its invisibility. Unlike a soldier with a gun or a political system backed up by a written constitution, culture resides within us. It doesn't seem "political," it's just what we like, or what we think is beautiful, or what feels comfortable. Wrapped in stories and images and figures of speech, culture is a politics that doesn't look like politics and is therefore a lot harder to notice, much less resist. When a culture becomes hegemonic, it becomes "common sense" for the majority of the population. No culture, however, is completely hegemonic. Even under the most complete systems of control, there are pockets of what Gramsci, and later Hall, called "counter-hegemonic" cultures: ways of thinking and doing that have revolutionary potential because they run counter to the dominant power. For Gramsci, these cultures might be located in traditional peasant beliefs or the shop-floor culture of industrial workers; for Hall they might be found in youth subcultures like Rastafarians and punks, and even in commercial entertainment. The activist's job, according to Hall, is to identify and exploit these cultural pockets, build a radical counter-culture within the shell of the old society, and wage the struggle for a new cultural hegemony. An important caveat: Gramsci never believed that cultural power alone was enough. The fight for cultural hegemony had to be part of an overall strategy that also incorporated struggles for political and economic power. *Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.*

LEARN MORE

The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935

Antonio Gramsci, 2000

https://archive.org/stream/AntonioGramsciTheGramsciReaderSelectedWritings19161935/Antonio_Gramsci_The_Gramsci_Reader_Selected_Writings_1916-1935_djvu.txt

Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Economy

Adam Morton, 2007

https://books.google.com/books/about/Unravelling_Gramsci.html?id=kIYpAQAAIAAJ

- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Currency hacking
- Divestment
- General strike
- Invisible theatre
- Messaggio nella banconota

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Bring the issue home
- Build strength through repetition
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Seek safety in support networks
- Solidarity, not aid
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use state power to build people power
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Capitalism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Decolonization
- Framing
- Memes
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Political identity paradox
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- The propaganda model
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Capitalism, Language, Movement
building, State violence,
Communications, Education

THEORY

DEBT REVOLT

Realizing our collective power to withdraw our willingness to pay debts is potentially as system-shaking today as the power of the industrial working class to withdraw its labour power a century ago.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Dmytri Kleiner

Dmytri Kleiner is the author of *The Telekommunist Manifesto*, and a contributing artist to the "Miscommunication Technologies" continuing series of artworks in collaboration with the Telekommunisten Network. Most recently, Dmytri has started an initiative to create an International Debtors' Party.

"PEOPLE ARE BROKE BECAUSE THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN."

"I ain't a Communist necessarily, but I been in the red all my life."
—Woody Guthrie

Many activist communiqués employ the classical language of class struggle. This language not only often fails to engage, it may even alienate people who might otherwise be sympathetic. The majority of people in the Global North do not identify as workers, and thus any appeal addressed to workers is unlikely to achieve results in these societies. As the industrial base of the economy has moved east and south, the language of class politics in the Global North has gotten much murkier and more complicated. I propose that debt-centred organizing offers the potential to reinvigorate radical struggle in the twenty-first century.

The language of the labour movement emerged in an era when the power loom was the driving force of industry, nobility controlled the land and the state, and being a worker in early industry was torturous and inhumane. Most working people were direct producers. Today, most people in developed nations are non-direct producers, working in customer service, finance, and other administrative or technical fields. They are, therefore, no longer direct witnesses to the fruits of their labour being stolen from them and hoarded by capitalists, but rather are divided and subdivided in increasingly insidious ways.

People today don't conceive of the "product of their labour" as the actual goods sold by their employers; in their minds, the product of their labour is their paycheck. That is what they produce; that is what is taken from their hands, not by their boss, but by their bills, their debts, their taxes. This is one reason the right has been so

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade

Principles

- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Take leadership from the most impacted

Theories

- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Neoliberalism
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary reform
- The commons

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Labour, Privatization, Wealth inequality

successful at channelling populist rage away from big business and toward big government.

Two decades of easy credit and bubble economics have left most people deeply in debt, often as a result of having to pay for essentials like education, childcare, housing, and health care. This is a real opportunity for activists to make the case that capitalism simply can't provide essential goods fairly and efficiently, and that their debts are unjust and were forced on to them. People are broke because the system is broken. We have no moral obligation to keep paying into a system that is not working.

The labour movement transformed the working conditions in developed nations and built the welfare state, and did so by championing the demands of the organized working class. Today, we have a debtors' consciousness, united by financial stress and economic precarity, with debt its measure.

Realizing our collective power to withdraw our willingness to pay debts (see: TACTIC: Debt strike) is potentially as system-shaking today as the power of the industrial working class to withdraw its labour power a century ago. Debt is a uniting condition that can mobilize the masses to fight for change.

The debtors of the world have nothing to lose but their chains.
Debtors of the world, unite!

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Debt: The First 5,000 Years

David Graeber, 2011

<https://books.google.com/books/about/Debt.html?id=GYhajCQU8XIC>

The New Road to Serfdom: An Illustrated Guide to the Coming Real Estate Collapse

Michael Hudson, 2006

<http://michael-hudson.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/RoadToSerfdom.pdf>

THEORY DECOLONIZATION

A form of bottom-up disobedience that revives indigenous ideas and lived experiences to challenge the impact of historical colonization and reverse its trajectory.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Danielle Endres

Danielle Endres is a professor of rhetoric and argumentation at the University of Utah. Her teaching and research examines discourse (verbal and nonverbal), persuasion (rational and irrational), activism, and social movements, with a focus on climate change activism, Native American activism, and environmental justice.

Colonization is an historical and ongoing form of territorial, economic, and mental conquest in which one group of indigenous people (first inhabitants of a place) is subordinated and put in service to another group of people under the forces of imperialism. Decolonization is a set of ideas and lived experiences that challenge imperialism through forms of bottom-up disobedience to historical and ongoing colonization. Theories and manifestations of decolonization prioritize indigenous (non-Western) forms of knowledge, spirituality, cultural practices, and sovereignty.

Given the diversity of indigenous groups and colonized peoples around the world, decolonization frameworks and strategies of resistance vary greatly from place to place depending on the specific historical relation between the imperial power and colonized populations (e.g. colonial, post-colonial, neo-colonial).

Decolonization theory raises questions about whether or how it's possible to use the "master's tools" (including all the legal and theoretical concepts inherited from modernity) to dismantle the master's house, and to construct something better.

LEARN MORE

Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society
Online Open Access journal, 2012
<http://decolonization.org/index.php/des>

Decolonizing Methodologies
Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Eve Tuck, video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIZXQC27tvq>

Concerning Violence: Nine scenes from the anti-imperialistic self-

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Couple in the Cage
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Fees Must Fall
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Hacking Apartheid
- Round Dance Revolution
- Stolen Beauty
- Stop Praver Plan
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- #ThisFlag
- Welcome to Palestine
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Clandestine leafleting
- Consumer boycott
- Distributed action
- Forum theatre
- General strike
- Hunger strike
- Mass street action

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Focus on basic needs
- Foster safer spaces
- Know your community

defense

Documentary film by Göran Olsson, 2014

<https://youtu.be/dlQwKP3j1zc>

- Know your cultural terrain
- Recapture the flag
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Training for the win
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Capitalism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- "Democracy promotion"
- Environmental justice
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism
- Revolutionary reform
- The commons
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance

TAGS

Indigenous rights, Land use, Colonialism, Racial justice

THEORY DIRECT ACTION

Action that changes our circumstances without handing power to an intermediary. Direct action interrupts business-as-usual, seizes leadership, and introduces an alternative narrative.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“SMART DIRECT ACTION ASSESSES POWER DYNAMICS AND FINDS A WAY TO SHIFT THEM.”

“Direct action is the insistence, when faced with structures of unjust authority, on acting as if one is already free.”

—David Graeber

Direct action is at the heart of all human advancement. Sound like a grandiose claim? It is. But it's also beautifully simple: direct action means that we take collective action to change our circumstances, without handing our power to a middle person.

We see instances of direct action in indigenous parables and stories, in the Bible, Torah and Koran, in every people's movement and popular revolution in modern history. Direct action is often practiced by people who have few resources, seeking to liberate themselves from an injustice.

People often conflate direct action with “getting arrested.” While sometimes getting arrested can amplify your message, or is strategically necessary to achieve your goal, it isn't the point of direct action. (In most liberation struggles throughout history, “getting captured” is actually seen as a bad thing!)

Similarly, people often conflate direct action with civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is a specific form of direct action that involves intentionally violating a law because that law is unjust — for instance, refusing to pay taxes that would fund a war, or refusing to comply with anti-immigrant legislation. In these circumstances, breaking the law is the purpose. With other kinds of direct action, laws may be broken, but the law being broken isn't

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Earth First!
- Honk at Parliament
- Justice for Janitors
- No vote, no sex
- Nuit Debout
- Orange Alternative
- Pedestrian death puppets
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Reclaim the Streets
- Santa Claus Army
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Standing Man
- Stripping Power in Uganda

the point. For example, we may be guilty of trespassing if we drop a banner from a building, but the violation is incidental: we aren't there to protest trespassing laws.

While associated with confrontation, direct action at its core is about power. Smart direct action assesses power dynamics and finds a way to shift them. One way of thinking about power is that there are two kinds: organized money and organized people. We don't have billions of dollars to buy politicians and governments, but with direct action, organized people spend a different currency: we leverage risk. We leverage our freedom, our comfort, our privilege or our safety.

Anthropologist David Graeber defines direct action as "a form of action in which means and ends become, effectively, indistinguishable; a way of actively engaging with the world to bring about change, in which the form of the action — or at least, the organization of the action — is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about."

As Frederick Douglass said, "power concedes nothing without a demand." Malcolm X elaborated, "Power never takes a step back, except in the face of more power." Rather than deferring to others to make changes for us through votes or lobbying, we seek to change the dynamics of power directly.

LEARN MORE

Direct Action, Anarchism, Direct Democracy
David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography*, 2009
<http://paycreate.com/directaction/>

Resources for Organizers
Praxis Makes Perfect
<https://joshuakahnruessell.wordpress.com/resources-for-activists-and-organizers/>

Gene Sharp's 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action
Albert Einstein Institution
<http://www.aeinstein.org/nonviolentaction/198-methods-of-nonviolent-action/>

- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yellow Pigs in Parliament
- Yomango
- #YouStink
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade
- Flotilla
- General strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Image theatre
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation
- Public filibuster
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't dress like a protester
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- Take leadership from the most impacted

- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Turn the tables
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the Jedi mind trick
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Artivism
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Commodity fetishism
- Dunbar's number
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Gerontocracy
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Palace Coup
- Poverty
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Democracy, Direct action, Labour, Movement building, Nonviolence, Pranks, Student activism

THEORY

DUNBAR'S NUMBER

We can only maintain 150 I-care-you-care relationships. These strong, primary relationships foster empowerment and social cohesion, while more rule-based relationships favor management. This impacts organizing.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stan Goff

Stan Goff spent over two decades in the US Army, mostly special operations, from 1970-1996. He has worked with Democracy South, a 12-state coalition working on money and politics and Iraq Veterans Against the War, and has authored four books including *Hideous Dream: A Soldier's Memoir of the US Invasion of Haiti* and *Sex & War*.

"WHEN WE SHIFT FROM PRIMARY TO RULE-MEDIATED RELATIONSHIPS, MUTUAL CARE IS REPLACED BY STRUCTURAL SUSPICION."

"An old friend will help you move. A good friend will help you move a dead body."

—Jim Hayes

Most of our day-to-day interactions involve either primary or secondary relationships. If you are my twice-a-week hiking buddy, we have a primary relationship based in mutual care and reciprocal obligation. If you are my insurance agent or my boss, we have a secondary relationship based in formal rules. The Dunbar's number concept posits that there is a limited number of primary relationships a person can manage. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar suggests that the average person can only maintain about 150 primary, I-care-you-care relationships. The simple reason for this is that we reach certain cognitive limits, and because there is simply not enough time for more without diffusing the quality of all relationships. Obviously, the number is fuzzy, because with changes in culture come changes in relationships, and because relationships themselves are difficult to define precisely because they are not quantifiable. But if we assume 150 as a hypothetical constant, variable across some range, then the range itself is a valid premise for a few conclusions. One implication of Dunbar's number is that when we shift from primary to rule-mediated relationships, mutual care is replaced by structural suspicion. This shift is significant. By necessity, a boss, administrator, or manager will tend to put systems and rules before care or service. Administrators and managers

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Lysistrata Project

Tactics

- Jail solidarity

Principles

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Delegate
- Don't mistake your group for society
- Enable, don't command
- Make the personal political
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Comunalidad (communality)
- Direct action

become the caretakers of impersonality, and that impersonality accrues power to itself over and against the caring individual. This invariably leads to rules that are designed to serve management and disadvantage the managed. In common parlance, “the tail starts to wag the dog.” This dog-waggery leads to resentment towards administration and management, who in turn become defensive, setting up a power struggle in which the administration is already advantaged by the growing dependency of the administered. What does this have to do with consciously political actions? Well, every time a group of friends considers becoming a committee, we ought to exercise the precautionary principle. Our desire to get bigger, stronger, and more efficient can blind us to the more formidable strength we risk losing by neglecting primary relationships. In other words, if we currently spend 80 percent of our time managing secondary relationships, then we need to figure out how we can flip that to 80 percent of our time nurturing primary relationships. One of the reasons many of us feel powerless in the face of so many crises is that we’re cut off from the social cohesion that can only happen in small, intimate groups. It is not hyperbole to say, then, that management is the enemy of social cohesion, because it substitutes secondary (weak) bonds for primary (strong) ones. By strengthening primary bonds, we not only develop a greater capacity to take effective action on our own behalves; we also increase our capacity to creatively respond to the forces that seem so threatening now.

- Feminism
- Participatory democracy
- Political identity paradox
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

TAGS

Community building, Democracy, Movement building

LEARN MORE

The Dunbar Number, from the Guru of Social Networks

Drake Bennet, Bloomberg, 2013

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-01-10/the-dunbar-number-from-the-guru-of-social-networks>

How Many Friends Does One Person Need? Dunbar’s Number and Other Evolutionary Quirks

Robin Dunbar, Faber & Faber, 2010

<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674057166>

The Magic Number

Robin Dunbar, RSA Journal, 2010

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41379992?>

Search=yes&resultItemClick=true&searchText=Dunbar&searchText=%22magic%20number%22&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3Fgroup%3Dnone%26amp%3Bacc%3Doff%26amp%3Bquery%3DDunbar%2B%2522magic%2Bnumber%2522%26amp%3Bfc%3Doff%26amp%3Bwc%3Don&refreqid=search%3A91499f2f16918c210f6fa64d72335350&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

The Innovation of Loneliness

Shimi Cohen, 2014

<https://vimeo.com/90657527>

THEORY

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Only by looking at environmental issues through a social justice lens can we effectively challenge abuses of power that target indigenous people, people of colour, and other disenfranchised communities.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Margaret Campbell

Margaret Campbell is a freelancer of many trades, but carries with her the spirit of engaged journalism, and a closely-held belief in the capacity of public art to heal and unite. She has had the opportunity to travel toward a deep understanding of her home community of Minneapolis/ St. Paul, and to work extensively on the White Earth Ojibwe Reservation in northwestern Minnesota on media and environmental justice initiatives.

“WHAT IS AT WORK HERE IS NOT ONLY RACISM, BUT A WIDESPREAD AND DEVASTATING ETHIC THAT WITHHOLDS COMPASSION FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND DENIES THE HUMANITY OF 99 PERCENT OF THE WORLD’S PEOPLE.”

“Nature shrinks as capital grows. The growth of the market cannot solve the very crisis it creates.”

—Vandana Shiva

Race and class composition are the most reliable indicators of where the wastes that industrial society creates are dumped: Invariably, they have been shown to accumulate in and around poor and racialized communities. Environmental racism refers to this tendency to burden marginalized groups with environmental problems. The movement for environmental justice is the organized response, seeking to redress the inequitable distribution of waste through both community development (greening) and political empowerment (petitioning for development and enforcement of environmental law and policies) in poor communities and communities of colour.

After four little girls in from the Altgeld Gardens housing community in Chicago, US, died from cancer in the early 1980s, Hazel Johnson, longtime resident and founder of People for Community Recovery, put two and two together: Their community was home to over 50 documented landfills, and also to the highest incidence of cancer in the city. Her organization went on to win many grassroots struggles for environmental justice on behalf of

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Earth First!
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Round Dance Revolution

Tactics

- Blockade

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Bring the issue home
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Take leadership from the most impacted

their predominantly poor, predominantly black community, and then began networking with other organizations across the country. By the mid 1990s, the environmental justice movement had made significant strides in publicizing such issues, with organizations such as the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice staging numerous acts of civil disobedience.

Globally, powerful corporations have been able to spread the practice of exploiting politically vulnerable communities. As Lawrence Summers, Secretary of the Treasury under US President Bill Clinton and director of the National Economic Council under President Obama, argued in a 1991 memo while employed at the World Bank, "the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that . . . I've always thought that underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly underpolluted." A Summers aide later claimed that the memo was intended sarcastically. Sarcasm or no, the statement accurately reflects the way waste is handled under capitalism (see: THEORY: Capitalism).

What is at work here is not only racism, but a widespread and devastating ethic that withholds compassion from the environment and denies the humanity of 99 percent of the world's people, treating them as resources to be exploited at best, or as entirely external to the economic calculations at worst.

It is not by chance that the US civil rights movement sparked a process that, in recent decades, has culminated in a veritable explosion of environmental activism. It is because of the insidious form that racism takes under the geographical development of capitalism that an utterly unsustainable way of life was allowed to evolve to the point of global climate catastrophe. Only by confronting as one the environmental and social manifestations of the crisis can we hope to replace this system with something more equitable for all.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Greening the Ghetto

Majora Carter, 2006

https://www.ted.com/talks/majora_carter_s_tale_of_urban_renewal

We Speak for Ourselves: Social Justice, Race, and Environment

Dana A. Alston and Robert D. Bullard, 1990

<http://www.worldcat.org/title/we-speak-for-ourselves-social-justice-race-and-environment/oclc/28710586>

Almost Everything You Need to Know About Environmental Justice

The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice

http://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/421/almost-everything-you-need-to-know-about-environmental-justice-english-version.pdf?

- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it

Theories

- Capitalism
- Decolonization
- Neoliberalism
- The commons
- The shock doctrine

TAGS

Climate justice, Capitalism, Colonialism, Energy, Environment, Food, Health, Housing, Human rights, Indigenous rights, International solidarity, Land use, Racial justice, State violence, Wealth inequality

THEORY

ETHICAL SPECTACLE

Since politics is not just about facts and reason, but also desire and fantasy, activists need to engage in spectacle. By honouring our principles, our spectacles can be ethical, liberating, and reality-based.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stephen Duncombe

Stephen Duncombe teaches the history and politics of media at New York University and is a lifelong political activist, co-founding a community-based advocacy group in the Lower East Side of Manhattan and working as an organizer for the NYC chapter of the international direct action group, Reclaim the Streets. He co-created the School for Creative Activism in 2011 and is presently co-director of the Center for Artistic Activism.

“THE ARGUMENT HERE IS NOT FOR A PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT THAT DECEIVES OR CHEAPENS ITS MESSAGE BUT RATHER FOR A PROPAGANDA OF THE TRUTH.”

“Boredom is always counter-revolutionary. Always.”
—Guy Debord

The concept of ethical spectacle offers a way of thinking about the tactical and strategic use of signs, symbols, myths, and fantasies to advance progressive, democratic goals. First introduced in a 2004 article by Andrew Boyd and Stephen Duncombe and later expanded in Duncombe’s 2007 book *Dream: Re-imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*, the theory’s premises are: (1) that politics is as much an affair of desire and fantasy as it is reason and rationality, (2) that we live in an intensely mediated age (what Situationist Guy Debord called the Society of the Spectacle), (3) that in order to be politically effective, activists need to enter the realm of spectacle, and (4) that spectacular interventions have the potential to be both ethical and emancipatory.

An ethical spectacle is a symbolic action that seeks to shift the political culture toward more progressive values. An ethical spectacle should strive to be:

Participatory: seeking to empower participants and spectators alike, with organizers acting as facilitators.

Open: responsive and adaptive to shifting contexts and the ideas of participants.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Billionaires for Bush
- Citizens’ Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Honk at Parliament
- Orange Alternative
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Santa Claus Army
- Streets Into Gardens
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- #ThisFlag
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?

Transparent: engaging the imagination of spectators without seeking to trick or deceive.

Realistic: using fantasy to illuminate and dramatize real-world power dynamics and social relations that otherwise tend to remain hidden in plain sight.

Utopian: celebrating the impossible — and therefore helping to make the impossible possible.

Progressives tend to distrust anything that smacks of propaganda or marketing — that's what the other side does. We tend to believe that proclaiming the naked truth is enough: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." But waiting for the truth to set us free is lazy politics. The truth does not reveal itself by virtue of being the truth: It must be told, and told well. It must have stories woven around it, and works of art made about it; it must be communicated in new and compelling ways that can be passed from person to person, even if this requires flights of fancy and new mythologies. The argument here is not for a progressive movement that deceives or cheapens its message but rather for a propaganda of the truth. This is the work of ethical spectacle.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy
Stephen Duncombe, 2007

http://www.stephenduncombe.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Dream_final.pdf

The Manufacture of Dissent: What the Left Can Learn from Las Vegas

Andrew Boyd and Stephen Duncombe, *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, 2004

<http://www.joaap.org/new3/duncombeboyd.html>

- Yomango
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Flash mob
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hoax
- Human banner
- Identity correction
- Lamentation
- Media-jacking
- Trek

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Be an ethical prankster
- Brand or be branded
- Make the invisible visible
- Show, don't tell
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use the law, don't be afraid of it
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Anti-oppression
- Artivism
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Society of the spectacle
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy

THEORY

EXPRESSIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL ACTIONS

Political actions tend to either express an identity or try to win concrete changes. Know the difference so you can choose the one that best serves your purpose.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

Joshua Kahn

Josh Kahn is an organizer and strategist serving movements for social justice and ecological balance. He has worked as an action coordinator, facilitator, and trainer with many groups including the Ruckus Society and 350.org, and has helped win campaigns against banks, oil companies, logging corporations, and coal barons.

“IF WE REALLY WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD, WE MUST KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN — AND ARTFULLY BALANCE — OUR INSTRUMENTAL GOALS WITH OUR DESIRE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION.”

“If the real radical finds that having long hair sets up psychological barriers to communication and organization, he cuts his hair.”

—Saul Alinsky

Sometimes activists will take an action without much thought to how others receive it, or what precisely the action will achieve. Many people participate in actions because it’s meaningful to them, or simply because it feels good to do the right thing. We call this the expressive part of an action. Expressive actions come from the heart and the gut — whether or not our heads calculate the specific outcome.

“Taking the street” during a march is a perfect example. Sure, it feels good to march unpermitted in the street. You and your comrades bravely disobey police orders and, all together, walk out into traffic. You can practically smell the group cohesion in the air. It’s intoxicating. It’s also usually inconsequential in terms of broader social movement objectives. Still, how many times have you heard someone say a march was “bad” simply because it stayed on the sidewalk? When someone says this, it may be because their goals are primarily expressive; affecting social change is of secondary importance.

Most trained organizers think on another level: Regardless of the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil’s Free Fare Movement
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Orange Alternative
- Reclaim the Streets
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Cacerolazo (noise-making)

self-expressive value for those involved, we ask “what is this action actually achieving for our issue, cause, movement, or campaign?” We call this the instrumental value of an action.

Both aspects are important, and though a well-designed action can deliver on both simultaneously, expressive and instrumental often get pitted against one another. Many hard-nosed organizers focus exclusively on tangible impacts, forgetting that the self-expressive dimension of an action plays a critical role in affirming values and building group identity. On the other hand, many groups can carry out a whole string of expressive actions without ever winning anything. The danger here is clear: Groups that don’t evaluate the success of their tactics in terms of their instrumental goals risk becoming narcissistic and self-referential. They can spiral into irrelevance because they aren’t tuned into how their action affects anyone outside of the group (see: PRINCIPLE: No one wants to watch a drum circle).

While instrumental actions are often focused on an “external” outcome, say, some measurable kind of pressure you can exert on the bad guy your campaign is targeting, they can also have an “internal” focus. Consider a mass teach-in that is designed to build your organization’s capacity, or increase the skills of participants, or shift the thinking in your movement. Here, the expressive value of the action is being directly translated into an instrumental outcome. Expressive and instrumental are therefore not mutually exclusive categories, but rather dynamics to which we need to pay attention.

Instrumental actions can be further subdivided into “communicative” and “concrete” (see: PRINCIPLE: Don’t expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action). Communicative or symbolic actions are designed to sway opinion, express an idea, or contribute to public discourse, while concrete actions are designed to have a tangible impact on a target. These are two separate ways of measuring an instrumental outcome.

While self-expression is a necessary part of the social change process, it is not sufficient. Through our rituals of self-expression, we affirm our values and visions and build the kind of group identity and cohesion without which we’d be too weak and disorganized to change the world (see: THEORY: Political identity paradox). That said, expressing values is not the same as engaging society and effecting systemic change. If we really want to change the world, we must know the difference between — and artfully balance — our instrumental goals with our desire for self-expression.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Instrumental and Expressive Aspects of Collective Action
Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2015

- protest)
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Guerrilla projection
- Human banner
- Hunger strike
- Lamentation
- Occupation

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Build strength through repetition
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Consider your audience
- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Don’t dress like a protester
- Don’t expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically
- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Give voice to those that can’t speak
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Use the power of ritual
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Political identity paradox
- Prefigurative politics

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2015/06/29/instrumental-expressive-aspects-of-collective-action/>

Hegemony How-To

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2017

https://books.google.com/books/about/Hegemony_How_To.html?id=ANTIDQAAQBAJ

- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Action star
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies
- SWOT

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Movement building

THEORY FEMINISM

Feminist social movements identify patriarchal power as a fundamental source of injustice and inequality, and hence call to transform gender power relations in all domains.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Rudo Chigudu

Rudo is a Zimbabwean artist, feminist, and activist who believes in the revolutionary power of the arts for healing and fueling revolutions, and whose work is centered on the politics surrounding women's bodies. She also believes there is nothing like a dose of laughter and a pinch of madness to keep the soul alive and a revolution going.

"IN THIS SENSE, CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY INVOLVES CHALLENGING OUR PRIVILEGES, OUR PREJUDICES, AND OURSELVES."

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

—Audre Lorde

In thinking about feminism, it is essential to start neither from fear nor fantasy. While fear stems from the belief that feminism is anti-male, fantasy is the belief that feminism is easily attainable.

Feminism is a social movement that challenges a system of sexist oppression — called patriarchy — that is deeply entrenched in many societies and into which we are all born. Feminism aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including those related to sex and gender as well as class, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and other forms of exclusion. This movement of resistance is often met with violence, stigmatization, and condemnation because it seeks to deconstruct an oppressive power structure, thereby challenging those that benefit from it.

The story of the Miniskirt March is a clear manifestation of this theory in action (see: [STORY: Miniskirt March](#)). In response to recurrent incidents of violence, harassment, and stigmatization against women's choice of clothing, women and human rights activists organized a march wearing miniskirts and tight-fitting clothes and paraded the streets of Harare in protest. Although the march was met with mixed reactions from the general public, it disrupted an otherwise banal power structure.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Lysistrata Project
- Miniskirt March
- No vote, no sex
- Panty power
- Walk a mile in her shoes

Tactics

- Sex strike

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Foster safer spaces
- Make the invisible visible
- Make the personal political
- Use others' prejudices against

Feminisms are diverse in origin and expression. Generally, though, they analyse and challenge patriarchal power as well as other systems of privilege and subordination. Feminisms have evolved over time from making linkages between slavery and women's bondage to focusing on women's subordination in the private sphere, including matters such as bodily autonomy, sexuality, and gender-based violence. In more recent times feminism has become more expansive, involving greater diversity across generations, classes, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.

Given that the vast majority of people are born into a world full of bias, be it gender, class, race, or nationality, we have all been largely shaped by patriarchy and often play into it in unconscious ways. Feminism seeks to create a critical political consciousness that enables people to identify injustices and challenge them. In this sense, challenging patriarchy involves challenging our privileges, our prejudices, and ourselves. Thus, we should always be sure that our gender-consciousness — our efforts to challenge the implicit oppression within us — becomes a way of seeing and living, and is implemented in other struggles for social change (see: PRINCIPLE: Challenge patriarchy as you organize).

Feminism is not something one is born into; it is a political act and a choice to be feminist. This choice is then manifested through one's actions. The success of feminist organizing in challenging complex systems of power thrives on creating an environment where revolutionary feminist consciousness can be cultivated, without reproducing the same problems that dominant systems create to begin with (see: THEORY: Anti-oppression).

The goal of feminist organizing is for all people, regardless of their gender or their sexuality, to live fully as who they are in a world that is peaceful and abundant with possibilities.

Feminism is about recognizing that all oppressions intersect. As Audre Lorde says, "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

LEARN MORE

We Should All Be Feminists
TEDxTalk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2013
https://youtu.be/hg3umXU_qWc

We Should All Be Feminists
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2014
<http://www.feminist.com/resources/artsspeech/genwom/adichie.html>

them

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Dunbar's number
- Gerontocracy
- Human rights
- New Pan-Afrikanism

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Gender and sexuality, Women's rights, Community building, Human rights, Movement building

THEORY

FLOATING SIGNIFIER

A floating signifier is a symbol or concept (for example, the Zapatista balaclava) that's loose enough to mean many things to many people, yet specific enough to galvanize action in a particular direction.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

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Jonathan Matthew Smucker

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"FINDING THE RIGHT FLOATING SIGNIFIER CAN MAKE OR BREAK A SOCIAL MOVEMENT."

"We are . . . the face that hides itself to be seen."
—Subcomandante Marcos

The American flag inspires extreme passions . . . but what exactly does it stand for? To different people it means freedom, justice, imperialism, and terror — its meaning shifts wildly depending on context and observer. This emptiness, into which observers can pour almost any meaning or desire, is a large part of the symbol's power.

For activists, a well-crafted floating signifier can be a powerful tool for catalyzing broad-based action. Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatistas, for example, deployed the concept of the floating signifier masterfully. Marcos described the masks the Zapatistas wore as a mirror in which all who struggle for a better world can see themselves. The Zapatistas' iconic black balaclava was not just a necessity for personal security, but became a powerful statement of unity and universality. "Behind our black mask," they declared, "we are you".

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Battle of the Camel
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Manich Msamah
- Occupy Wall Street
- Québec Student Strike
- Reclaim the Streets
- Standing Man
- Street Graduation
- The Salt March
- Whose Tea Party?
- Yomango
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

In 2008, presidential candidate Barack Obama also made masterful use of floating signifiers. His poetic rhetoric of “hope” and “change we can believe in” inspired a population weary from eight years of misrule. He became whatever his supporters wanted him to be. Obama explicitly acknowledged this phenomenon in the prologue to his campaign screed, *The Audacity of Hope*: “I serve as a blank screen on which people of vastly different political stripes project their own views.”

Finding the right floating signifier can make or break a social movement or campaign. When a social movement hits upon such a catalyzing symbol, it’s like striking gold. One might even argue that broad social movements are constituted in the act of finding their floating signifier. Previously disparate groups suddenly congeal into a powerful aligned force. Momentum is on their side, and things that seemed impossible only yesterday become visible on the horizon.

Indeed, the power of a good floating signifier was perhaps nowhere more evident than in the overnight growth of Occupy Wall Street. Far eclipsing the literal physical occupation in Zucotti Park, Occupy Wall Street resonated so far and wide because it served as a symbol about standing up to powerful elites on their own doorstep. To many people, the “occupy” in “Occupy Wall Street” essentially stands in for the F word. Millions of Americans were waiting for someone or something to stand up to Wall Street, the big banks, the mega-corporations, and the political elite. Then one day, a relatively small crew of audacious and persistent New Yorkers became that someone or something — became the catalyzing symbol of defiance we’d been waiting for. And by having an open process, and not fixing its meaning early with a ten-point program or the like, the symbol was able to continue “floating.”

It’s not that the symbol is empty of meaning. Both “occupy” and “the 99%” carry content that strategically frames public thinking and pulls the political discourse in a clear direction. But a degree of ambiguity is absolutely necessary if such a symbol is to catalyze a broad alignment. If the symbol’s meaning becomes too particular — too associated with any one current or group within the alignment — it risks losing its powerfully broad appeal. This is why the forces defending the status quo try to nail it down. Their hope is that by fixing it to particular meanings, associating it with particular “kinds of people” and to narrower frameworks, it will no longer function as a popular symbol.

Float on, beautiful signifier. Float on.

*This article incorporates passages from a blog post by Jonathan Matthew Smucker, *The Tactic of Occupation and the Movement of the 99%*.*

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Distributed action
- Divestment
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Hashtag campaign
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Occupation

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Brand or be branded
- Change a name to change the game
- Consider your audience
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Seize the means of communication
- Show, don’t tell
- Think narratively
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use the power of ritual

Theories

- Activism
- Ethical spectacle
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- SMART objectives

TAGS

Campaign strategy,

LEARN MORE

Our Word is Our Weapon: Selected Writings

Subcommandante Marcos, 2002

https://books.google.com/books/about/Our_Word_is_Our_Weapon.html?id=R_X-WmHOZoEC

Communications, Movement
building

THEORY FRAMING

Like the frame around a photograph, a *conceptual* frame highlights certain events and facts, while making others invisible. Framing your message effectively can make the difference between winning and losing.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

“WHEN FRAMING AN ACTION OR CAMPAIGN, WE MUST CONSIDER HOW THE PROBLEM OR CONFLICT CAN BE MOST COMPELLINGLY PORTRAYED.”

“Our revolution is fought with concepts, not with guns.”

—Gloria Anzaldúa

We are narrative animals, always using story to make sense of our world, and conceptual frames are key to this process. Frames, writes George Lakoff, “are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality — and sometimes to create what we take to be reality.”

Whether we’re aware of them or not, frames are embedded in the ways we describe and understand the world, imposing a meaning that often benefits those with power. For example, when economists give the “economic forecast,” the analogy of economy-as-weather subtly steers us to think of capitalism as a force of nature, beyond human control. This framing benefits banks and corporations, as it obscures how they actually manipulate markets to their own advantage.

Framing can be a useful tool not just for reinforcing power, but also for contesting it (see: PRINCIPLE: Reframe the issue). When framing an action or campaign, we must consider how the problem or conflict can be most compellingly portrayed so as to disrupt the dominant framing and replace it with a frame that benefits the movement’s goals.

Some questions to ask include: Who are the good guys? Who are

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Billionaires for Bush
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Manich Msamah
- Stop Praver Plan
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Citizen’s arrest
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection

the bad guys? What is the conflict and what is at stake? What hidden forces or new solutions must be revealed? What are our underlying values? Is there a unifying theme that can create a framing structure for our story?

For example, when workers are organizing for better benefits, rather than rally for “paid” sick time, which implies people should be paid by their already oh-so-generous employers to be home sick, they may choose to rally for “earned sick time,” which implies that the workers have earned this benefit as compensation. The shift from “paid” to “earned” creates an entirely different frame for understanding, and discussing, the issue.

While proponents of the so-called “Stop and Frisk” program in New York City call the practice of “police stops” a boon for “community safety” that “saves lives,” opponents of the program focus their message using the frame of “racial profiling,” and say that the policy “criminalizes a whole race and community of people.” They widen and at the same time focus the frame on revealing a narrative of racial injustice, effectively mobilizing a broad-based movement of people of color and allies against racism.

Another example: Fossil fuel company-backed scientists call themselves “climate skeptics” for a reason. What scientist worth his/her salt isn’t skeptical? Isn’t that part of the scientific method? Rather than go down the dead-end road of “But they’re lying!,” climate activists have been able to frame these voices as marginal using analogies like “tobacco science” and labeling them “climate deniers.” A denier (as opposed to a liar) makes an active choice to refute a difficult truth that society has already accepted (see: PRINCIPLE: Turn the tables).

When you engage in framing, you must be willing to accept that the facts of your case alone are not enough for you to win (see: THEORY: Ethical spectacle). Framing is a struggle over meaning. As framing guru George Lakoff reminds us, “Truth must be framed effectively to be seen at all. That is why an understanding of framing matters.”

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Re: Imagining Change: An Introduction to Story-based Strategy by Doyle Canning and Patrick Reinsborough
Center for Story-based Strategy, 2009
<https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/download-reimagining-change/>

Resource Library

The Center for Media Justice

<http://centerformediajustice.org/build-leadership/resource-library/>

- Hashtag campaign
- Image theatre
- Light Brigade
- Reverse graffiti
- Storytelling
- Street theatre

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Change a name to change the game
- Change is the only constant
- Focus on basic needs
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Memes
- Prefigurative politics
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Communications, Campaign strategy, Media, Social media, Movement building

Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate

George Lakoff, 2004

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_All_New_Don_t_Think_of_an_Elephant.html?id=aWhpBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false

Fair Game: A Strategy for Racial Justice Communications in the Obama Era

Praxis Project, 2011

<https://books.google.jo/books?id=V7aYSQAACAAJ&dq=Fair+Game:+A+Strategy+for+Racial+Justice+Communications+in+the+Obama+Era&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi86abX36rZAhUKZVAKHVzoBqgQ6AEIJTAA>

THEORY

GERONTOCRACY

Gerontocracy is the rule of the old over the young — a form of oppression primarily exercised across a society or culture, but sometimes also specifically within governments or other institutional structures.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

“WHEN RULE BY THE OLD BECOMES ENTRENCHED, EXTREME, OR OUT OF TOUCH, IT CAN BECOME OPPRESSIVE AND ANTITHETICAL TO DEMOCRACY”

“It is for the elder man to rule and for the younger to submit.”
—Plato

“Don’t trust anyone over 30.”
—Jack Weinberg

Gerontocracy is the rule of the old over the young. While the experience and (sometimes) wisdom that comes with age can often be important to good leadership, when rule by the old becomes entrenched, extreme, or out of touch, it can become oppressive and antithetical to democracy.

Gerontocracy does not originate in one place. Ancient Sparta was governed by a “Gerousia,” a council of men above 60 who served for life. Communist states of the far east and eastern block have been organized with similar tendencies. Numerous tribes around the world — such as Kenya’s Samburu and several groups throughout Yorubaland — place power in the hands of male elders.

The word “senate” is derived from the Latin “senex,” meaning “old man.” And in the US Senate, older generations occupy a disproportionate number of seats — one extreme example being South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond (Sr.!) who occupied his post for nearly half a century and left office at age 100.

Similarly, in Africa today, many dictators above the age of 70 have been in power for decades. Robert Mugabe, one notorious example, was forced to resign in Zimbabwe at age 93 after 37 years

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Burmese Students’ Long March
- Fees Must Fall
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Manich Msamah
- Québec Student Strike
- Schools of Struggle
- Trail of Dreams
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- General strike

Principles

- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Create many points of entry
- Embrace the stigma
- Make new folks welcome
- Shame the authorities by doing

in power.

And in many African countries, power centralized in the head of state is reinforced by gerontocracy in local communities, where ethnic and clan leaders can easily be bribed, manipulated, or coerced by those in power to solicit (or coerce) votes for politicians. Even within the civil society organizations that are supposed to be a progressive counterweight to gerontocratic systems, gatekeepers to donor funding are often older men.

Gerontocracy is also entrenched in culture, not just in governments. "Obey your elders," is a worldwide mantra. Even so, wherever old executives and politicians stand in the way, strategies for achieving change must enable youth to take power.

Such was the case in Burkina Faso during the youth uprising of 2014, when young Burkinabes marched on Parliament and sparked regime change. The next day they were in the streets, cleaning up the mess they had made, and rebuilding their society.

According to the last available data, 13 countries' populations — all of them in Africa — have median ages below 18. This means that the majority of these populations are not afforded the right to vote. Niger harbors the world's youngest population, with a median age of 14.8. Nigerian President Mahamadou Issoufou — born in 1951 — is calling the shots for generations he cannot possibly understand. Lowering the voting age to 16 would be a progressive step toward putting power in the hands of youth.

Movements might also look internally at their own demographics. Are youth empowered to make decisions? Are more experienced organizers investing time to mentor newcomers? Such considerations can strengthen any movement's power.

Everywhere, not just in Africa, old and entrenched leaders are failing to make decisions to protect future generations — notably, from the catastrophic effects of climate change. The future is in jeopardy, and since it is the young that will have to live in it (see: PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from the most impacted), they are the most motivated to solve problems adults have been putting off.

LEARN MORE

10 Oldest Currently Serving State Leaders

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_state_leaders_by_age#10_oldest_currently_serving_state_leaders

The Politics of Age and Gerontocracy in Africa

Ethnographies of the Past & Memories of the Present, 1998

<https://www.amazon.com/Politics-Age-Gerontocracy-Africa-Ethnographies/dp/0865435987>

their job

- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Corruption
- Direct action
- Feminism
- Human rights
- Intersectionality
- New Pan-Africanism
- Palace Coup
- Participatory democracy
- Postcolonialism

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Pillars of power
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Democracy, Dictatorship, Elections, Policy, Student activism, Women's rights

THEORY

HAMOQ AND HAMAS

Turning anger into action is necessary, but that anger is most effective when it is disciplined and intelligently focused (*hamas*). Uncontrolled, stupid anger (*hamoq*) mostly undermines your own cause.

CONTRIBUTED BY

George Monbiot

George Monbiot is an English writer, environmental and political activist, and founder of The Land is Ours campaign and ArrestBlair.org. He writes a weekly column for The Guardian, and is the author of a number of books, including *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain* (2000) and *Bring on the Apocalypse: Six Arguments for Global Justice* (2008).

"HAMAS EXPLAINS ITSELF. IT IS BOTH A PROTEST AND AN EXPOSITION OF THE REASONS FOR THAT PROTEST."

The great Islamic activist Hamza Yusuf Hanson distinguishes between two forms of political action. He defines the Arabic word *hamas* as enthusiastic, but intelligent, anger. *Hamoq* means uncontrolled, stupid anger.

The Malays could not pronounce the Arabic letter "H", and the British acquired the second word from them. On the streets of Genoa during the 2001 G8 summit, while the white overalls movement practiced *hamas*, seeking to rip down the fences around Genoa's red zone but refusing to return the blows of the police, the black bloc ran amok.

The important thing about *hamas* is that, whether or not it is popular, it is comprehensible. People can see immediately what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Hamoq, by contrast, leaves its spectators dumbfounded. *Hamas* may have demolished the McDonald's in Whitehall, England, on May Day 2000, but it would have left the Portuguese restaurant and the souvenir shop beside it intact.

Hamas explains itself. It is a demonstration in both senses of the word: a protest and an exposition of the reasons for that protest. *Hamoq*, by contrast, seeks no public dialogue. *Hamas* is radical. *Hamoq* is reactionary.

If, like some of the black bloc warriors I have spoken to, you cannot

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Citizens' Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Gezi Park iftar
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Occupy Wall Street
- Standing Man
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Civil disobedience
- Eviction blockade
- Mass street action
- Music video

accept this distinction, then look at how the police responded to these two very different species of anger.

On Friday, though they were armed to the teeth and greatly outnumbered the looters, the police stood by and watched as the black bloc rampaged around Brignole station, smashing every shopfront and overturning the residents' cars. Then, on Saturday night, on the pretext of looking for the people who had caused the violence, the police raided the schools in which members of the nonviolent Genoa Social Forum were sleeping, and started beating them to a pulp before they could get out of their sleeping bags. The police, like almost everyone else in Genoa, knew perfectly well that the black bloc were, at the time, camped in a car park miles away.

It is not hard to see which faction Italy's borderline-fascist state felt threatened by, and which faction it could accept and even encourage.

If Carlo Giuliani did not die in vain, it was because the Genoa Social Forum had so clearly articulated the case he may have been seeking to make. His hamoq forced a response because other people were practicing hamas.

Hamas instructs us to choose our enemies carefully. Indeed, when actions are clearly focused, then violence toward human beings is far less likely to take place, as it's harder to forget what we are seeking to achieve.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Raising the Temperature

George Monbiot, The Guardian, 2001

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2001/jul/24/greenpolitics.globalisation>

- Occupation
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Don't dress like a protester
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Kill them with kindness
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- The real action is your target's reaction

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Direct action
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Action star
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Democracy, Movement building, Direct action, Nonviolence, State violence

THEORY MEMES

Memes are self-replicating units of cultural information that spread virally from mind to mind, network to network, generation to generation.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

“ALTHOUGH THE TERM MAY BE RELATIVELY NEW, MEMES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN USED BY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TO SPREAD STORIES OF LIBERATION AND CHANGE.”

How do ideas spread? How does cultural change happen? How does a symbol become a shared point of connection for a movement? Through memes! Understanding how to introduce and spread memes (rhymes with *dreams*) is a crucial skill for anyone who seeks to shift public opinion or cultural practices.

A meme is like a piece of cultural DNA that evolves as it passes from person to person. The term is derived from the ancient Greek word *mimema*, meaning, “something imitated.” Playing on the word “gene,” evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term as a way of understanding how cultural practices spread. A meme is any unit of culture that has spread beyond its creator — buzz words, catchy melodies, fashion trends, ideas, rituals, iconic images, and so on.

Unscrupulous power-holders have shown considerable skill at designing memes that spread their stories through the culture: fake news, the war on terror, union bosses, and tax relief are all memes that have become part of the public discourse. A meme is like a viral frame that allows a story to spread, carrying a certain worldview with it.

Although the term may be relatively new, memes have always been used by social movements to spread stories of liberation and change, from Korda’s iconic image of Che Guevara to the “Fight for 15” campaign to raise the minimum wage. The rapid spread of

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Kubatana’s yellow poster campaign
- Orange Alternative
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Québec Student Strike
- Standing Man
- “You’ll never have a home in your f***ing life!”

Tactics

- Clandestine leafleting
- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Currency hacking
- Distributed action

Occupy Wall Street's meme "We are the 99%" showed not only how a good meme can amplify a powerful social change message but also how a shared meme can serve as an organizing tool.

Effective memes are memorable, easy to spread and "sticky." In other words they linger in our consciousness, connect with our existing thinking, and are easily passed on through our communications and actions. A meme that embodies a message and spreads rapidly can dramatically increase the impact of an action or campaign.

IMPORTANT CAVEAT: A potent meme alone will not win a campaign or trigger systemic change. The right meme can, however, help people-powered organizing be exponentially more effective and influential by helping a message, an idea, or a rallying cry go viral.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Adbusters Magazine

<https://adbusters.org/>

Know Your Meme

<http://knowyourmeme.com/>

Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge — and Why We Must

Kalle Lasn, 2000

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Truth is a Virus: Meme Warfare and the Billionaires for Bush (or Gore)

Andrew Boyd, 2002

<http://andrewboyd.com/truth-is-a-virus-meme-warfare-and-the-billionaires-for-bush-or-gore/>

- Flash mob
- Hashtag campaign
- Inflatables
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Messaggio nella banconota
- Storytelling

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make your own myths
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Stay on message
- Think narratively
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Action logic
- Cultural hegemony
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Battle of the story

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Communications, Language, Media, Social media

THEORY

NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism, today's dominant ideology, reduces the state to a handmaiden of transnational capital. In pursuing the relentless privatization of the commons, its policies inevitably spark popular discontent.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Firoze Manji

Firoze Manji is a Kenyan activist and writer. He is the founder of Pambazuka News, Pambazuka Press, and Fahamu. He currently heads Pan-African Baraza, an initiative of ThoughtWorks.

"THERE IS NOW A MATERIAL BASIS FOR SOLIDARITY ACROSS THE GLOBE BASED ON A SHARED SENSE OF DISCONTENT AT THE RUIN THAT NEOLIBERALISM IS MAKING OF ALL THAT WE VALUE."

"The neoliberal project [is] not an economic project at all, but a political project, designed to devastate the imagination, and willing [. . .] to destroy the capitalist order itself if that's what it took to make it seem inevitable."—David Graeber

—

We are living through a period of unprecedented concentration and centralization of capital on a global scale, with a few hundred transnational corporations controlling almost every aspect of our economies. Capitalists have responded to the falling rate of profit in production by increasingly speculating in credit, property, and stock markets — the unproductive sectors of the economy. Under such conditions, accumulation by dispossession becomes the order of the day: privatizing public services and selling off state assets; eliminating jobs and suppressing wages; extracting natural resources; forcing open territories for exploitation. All of this results in governments being more accountable to corporations, banks, and financial institutions than they are to citizens — a political dispossession that only compounds the social and economic dispossession. This phenomenon has come to be known as *neoliberalism*.

Neoliberalism, in a word, is the attempt of capital to resolve its crises by subjecting all aspects of life, from health and education to arts, livelihoods, and democracy itself, to the ideology of the free market. When implemented in advanced capitalist countries, neoliberalism is referred to as "austerity measures," whereas for Third World populations it has been called "structural adjustment" or, more recently, "poverty reduction strategy papers" (PRSPs).

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Fees Must Fall
- Gezi Park iftar
- Manich Msamah
- Nuit Debout
- Public Option Annie
- Québec Student Strike
- Schools of Struggle
- Street Graduation
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- #ThisFlag
- Who Would Accept?
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Yomango
- #YouStink
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade

Beyond differences in naming, a common set of destructive social and economic policies are implemented in countries around the globe, privatizing and deregulating economies for the benefit of a few people with political and economic power. The state is declared inefficient and public services are first allowed to deteriorate from lack of funding before being sold off cheaply to the private sector, principally to transnational corporations. The state is prohibited from investing in social infrastructure, including health, education, transport, and telecommunications, which are instead managed by corporations, for profit. In the Third World, the state is barred from subsidizing agricultural production (unlike in Europe and the US). Tariff barriers protecting national economies are removed, rights to natural resources are auctioned off cheaply, and taxes are cut, resulting in ballooning wealth inequality and growing public debt.

Notably, as the state recedes, public services that corporations are unable to make profits from, such as primary education in poor communities, begin to be provided in part by charitable NGOs, another face of the private sector that is ultimately not accountable to citizens. The result is that the essentials of life that everyone has rights to — health care, education, water, etc. — are now selectively offered as charity (see: THEORY: The NGO-ization of resistance).

Fortunately, there *are* alternatives. The destruction caused by neoliberal policies has resulted in a growing crisis of credibility in capitalism's ability to deliver on its promises, and growing movements demand a new approach, including the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, the Occupy movements, as well as protest movements across the African continent, Spain, and Greece. For the first time in decades, there is now an appreciation of the material basis for solidarity across the globe based on a shared sense of discontent at the ruin that neoliberalism is making of all that we value.

LEARN MORE

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Firoze Manji, 2012
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The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism
Naomi Klein, Knopf Canada, 2007
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Ending the Crisis of Capitalism or Ending Capitalism
Samir Amin, Fahamu Books, 2010

- Consumer boycott
- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Escalate strategically
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Make the invisible visible
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted

Theories

- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Cultural hegemony
- Debt revolt
- Decolonization
- "Democracy promotion"
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Poverty
- Revolutionary reform
- Society of the spectacle
- The commons
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance
- The propaganda model
- The shock doctrine
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Capitalism, Colonialism, Corruption, Democracy, Policy, Privatization, Wealth inequality

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Structural Adjustment: The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis, Poverty, and Inequality (The SAPRI Report)

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Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea

Mark Blyth, Talks at Google, 2013

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THEORY

NEW PAN-AFRIKANISM

A continuation of the historic Pan-African struggle for freedom, justice, and dignity across the continent, renewed to tackle the particular challenges Africa faces today.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Rim Menia

Rim Menia studies architecture at the École Polytechnique d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme in Algiers, and also serves on the leadership team of the Afrika Youth Movement.

Sungu Oyoo

Sungu Oyoo is a Kenyan writer, activist, and member of the Africans Rising movement.

“NEW PAN-AFRIKANISM IS AN ASPIRATION FOR THE MASSES OF AFRICA — ESPECIALLY ITS YOUTH WHICH COMPRISE THE MAJORITY OF ITS POPULATION.”

“We have a beautiful history, but we will create one that will astonish the world.”

—Marcus Garvey

Pan-Africanism is the belief that Africans on the continent and in the diaspora share not only a common history, but also a common destiny. Developed at a time of crisis and tragedy, Pan-Africanism is anchored on the principle that unity among Africans is vital for their economic, social, cultural, and political progress.

The ideals of Pan-Africanism guided African struggles against colonial and post-colonial oppression for much of the 20th Century. New Pan-Afrikanism is both a continuation of that tradition of struggle, as well as a renewed push toward freedom, justice, and dignity that responds to the particular challenges posed by capitalism in today's Africa. New Pan-Afrikanism is an aspiration for the masses of Africa — especially its youth which comprise the majority of its population — to mobilize, exchange ideas, and organise themselves into decolonial, feminist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist formations that promote cultural re-discovery and belonging; inclusion and equality; collective consciousness and decision-making; and solutions to some of the crucial problems citizens and descendants of Africa face today. It proposes alternatives to prevailing systems through the following guiding principles:

1- **Unity and solidarity.** African countries like Tanzania hosted liberation movements from across the continent at the twilight of colonialism and committed resources to further those struggles. Africa's political unity remains a precondition to confronting economic exploitation and unfair treatment by global forces, as

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Fees Must Fall
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Manich Msamah
- Miniskirt March
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Cultural disobedience
- Mass street action
- Storytelling

Principles

- Escalate strategically
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Know your community
- Reclaim the pre-colonial
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)

Kwame Nkrumah emphasized over 50 years ago. In today's context, community-based organisations and movements like Africans Rising have been enacting this principle by organizing solidarity efforts to support popular mobilizations against repression such as in Togo, and more recently, in Sudan. Achieving this precondition remains key in warding off imperialisms — both old and new — and re-igniting Africa's political and economic agency.

2- **Political freedom.** The continent's collective destiny is premised on an African conceptualization of respect for human dignity, social justice, and participatory governance that incorporates practices such as *tajmaat* among Berbers in northern Africa, *baraza* among various ethnicities in Eastern Africa, or *imbizo* among the Zulu in Southern Africa. Recent revolts in Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Sudan provide key examples of how grassroots voices and aspirations remain key to struggles against "flag and anthem" independence, dictatorships, and democracy promotion.

3- **Economic freedom.** Some traditional societies in Africa were founded on egalitarian values. Today, the masses find themselves excluded from meaningful participation in economic processes by gerontocratic regimes (see: THEORY: Gerontocracy), global capital and its local agents, both of whom exploit Africa and its people through lopsided trade agreements, land and mineral concessions, and illicit financial flows (see: THEORY: Capitalism). New Pan-Afrikanism views the liquidation of imperialist currencies such as the CFA as a necessary step towards the unification of fragmented national economies and the establishment of a common African currency. New Pan-Afrikanism advocates for pro-people economies that enable cooperatives and solidarity economies among other people-centred modes of production and trade.

4- **Identity and culture correction.** Colonialism and globalization came with waves of cultural hegemony. Changing how Africans perceive and practice their culture involves correcting old narratives and worldviews and setting new ones which highlight the virtues of African identity. *Ubuntu* is a traditional way of life centering communal living. New Pan-Afrikanists harness and employ Africa's diverse cultural values, traditions, and rites across the continent and in the diaspora under a multicultural umbrella via storytelling, performing arts, the Ubuntu (see: PRINCIPLE: Reclaim the pre-colonial) philosophy, and other African practices.

5- **Global South Feminism(s).** Men and women must coexist on the basis of dignity, equity, and mutual respect. Radical feminisms from the Global South offer a critical examination of structural, religious, cultural, and legal limitations imposed on African women — and expectations of conformity that come with these diktats. Confronting prejudice against women (see: TACTIC: Cultural disobedience) has been a core component of modern political campaigns, from South Africa's #feesmustfall student movement to Ugandan mobilizations against land grabbing (see: STORY: Stripping Power in Uganda). The intersectional lenses of feminism remain key not only in the analysis of women's struggles, but also wider African struggles for justice, dignity, equality, land, water, and even the correction of narratives. There is no New Pan-Afrikanism without feminism!

6- **Ecological sovereignty.** The callous

- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- "Democracy promotion"
- Feminism
- Gerontocracy
- Intersectionality
- Palace Coup
- Prefigurative politics
- The NGO-ization of resistance

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Capitalism, Colonialism, Community building, Democracy, Environment, Human rights, International solidarity, Language, State violence, War and peace, Wealth inequality, Women's rights

hand of capitalism ravages Africa today by grabbing land, extracting precious resources, and despoiling Africa's soil, waters, and skies. From agribusiness to mining, private sector exploitation of land and resources is a form of indirect colonization. New Pan-Afrikanism resists such ecological devastation by giving new political meaning to the commons, seed and food sovereignty, and traditional agricultural practices capable of restoring damaged lands and protecting what is left. It seeks to reinforce indigenous ways of life that have always been attuned to environmental needs and alert to looming disasters. Through wise ecological stewardship we must preserve Africa for many generations to come. 7-

Unlearning, dismantling, and rebuilding. (see: THEORY: Decolonization). Our journey towards achieving these New Pan-Afrikan aspirations involves unlearning and dismantling systems, while simultaneously inventing and applying people-centred replacements. New Pan-Afrikanists envisage collaboration and co-creation in the design and promotion of solutions that address Africa's major challenges, promote alternative practices, and disrupt the status quo when conditions require. New Pan-Afrikanism constitutes an avenue towards Africa's brighter future. Today, many social movements are emphasizing the centrality of New Pan-Afrikanism in continent-wide advancement and liberation, and are applying these principles in their shared struggle(s) towards justice.

LEARN MORE

The Kilimanjaro Declaration

Africans Rising, 2016

<https://www.africans-rising.org/the-kilimanjaro-declaration/>

Re-imagining Pan-Africanism

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How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Walter Rodney

Walter Rodney, Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972

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Africa Must Unite, Kwame Nkrumah

Kwame Nkrumah, Panaf Books, 1963

<https://archive.org/details/africamustunite00nkru>

THEORY

PALACE COUP

When civilian resistance threatens to depose a dictator, that dictator may try to short-circuit the people by handing over power to one of his own. This is known as a Palace Coup, or “faux-verthrow.” ;-)

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

“PEOPLE-POWERED STRUGGLES AGAINST AUTOCRACY MUST GET WISE TO THIS MANOEUVER AND LEARN TO SUSTAIN RESISTANCE BEYOND THE MOMENT OF PERSONNEL CHANGE AT THE TOP.”

“Since mankind’s dawn, a handful of oppressors have accepted the responsibility over our lives that we should have accepted for ourselves.”

—V for Vendetta

Dictatorships are becoming sly. At the crucial moment when they’re about to crumble, they shuffle the torch to other members of their inner circles instead of conceding their thrones to popular demands.

People-powered struggles against autocracy must get wise to this “Palace Coup” (or “faux-verthrow”) manoeuver and learn to sustain resistance beyond the moment of personnel change at the top.

There’ve been 457 coup attempts worldwide between 1950 and 2010, half of them successful. That’s an average of 1.16 coups per country over just three generations! Whether we like it or not, power grabs are a part of the global political landscape. The phenomenon is particularly prevalent in Africa, which has seen more coups than any other continent.

But the outright iron fist is out of style for the 21st-century dictator. Inner circles of oligarchies are increasingly cunning in orchestrating coups, shuffling leadership posts amongst their own to retain control while being credited with change.

Autocrats are well aware that establishing democratic pretense is a

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Honk at Parliament
- Manich Msamah
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- General strike
- Occupation

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Don’t expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Escalate strategically

lucrative business. Foreign aid is loaded with elections funding. Despots stage elections to maintain appearances. With votes rigged before the polls open, they not only retain power, but receive a pat on the back from democratic patrons — and the cash and support that comes with it. Foreign aid for this kind of sham-democracy effectively creates an “economy of the coup.”

In recent years, the Palace Coup has become the default mechanism for pseudo-democratic transition in Africa. Joseph Kabila, 18-year dictator of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arranged a backdoor deal to install Felix Tshisekedi as his successor, despite popular support for Martin Fayulu in 2018. As 95-year-old President Robert Mugabe’s popularity among Zimbabweans waned, a ruling party faction favoring Emmerson Mnangagwa recaptured the throne instead of organizing a democratic transition.

Tanzania has also mastered this art of change-without-transition. The once Pan-African socialist Chama Cha Mapinduzi party, Africa’s second-longest serving party, has overseen fairly regular change of leadership while growing increasingly neoliberal and authoritarian.

Sometimes, elites will continue to play the Palace Coup game even after they’ve been deposed, often intentionally provoking security threats to say that the transition isn’t working and they’ve got to seize power until things “calm down.”

Democratic movements that have mobilized popular support for more substantive change must be on their guard against this brand of authoritarian manoeuvring. To achieve a genuine democratic transition, movements must sustain their fights beyond the moment of nominal leadership change.

2019 suggests popular movements are doing just that: In Algeria, citizens who toppled four-term dictator Abdelaziz Bouteflika remain on the streets as of this writing, insisting on a legitimate electoral process. In Sudan, the social movement that forced the military to oust long-time dictator Omar al-Bashir, is now engaged in a fierce fight (occupations, general strikes, mass marches, etc.) to establish a transitional civilian government even while the military violently tries to retain control.

We’re at a crucial moment to set our century’s historical trajectory in the right direction — away from the naivete that a staged change-of-guard will suffice and toward sustained struggles to build the societies we want.

LEARN MORE

Is Authoritarianism Staging a Comeback?

Atlantic Council, 2015

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/books/is-authoritarianism-staging-a-comeback>

- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Reframe the issue
- Use state power to build people power
- We are all leaders
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza’a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- “Democracy promotion”
- Direct action
- Gerontocracy
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Postcolonialism
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Dictatorship, Elections, Militarization, State violence

Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010: A new dataset

Jonathan Powell, Clayton Thyne, 2011

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The Physics of Dissent

Behavioural and Social Sciences at Nature Research, 2019

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THEORY PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED

A theory of education by which, according to Paulo Freire, “men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

CONTRIBUTED BY

Levana Saxon

Levana Saxon is an organizer and educator with Practicing Freedom who has worked with groups such as the Paulo Freire Institute, Rainforest Action Network, Center for Political Education, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Youth In Focus, El Teatro Campesino, and multiple Oakland Public Schools. She currently co-coordinates the Ruckus Society’s Arts Core and facilitates trainings and dialogues with the White Noise Collective, which she co-founded.

Virginia Vitzthum

Virginia Vitzthum is a writer, author, playwright, and editor whose works have been featured in numerous publications such as Salon, Washington Post, Village Voice, Ms., Washington City Paper, Elle, and Time Out New York. She was recently dramaturg/actor/songwriter for Pedagogy of the Oppressed: The Musical! — an original production by Falconworks Theater Company in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

“MANY PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS TODAY ARE STILL TRAPPED IN THE “BANKING” APPROACH TO EDUCATION, SEEING THE PUBLIC AS A PASSIVE RECEPTACLE OF THEIR INFORMATION.”

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

—Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Over a lifetime of work with revolutionary organizers and educators, Paulo Freire created an approach to emancipatory education and a lens through which to understand systems of oppression in order to transform them. He flipped mainstream pedagogy on its head by insisting that true knowledge and expertise already exist within people. They need no “deposits” of information (what Freire calls “banking education”), nor do they need leftist propaganda to convince them of their problems. What is required to transform the world is dialogue, critical questioning, love for humanity, and praxis — the synthesis of critical reflection and action.

The key contrasts between the two education pedagogies are:

Banking education: education as the practice of domination * Goal is to adapt people to their oppressive conditions. * Teacher

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Justice for Janitors
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Forum theatre
- Image theatre
- Legislative theatre

Principles

- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Change is the only constant
- Choose your target wisely
- Consensus is a means, not an end

attempts to control thinking and action of the students, who are treated as passive objects. * Assumes that people are merely in the world, not connected to it or each other. * Removes students from their context; teaches reality as unchangeable. * Treats oppressed people as marginal to a healthy society and in need of incorporation into it. * Fundamental to maintaining systems of oppression.

Problem-posing education: education as a practice of freedom *

Goal is to transform structural oppression (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible). * Both educator and educand (Freire's word for "student," designed to convey an equitable and reciprocal relationship) teach and learn from each other. * Assumes the world is an unfolding historical process; everything and everyone is interrelated. * Begins with the educands' history, present, and unwritten future. * Seeks to transform society to rehumanize both the oppressed and their oppressors. * Fundamental to the revolutionary process.

Dialogue and participatory action research are two practices heavily influenced by Freire that are now common in the fields of popular education, critical pedagogy, (Theatre of the Oppressed)[Theatre of the oppressed], and eco-pedagogy.

Freire explains that what most people think of as dialogue is really just debate, a zero-sum game in which people compete to deposit ideas into one another or name the world on behalf of others as an end in itself. In dialogue, on the other hand, both parties work together to name their world by exploring their lived experiences to identify common patterns and generate action.

Meanwhile, participatory action research is a community-led process in which people determine solutions to their problems by gathering data from their peers, analyzing it, and then taking informed action. It's a model of community organizing that builds the capacity and expertise of those on the front lines.

Unfortunately, many progressive movements today are still trapped in the "banking" approach to education, seeing the public as a passive receptacle of their information.

MOST FAMOUS APPLICATION: Freire's work has been used by many revolutionary movements such as Amílcar Cabral in Guinea Bissau, the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, and the Zapatistas in Mexico, by popular literacy campaigns, and in the World Social Forums. Freire has also inspired the movement for "critical pedagogy" in the United States.

MIS-APPLICATION: Some educators take the words "popular education" to simply mean taking complex information and dumbing it down or slogan-izing it, a misguided approach rooted in the very idea that Pedagogy of the Oppressed opposes: that the educators are experts while the students are empty and passive receptacles awaiting knowledge.

- Enable, don't command
- Fail forward
- Focus on basic needs
- Know your community
- Make the invisible visible
- Praxis makes perfect
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Training for the win
- Use your cultural assets
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Neoliberalism
- Poverty
- Prefigurative politics
- The Global South
- Theatre of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting
- Artstorm
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Democracy, Dictatorship, Education, Human rights

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Green Theory and Praxis Journal

<http://greentheoryandpraxisjournal.org/>

Project South

<https://projectsouth.org/>

Paulo Freire Organizations

Freire Institute

<http://www.freire.org/paulo-freire/paulo-freire-organizations>

THEORY

POLITICAL IDENTITY PARADOX

Group identity creates a cohesive community for activists, yet tends to foster a subculture that can alienate the public. Balancing these two tendencies is key to sustaining our work and maximizing its impact.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Jonathan Matthew Smucker

Jonathan Matthew Smucker is a long-time participant, organizer, trainer, and theorist in grassroots movements for social, economic and ecological justice, and has trained thousands of change agents in campaign strategy, framing and messaging, direct action, and other grassroots organizing skills. He is co-founder and Director of Beyond the Choir, a strategy and training organization.

“DEDICATED RADICALS CUT THEMSELVES OFF, LIKE LONE GUERRILLA FIGHTERS IN ENEMY TERRITORY. IT MIGHT HAVE FELT GLORIOUS, BUT IT WAS A SUICIDE MISSION.”

Any serious social movement needs a correspondingly serious group identity that encourages its members to contribute an exceptional level of commitment and sacrifice over the course of prolonged struggle. Strong group identity, however, is a double-edged sword. The stronger the identity and cohesion of the group, the more likely people are to become alienated from other groups, and from society. This is the political identity paradox.

This phenomenon is true of all groups, but tends to have particular consequences for a group involved in political struggle, which not only has to foster a strong internal identity, but also has to win allies.

The tendency toward isolation can escalate very quickly in political groups, as oppositional struggle (for example, the brutal resistance endured by activists during the US civil rights movement) can foster an oppositional psychology. On the one hand, participants need to turn to each other more than ever for strength and support. They feel a compelling cohesiveness to their group identity in these moments of escalated conflict. On the other hand, they need to keep outwardly oriented, to stay connected to a broad and growing base (see: PRINCIPLE: Make new folks welcome). This is difficult to do even when leaders are fully oriented to the task, let alone when they are unprepared, which is often the case.

Take, for example, Students for a Democratic Society (the original

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle of the Camel
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Manich Msamah
- Nuit Debout
- Schools of Struggle
- The Salt March
- "You'll never have a home in your f***ing life!"

Tactics

- Hoax
- Trek

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Consider your audience

SDS that fell apart in dramatic fashion in 1969). At the center of the epic implosion of this massive student organization — beneath the rational arguments that leaders were slinging at each other — was the political identity paradox. Key leaders had become encapsulated in their oppositional identity and grown more and more out of touch. They lost the ability and inclination to relate to their broader membership — a huge number of students at the moment of the implosion — let alone to broader society. Some of the most committed would-be leaders of that generation came to see more value in holing up with a few comrades to make bombs than in organizing masses of students to take coordinated action.

This is the tendency toward isolation taken to the extreme. Dedicated radicals cut themselves off, like lone guerrilla fighters in enemy territory. It might have felt glorious, but it was a suicide mission.

The political identity paradox speaks to the need for political groups to develop both strong bonding and strong bridging. Without strong within-group bonding, group members will lack the level of commitment required for serious struggles. But without strong beyond-group bridging, the group will become too insular and isolated to forge broad alliances.

Good leaders have to perform an extraordinary balancing act between the conflicting imperatives of building a strong sense of identity within their groups and connecting with allies and potential allies beyond the group (see: PRINCIPLE: Escalate strategically).

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Activists Caught in the Filter Bubble

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2011

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2011/05/25/activists-caught-in-the-filter-bubble/>

What Prevents Radicals from Acting Strategically

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2006

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The Political Identity Paradox | Evolutionary Logic of collective Action pt.III

Jonathan Matthew Smucker, 2011

<https://jonathansmucker.org/2011/01/10/the-political-identity-paradox-evolutionary-logic-of-collective-action-ptiii/>

Beyond the Choir

<https://beyondthechoir.org/>

- Define “hardcore” strategically
- Don’t dress like a protester
- Enable, don’t command
- Escalate strategically
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make new folks welcome
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Recapture the flag
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Dunbar’s number
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Community building, Movement building, Democracy, Student activism

THEORY

POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonial theory forces us to acknowledge that oppression occurs not just in economic relations, but also in the very categories of meaning-making that produce reality as we know, understand, and live it.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Ram Bhat

Ram is the co-founder of Maraa, an arts and media collective in India. He is currently pursuing a PhD in media and communications at the London School of Economics.

“THIS HEAVY THEORIZING MAY ALL SEEM LIKE ANATHEMA TO MANY ACTIVISTS, AND, INDEED, POSTCOLONIAL THEORY APPLIED TO ACTIVISM MAY COMPLICATE ACTIVISTS’ LIVES IN UNEXPECTED WAYS. BUT, GOOD!”

“Imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land but from our minds as well.”

—Frantz Fanon

Activism too often relies on a black-and-white narrative that neatly divides the world between oppressor and oppressed. As a result, activists often lean on a universalist language of human rights, democracy, and justice to fight back. Postcolonial theory, however, recognizes that any discourse is historically rooted in a particular ideological framework. While postcolonial theory is sympathetic to the aims and intentions of activism, it also complicates the allegedly universalist discourses that activism tends to rely on.

Postcolonialism is useful for activists who want to reflect on the historical roots of their discourse and the unintended consequences of using their discourse on behalf of people of the so-called Third World. It creates a discursive space where subaltern context and agency are rendered visible and capable of speaking to power. Indeed, it profoundly transforms our notions of where power is located in our struggles. It forces us to acknowledge that oppression occurs not just in economic relations, but also in the very categories of meaning-making that produce reality as we know, understand, and live it.

Postcolonial theory moves away from a strictly materialist analysis, preferring instead to go with a Foucaultian perspective; namely, that it is discourse that produces reality. This is not to deny that there is a material reality out there. Rather, it posits that every material reality “out there” can only be known, understood,

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Conflict Kitchen
- Disrupting Obama’s town hall in Myanmar
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Hacking Apartheid
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Debt strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Music video
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo
- Visibility action

Principles

- Change a name to change the game

interpreted, and acted upon through language. Postcolonial theory uses discourse analysis, psychoanalytical approaches, semiotics, and Marxist approaches, but in the end, the purpose is to reveal power relations inherent in any discourse, always in ways that enable subaltern voices to emerge.

Postcolonial theory attempts to go beyond the binaries that shape political and cultural discourse. It suggests that a simple reversal of racial stereotypes, for example, or a naive assertion of nationalism as a response to colonial rule, is not just ineffective, but contains tendencies to reproduce the abuses it resisted in the first place! Instead, postcolonial theory attempts to create what Homi Bhabha has called the “third space” — an approach that highlights the ambiguity, uncertainty, and non-deterministic manner in which struggle and resistance must be carried out. Gayatri Spivak, in a similar vein, has referred to *catachresis*, a form of critique that aims at “reversing, displacing, and seizing the apparatus of value-coding.”

This heavy theorizing may all seem like anathema to many activists, and, indeed, postcolonial theory applied to activism may complicate activists’ lives in unexpected ways. But, good! In the long-term, activism rooted in postcolonial theory can lead to a far richer engagement with the subaltern — presumably on whose behalf activists do their work. Refusing to already always accept that there is oppression or victimhood can allow subalterns to express their subjectivity — especially on a range of subjects that they are not expected to talk about. For example, a landless peasant or a migrant sweatshop worker producing art, performing poetry, or discussing the meaning of her dreams displaces our notions about how oppressed people behave. The French philosopher Jacques Ranciere, talking about French workers in the mid-19th century, puts it aptly when he says, a worker who sings songs is more dangerous than the worker who shouts slogans. This is because the worker who sings songs has effectively disrupted our notions around how workers are supposed to occupy their symbolic position as workers. Postcolonial theory allows us to see that subaltern people can and do break the symbolic identity that is shackled on to them by activism, opening us to the possibility of pursuing those symbolic transgressions to their revolutionary ends. Thus, postcolonial theory is not just about making activism more effective. Rather, postcolonial theory transforms the very meanings of what constitutes activism itself.

LEARN MORE

Beginning Postcolonialism

John McLeod, Manchester University Press, 2000

https://books.google.co.in/books?id=hiRDc5N27YkC&redir_esc=y

Concerning Violence

- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Artivism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Decolonization
- “Democracy promotion”
- Gerontocracy
- Non-cooperation
- Palace Coup
- Poverty
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Power mapping
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Colonialism, Language,
Indigenous rights

Göran Olsson, based on Frantz Fanon's essay Concerning Violence,
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Frantz Fanon, Grove Press, 1963

<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=-XGKFJq4eccC>

Can the Subaltern Speak?

Gayatri Spivak, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 1988

<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=rtpgMCVSopIC>

THEORY POVERTY

A focus on “poverty” relies on a charity framework that can never bring justice. To counter the process of impoverishment requires political action against those who cause and benefit from impoverishment.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Firoze Manji

Firoze Manji is a Kenyan activist and writer. He is the founder of Pambazuka News, Pambazuka Press, and Fahamu. He currently heads Pan-African Baraza, an initiative of ThoughtWorks.

“SAVIOURS CANNOT THRIVE WHERE A PEOPLE RETAKE CONTROL OF THEIR DESTINIES.”

This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. Any attempt to ‘soften’ the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their ‘generosity,’ the oppressors must perpetrate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this ‘generosity,’ which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source. True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the ‘rejects of life,’ to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.
—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

For saviours to exist, there must be those in need of “saving.” Put another way, saviours require victims. Victimization — that is, the process of making other humans victims — is a requirement of the saviour complex. And by definition, a *white* saviour complex is premised on the victimization of the African — the *black* body. Thus, it has become conventional in the West to describe Africans only in terms of what they are not:

“They are considered chaotic not ordered,

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Street Graduation
- Taco Bell Boycott
- Who Would Accept?
- #YouStink
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade
- Mass street action

Principles

- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Focus on basic needs
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted

Theories

- Capitalism
- “Democracy promotion”
- Direct action
- Neoliberalism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism

traditional not modern, tribal not democratic, corrupt not honest, underdeveloped not developed, irrational not rational, lacking in all of those things the West presumes itself to be. White Westerners are still today represented as the bearers of 'civilization,' the brokers and arbiters of development, while black, postcolonial 'others' are still seen as uncivilised and unenlightened, destined to be development's exclusive objects" "The missionary position: NGOs and development in Africa".

But to sustain this image of Africa requires the complicity of the African states and African NGOs, each to carry out its own form of violence. It requires the violence associated with destroying the emergence of self-worth, self-determination and dignity that was, for instance, the achievement of the short-lived revolution led by Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso. That violence is also necessary if the new rulers are to use the state as a source of private accumulation by dispossession (see: THEORY: Neoliberalism).

The local NGOs, whose survival is dependent of receiving handouts from the white saviour industry, are complicit in nurturing the image of the subservient, incapable, primitive, African, the victim that needs saving. The complicity of African NGOs, and indeed of African leaders, in perpetuating a form of self-hate of the African identity, a modern manifestation of Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*, is a painful and too often unacknowledged form of violence.

Saviours cannot thrive where a people retake control of their destinies, assert their dignity and humanity, create structures for self determination, organize to meet basic needs and make collective decisions, take pride in their own cultures, and seek neither aid, grants nor charity.

To counter the process of impoverishment requires political action against those who cause and benefit from impoverishment. It requires from activists a willingness to act in solidarity with, and popularize, the efforts of the impoverished to seek justice through their own actions, and a willingness to fight the corporations that reap huge profits through exploitation of those whom they impoverish.

LEARN MORE

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- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Colonialism, Community building, Human rights, International solidarity, Movement building, Policy, Privatization, Racial justice, State violence, Street protest, Wealth inequality

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THEORY

PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS

By creating in the now — via visionary direct action and living our values — the future world we wish to see, we can experience for ourselves how a better world is not only necessary but possible.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

“WE CAN’T CREATE A WORLD WE HAVEN’T YET IMAGINED. BETTER IF WE’VE ALREADY TASTED IT.”

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

—Buckminster Fuller

Many of us spend so much time trying to stop bad things from happening that we rarely take the time to sketch out how things could be better, let alone actually go out and create a little slice of the future we want to live in. Prefigurative interventions seek to address that imbalance.

The lunch counter sit-ins of the US civil rights movement are frequently referenced as defiant, courageous, and ultimately successful acts of resistance against America’s Jim Crow-era apartheid. They were certainly that, but they were also profoundly prefigurative. The students’ actions — mixed-race groups of people violating the law by sitting at lunch counters and demanding to be served — foreshadowed victory and prefigured the world they wanted to live in: They were enacting the integration they wanted.

Pranks, art interventions, tactical media, alternative festivals, and temporary communities, even electoral guerrilla theater, can also be effective ways to prefigure the world we want to live in.

Prefigurative interventions are direct actions sited at the point of assumption — where beliefs are made and unmade, and the limits of the possible can be stretched (see: METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention). The goal of a prefigurative intervention is twofold: to offer a compelling glimpse of a possible and better future, and also — slyly or baldly — to point up the poverty of imagination of the world we actually do live in.

POTENTIAL RISKS

When playing with utopian visions, it’s easy to get carried away. The idea is not to paint a pretty picture full of rainbows and unicorns, but to put forward a fragment of something visionary that lies just beyond the realm of the possible — and in such a way that your action calls out the vested interests making it impossible. In sum, it has got to make sense. Don’t go proposing replacing a cash-and-credit economy with a hug-and-kiss economy and think that’ll demonstrate how the CEOs are keeping us all from being happy.

KEY PRINCIPLE

Show, don’t tell

You can go on about Utopia, about the better world you dream of, about how things could be different, until you’re blue in the face, and no one will pay any attention. You yourself might not even believe what you’re saying. But creating a lived experience of the change

Like the occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt and the encampments in public squares across Spain by the Indignados movement, the Occupy (see: STORY: Occupy Wall Street) encampments across the world are crucibles of prefigurative intervention, providing a space for people to create in microcosm the communitarian and democratic world they want to bring into being. Likewise, the Burning Man art festival works as a temporary autonomous zone where people can live out values, test out ideas and experiment with the future in real time.

Monthly Critical Mass bike rides prefigure future cities in which bicycles actually hold their own as traffic. Or PARK(ing) Day, in which people in cities across the country put a day's worth of coins into a parking meter and transform their parking space into a mini-park or jazz lounge or tiny public swimming pool, prefigure a greening of urban space and a reclaimed commons.

The Oil Enforcement Agency was a 2006 theatrical action campaign in which environmental activists — complete with SWAT-team-like caps and badges, posed as agents of a government agency — one that didn't exist, but should have. Agents ticketed SUVs, impounded fuel-inefficient vehicles at auto shows, and generally modelled a future in which government took climate change seriously.

If hope truly is a muscle that we build by exercising, then interventions that prefigure the world we want to live in — whether by prophetic acts of civil disobedience, the formation of alternative communities or the staging of prankish provocations — are one of the best ways to work that muscle.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Don't Wait for the Revolution, Live It

Andrew Boyd, Yes Magazine, 2013

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Should We Fight the System or Be the Change?

Mark Engler and Paul Engler, Waging Nonviolence, 2014

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/fight-system-change/>

Beautiful Solutions: A Toolbox for the Future

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Can Prefigurative Politics Replace Political Strategy?

Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 2014

<http://berkeleyjournal.org/2014/10/can-prefigurative-politics-replace-political-strategy/>

you seek (whether it's a prophetic headline that for fifteen seconds you believe to be true, or an unlocked white bicycle leaning against a building that is free for anyone to use) is the best way to break through cynicism, stimulate our political imaginations, and affirm that, yes, another world is possible. After all, we can't create a world we haven't yet imagined. Better if we've already tasted it.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Battle in Seattle
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Conflict Kitchen
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Miniskirt March
- Occupy Wall Street
- PARK(ing) Day
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Reclaim the Streets
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Santa Claus Army
- Schools of Struggle
- Streets Into Gardens
- The Salt March

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Critical Mass
- Cultural disobedience
- Distributed action
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale

- Identity correction
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Public art intervention
- Storytelling
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Brand or be branded
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Change is the only constant
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Foster safer spaces
- Hope is a muscle
- Kill them with kindness
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Show, don't tell
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Cultural hegemony
- Debt revolt
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Floating signifier
- Framing

- Hamoq and hamas
- Memes
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The commons

Methodologies

- Action star
- Baraza
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Community building, Direct action

THEORY

REVOLUTIONARY NONVIOLENCE

Revolutionary nonviolence emphasizes dialogue among radicals of different stripes and seeks to build unity around a shared commitment to revolutionary social transformation via mass civil resistance.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Matt Meyer

Matt Meyer is a long-time leader of the War Resisters League and a founder of the anti-imperialist collective Resistance in Brooklyn (RnB). His other work includes co-authorship of *Guns and Gandhi in Africa*, with Bill Sutherland, a ten-year stint as Multicultural Coordinator for NYC's Alternative High Schools, and serving on the Board of the Peace and Justice Studies Association.

"REVOLUTIONARY NONVIOLENCE NEITHER CELEBRATES PASSIVITY NOR FETISHIZES CONFRONTATION."

For activists working for radical change, there is a useful distinction to be made between Gandhian, strategic, and revolutionary nonviolence. Gandhian nonviolence is a combination of constructive base-building programs and *satyagraha*, often interpreted in the Global North as a form of spiritual direct action. Strategic nonviolence takes a more tactical tack and focuses on the methods enumerated by Gene Sharp. Meanwhile, as Gandhi himself noted, revolutionary nonviolence suggests that it is better to engage in violence than to do nothing in the face of oppression, and that any popular movement must push beyond mere reformist change that leaves structures of oppression intact, even though this requires active confrontation.

Indian activist Jayaprakash (JP) Narayan made important advances in this line of thinking, calling for "total revolution" in a framework that included anti-authoritarianism, non-orthodox Marxism, and self-determination for all peoples. As a campaigner at the time of the Chinese communist revolution, JP's main critique of Mao Zedong's maxim that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun" was the simple observation that those with the most destructive weapons were never the masses of the population, but rather those with the most entrenched power and authority. JP suggested that Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (at least in its core intentions) bore striking similarities to *satyagraha*, in that both were meant to combat a profit-motivated mentality, and both sought to disarm the exploiting classes.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Earth First!
- The Salt March

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- General strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

The greatest successes of the Chinese and Vietnamese strategy of people's war — which calls for mobile tactics and the creation of clandestine fighting units — often lay in the implementation of popular education programs, the creation of self-sufficient economic units, and the formation of mass-based organizations. The military successes were more ambiguous. Even in the heat of battle, some of the leaders of Africa's liberation wars, most notably Amílcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau, commanded his followers to be "militants, not militarists." The widely repeated South African dictum that "nonviolence just didn't work" in the ultra-repressive context of the racist apartheid regime has been refuted in post-apartheid society, as even organizers of the armed struggle now openly question the ways in which authoritarian styles grew out of their military structures.

In the US context, mainstream academics are beginning to discuss what many African-American activists have quietly understood for decades: that the ideological and tactical differences between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Minister Malcolm X were never as contradictory or divergent as the popular narrative would have us believe. As each developed and matured, their analyses of the nature of the US state, and the variety of approaches needed to resist it, increasingly converged.

The theory of revolutionary nonviolence demands a nuanced view of struggle that does not over-emphasise the dichotomy between nonviolent and armed revolutionaries — that neither celebrates passivity nor fetishizes confrontation. It embraces the contributions of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu philosophy: the notion that everyone's liberation is indelibly connected. Advocates of revolutionary nonviolence must include an adherence to strategic nonviolence, but also must maintain dialogues well beyond those who agree with that framework.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

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Amílcar Cabral, 1970

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James H. Cone, 1991

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On Revolution and Equilibrium
Barbara Deming, 1985
<https://ajmuste.org/publications#2>

- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Hamoq and hamas
- Palace Coup
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Colonialism, Community building, Democracy, Dictatorship, Direct action, Human rights, International solidarity, Militarization, Movement building, Nonviolence, Racial justice, State violence, Street protest, War and peace, Wealth inequality

Revolutionary Nonviolence

David T. Dellinger, 1971

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The Wretched of the Earth

Frantz Fanon, 2007

<https://books.google.com/books?id=-XGKFJq4eccC&lpg=PR43&ots=3LHCX786s-&dq=wretched%20of%20the%20earth&lr&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Towards Total Revolution

Jayaprakash Narayan, 1978

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THEORY

REVOLUTIONARY REFORM

Revolutionary reforms are smaller, more achievable changes that can lay the groundwork for more systemic and lasting change.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Cynthia Kaufman

Cynthia Kaufman is the director of the Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action at De Anza College where she also teaches philosophy. She is the author of two books on social change, *Getting Past Capitalism: History, Vision, Hope* (Lexington Books 2012) and *Ideas for Action: Relevant Theory for Radical Change* (2nd Edition PM Press 2016), and is a lifelong social change activist, having worked on issues such as tenants' rights, police abuse, union organizing, international politics, and climate change.

“THE CONCEPT OF REVOLUTIONARY REFORM HELPS GUIDE OUR ACTIONS TO FIND THAT SWEET SPOT WHERE ACTIONS CAN HAVE MAXIMUM IMPACT.”

"When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist."

—Dom Hélder Pessoa Câmara, Brazilian Archbishop

In many movements there is a real distinction to be made between those who want to solve a problem at its root and those who want to ameliorate its worst effects. For some people, for example, the way to deal with hunger is to work at soup kitchens. For others, setting up a soup kitchen is a fairly insignificant reform. They want to eliminate the root causes of poverty so that people won't need to go to soup kitchens. Many people use the terms *revolutionary* and *reformist* to mark these two ways of approaching social change.

When we talk about transformative goals like overthrowing capitalism, however, ideas of revolution and reform can be frozen into an unproductive "either/or" dichotomy. On the one side is a total revolution happening all at once at a moment of crisis in capitalism. On the other is a reformism that can seem like nothing more than a series of efforts to soften some of capitalism's worst excesses, but which will not ultimately make any real difference. Among anti-capitalists, reformism is usually represented by the position of the early twentieth century German Social Democrat

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Honk at Parliament
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Taco Bell Boycott

Tactics

- Blockade
- Mass street action

Principles

- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Develop an inside-outside strategy
- Escalate strategically
- If you're not uncomfortable,

Eduard Bernstein. His view was that capitalism can be encouraged to simply evolve into socialism without any power struggle. Those supporting revolution, on the other hand, tend to gravitate toward the ideas of Russian revolutionary leader, Vladimir Lenin. He called for revolutions to overthrow capitalism by taking over national governments, one nation at a time.

Trotsky and Luxemburg had an intermediate position. Leon Trotsky, who was a leader of the Russian revolution and became a dissident under the Stalinist dictatorship, and Rosa Luxemburg, who fought against Bernstein within the German Social Democratic Party, both opposed reformism and argued for revolutionary overthrow. In their move toward overthrow, they didn't just focus on building a party that could overthrow a state via armed struggle, as Lenin did. Instead, they urged organizers to build toward a revolution by organizing around "transitional demands." Those were demands that would be perceived by the public as reasonable, but which, because they couldn't be met under the system of capitalism, would throw the capitalist system into a crisis, leading to revolution.

Some thinkers, such as the early-twentieth-century Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta, the late-twentieth-century French socialist André Gorz, and the late-twentieth-century American radicals James and Grace Lee Boggs, worked from the similar position that some kinds of reforms can lead to deep transformation. There are some transformations, in other words, that, as we achieve them, we change the fabric of society, and bit by bit they can lead to deep systemic transformation, and begin to overcome capitalism or any other system of domination. The concept of revolutionary reform helps guide our actions to find that sweet spot where actions can have maximum impact.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 demanding an end to segregation on buses in the city, for example, didn't just win its immediate demand. Rather, the success there led eventually to a US federal court ruling outlawing segregation nationally. In 2013 people who opposed rising bus fares began to organize in cities all around Brazil (see: STORY: Brazil's Free Fare Movement) to demand free public transportation. Over time the movement grew and pulled in thousands of organizers, who won major concessions in terms of bus fare. In the process many people were politicized and saw the possibility of taking to the streets and using mass protest to transform society in other ways.

Another example: Getting universal health care in the United States would make people less dependent upon their job to survive. As people are freed from a dependence on wage labour they are more able to build a non-capitalist economy. Universal health care is thus a revolutionary reform that is an important part of getting past capitalism.

When you are engaged in a small action without a larger strategy, it is unlikely to lead to anything but mild reform and short-term relief.

your coalition is too small

- Praxis makes perfect
- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative
- Use state power to build people power
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Capitalism
- Corruption
- Cultural hegemony
- Debt revolt
- Decolonization
- Human rights
- Neoliberalism
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Capitalism, Democracy, Dictatorship, Movement building, Policy, Health

But if the action you take is directed at concrete, achievable steps while at the same time opening up a path toward a larger, more systemic transformation, then your work is revolutionary reform.

LEARN MORE

Transitional Demand

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitional_demand

Four Futures: Life After Capitalism

Peter Frase, 2016

https://books.google.com/books/about/Four_Futures.html?id=hKe8oAEACAAJ

Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals

Jonathan Smucker, 2017

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Rosa Lives

Jacobin Magazine, 2016

<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/01/rosa-luxemburg-paul-buhle-clr-james-reform-revolution-german-spd/>

THEORY

SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE

Modern capitalism upholds social control through "the spectacle" — the use of mass communications to turn us into consumers and passive spectators of our own lives, history, and power.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Dave Oswald Mitchell

Dave is the Editorial Director of Beautiful Trouble and a co-editor of Beautiful Rising.

"WE DON'T STRIKE, WE STRIKE POSES."

"Politics is that dimension of social life in which things become true if enough people believe them."

—David Graeber

"Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation," Guy Debord argued in his seminal work, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) argues. Consider how people who witness a catastrophic event often say the experience was "like a movie." Or how as activists we often measure the success of our actions in media coverage alone. What we feel, what we believe, how we express desire, what we believe is possible — all are filtered through, and constrained by, the media we consume and produce. The political consequence of this separation from felt experience is key to understanding both how we experience the world and how we can change it.

Marx famously argued that under capitalism, the commodity becomes "fetishized" and reduced to its exchange value. Debord applied Marx's ideas to mass communication, showing how capitalism has penetrated not just what we produce and consume, but how we communicate. The spectacle — as manifested in mass entertainment, news, and advertising — alienates us from ourselves and our desires in order to facilitate the accumulation of capital.

Increasingly, the spectacle serves as capitalism's primary mechanism of social control. This is control by seduction and distraction, not force — but no less powerful and insidious for that fact. Debord argued that our lives have been degraded, first from being into having, then from having into merely appearing. (Think how much of our day-to-day "activist" behaviour is concerned simply with performing our identity as activists: Too often, we don't strike, we strike poses.)

Seeking to free us from the power of the spectacle in order to mount a credible challenge to capitalism, the Situationists introduced the tactic of *détournement*, or culture jamming: an

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Reclaim the Streets

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Culture jamming
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Change is the only constant
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Ethical spectacle
- Neoliberalism
- The propaganda model

TAGS

Art, Capitalism, Communications, Media, Social media

attempt to turn the powers of the spectacle against itself (see: TACTIC: Culture jamming). Whether the master's tools can ever dismantle the master's house, however, remains to be seen half a century later.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Society of the Spectacle

Guy Debord, 1967

<http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/index.htm>

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Tiernan Morgan & Lauren Purje, Hyperallergic, 2016

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THEORY

STRATEGIC NONVIOLENCE

A framework for broad-based direct action emphasizing openness, accountability, and agreements on "how we want to work together this time," designed to build large, inclusive, diverse, and effective movements.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Starhawk

Starhawk is an author, activist, permaculture designer, and one of the foremost voices in earth-based spirituality. She has lived and worked collectively for thirty years, and directs and teaches Earth Activist Trainings, which combine a permaculture design certificate course with a grounding in spirit and a focus on organizing and activism.

"A FRAMEWORK OF STRATEGIC NONVIOLENT DIRECT ACTION MAKES IT EASY TO REJECT PROVOCATION."

For over a decade, questions of violence, property destruction, and confrontational tactics generally have tended to be debated under the frame diversity of tactics, but the time has come to seek a new frame. Diversity of tactics becomes an easy way to avoid wrestling with questions of strategy and accountability. It lets us off the hook from doing the hard work of debating positions and coming to agreements about how we want to act together. It becomes a code for "anything goes," and makes it impossible for our movements to hold anyone accountable for their actions.

A framework that might better serve our purposes is one of strategic nonviolent direct action. Within a strategic nonviolence framework, groups make clear agreements about which tactics to use for a given action. This frame is strategic — it makes no moral judgments about whether or not violence is ever appropriate, it does not demand we commit ourselves to a lifetime of Gandhian pacifism, but it says, "This is how we agree to act together at this time." It is active, not passive. It seeks to create a dilemma for the opposition (see: PRINCIPLE: Put your target in a decision dilemma), and to dramatize the difference between our values and theirs.

Strategic nonviolent direct action has powerful advantages:

We make agreements about what types of action we will take, and hold one another accountable for keeping them. Making agreements is empowering. If I know what to expect in an action, I can make a choice about whether or not to participate. We don't place unwilling people in the position of being held responsible for

KEY PRINCIPLE

Define "hardcore" strategically

Activists tend to become increasingly radicalized through greater exposure to repression and injustice. Young activists, especially, will increasingly seek more "hardcore" ways to challenge the structures they oppose. These tendencies are valuable and should be honored and supported, but not all hardcore actions are equally effective. By charting a course of strategic escalation, we make space for the more radical among us to grow, without leaving behind the more cautious in our midst.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement

acts they did not commit and do not support.

In the process of coming to agreements, we listen to each other's differing viewpoints. We don't avoid disagreements within our group, but learn to debate freely, passionately, and respectfully.

We organize openly, without fear, because we stand behind our actions. We may break laws in service to the higher laws of conscience. We don't seek punishment, nor admit the right of the system to punish us, but we face the potential consequences for our actions with courage and pride.

Because we organize openly, we can invite new people into our movements and they can continue to grow. As soon as we institute a security culture in the midst of a mass movement, the movement begins to close in upon itself and to shrink.

Though a framework of nonviolent direct action does not make us safe, it does let us make clear decisions about what kinds of actions we put ourselves at risk for. That said, we can't control what the police do and they need no direct provocation to attack us (see: PRINCIPLE: Take risks, but take care).

A framework of strategic nonviolent direct action makes it easy to reject provocation. We know what we've agreed to — and anyone urging other courses of action can be reminded of those agreements or rejected.

There's plenty of room in this struggle for a diversity of movements and a diversity of organizing and actions. Some may choose strict Gandhian nonviolence, others may choose emphatic resistance. But for movements that embrace it, strategic nonviolent direct action is a framework that will allow broad-based movements to grow in diversity and power.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

An Open Letter to the Occupy Movement: Why We Need Agreements

Alliance for Community Trainers, 2011

<http://trainersalliance.org/open-letter-to-the-occupy-movement-why-we-need-agreements/>

- Bring Back Our Girls
- Citizens' Posse
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Occupy Wall Street
- Round Dance Revolution
- Schools of Struggle
- The Salt March
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Carnival protest
- Civil disobedience
- Jail solidarity
- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- One no, many yesses
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Prefigurative politics
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Direct action,
Nonviolence

THEORY

TEMPORARY AUTONOMOUS ZONE

A T.A.Z. is a liberated area “of land, time or imagination” where one can be *for* something, not just against, and where new ways of being human together can be explored and experimented with.

CONTRIBUTED BY

John Jordan

John Jordan was co-founder of Reclaim the Streets (1995-2001) and now works with the Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, a collective that merges art, activism, and permaculture. Co-author of *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-capitalism* (Verso), he has just brought out a new book-film with Isabelle Fremeaux exploring Europe’s utopian communities, *Les sentiers de l’utopie* (Editions Zones/La Découverte).

“A T.A.Z. IS AN ERUPTION OF FREE CULTURE WHERE LIFE IS EXPERIENCED AT MAXIMUM INTENSITY.”

Coined in 1990 by poet, anarcho-immediatist and Sufi scholar Hakim Bey, the term *temporary autonomous zone* (T.A.Z.) seeks to preserve the creativity, energy, and enthusiasm of autonomous uprisings without replicating the inevitable betrayal and violence that has been the reaction to most revolutions throughout history. The answer, according to Bey, lies in refusing to wait for a revolutionary moment. Instead, we must create spaces of freedom in the immediate present while avoiding direct confrontation with the state.

A T.A.Z. is a liberated area “of land, time or imagination” where one can be *for* something, not just against, and where new ways of being human together can be explored and experimented with. Locating itself in the cracks and fault lines in the global grid of control and alienation, a T.A.Z. is an eruption of free culture where life is experienced at maximum intensity. It should feel like an exceptional party where for a brief moment our desires are made manifest and we all become the creators of the art of everyday life.

The key, suggests Bey, is to remain mobile, relying on stealth and the ability to melt into the darkness at a moment’s notice. Before the T.A.Z. is spotted and recognized by the state, which will inevitably seek to crush it, it dissolves and moves on, reappearing in unexpected places to celebrate once again the wonders of conviviality and life outside the law. It might last hours, days, years even, depending on how quickly it is noticed by authorities.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Occupy Wall Street
- PARK(ing) Day
- Reclaim the Streets
- Streets Into Gardens
- The Teddy Bear Catapult

Tactics

- Critical Mass
- Flash mob
- Occupation

Principles

- Balance art and message
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Use your cultural assets
- We are all leaders

Theories

Bey claims that T.A.Z.s have always existed. He sees their ancestry in the numerous liberated zones that pepper history: from the secret “state” of the medieval Persian Assassins to the eighteenth century pirate utopias — islands where buccaneers, maroons, and escaped convicts lived outside the law, sharing goods and property; from the radical communes of Paris and Munich to the dissatisfied colonizers of North America who deserted their enclave to join Native American communities, leaving the infamous sign behind them, “Gone to Croatan.”

Bey maintains, however, that the T.A.Z. cannot be defined; it is simply a “suggestion . . . a poetic fancy,” not “political dogma,” and that “if the phrase became current it would be understood without difficulty . . . understood in action.” Twenty years on, the notion of T.A.Z has inspired movements and actions across the world, from the creative play of Reclaim the Streets parties to the autonomy of protest encampments, the Anonymous hacker movement to the Burning Man festival and secret rainbow gatherings.

When Bey first came up with the concept, the web was in its infancy, yet he already imagined a future world where a multitude of autonomous zones could be linked by dispersed networks of communication freed from political control. The web would not be an end in itself, he wrote, but a weapon without which autonomous zones would perish. At the time, he dismissed his own theory as pure speculative science fiction, but the future always arrives faster than one can imagine.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism

Hakim Bey, 1991

https://hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont

Say Something Nice

Improv Everywhere, 2011

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwEYYI-AGWs&feature=youtu.be>

- Prefigurative politics
- The commons
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Artstorm

TAGS

Action design, Community building, Democracy, Direct action, Housing, Land use, Movement building, Privatization

THEORY

THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Global South is not a place, but a way of talking about a diverse set of struggles: the uprising of the planet's people against neoliberal policies, at least, and against the capitalist system, at most.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Vijay Prashad

Vijay Prashad is Professor of International Studies at Trinity College and Chief Editor of LeftWord Books. He is the author of eighteen books, including *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (2013).

"THESE PROTESTS HAVE PRODUCED AN OPENING THAT HAS NO EASILY DEFINABLE POLITICAL DIRECTION."

But down here, down near the roots is where memory omits no memory and here are those who defy death for and die for and thus together achieve what was impossible that the whole world would know that the South, that the South also exists —Mario Benedetti, "El Sur también existe."

The Global South is not a place.

In response to the neoliberal attack on the social world of the world's poor from the late 1970s onwards, protests broke out from Caracas (1989) to Seattle (1999). These protests heralded the slogan *Another World is Possible*. The term *Global South*, used in different forums with various degrees of urgency, referred to the demands of these protests to end the theft of the commons, the theft of human dignity and rights, and the undermining of democratic institutions and the promises of modernity. It is the name for the protests against neoliberal policies that produce an unequal world.

What are these policies? Pushed by the IMF and the World Bank, these policies used the Third World debt crisis and the problem of insufficient municipal revenue in the former colonies of Asia, Africa, and the Americas to push for cuts to social services, a transfer of social wealth to the private sector, and the forcing open of vast areas of human life to the commodity process. Water was no longer to be a common resource, but would be owned, bottled, and sold. Education became a commodity, not a right. So did health care. Conditions of life for the world's billions deteriorated. The end result: Five multi-billionaires now own as much as half the world's entire population (3.8 billion people). That obscenity is what has resulted in a massive, world-wide challenge arising under the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Conflict Kitchen
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Hacking Apartheid
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade
- Consumer boycott
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- Forum theatre
- General strike
- Mass street action
- Occupation
- Sex strike

Principles

- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted

banner of *the Global South*.

The Global South is this: a world of protest, a whirlwind of creative activity. These protests have produced an opening that has no easily definable political direction. Some of them turn backwards, taking refuge in imagined unities of the past or in the divine realm. Others are merely defensive, seeking to survive in the present. And yet others find the present intolerable and nudge the world toward the future.

LEARN MORE

The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South

Vijay Prashad, Verso, 2013

<http://www.versobooks.com/books/1643-the-poorer-nation>

Polarizing Development: Alternatives to Neoliberalism and the Crisis

Lucia Pradella and Thomas Marois, Pluto, 2014

<http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/P/bo21626415.html>

- The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Capitalism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Decolonization
- "Democracy promotion"
- Neoliberalism
- Palace Coup
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism
- Poverty
- The NGO-ization of resistance

TAGS

Austerity, Climate justice, Capitalism, Colonialism, Corruption, Democracy, Dictatorship, Human rights, Immigration, International solidarity, Policy, Privatization, Racial justice, State violence, Street protest, War and peace, Wealth inequality

THEORY

THE NGO-IZATION OF RESISTANCE

When frontline organizers spend more time writing grant reports than changing the system, something is wrong. People most impacted by injustice, not those working for big non-profits, should drive the movement.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy is the author of two novels, *The God of Small Things* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Her latest works of nonfiction include *The Doctor and the Saint* and *The End of Imagination*. She lives in Delhi.

“THE GREATER THE DEVASTATION CAUSED BY NEOLIBERALISM, THE GREATER THE OUTBREAK OF NGOS.”

“Bel dan pa di zanmi.” (“Just because someone is smiling at you doesn't mean they're your friend.”)

—Haitian proverb

A hazard facing mass movements is the NGO-ization of resistance. It will be easy to twist what I'm about to say into an indictment of all NGOs. That would be a falsehood. In the murky waters of fake NGOs set up to siphon off grant money or as tax dodges (in states like Bihar, they are given as dowry), of course there are NGOs doing valuable work. But it's important to turn our attention away from the positive work being done by some individual NGOs, and consider the NGO phenomenon in a broader political context.

In India, for instance, the funded NGO boom began in the late 1980s and 1990s. It coincided with the opening of India's markets to neoliberalism (see: THEORY: Neoliberalism). At the time, the Indian state, in keeping with the requirements of structural adjustment, was withdrawing funding from rural development, agriculture, energy, transport, and public health. As the state abdicated its traditional role, NGOs moved in to work in these very areas. The difference, of course, is that the funds available to them are a minuscule fraction of the actual cut in public spending. Most large well-funded NGOs are financed and patronized by aid and development agencies, which are in turn funded by Western governments, the World Bank, the UN, and some multinational corporations. Though they may not be the very same agencies, they are certainly part of the same loose, political formation that oversees the neoliberal project and demands the slash in government spending in the first place.

RELATED TOOLS

Principles

- Focus on basic needs
- Solidarity, not aid
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Decolonization
- “Democracy promotion”
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Africanism
- Palace Coup
- Postcolonialism
- Poverty
- The Global South

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Why should these agencies fund NGOs? Could it be just old-fashioned missionary zeal? Guilt? It's a little more than that.

NGOs give the *impression* that they are filling the vacuum created by a retreating state. And they are, but in a materially inconsequential way. Their *real* contribution is that they defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right. They alter the public psyche. They turn people into dependent victims and blunt the edges of political resistance. NGOs form a sort of buffer between the *sarkar* and *public*. Between Empire and its subjects. They have become the arbitrators, the interpreters, the facilitators of the discourse. They play out the role of the "reasonable man" in an unfair, unreasonable war.

In the long run, NGOs are accountable to their funders, not to the people they work among. They're what botanists would call an indicator species. It's almost as though the greater the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the greater the outbreak of NGOs. Nothing illustrates this more poignantly than the phenomenon of the US preparing to invade a country and simultaneously readying NGOs to go in and clean up the devastation.

In order to make sure their funding is not jeopardized and that the governments of the countries they work in will allow them to function, NGOs have to present their work — whether it's in a country devastated by war, poverty, or an epidemic of disease — within a shallow framework more or less shorn of a political or historical context. At any rate, an *inconvenient* historical or political context. It's not for nothing that the "NGO perspective" is becoming increasingly respected.

Apolitical (and therefore, actually, extremely political) distress reports from poor countries and war zones eventually make the (dark) people of those (dark) countries seem like pathological victims. *Another malnourished Indian, another starving Ethiopian, another Afghan refugee camp, another maimed Sudanese . . .* in need of the white man's help (see: THEORY: Poverty). They unwittingly reinforce racist stereotypes and reaffirm the achievements, the comforts, and the compassion (the tough love) of Western civilization, minus the guilt of the history of genocide, colonialism, and slavery. They're the secular missionaries of the modern world.

Eventually — on a smaller scale, but more insidiously — the capital available to NGOs plays the same role in alternative politics as the speculative capital that flows in and out of the economies of poor countries. It begins to dictate the agenda.

It turns confrontation into negotiation. It de-politicizes resistance. It interferes with local peoples' movements that have traditionally been self-reliant. NGOs have funds that can employ local people who might otherwise be activists in resistance movements, but now

Austerity, Capitalism,
Colonialism, Democracy,
Dictatorship, International
solidarity, Movement building,
Policy, Privatization

can feel they are doing some immediate, creative good (and earning a living while they're at it). Charity offers instant gratification to the giver, as well as the receiver, but its side effects can be dangerous. Real political resistance offers no such short cuts.

The NGO-ization of politics threatens to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job. With a few perks thrown in.

Real resistance has real consequences. And no salary.

Excerpted from Arundhati Roy, The End of Imagination (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), by permission of Haymarket Books.

LEARN MORE

Public Power in the Age of Empire: Arundhati Roy on War, Resistance, and the Presidency

Democracy Now, 2004

http://www.democracynow.org/2004/8/23/public_power_in_the_age_of

The End of Imagination

Arundhati Roy, Haymarket Books, 2016

<http://www.haymarketbooks.org/pb/The-End-of-Imagination>

The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, South End Press, 2007

https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Revolution_Will_Not_be_Funded.html?id=u7faAAAAMAAJ

THEORY

THE COMMONS

The natural and cultural wealth that belongs to all of us, such as air, water, forests, libraries, and the Internet. These shared gifts are foundations for a more just world, and must be protected and expanded.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Peter Barnes

Peter Barnes is an entrepreneur and writer who co-founded a worker-owned solar energy company in San Francisco and Working Assets Long Distance (now Credo Mobile). Barnes worked as a reporter for The Lowell Sun in Massachusetts, Newsweek, and The New Republic, and his books include *Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons*, *Who Owns the Sky?* (2001), and *Pawns: The Plight of the Citizen-Soldier*.

“A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY COMMONS SECTOR WOULDN'T REPLACE THE MARKET OR THE STATE, BUT WOULD RATHER SERVE AS A NECESSARY BALANCE TO THEM.”

“Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as **boni patres familias** [good heads of the household].”

—Karl Marx

In pre-capitalist times, shared commons were the source of sustenance for most people. Though corporations have enclosed and diminished much of the commons, it lives on in three portfolios: natural wealth (air, water, seeds, ecosystems, other species); community wealth (streets, parks, the Internet, money, social insurance); and cultural wealth (music, art, science, open-source software). All of these are gifts we share and are obliged to preserve for others and for future generations (see: PRINCIPLE: Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves).

The trouble is that, under capitalism, common wealth is increasingly appropriated by private corporations and wealthy individuals for profit (see: THEORY: Neoliberalism). To counter this, we need to expand and strengthen both the commons and the institutions that sustain them.

Several doctrines flow from the idea of the commons: * Public trust doctrine: The state must act as the trustee of common wealth for

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Conflict Kitchen
- Earth First!
- Gezi Park iftar
- Reclaim the Streets
- Santa Claus Army
- Standing Man
- Streets Into Gardens
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- Who Would Accept?
- Yomango
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Blockade
- Debt strike
- Eviction blockade
- Nonviolent search and seizure
- Occupation

the benefit of all, or designate accountable trustees. * We're all in this together: The capitalist-era risks of unemployment, disability, illness, climate change, and unfunded retirement are best shared collectively rather than borne individually (see: PRINCIPLE: Solidarity, not aid). * Polluter pays: Polluters should pay to dump wastes in shared ecosystems. * Precautionary principle: Ecosystems should be managed for long-term health, not short-term profit. * One person, one share: Rent from common assets belongs to everyone equally. * Usufruct: Our right to make use of a given resource is contingent upon our responsibility to preserve and enrich that resource for future generations.

It's important to note that, though the commons sector needs state support (just as the private sector does), it's not identical to the state. One can imagine a vibrant commons sector built around the Internet and the airwaves; trusts that protect key essential resources like clean air, water, forests, and topsoil; universal health care; dividends paid from common wealth to everyone; and local arts funds based on copyright fees. One can also imagine fees on private transactions that profit from the financial commons.

An important function of the commons sector would be to charge corporations for costs (such as bank bailouts and pollution) that they currently impose on the rest of us. If this were done, businesses would speculate less and invest more in clean technologies, and rent from commons use could provide non-labour income to all.

In short, a twenty-first-century commons sector wouldn't replace the market or the state, but would rather serve as a necessary balance to them. While such a sector won't emerge all at once, we can build it piece by piece over time.

MOST FAMOUS APPLICATION: Parks and wilderness areas, the Internet, Wikipedia, Social Security, the Alaska Permanent Fund (pays equal dividends to all Alaskans with revenue from oil leases).

MOST INFAMOUS BETRAYAL: Free gifts of air to polluters, money to banks, and airwaves to broadcasters.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Reimagining Politics Through the Lens of the Commons
David Bollier, 2017

<http://www.bollier.org/blog/re-imagining-politics-through-lens-commons>

All That We Share: How to Save the Economy, the Environment, the Internet, Democracy, Our Communities, and Everything Else that Belongs to All of Us
Jay Walljasper, 2010

<https://books.google.com/books?id=DnKtQAAACAAJ&dq>

- Reverse graffiti
- Trek

Principles

- Breakfast is persuasive
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Everything for everyone, and nothing for ourselves
- Focus on basic needs
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Solidarity, not aid
- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Debt revolt
- Decolonization
- Environmental justice
- Neoliberalism
- Prefigurative politics
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The shock doctrine

Methodologies

- Baraza
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Austerity, Capitalism, Climate justice, Food, Land use, Wealth inequality, Policy

The Commoner

<http://www.commoner.org.uk/>

THEORY

THE PROPAGANDA MODEL

The propaganda model suggests that media outlets operating within a capitalist economy will consistently produce news content that aligns with the interests of political and economic elites.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Simon Enoch

Simon Enoch holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Culture from Ryerson University in Toronto and serves as director of the Saskatchewan Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Simon has previously published in Foucault Studies, Cultural Logic, Capitalism, Nature, Socialism, and Socialist Studies.

“CORPORATE-OWNED NEWS MEDIA WILL CONSISTENTLY PRODUCE NEWS CONTENT THAT SERVES THE INTERESTS OF ESTABLISHED POWER.”

“Any dictator would admire the uniformity and obedience of the US media.”

—Noam Chomsky

The propaganda model seeks to explain media behaviour by examining the institutional pressures that constrain and influence news content within a profit-driven system. In contrast to liberal theories that argue that journalism is adversarial to established power, the propaganda model predicts that corporate-owned news media will consistently produce news content that serves the interests of established power.

First introduced in 1988 in Edward S. Herman’s and Noam Chomsky’s *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, the propaganda model argues that “the raw material of news” passes through five filters that ultimately shape the news audiences receive. These filters determine what events are deemed newsworthy, how they are covered, where they are placed within the media, and how much coverage they receive.

The five filters are as follows:

Concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit-orientation of the dominant mass-media firms. Corporate media firms share common interests with other sectors of the economy, and therefore have a real stake in maintaining an economic and political climate that is conducive to their profitability. They are unlikely to be critical of economic or political policies that directly benefit them.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Sign Language Sit-in

Tactics

- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Hashtag campaign
- Hoax
- Identity correction
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Do the media’s work for them
- Stay on message
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Neoliberalism
- Society of the spectacle

Advertising as primary source of income. To remain profitable, most media rely on advertising dollars for the bulk of their revenue. It is therefore against the interests of the news media to produce content that might antagonize advertisers.

Reliance on information provided by “expert” and official sources. Elites have the resources to routinely “facilitate” the news-gathering process by providing photo-ops, news conferences, press releases, think-tank reports, and canned news pieces that take advantage of the news media’s need for continuous and cheap news content. Business leaders, politicians, and government officials are also typically viewed as credible and unbiased sources of information, jettisoning the need for fact-checking or other costly background research. This filter was clearly demonstrated during the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War, when the US news media took official pronouncements at face value, refusing to investigate their veracity or accuracy.

Flak as a means of disciplining the media. Flak refers to negative commentary on a news story that can work to police and discipline journalists or news organizations that stray too far outside the consensus. Flak includes complaints, lawsuits, petitions, or government sanctions.

An external enemy or threat. Manifesting as “anti-communism” during the Cold War period when *Manufacturing Consent* was originally published, this filter still operates, particularly in the post-9/11 political climate. This filter mobilizes the population against a common enemy (terrorism, energy insecurity, Iran . . .) while demonizing opponents of state policy as insufficiently patriotic or in league with the enemy.

The propaganda model suggests that corporate media ultimately serve to “manufacture consent” for a narrow range of self-serving élitist policy options. It allows us to understand the institutional pressures that shape how activists’ causes and actions are covered. By understanding the limits of “objectivity” and the contradictions within corporate-sponsored journalism, we can develop media tactics that take advantage of these contradictions while also bypassing the filters of the corporate press, and directly appealing to the public through alternative forms of media. As Herman himself writes, “we would like to think that the propaganda model even suggests where and how activists can best deploy their efforts to influence mainstream media coverage of issues.”

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Propaganda Model Revisited
Edward S. Herman, 1996

<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/9608072479/propaganda-model-revisited>

Methodologies

- Peel the onion

TAGS

Capitalism, Communications,
Democracy, Language, Media,
Privatization, Social media

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'Propaganda Model'

Jeffrey Klaehn, 2002

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Herman and Noam Chomsky

Andrew Mullen, 2009

https://chomsky.info/200911__/

Media Lens

<http://www.medialens.org/>

THEORY

THE SHOCK DOCTRINE

Neoliberalism treats crises such as wars, natural disasters, and recessions as opportunities to impose privatization, deregulation, and cuts to social services. Social movements must contest these moments.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Mark Engler

Mark Engler, a writer based in Philadelphia, is an editorial board member at *Dissent*, and a contributing editor at *Yes! Magazine*. He is co-author, with Paul Engler, of *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century* (Nation Books).

"WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT NEOLIBERALS ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN RESPOND TO A CRISIS."

"Only a crisis — actual or perceived — produces real change."
—Milton Friedman

The shock doctrine is a theory for explaining the way that force, stealth, and crisis are used in implementing neoliberal economic policies such as privatization, deregulation, and cuts to social services. Author Naomi Klein advanced this theory in her 2007 book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

By way of metaphor, Klein recounts the history of electroshock therapy experiments conducted by Scottish psychiatrist Ewen Cameron for the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the 1950s. Cameron's "shock therapy" sought to return troubled patients to a blank slate on which he could write a new personality. Klein argues that a parallel "shock therapy" process has been used at the macro level to impose neoliberal economic policies in countries around the world.

The shock doctrine posits that in periods of disorientation following wars, coups, natural disasters, and economic panics, pro-corporate reformers aggressively push through unpopular "free market" measures. For more than 30 years, Klein writes, followers of Milton Friedman and other market fundamentalists have been "perfecting this very strategy: waiting for a major crisis, then selling off pieces of the state to private players while citizens were still reeling from the shock, then quickly making the 'reforms' permanent."

One of the earliest examples of the shock doctrine is the case of Chile. In 1973, Chile's democratically elected socialist President Salvador Allende was overthrown in a coup d'état led by army

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Manich Msamah
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation

Tactics

- Mass street action

Principles

- Solidarity, not aid

Theories

- Capitalism
- Environmental justice
- Neoliberalism
- The commons

TAGS

Austerity, Climate justice, Capitalism, Corruption, Democracy, Dictatorship, Privatization, State violence, Wealth inequality

general Augusto Pinochet, with support from the United States. Amid lingering turmoil created by the coup and tensions caused by the ensuing economic downturn, Milton Friedman suggested that Pinochet implement a “shock program” of sweeping reforms including privatization of state-owned industries, elimination of tariffs, and cuts to government spending. To implement these policies, the Pinochet regime appointed to important positions several Chilean disciples of Friedman. Additionally, to squash popular movements that opposed these changes, the regime unleashed a notorious program of torture and “disappearances,” which ultimately led to the deaths of thousands of dissidents.

Klein contends that various forms of the shock doctrine have since been used to advance hyper-capitalist reforms, for example in former Eastern Bloc countries following the collapse of the Soviet Union and in South Africa after the end of apartheid. More recently, pro-corporate advocates have used the 2004 tsunami in south Asia to privatize public beaches in Sri Lanka and have worked to slash corporate taxes and public education and re-shape neighborhoods in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In each case, we witness, in Klein’s words, “orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities.”

Although the shock doctrine has helped explain neoliberal attempts to take advantage of disaster situations, it cannot entirely account for the success of “free market” ideology, particularly in cases in which the market’s powers of seduction play a larger role than the use of brute force. Moreover, we should remember that neoliberals are not the only ones who can respond to a crisis. Throughout the world, social movements are learning that political upheaval and economic downturn can create opportunities for popular movements to demand, and construct, a more just and equitable society.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism

Naomi Klein, 2007

[https://books.google.com/books?](https://books.google.com/books?id=PwHUAq5LPOQC&lpg=PP1&dq=the%20shock%20doctrine&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false)

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Mark Engler, 2008

<http://democracyuprising.com/2008/03/31/capitalism-as-catastrophe/>

THEORY

THE SOCIAL CURE

The actions of our peers are more likely to motivate us to act than either information or an appeal to fear. The social cure shows us how to harness this power of social groups for social change.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Bryan Farrell

Bryan Farrell is an editor at Waging Nonviolence, where he writes about environment, climate change, and people power. His work has also appeared in Slate, Mother Jones, The Nation, Grist, and Earth Island Journal.

“THEIR LANGUAGE SMELLED LIKE DEATH. AND WE WON BECAUSE WE LOVED LIFE MORE.”

People are rarely swayed by information alone. If they were, the tobacco industry would have collapsed when the first Surgeon General’s report on smoking came out in 1964, and fossil fuels would have been phased out in 1989, when the threat of global warming reached public consciousness.

So what does move us? According to Tina Rosenberg, author of *Join the Club*, it’s peer pressure. You know, the same thing that compels teenagers to engage in all sorts of risky behaviour that drives parents crazy. But there’s more to it than that.

Peer pressure is also responsible for some astounding instances of positive social change, from lowering HIV rates among South African youths to reducing the number of teen smokers in the United States. Both advances, Rosenberg explains, came about through targeted efforts by local NGOs to activate peer networks for positive social change.

It’s a point that many are willing to accept in theory. Few, though, would believe that something so simple could topple a brutal dictator. But that’s precisely what the Serbian student movement Otpor was able to achieve when it transformed a previously passive and fatalistic citizenry into the nonviolent army that overthrew Slobodan Milošević, the “Butcher of the Balkans,” in 2000.

As Rosenberg explains in her book, “Traditional democracy activists create political parties. Otpor created a party. People joined the movement for the same reasons they go to the hot bar of the moment.” By branding itself with hip slogans, black t-shirts, absurd humour, rock music, and an iconic clenched-fist graphic, the eleven

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Billionaires for Bush
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Justice for Janitors
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Lysistrata Project
- No vote, no sex
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Replacing Cops with Mimes

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Carnival protest
- Cultural disobedience
- Distributed action
- Flash mob
- Lamentation
- Mass street action

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Burn brightly, but don’t burn out

founders of Otpor — all university students at the time — reinvented resistance in Serbia by making it a desirable club to join.

They even managed to create a cult around getting arrested. For teenagers, it was a way to be rebellious and win the respect of their peers at the same time. Eventually, getting arrested became a competition and kids would compete to rack up the most busts. As one Otpor member noted, "When someone asks me who took down Milošević, I say, 'High school kids.' "

By appealing to people's need for not just information but identification, Otpor showed that the social cure can be used in even the most difficult and repressive of situations as a force for rallying citizen power. Put more simply, in the words of Otpor founder Srdja Popovic, "Their language smelled like death. And we won because we loved life more."

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

How Peer Pressure Creates Social Change

Bryan Farrell, 2011

<https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/how-peer-pressure-creates-social-change/>

Bringing Down a Dictator

Steve York, 2001

<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/bringing-down-a-dictator/>

- Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel
- Foster safer spaces
- Get arrested in an intelligent way
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make new folks welcome
- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Seek safety in support networks
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Think narratively

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Cultural hegemony
- Dunbar's number
- Political identity paradox
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Community building, Democracy, Dictatorship, Movement building, Student activism

THEORY

THE TACTICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

We often think of activist tactics as serving a larger campaign strategy. Instead, it might be more liberating and agile to think of tactics not as a subset of strategy, but as a democratic response to it.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Stan Goff

Stan Goff spent over two decades in the US Army, mostly special operations, from 1970-1996. He has worked with Democracy South, a 12-state coalition working on money and politics and Iraq Veterans Against the War, and has authored four books including *Hideous Dream: A Soldier's Memoir of the US Invasion of Haiti* and *Sex & War*.

"STRATEGIES ARE UNDERMINED BY UNPREDICTABILITY. TACTICS MAKE AN ALLY OF UNPREDICTABILITY."

Strategy and tactics, as the concepts are commonly understood, have their roots in military theory. The French Jesuit scholar Michel de Certeau, however, drew a distinction between the two terms that leaps over some of the martial history of these ideas.

In military parlance, strategy is the identification of key campaigns that are necessary to accomplish the main objective — in most cases, winning the war. Operations are the level of planning that determines key battles necessary to win campaigns. Tactics are those techniques that are required to win battles. So the tactic is subordinate to the campaign, which is subordinate to the strategy. Those who adapt the model inherit the hierarchy in which it is based.

De Certeau took a different approach, positing tactics not as subordinate to strategy but as opposed to it. He wrote about people in their everyday lives, not in conditions of extremity and conflict, in a book fittingly entitled *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984).

The setting of strategy, notes de Certeau, is always the purview of power. Strategy presumes control. Strategy is self-segregating, in the same way administration and management are self-segregating, setting itself up as a barricaded insider. The strategic leaders become the Subject; the led and the enemy become the Objects. Strategy presumes an in-group that carries out campaigns.

In contrast to strategy, de Certeau characterizes tactics as the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Conflict Kitchen
- Honk at Parliament
- Occupy Wall Street
- PARK(ing) Day
- Street Graduation
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Who Would Accept?
- Yomango

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Creative disruption
- Cultural disobedience
- Distributed action
- Eviction blockade
- Flash mob

purview of the non-powerful. He understands tactics not as a subset of strategy, but as an adaptation to the environment, which has been created by the strategies of the powerful. The city planning commission may determine what streets there will be, but the local cabbie will figure out how best to navigate the lived reality of those streets. This art of making-do is what de Certeau calls *bricolage*, a process that often implies cooperation as much as competition.

Strategy, de Certeau recognizes, makes two presumptions: control and an in-group. The inherent contradiction of strategy is that the control is never perfect and the situation upon which the strategy was constructed is always changing, which constantly makes aspects of the strategy obsolescent. The self-segregation of in-groups magnifies these myopic aspects of strategy, because the walls that keep others out also obscure their vision. Strategy becomes dangerously self-referential.

Tactics, on the other hand, are action in a constant state of reassessment and correction, based directly on observations of the actual environment. Tactical theorist John Boyd rather schematically diagrammed this process as an "OODA-loop," in which people *observe* their surroundings (O), *orient* on the most important developments in the environment (O), *decide* on an immediate course of action (D), take that *action* (A), then revert immediately to observation of the environment to see how their last action might have changed it (orienting again, deciding again, acting again, in a perpetual adaptive loop). There is no presumption of how things will turn out, as there is in strategy. Instead, there is readiness to take advantage of unpredictable changes. This is called tactical agility, and it is often what sets popular uprisings apart from the institutions they seek to overthrow: They have strategy, we have tactics.

Strategies are undermined by unpredictability. Tactics make an ally of unpredictability.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

The Practice of Everyday Life

Michel de Certeau, 2002

[https://books.google.com/books?id=-](https://books.google.com/books?id=-Csl_AAoUT8C&lpq=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false)

[Csl_AAoUT8C&lpq=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=-Csl_AAoUT8C&lpq=PP1&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false)

- General strike
- Hoax
- Infiltration
- Media-jacking
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Fail forward
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Praxis makes perfect
- Seek common ground
- Shame the authorities by doing their job
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The real action is your target's reaction
- This ain't the Sistine chapel
- Use the Jedi mind trick

Theories

- Cultural hegemony
- Dunbar's number
- Floating signifier
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- Temporary autonomous zone
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Spectrum of allies

TAGS

Action design, Campaign
strategy

THEORY

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

A set of theatrical games and exercises that empower people to explore collective struggles, analyze their history and present circumstances, and then experiment with inventing a new future together.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Levana Saxon

Levana Saxon is an organizer and educator with Practicing Freedom who has worked with groups such as the Paulo Freire Institute, Rainforest Action Network, Center for Political Education, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Youth In Focus, El Teatro Campesino, and multiple Oakland Public Schools. She currently co-coordinates the Ruckus Society's Arts Core and facilitates trainings and dialogues with the White Noise Collective, which she co-founded.

"THEATRE THUS BECOMES REHEARSAL FOR REAL-WORLD ACTION."

"The theatre itself is not revolutionary: It is a rehearsal for the revolution."

—Augusto Boal

Theatre of the Oppressed is an arsenal of theatre techniques and games that seeks to motivate people, restore true dialogue, and create space for participants to rehearse taking action. It begins with the idea that everyone has the capacity to act (see: PRINCIPLE: Anyone can act) in the "theatre" of their own lives; everybody is at once an actor and a spectator. We are "spect-actors!" — a term which Boal coined.

Boal points out that when we are simply passive audience members, we transfer our desire to take action onto the characters we identify with, and then find that desire satiated as the conflict resolves itself on stage, in films or in the news. Catharsis substitutes for action.

Boal, following Brecht, calls this bourgeois theatre, which functions to reproduce elite visions of the world and pacify spectators. He says bourgeois theatre is "finished" theatre; the bourgeoisie already know what the world is like and so simply present it onstage.

In contrast to bourgeois theatre, "the people" do not yet know what their world will be like. Their "authentic" theatre is therefore unfinished, and can provide space to rehearse different possible

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Couple in the Cage
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- The Salt March
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- Trail of Dreams
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Citizen's arrest
- Forum theatre
- Guerrilla theatre
- Image theatre
- Invisible theatre
- Legislative theatre
- Storytelling
- Street theatre

Principles

- Anyone can act
- Balance art and message

outcomes (see: PRINCIPLE: Praxis makes perfect). As Boal writes in *Theatre of the Oppressed*: "One knows how these experiments will begin but not how they will end, because the spectator is freed from his chains, finally acts, and becomes a protagonist."

Theatre of the Oppressed encompasses many forms, including the following:

Image theater invites spect-actors to form a tableau of frozen poses to capture a moment in time dramatizing an oppressive situation. The image then becomes a source of critical reflection, facilitated by various kinds of interventions: Spect-actors may be asked to depict an ideal image of liberation from that oppression, and then a sequence of transition images required to reach it, or to reshape an image to show different perspectives (see: THEORY: Framing).

Forum theater is a short play or scene that dramatizes a situation, with a terribly oppressive ending that spect-actors cannot be satisfied with. After an initial performance, it is shown again, however this time the spectators become spect-actors and can at any point yell "freeze" and step on stage to replace the protagonist(s) and take the situation in different directions. Theatre thus becomes rehearsal for real-world action.

Legislative theater takes forum theater to the government and asks spect-actors to not only attempt interventions on stage, but to write down the successful interventions into suggestions for legislation and hand them to the elected officials in the room.

Invisible theater is a play that masquerades as reality, performed in a public space. The objective is to unsettle passive social relations and spark critical dialogue among the spect-actors, who never learn that they are part of a play. During an interview on Democracy Now! on June 3, 2005, Augusto Boal said of one invisible theatre intervention, "The actor became the spectator of the spectator who had become an actor, so the fiction and reality were overlapping."

A final point that perhaps can't be stated enough: Our movements need to be more strategic and community-led! Theatre of the Oppressed offers arts-based strategy-developing exercises (see: PRINCIPLE: Balance art and message) that foster collaboration and community-led engagement. What could be more awesome?

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed
<http://ptoweb.org/>

Theatre of the Oppressed
Augusto Boal, 1979

- No one wants to watch a drum circle
- Praxis makes perfect
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Use your cultural assets
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Alienation effect
- Anti-oppression
- Critical multiculturalism
- Ethical spectacle
- Framing
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Methodologies

- Artstorm

TAGS

Art, Action design, Campaign strategy, Pranks

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2PrIAQAACAAJ&dq>

Come Closer: Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed

<https://books.google.com/books?id=vMU4KQEACAAJ&dq>

THEORY

“DEMOCRACY PROMOTION”

Democracy promotion is the term the US uses to describe efforts to penetrate and control emergent civil societies in targeted countries — those with regimes deemed unfriendly or unstable by policymakers.

CONTRIBUTED BY

George Katsiaficas

A Fulbright Fellow, student of Herbert Marcuse, and long-time activist, George Katsiaficas is the author of *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968*. He recently published two volumes about East Asian uprisings in the 1980s and 1990s: *Asia's Unknown Uprisings* (PM Press in Oakland).

“AMERICAN POLICYMAKERS ARE WELL AWARE THAT THE RADICAL IMPETUS IN THE STREETS, IF LEFT TO DEVELOP ACCORDING TO ITS OWN LOGIC, COULD WELL CONTINUE TO EXPAND AND BECOME A THREAT TO BOTH US STRATEGIC MILITARY INTERESTS AND CORPORATE DOMINATION.”

“This is not democracy. It is to politics what McDonald’s is to food.”
—John Pilger

In the 1980s, as People Power revolts across Asia transformed political dynamics, US global strategy changed from sole reliance on repressive military interventions and covert CIA actions to include a public component called “democracy promotion,” the attempt to penetrate and control emergent civil societies in targeted countries (those with regimes deemed unfriendly or unstable by American policymakers). Tens of millions of US dollars were poured into programs formerly managed by the CIA, such as creating “friendly” trade unions, political parties, feminist alliances, activist clusters, and media that would support US transnational interests. In combination with the National Endowment for Democracy, the AFL-CIO, the international committees of the Democratic and Republican parties, and the US Chamber of Commerce, NGOs chosen by US officials were funded with the aim of building friendly voices within emergent civil societies in order to channel them into transnational alliances with global elites.

Often this effort required undermining indigenous radical formations that organically developed through struggles against US-backed dictatorships — as in the Philippines under Marcos or more recently in Egypt before the overthrow of Mubarak. The goal in both these cases was to suppress popular demands that arose

RELATED TOOLS

Principles

- Recapture the flag
- Solidarity, not aid
- Use state power to build people power

Theories

- Decolonization
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Africanism
- Palace Coup
- Postcolonialism
- Poverty
- The Global South
- The NGO-ization of resistance

TAGS

Capitalism, Colonialism, Corruption, Democracy, Dictatorship, Elections, Human

from below. American policymakers are well aware that the radical impetus in the streets, if left to develop according to its own logic, could well continue to expand and become a threat to both US strategic military interests and corporate domination. US infiltration of indigenous civil society groups is often a preventative measure meant precisely to undermine movements' radical potential. As James Petras observed during the Arab Spring, "The risk of waiting too long, of sticking with the dictator, is that the uprising radicalizes: The ensuing change sweeps away both the regime and the state apparatus, turning a political uprising into a social revolution." (In cases where entrenched regimes unfriendly to the United States cannot be overthrown through military intervention, such as Milošević in Yugoslavia, strategic nonviolent opposition led by NGOs was used as an alternative tactic.)

(Reprinted with permission from George Katsiaficas, Asia's Unknown Uprisings, Vol. II: People Power in the Philippines, Burma, Tibet, China, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand and Indonesia, 1947-2009. PM Press, 2013.)

LEARN MORE

Oligarchs, Demagogues, and Mass Revolts Against Democracy

James Petras, Dissident Voice, 2013

<http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/12/oligarchs-demagogues-and-mass-revolts-against-democracy/>

Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II

William Blum, Common Courage Press, 2004

<http://williamblum.org/books/killing-hope/>

rights, International solidarity,
Militarization, Policy, State
violence, Street protest, War and
peace, Wealth inequality

METHODOLOGY ACTION STAR

A checklist of 8 key factors for planning & evaluating actions.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

A checklist of 8 key factors for planning & evaluating actions.

1. Who/what is the political **target**?
2. Where is the **Point of Intervention**?
3. How does this action activate passive **allies** & isolate your opposition?
4. Who is the priority **audience** & what is your message to them?
5. Is the conflict & **story** strategically framed?
6. Does the action connect with people's **values** & appeal to commonsense?
7. **Action logic.** Does the action itself tell the story?
8. Will it build the group's **capacity**?

LEARN MORE

Action Strategy: A How-To Guide

The Ruckus Society, 2011

<http://ruckus.org/downloads/RuckusActionStrategyGuide.pdf>

Beautiful Trouble Trainer's Library

Beautiful Trouble, 2013+

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/0BwOTpLplsKkdbVhaSIRKSjdJaGs>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Earth First!
- Public Option Annie
- Pyramid of Shoes
- Streets Into Gardens
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Citizen's arrest
- Creative disruption
- Creative petition delivery
- Hunger strike
- Media-jacking

Principles

- Bring the issue home
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Create many points of entry
- Do the media's work for them
- Don't dress like a protester
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Lead with sympathetic characters

- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Stay on message
- Take risks, but take care
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Think narratively
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Hamoq and hamas
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Points of intervention
- Spectrum of allies
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Action design, Communications, Community building, Direct action, Nonviolence, Street protest, Student activism

METHODOLOGY

ART OF HOSTING

The Art of Hosting is a set of principles and practices for harnessing the self-organizing capacity and collective wisdom of groups to address complex challenges.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Aerin Dunford

Aerin is a writer, upcycling artist, process designer and facilitator, yoga instructor, and an independent process consultant using Art of Hosting and other participative approaches as a basis for her work with organizations.

Megan Martin

Megan is a program consultant, facilitator, and community activator living and working in Latin America. As a part of the growing community of Art of Hosting facilitators and practitioners in Mexico, she has put these processes to use (along with participatory theatre practices) while collaborating with NGOs, activists, businesses, governments, and civil society groups seeking stronger participation, innovation, and impact in their work.

“THE ART OF HOSTING CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS A GROUP OPERATING SYSTEM.”

“There is no greater power than a community discovering what it cares about.”

—Margaret Wheatley

Based on the assumption that people give their energy and lend their resources to what matters most to them, in work as in life, the Art of Hosting blends a suite of powerful conversational processes to invite people to step in and take charge of the challenges facing them. It can be a powerful tool for activists and organizers to convene meaningful, empowering, and productive conversations, amongst themselves or in the communities they’re seeking to engage.

Groups and organizations using the Art of Hosting as a working practice report better decision making, more efficient and effective capacity building, and greater ability to quickly respond to opportunity, challenge, and change. People who experience the Art of Hosting typically say that they walk away feeling more empowered and able to help guide meetings and conversations towards more effective and desirable outcomes.

In our work as creative activists, we’ve all participated in a meeting that feels like a waste of time, conversations that feel more like debates, and invitations to provide input that turn out to be something altogether different. People want to contribute, but they can’t see how. Some voices dominate, while others are barely

POTENTIAL RISKS

The Art of Hosting is a practice that involves both a set of specific exercises and an overarching commitment to trust in the capacity, intelligence, and potential of a given group of people. It’s not a series of steps to be followed, but rather a muscle that requires constant exercise. Forgetting to have patience with the practice (and with yourself) can be an obstacle. It’s also important that leaders or power brokers are truly open to the input or results of these participatory processes. If there are hidden agendas or predetermined outcomes, participants will often find themselves disillusioned or disempowered by the process.

RELATED TOOLS

heard. Or, we have a great conversation, but then struggle to summarize the key points or priority tasks arising from it. As leaders, we want the best contributions of everyone (see: PRINCIPLE: We are all leaders), but often don't know how to get them. The Art of Hosting offers groups a number of collaborative methods that work well together — including Circle, World Cafe, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space Technology, ProAction Cafe, storytelling and more — to address issues like these.

The Art of Hosting is being used by a variety of groups — families, organizations, governments — and in many sectors, including healthcare, education, human rights, youth, and justice, to name a few. It has been used to convene a collective and simultaneous conversation of over 10,000 people in cities across Israel/historic Palestine to talk about social justice; as a transformative container for wide collaboration within the European Commission and other EU institutions; for rethinking large and complex citywide systems in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.; and it serves as the underlying *modus operandi* at the permaculture demonstration village, Kufunda, in Ruwa, Zimbabwe.

As a practice, the Art of Hosting offers those who feel called to grapple with large issues both a framework and a practice that hones their skills, builds their capacity, and invites the participation of all. Because it can be used in conjunction with many other methodologies or practices, it can be thought of as a sort of “operating system” that focuses the group on effective and grounded communication.

LEARN MORE

Art of Hosting

<http://www.artofhosting.org/>

Art of Hosting Mexico

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ArtOfHostingMexico/>

Art of Hosting Online Community

<http://artofhosting.ning.com/>

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Lysistrata Project
- Nuit Debout

Tactics

- Cultural disobedience
- Flash mob

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Breakfast is persuasive
- Build strength through repetition
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Enable, don't command
- Fail forward
- Foster safer spaces
- Know your community
- Simple rules can have grand results
- Solidarity, not aid
- Start a conversation
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Training for the win
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Anti-oppression
- Comunalidad (communality)
- Participatory democracy
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Social model of disability

Methodologies

- Baraza

TAGS

Communications, Community building, Education, Movement building

METHODOLOGY

ARTSTORM

Like brainstorming, but more active, artstorming invites participants to jump directly into the creative process, resulting in better ideas, and often amazing creations.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Levana Saxon

Levana Saxon is an organizer and educator with Practicing Freedom who has worked with groups such as the Paulo Freire Institute, Rainforest Action Network, Center for Political Education, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Youth In Focus, El Teatro Campesino, and multiple Oakland Public Schools. She currently co-coordinates the Ruckus Society's Arts Core and facilitates trainings and dialogues with the White Noise Collective, which she co-founded.

“BY ENGAGING THE FULL SPECTRUM OF OUR CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE, ARTSTORMING TAPS INTO PARTS OF US THAT MIGHT BE SNOOZING MOST OF THE TIME.”

“The real seeds for revolutionary changes can grow in artistic practices.”

—John Jordan

Brainstorm sessions should be a great way for groups to arrive at an idea that is better than any one individual could come up with, but they often don't work that way. In a big group, the ideas of a few people who feel confident enough to share their half-baked musings tend to drown out the rest. Yale University researchers actually found that brainstorming can reduce a group's creativity. So when collectively designing an arts action, instead of brainstorming, try artstorming!

When artstorming, instead of a blank wall where people write up ideas from the group, everyone stands up and starts improvising together with all the tools at hand. Instead of theorizing about what would look or sound good, they try it out. It starts with physical movement (proven to enhance creative output), then some form of improvisation (word association, or improv theatre games), which prepares the brain to take risks.

Artstorming is useful because it:

Makes space for multiple intelligences and fluencies. Artstorming creates space for the spatially, kinesthetically, and musically gifted

POTENTIAL RISKS

Some people may find an artstorm terrifying. Don't force people to do it or assume everyone is comfortable working this way. For those who declare discomfort with spontaneous creative work, give them a different role: say, offering verbal feedback to ensure that the groups are staying on-message.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Ghana ThinkTank
- Manich Msamah
- Street Graduation

Tactics

- Forum theatre
- Image theatre

folks who might be alienated from a verbal brainstorm.

Invites people to be fully present. By engaging the full spectrum of our creative intelligence, artstorming taps into parts of us that might be snoozing most of the time. These parts will be badly needed in an arts action.

Supports creativity. In an artstorm, people's honest expression of the feelings and ideas that brought the group together in the first place are safe to come out and play, so more expression happens.

Is anti-capitalist. That's right. Hakim Bey asserts that under capitalism we have become increasingly alienated from our direct experiences with each other and with our art. Artstorming is an opportunity to reconnect with ourselves, our art, and each other.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Forget Brainstorming

Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman, Newsweek, 2010

<http://www.newsweek.com/forget-brainstorming-74223>

Artist Guide

Kevin Buckland, 350.org, 2011

<https://issuu.com/350.org/docs/artist-guide-formatted?backgroundColor=%2523222222>

The Radical Working Class Roots of Improv Comedy

Gabrielle Ross, Bitch Magazine, 2013

<https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/the-radical-roots-of-improv>

- Legislative theatre

- Street theatre

Principles

- Balance art and message

- Choose tactics that support your strategy

- Consider your audience

- Give voice to those that can't speak

- Praxis makes perfect

- Use organizing strategies that scale

Theories

- Activism

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed

- Temporary autonomous zone

- Theatre of the Oppressed

TAGS

Action design, Art,

Communications, Direct action,

Movement building

METHODOLOGY

BARAZA

A large community gathering to discuss important matters, share information, & hold leaders to account.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Phil Wilmot

Phil Wilmot is an organizer based in Uganda, heading the prolific resistance network and political education collective Solidarity Uganda. He writes about, partakes in, and supports resistance across Africa. He also enjoys being a daddy, especially where it involves cooking, storytelling, and video gaming.

“BARAZAS ARE A QUITE HORIZONTAL, AND DIRECTLY DEMOCRATIC, MECHANISM FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING.”

“The little grassroots people can change the world.”

—Wangari Maathai

A *baraza* is a large community gathering to discuss important matters, share information, and hold leaders to account.

Especially when employed in rural areas of East Africa, barazas often attract hundreds — or even thousands — of local residents. Movements and organizations are able to tap into these spaces to bring forward critical issues, say, educating people on mitigating the effects of climate change, calling attention to rises in domestic violence, or exposing a corrupt local leader.

Incompetent civil servants, greedy businesspeople, and dishonest politicians usually refuse to show up at barazas, for fear of being shamed for their actions. Wrongdoers who are brave enough to appear are forced to make amends for their transgressions.

Barazas are not always a battle of good versus evil. Often a problem affecting a community is raised for discussion, and solutions are gathered from attendees. When agreed upon, responsibilities are designated to particular teams to implement. In this way, barazas are a quite horizontal, and directly democratic, mechanism for community organizing.

In Abim, Uganda, barazas were used to evaluate civil servants on how responsibly they used local tax revenues. This resulted in improved infrastructure, including roads and bridges.

The Constitutional Movement in Kuwait from 1986 to 1992 employed the use of *diwanyat* — annexes to homes where local

POTENTIAL RISKS

Barazas can be usurped by opponents of the community, who then lose control over their own organizing mechanism. In Kenya, the government convenes barazas at the lowest administrative units to give residents updates on upcoming vaccination programmes, new agricultural practices, and other government programs. These barazas were abused by the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), especially in the 1990s during the Moi dictatorship, when the party was a vehicle for state propaganda. Spaces that are open to all are vulnerable to being co-opted by interlopers if there is no strategy to protect them from working against their members' best interests.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

assemblies are held — to organize while street protests were illegal. Due to cultural norms, police would never enter a diwanya. Diwanyat enabled mass mobilization, fueling a movement that eventually attained the reinstatement of the suspended constitution.

Humans everywhere have organized baraza-like gatherings under various names: “town halls” in New England, “indignados” in Madrid, “diwaniyat” in much of the Arab world. One might argue the baraza is fundamental to the human way of being, filling a need to come together and belong while working toward a better community.

What is the baraza of your culture? What is the naturally existing direct-democratic tradition in your community? And how can you harness it to improve things?

LEARN MORE

Baraza Policy Brief: An Assessment of the Role and Effectiveness of Barazas in Decision Making Processes
Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, 2018
https://www.iser-uganda.org/images/Baraza_Policy_Brief.pdf

- Gezi Park iftar
- PARK(ing) Day

Tactics

- Mass street action
- Occupation

Principles

- Consider your audience
- Foster safer spaces
- Know your community
- Make new folks welcome
- Seek common ground
- Use organizing strategies that scale
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Comunalidad (communality)
- Gerontocracy
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Prefigurative politics
- The commons

Methodologies

- Art of Hosting

TAGS

Communications, Democracy,
Community building

METHODOLOGY

BATTLE OF THE STORY

Harness the strength of stories to expose oppressive beliefs, and show how another reality is possible.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

Analyze both the status-quo's story and your new story via 5 lenses:

1. **Conflict:** How is the problem being framed? Who is the conflict between?
2. **Characters:** Who are the villains & heroes?
3. **Imagery:** How does the story show us (rather than tell us) what's important?
4. **Foreshadowing:** How does the story show us the future?
5. **Assumptions:** What must one believe to accept the story as true?

LEARN MORE

Narrative Power Analysis Worksheet

name of book or magazine, etc., year it was published

<http://drpop.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Narrative-Power-Analysis-Worksheet1.pdf>

What's Your Story? Worksheet

Center for Media Justice

<http://centerformediajustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WhatsYourStoryWorksheet.pdf>

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- 99% Bat Signal
- Angola 15+2
- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Billionaires for Bush
- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Citizens' Posse
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Every Heartbeat Counts
- Fees Must Fall
- Flower Speech Campaign
- #GambiaHasDecided
- Ghana ThinkTank
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Justice for Janitors
- Lysistrata Project
- Orange Alternative
- Pimp My . . . Carroça!
- Public Option Annie
- Stolen Beauty
- Street Graduation
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Teddy Bear Catapult
- #ThisFlag

- Trail of Dreams
- Whose Tea Party?

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre
- Forum theatre
- General strike
- Guerriglia del teatrino elettorale
- Guerrilla musical
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Hunger strike
- Light Brigade
- Media-jacking
- Phone blockade
- Storytelling
- Subversive travel
- Trek
- Viaggio Sovversivo

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Change a name to change the game
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consensus is a means, not an end
- Consider your audience
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Give voice to those that can't speak
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Recapture the flag
- Reframe the issue

- Seek common ground
- Solidarity, not aid
- Stay on message
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Action logic
- Alienation effect
- Anti-oppression
- Artivism
- Commodity fetishism
- Critical multiculturalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Ethical spectacle
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Memes
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Postcolonialism
- Revolutionary reform
- The NGO-ization of resistance

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Story of self, us, and now

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Community
building, Language, Media,
Movement building

METHODOLOGY

PEEL THE ONION

People & organizations are more complicated than their stated positions. By peeling back the onion on both friend & foe, we can discover potential allies and reveal power-holders' hidden conflicts of interest.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nils Amar Tegmo

From graphic designer and anarcho-punk musician carrying out direct actions against Monsanto in Nepal, to trainer of youth activists, Nils has worked with hundreds of young people to share skills and knowledge on creative activism and strategic campaign planning. He is currently running the online learning platform and toolkit Global Change Lab.

“IF WE’RE GOING TO BE STRATEGIC ABOUT CHANGING SOCIETY FOR THE BETTER, WE NEED TO ASSESS AND ANALYZE THE POSITIONS, INTERESTS, AND NEEDS OF THOSE WITH POWER.”

“We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.”

—Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

People — including politicians and other people with power — aren't as one-dimensional as we might think. What they say isn't always what they actually want or need. Rather, they have complex layers of needs, interests, and positions; some may be visible and others invisible. The onion tool helps us peel back their political rhetoric to build a deeper, more complex picture understanding of what motivates particular individuals in power, so we can better work with (or against) them.

The onion tool makes a critical distinction between a powerful person's positions, interests, and needs.

A **position** is *what we say we want*. But talk can be cheap, especially from powerful politicians and the business elite. If we assume they're telling us the full truth, we will never get the broader picture. This does not mean we need to be generally distrustful, only that it is advisable to think clearly, rationally, and critically when listening to what the powerful say.

An **interest**, on the other hand, is *what we really want*. Our interests are not always evident from our stated position. For example, the

POTENTIAL RISKS

Determining a person's needs can be more difficult than determining their positions or interests because their needs often remain unspoken and are generally less obvious and more idiosyncratic.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army
- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Public Art Nanny Hotline
- Schools of Struggle

Tactics

- Anonymous suggestion box
- Citizen's arrest
- Creative lobbying
- Eviction blockade

interest of a politician may be to consolidate power and increase wealth. The interest of Coca-Cola or Shell is most likely to accumulate financial gain at the expense of others. Meanwhile they're talking about the good of the nation, and promising happiness to anyone who drinks Coca-Cola. There is a clear difference between what they say they want and what they really want.

At the heart of it all are our **needs**. This is *what we must have* and is often non-negotiable. For an individual it may be our values, commitments, beliefs, or ethics. It is the innermost layer and generally where we are most honest. It is, of course, deep inside and often hidden, so understanding the inner workings of other people is not always easy.

So what does all this have to do with activism and campaigning? Well, if we're going to be strategic about changing society for the better, we need to assess and analyze the positions, interests, and needs of those with power. By understanding powerful individuals at a more profound level, we can choose our targets wisely, communicate with them more strategically (and when needed, diplomatically), and better identify conflicts of interests and potential alliances.

Also, while positions are generally public, true interests are not. Sometimes exposing your opponent's true interest can undermine their credibility, and move your cause closer to victory.

The ability to distinguish between what people say they want, what they really want, and what they can't live without has many practical applications. For example, the onion tool is great for conflict management within teams of activists or campaigners when disagreements arise. It can help you identify what really matters to you and your colleagues and help you determine shared priorities.

LEARN MORE

Positions, Interests, and Needs

The Network University

http://www.netuni.nl/courses/conflict1/week1/1.7_week.html

Just and Democratic Governance: Power

International Governance Team, ActionAid, 2012

http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/final_power_double_page_spread_mar_ch_2012.pdf

- Forum theatre
- Hunger strike
- Image theatre
- Phone banking

Principles

- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Change is the only constant
- Choose your target wisely
- Kill them with kindness
- Know your community
- Make the personal political
- Personalize and polarize
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Start a conversation
- The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself
- Use others' prejudices against them

Theories

- Anti-oppression
- Framing
- Hamoq and hamas
- Palace Coup
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- The commons
- The propaganda model
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Power mapping
- Story of self, us, and now
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Corruption

METHODOLOGY

PILLARS OF POWER

Identify the institutions that your target relies on for support so you can weaken or disrupt their power.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Eric Stoner

Eric Stoner is an adjunct professor at St. Peter's College and an editor at Waging Nonviolence, a blog that covers nonviolent action around the world. His articles have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, *Sojourners*, *In These Times*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, among other publications.

"POWER ULTIMATELY RESTS IN THE HANDS OF MILLIONS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO KEEP SOCIETY RUNNING SMOOTHLY ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS, AND WHO CAN SHUT IT DOWN SHOULD THEY SO CHOOSE."

"First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, and then you win."

—Gandhi

Many believe that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun," as Mao Zedong famously said. However, research and experience show that power stems not just from a powerful opponent's ability to use force, but also from the consent and cooperation of the institutions and organizations that sustain the oppressor: the media, the army, the police, the courts, the universities, organized labour, international backers, and others.

Use a *pillars of power* analysis to identify the institutions without whose support your target would collapse, and to strategize ways to weaken or remove those institutional "pillars," so that the foundation that sustains the target begins to crumble and the system falls. Once you understand the various institutions that enable a specific oppressive regime or status quo situation to maintain its power, you can investigate how to neutralize, undermine, or withdraw the foundations that the oppressive system depends on, and reduce its power.

Some of these pillars, such as the military, the police, and the courts, are coercive in nature, compelling obedience through force or the threat of force, while other pillars, like the media, the education system, and religious institutions, support the system through their influence over culture and popular opinion. Hence,

POTENTIAL RISKS

This tool is great for starting out with people-power strategic planning, and will develop a big picture overview of the vulnerability and strengths of the system you are fighting. But don't mistake this for a detailed road map for your campaign — follow up this tool with others mentioned in the "How To Use" section. And, as in real life, if you end up pushing the pillars of support in towards the center rather than pulling them away, the roof will not come down. Take this into account when determining which pillars you will target, and how.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle of the Camel
- Fees Must Fall

the power of even the most charismatic or ruthless leader is contingent upon the support of key institutions, themselves vulnerable to popular action or withdrawal of consent from the general population.

In February 2011, Egyptian President Mubarak was forced to leave office when several of his key institutional pillars cracked — the army and business community foremost among them — removing their support for him. (Unfortunately, in the long run, the Egyptian revolution was unable to assemble a strong enough foundation of its own to counter the regime's largest pillar, the military, which retook control in a coup in 2013.)

Identifying the internal construction of a pillar of power can help determine where you can have the greatest impact as you break down support for the system.

As another example, a major turning point leading to the downfall of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in 2000 was when the police refused to enforce his orders to fire on protesters. This was the result of a deliberate strategy by the leading opposition group Otpor to reach out to the police and remind them that their families and friends were among the demonstrators. Desertions, especially from high-level military positions, are a clear sign that this crucial pillar of support has begun to crumble.

Power ultimately rests not in the grip of presidents, generals, and billionaires, but in the hands of millions of ordinary people who keep society running smoothly on a day-to-day basis, and who can shut it down should they so choose. This is the meaning of the slogan "people power." One of the main reasons that so many injustices persist is not that the powerful can simply do whatever they want with impunity, but that most people are ignorant of the power they can wield by withdrawing their consent (see: TACTIC: General strike).

This understanding of power has been repeatedly vindicated in recent decades, as numerous dictators and extremely repressive regimes have been toppled by unarmed people with minimal violence but much courage and creativity. These successful nonviolent struggles simply cannot be explained by someone who sees violence as the only, or even the primary, mechanism of power.

LEARN MORE

This is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt is Shaping the 21st Century

ThisIsAnUprising.org, 2016

<http://thisisanuprising.org/>

People Power

Lisa Fithian, 2013

<http://organizingforpower.org/people-power-2/>

- #GambiaHasDecided
- Justice for Janitors
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Orange Alternative
- Québec Student Strike
- Schools of Struggle
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- #ThisFlag
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- #YouStink

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Citizen's arrest
- Civil disobedience
- Creative petition delivery
- Divestment
- General strike
- Hunger strike
- Jail solidarity
- Lamentation
- Mass street action
- Occupation
- Phone banking
- Trek

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Build strength through repetition
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Maintain nonviolent discipline
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Use others' prejudices against them
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking about the Fundamentals

Robert Helvey, Albert Einstein Institution, 2004

<http://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/OSNC.pdf>

Waging Nonviolent Struggle: Twentieth-Century Practice and
Twenty-First-Century Potential

Gene Sharp, Porter Sargent, 2005

<http://www.wagingnonviolentstruggle.com/>

CANVAS Manual

Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies, 2004

<http://canvasopedia.org/project/canvas-core-curriculum/>

A Force More Powerful

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, 2000

<http://www.aforcemorepowerful.org>

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Capitalism
- Commodity fetishism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing
- Gerontocracy
- Hamoq and hamas
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Afrikanism
- Non-cooperation
- Palace Coup
- Participatory democracy
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Revolutionary reform
- Strategic nonviolence
- The commons
- The NGO-ization of resistance
- The social cure
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- SWOT
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy, Capitalism, Colonialism, Democracy, Dictatorship, Direct action, Elections, Movement building, Nonviolence, State violence, Street protest, Student activism

METHODOLOGY

POINTS OF INTERVENTION

Identify pressure points where you can take action to interrupt business as usual, and press for change.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Doyle Canning

Doyle is a creative strategist with a deep commitment to building broad-based movements for social justice and an ecological future. She is a co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme) and delivers training, coaching, facilitation and framing to high-impact networks who are taking on greedy corporations, corrupt politicians, racist laws and polluting policies.

Patrick Reinsborough

Patrick Reinsborough is a strategist, organizer and creative provocateur with over twenty years of experience campaigning for peace, justice, indigenous rights and ecological sanity. He is the co-founder of the Center for Story-based Strategy (formerly known as smartMeme), a movement support organization which harnesses the power of narrative for fundamental social change.

“TRULY EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS GO BEYOND SIMPLY DISRUPTING A SYSTEM TO POSE A DEEPER CHALLENGE TO ITS UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND BASIC LEGITIMACY.”

Points of intervention are specific places in a system where a targeted action can effectively interrupt the functioning of a system and open the way to change. By understanding these different points, organizers can develop a strategy that identifies the best places to intervene in order to have the greatest impact.

Social movements have traditionally intervened by taking direct action at physical points in the systems that shape our lives, but with the spread of effective labour organizing and the increasing power of media, conceptual points of intervention have become increasingly important.

Truly effective interventions go beyond simply disrupting a system to pose a deeper challenge to its underlying assumptions and basic legitimacy. This holds true whether the intervention targets a physical system like a sweatshop or an ideological system like racism, sexism, or market fundamentalism.

The five types of points of intervention are points of production (for instance, a factory), points of destruction (a logging road), points of consumption (a retail store), points of decision (a corporate headquarters) and points of assumption (a foundational narrative or a place of symbolic importance).

Point of production

Action at the point of production is the foundational insight of the

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Battle in Seattle
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Billionaires for Bush
- Brazil's Free Fare Movement
- Daycare Centre Sit-In
- Disrupting Obama's town hall in Myanmar
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- PARK(ing) Day
- Québec Student Strike
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- The Salt March
- Welcome to Palestine

Tactics

- Blockade
- Civil disobedience
- Consumer boycott
- Distributed action

labour movement. Workers organize to target the economic system where it directly affects them, and where that system is most vulnerable. Strikes, picket lines, work slowdowns, and factory takeovers are all point-of-production actions.

Point of destruction

A point of destruction is the place where harm or injustice is actually occurring. It could be the place where resources are being extracted (a strip mine) or the place where the waste from the point of production is dumped (a landfill). By design, the point of destruction is almost always far from public attention — made invisible by remoteness, oppressive assumptions, or ignorance — and tends to disproportionately impact already marginalized communities. Intervention at the point of destruction can halt an act of destruction in the moment, as well as dramatize the larger conflict.

Point of consumption

The point of consumption is the location of interaction with a product or service that is linked to injustice. Point-of-consumption actions are the traditional arena of consumer boycotts and storefront demonstrations. The point of consumption is often the most visible point of intervention for actions targeting commercial entities. Point-of-consumption actions can also be a good way to get the attention of corporations when lawmakers aren't listening.

Point of decision

The point of decision, where the power to act on a campaign's demands rests, is often the most self-evident point of intervention, and therefore one of the most frequently targeted. Whether it's a slumlord's office (see: STORY: Daycare Centre Sit-In), a corporate boardroom or state capital, or an international summit meeting (see: STORY: Battle in Seattle), many successful campaigns have used some form of action at the point of decision to put pressure on key decision-makers.

Point of assumption

Assumptions are the building blocks of ideology, the DNA of political belief systems. They operate best when they remain unexamined. If basic assumptions can be exposed as contrary to people's lived experience or core values, entire belief systems can be shifted. Actions that expose and target widely held assumptions (see: STORY: Billionaires for Bush) and (see: STORY: Barbie Liberation Organization) can therefore be very effective at shifting the discourse around an issue and opening up new political space. Point-of-assumption actions can take many different forms, such as exposing hypocrisy, reframing the issue, amplifying the voices of previously silenced characters in the story, or offering an alternative vision (see: THEORY: Prefigurative politics).

- Divestment
- Flotilla
- Inflatables
- Mass street action
- Phone banking
- Phone blockade

Principles

- Bring the issue home
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Develop an inside-outside strategy
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest
- Know your community
- Make the invisible visible
- Personalize and polarize
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Reframe the issue
- Think narratively
- Turn the tables

Theories

- Action logic
- Activism
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Ethical spectacle
- Neoliberalism
- Prefigurative politics

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- SWOT
- Theory of change

Turning creative action into real change requires careful strategizing. Identifying different possible points to target is a great first step to help design actions that connect to large campaign and social change goals.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

Re:Imagining Change: How to Use Story-based Strategy to Win Campaigns, Build Movements, and Change the World

Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning, 2017

https://books.google.com/books/about/Re_Imagining_Change.html?id=Xp1QvgAACAAJ

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Direct action

METHODOLOGY

POWER MAPPING

Map the power dynamics at play to identify your primary target and design a winning campaign strategy.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Andrew Boyd

Andrew Boyd is an author, humorist and long-time veteran of creative campaigns for social change. He is Wrangler-in-Chief Emeritus at Beautiful Trouble.

"A POWER MAP, PROPERLY DONE, CAN HELP YOU DESIGN A WINNING STRATEGY FOR YOUR CAMPAIGN."

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

—Alice Walker

To win a campaign, you need to correctly identify who has the power to fix the problem you want fixed. Then you need to pressure them to make the right decision. Power mapping is a tool to not only identify who holds that power, but, crucially, who holds influence over that person, and, therefore, who to target with your direct actions and campaign activities (see: PRINCIPLE: Choose your target wisely). A power map, properly done, can reveal these relationships and power dynamics and help you design a winning strategy for your campaign.

Let's say a Canadian mining company is trying to extract minerals from the land surrounding your community in Mali. As a result, the land is getting polluted, seriously affecting your family's and neighbors' health. Who do you target? The company? And if so, do you target the regional director in Mali or the international CEO in Canada? Who ultimately has the power to close the mine? And what kind of power can you leverage to make them do it? Doing a power map of the whole situation can help you answer these questions. It might tell you that you shouldn't, in fact, target the company because you won't be able to build enough direct leverage over them. Instead, the power map might indicate you should target the Malian government — to pass a law, or insist on a clean-up. But who exactly? Everyone from the local mayor up to the President has some degree of power in the situation, as well as varying degrees of influence over each other. A power map can help illuminate these relationships and suggest the best way forward.

It's critically important to do a power map *before* you start campaigning. Going after the wrong targets can be damaging to

POTENTIAL RISKS

People come and go, and the power landscape constantly shifts, so you will need to periodically revisit and revise your power map to maintain a current and accurate picture of the power dynamics your campaign must navigate. Also, structures of power not only vary across time, but can also vary from place to place — so don't assume that the same problem will have the same power map in two different geographical areas. You need to spend the time to make sure your map is detailed and accurate.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Dhawili (turn on the lights)
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Fees Must Fall
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stop Praver Plan
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taco Bell Boycott

your motivation and resources. It is important to make sure that you're on the right track before you start!

You may find, as the farmworkers who organized the Taco Bell Boycott did, that even after correctly identifying your target, and campaigning against them for a while, you can't mobilize enough power to directly pressure them to fix the problem. That's when you need to focus your energies on pressuring what are called "secondary targets" — power-holders who can influence your primary target. If they feel enough pressure from you, they'll lean on the primary target to give into your demands. Power mapping helps you draw all the lines of influence between your primary target and all the other stakeholders involved — including you.

LEARN MORE

Power Analysis — Trainer-Training

SCOPE Los Angeles, 2007

http://www.ctbh.org/documents/Power_Analysis_Trainer_Training.pdf

How to Do Power Structure Research

G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America*, First posted May 2009; updated October 2012

https://whorulesamerica.ucsc.edu/methods/how_to_do_power_structure_research.html

A Guide to Power Mapping

Move to Amend

<https://movetoamend.org/toolkit/guide-power-mapping>

Just and Democratic Governance: Power

International Governance Team, ActionAid, 2012

http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/final_power_double_page_spread_march_2012.pdf

Tactics

- Banner hang
- Blockade
- Consumer boycott
- Creative lobbying
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Gherao (encirclement)
- Phone banking
- Public filibuster

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Define "hardcore" strategically
- Escalate strategically
- Personalize and polarize
- Put your target in a decision dilemma

Theories

- Action logic
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Palace Coup
- Postcolonialism
- The commons
- The NGO-ization of resistance

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Democracy, Direct action, Movement building, Nonviolence

METHODOLOGY

SMART OBJECTIVES

Strong campaigns are built on a series of short- and medium-term SMART objectives that function as intermediary steps towards a more ambitious campaign goal.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Marcelo Marquesini

Marcelo is a socio-environmental activist and campaigner who has been operating for 20 years in the Brazilian Amazon in defence of forest conservation and indigenous and traditional communities' rights. He is also a co-founder and facilitator of Escola de Ativismo (School of Activism).

"CAMPAIGNERS SHOULD MAP OUT A STRATEGY OF SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM OBJECTIVES THAT FUNCTION AS INTERMEDIARY STEPS TOWARDS AN AMBITIOUS VISION OF THE FUTURE."

"What can we do today, so that tomorrow we can do what we are unable to do today?"

—Paulo Freire

Elaborating a campaign objective might appear to be a simple task, however, it is quite common in the activist world to find poorly formulated objectives that are impossible to reach. This kind of error can have a major negative impact on the success of a campaign.

The SMART tool is a way to plan short- and medium-term objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound, and that increase the likelihood of a campaign's success. It's a tool that helps people involved in a campaign or action maintain their focus and align their expectations.

The formulation of a SMART objective begins by determining a *problem*, a *desired change*, and a *vision for the future*, which then serve as the basis for additional analyses, including: context analysis, an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (see: METHODOLOGY: SWOT), and a mapping of the actors that can support or hinder your goals (see: METHODOLOGY: Power mapping).

The results of all these analyses will orient the process of defining a SMART objective.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Not all SMART objectives will strictly follow the five criteria. Be careful with the different interpretations given to each of the tool's initials and don't let your objective lose its SMART connotation. In many occasions, the letter A can be switched for Attainable, Assignable, Action-oriented, or Actionable, and the letter R for Reasonable, Relevant, Resourced, or Results-based. The SMART methodology is more suited for short- and medium-term objectives. The definition of what is short- and medium-term will depend on your campaign and the larger context in which it is happening. For some campaigns, short can mean a few weeks, while for others it can mean two or even three years.

RELATED TOOLS

LEARN MORE

Objectives

The Change Agency, Australia

<http://www.thechangeagency.org/campaigners-toolkit/training-resources/strategy/>

Why Campaigns, Not Protests, Get the Goods

George Lakey, Waging Nonviolence, 2016

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/election-campaigns-one-off-protests/>

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Earth First!
- Kisangani Demands Electric Power
- Manich Msamah
- Maraiwatsede: the land belongs to the Xavante
- Schools of Struggle
- Sign Language Sit-in
- Stolen Beauty

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Debt strike
- Distributed action
- Mass street action

Principles

- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Don't expect a concrete outcome from a symbolic action
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Know your community
- Praxis makes perfect
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Stay on message
- Use your cultural assets

Theories

- Action logic
- Direct action
- Floating signifier
- Framing
- Prefigurative politics
- Strategic nonviolence

Methodologies

- Battle of the story
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- Spectrum of allies

- SWOT
- Theory of change

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Communications, Direct action, Movement building, Nonviolence

METHODOLOGY

SWOT

Cross-reference internal & external factors in order to identify potential campaign scenarios.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

“THE SWOT MATRIX CAN HELP YOU DETERMINE OR CLARIFY YOUR STRATEGIC GOALS, IDENTIFY CHALLENGES YOU MAY ENCOUNTER, AND DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY OR ACTION PLAN.”

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.” —Antoine de Saint-Exupery

—

Planning a campaign? Need a way to assess your situation and your capacity to address it? The SWOT matrix can help you and your organization identify key factors in play. By carefully considering internal *strengths* and *weaknesses*, alongside external *threats* and *opportunities*, you can identify your “best case,” “missed opportunity,” “mobilization scenario,” and “worst case” options.

Let’s say you’re running an anti-corruption campaign. If a SWOT analysis reveals that an internal strength (you have large core of committed volunteers) overlaps with an external opportunity (a huge corruption scandal has just broken), you would potentially have the best case scenario of being able to field a large team to deliver information or materials to newly aware constituents. This could lead you to identify a need to develop materials and fundraise for their printing. If, however, you have a minimal staff and no trained volunteers (weakness) when a major corruption scandal has just broken (opportunity) this could be a “missed opportunity” scenario, meaning you may need to develop alternative ways to meet your goals. These are just a few examples of the sorts of insights a SWOT analysis can provide. With a fully completed matrix, other insights could lead you to different strategic conclusions.

You may notice that, depending on the situation, an organization’s strengths could also be similar to an organization’s weaknesses. For example, many volunteers can be a strength if you need them, and a weakness if they need extensive training you cannot provide. In the same way, a breaking scandal can be both an opportunity (it’s a

POTENTIAL RISKS

The SWOT analysis is useful for clarifying your strategic goals and helping you decide how to achieve them. It will not, however, help you determine the relative importance of any particular factor or outcome, unless you add a quantitative measure to your analysis. When using the SWOT matrix, be mindful about the assumptions you are making. Rather than acting on incomplete or inaccurate information, keep a list of further research or questions that need to be answered before you act.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Round Dance Revolution
- Who Would Accept?

Tactics

- Civil disobedience

Principles

chance to expand your campaign) and a threat (your target may suddenly see you as a greater risk, and lash out in new ways).

SWOT can work well in combination with other methodologies, particularly: * Pillars of power (see: METHODOLOGY: Pillars of power), to identify the key institutions that need to be included as external forces in the SWOT Matrix * Spectrum of allies (see: METHODOLOGY: Spectrum of allies), to help you identify and assess specific stakeholders, constituents, impacted communities, and opposition forces. * Force field analysis, to identify the relative strengths of forces acting to support the status quo, as well as what forces and actions might counter them.

A SWOT matrix can help you clarify your strategic goals and your capacity to address them.

The SWOT matrix's superpower is to help you determine or clarify your strategic goals, identify challenges you may encounter, and develop an effective campaign strategy or action plan.

LEARN MORE

Seven steps on how to do a SWOT action analysis

Roy Mogg's blog, 2010

<http://roymogg.com/2010/09/06/swot-action-analysis-a-work-shop-guide/>

- Build strength through repetition
- Burn brightly, but don't burn out
- Change is the only constant
- Fail forward
- Praxis makes perfect
- Solidarity, not aid

Theories

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Expressive and instrumental actions

Methodologies

- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy

METHODOLOGY

SPECTRUM OF ALLIES

Locate allies and opponents along a spectrum from active opposition to

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nadine Bloch

Nadine Bloch is currently Training Director for Beautiful Trouble, as well as an artist, political organizer, direct action trainer, and puppetista.

“MOVEMENTS WIN NOT BY OVERPOWERING THEIR ACTIVE OPPOSITION, BUT BY SHIFTING THE SUPPORT OUT FROM UNDER IT.”

“In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Movements seldom win by overpowering the opposition; they win by shifting support out from under it. Use a spectrum-of-allies analysis to identify the social groups (students, workers) that are affected by your issue, and locate those groups along a spectrum, from *active opposition* to *active allies*, so you can focus your efforts on shifting those groups closer to your position. Identifying specific stakeholders (e.g. not just students, but students at public colleges; not just workers, but domestic workers) can help you identify the most effective ways of moving different social groups closer to your position, in order to win your campaign.

When mapping out your campaign, it is useful to look at society as a collection of specific communities, blocs, or networks, some of which are institutions (unions, churches, schools), others of which are less visible or cohesive, like youth subcultures or demographic groupings. The more precisely you can identify stakeholders and impacted communities, the better you can prepare to persuade those groups or individuals to move closer to your position. You can then weigh the relative costs and benefits of focusing on different blocs.

Evaluating your spectrum of allies can help you avoid some common pitfalls. Some activist groups, for instance, only concern themselves with their active allies, which runs the risk of “preaching to the choir” — building marginal subcultures that are incomprehensible to everyone else, while ignoring the people you actually need to convince. Others behave as if everyone who disagrees with their position is an active opponent, playing out the “story of the righteous few,” acting as if the whole world is against

POTENTIAL RISKS

Watch out for very broad or generic identification of the blocs/groups in the pie chart. Without enough precision this tool won't help you identify specific communication tactics for reaching particular groups. Nor will you be able to get an accurate read on the true resource costs of reaching those groups.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Angola 15+2
- Battle in Seattle
- Battle of the Camel
- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Bring Back Our Girls
- Burmese Students' Long March
- Dump Veolia Campaign
- Fees Must Fall
- Flower Speech Campaign
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Honk at Parliament
- Justice for Janitors
- Manich Msamah
- Québec Student Strike
- Stolen Gas Campaign

them. Yet others take a “speak truth to power” approach, figuring that through moral appeal or force of logical argument, they can somehow win over their most entrenched active opponents. All three of these extreme approaches virtually guarantee failure. Movements and campaigns are won not by overpowering one’s active opposition, but by shifting each group one notch around the spectrum (passive allies into active allies, neutrals into passive allies, and passive opponents into neutrals), thereby increasing people power in favour of change and weakening your opposition.

For example, in 1964 in the U.S., the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a major driver of the African-American civil rights movement in the racially segregated South, realized that in order to win desegregation and voting rights for African Americans, they needed to make active allies of sympathetic white northerners. Many students in the North were sympathetic, but had no entry point into the movement. They didn’t need to be educated or convinced, they needed an invitation to enter the struggle. (Or in the spectrum-of-allies schema, they needed to be moved from passive allies into active allies.) Moreover, these white students had extended communities of white families and friends who were not directly impacted by the struggles of African-American southerners. As the struggle escalated, these groups could be shifted from neutral to passive allies or even active allies.

Based on this analysis, the SNCC made a strategic decision to focus on reaching neutral white communities in the North by engaging sympathetic white students in their Freedom Summer program. Busloads of students traveled to the South to assist with voter registration, and many were deeply radicalized in the process. They witnessed lynchings, violent police abuse, and angry white mobs, all a response to black Southerners simply trying to exercise their right to vote.

Many wrote letters home to their parents, who suddenly had a personal connection to the struggle. This triggered another desired shift: Their families became passive allies, often bringing their workplaces and social networks with them. The students, meanwhile, returned to school in the fall as active allies, and proceeded to organize their campuses — more shifts in the direction of civil rights. The result: a profound transformation of the political landscape.

This cascading shift of support wasn’t spontaneous; it was part of a deliberate movement strategy that, to this day, carries profound lessons for other movements.

LEARN MORE

Spectrum of Allies
War Resisters’ International
<http://www.wri-irg.org/node/23368>

- Stop Praver Plan
- Stripping Power in Uganda
- Taco Bell Boycott
- The Salt March
- Trail of Dreams
- Welcome to Palestine
- Wisconsin Capitol Occupation
- Zapatista Caravan

Tactics

- Cacerolazo (noise-making protest)
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- Eviction blockade
- General strike
- Hashtag campaign
- Mass street action
- Music video
- Phone banking
- Subversive travel
- Viaggio Sovversivo
- Visibility action

Principles

- Activate international mechanisms
- Brand or be branded
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Debtors of the world, unite!
- Don’t dress like a protester
- Escalate strategically
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- If you’re not uncomfortable, your coalition is too small
- Know your community
- Know your cultural terrain
- Make new folks welcome
- Personalize and polarize
- Seek common ground
- Use your cultural assets
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

Exercises: Identifying Allies and Opponents

New Tactics in Human Rights

<https://www.newtactics.org/resource/exercises-identifying-allies-opponents>

Moving Your Allies: A Follow-Up Exercise

Training for Change

<https://www.trainingforchange.org/tools/moving-your-allies-0>

Know Your Allies, Your Opponents, and Everyone In-Between

George Lakey, Waging Nonviolence, 2012

<http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/know-your-allies-your-opponents-and-everyone-in-between/>

Civil Resistance and the 3.5% Rule

Erika Chenoweth, Rational Insurgent / TEDxBoulder, 2013

<http://rationalinsurgent.com/2013/11/04/my-talk-at-tedx-boulder-civil-resistance-and-the-3-5-rule/>

- Al faza'a (a surge of solidarity)
- Baltajiah (thugs)
- Capitalism
- Cultural hegemony
- Direct action
- Expressive and instrumental actions
- Framing
- Intersectionality
- Neoliberalism
- New Pan-Africanism
- Revolutionary nonviolence
- Strategic nonviolence
- The commons
- The NGO-ization of resistance
- The tactics of everyday life

Methodologies

- Action star
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- SWOT
- Theory of change

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Media,
Movement building

METHODOLOGY

STORY OF SELF, US, AND NOW

Move large numbers of people to action by exchanging personal stories that help build a sense of community around shared values & experiences.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Nisreen Haj Ahmad

Nisreen Haj Ahmad is a Palestinian activist, organizer, and co-founder of Ahel.org. She trains and coaches people and organizations to run campaigns in the Middle East, using Marshall Ganz' organizing framework.

"PUBLIC NARRATIVE IS THE *WHY* OF ORGANIZING — THE ART OF TRANSLATING VALUES INTO ACTION THROUGH STORIES."

"If I am not for myself, who will be? And if I am for myself alone, what am 'I'? And if not now, when?"

—Rabbi Hillel the Elder

A good story has the power to change the world. The *public narrative* methodology trains organizers, activists, and community leaders to share their personal stories more effectively, in order to build a sense of community around shared values and experiences, and ultimately to move large numbers of people to action on an issue or cause.

Public narrative is useful when you are forming a new team or expanding a group to bring them together around values and choices. It is also used when you are preparing your community or team to deal with a challenge, whether internal or external to the organization. The most obvious use of narrative is to move people to action; the less obvious use is to decide strategy. Often, hidden in people's stories of what choices they made, and what calls them to leadership, is the answer to what our strategy should be (see: METHODOLOGY: Battle of the story). Public narrative is also used to awaken people to injustice, and to their own agency in confronting it, especially within communities or groups that have been oppressed for centuries.

Public narrative is made up of three interwoven stories, that, once honed, the storyteller should be able to tell in a total of under five minutes:

- First is *the story of self*: I tell my personal story so that you understand what calls me to leadership on this cause. What

POTENTIAL RISKS

Watch out for the following mistakes when you develop your public narrative:

- Your *story of self* should include not just the challenges you faced, but the choices you made. The goal is to motivate action and emphasize agency. If you don't include the choices you made and the outcomes of these choices, then it may sound like a victim's story.
- Often people end with a very general call to action such as "join our movement" or "adopt our cause." The best calls to action are the most specific. For example, "Join our movement; join the march on May 5th at 2

challenges have I faced and what choices have I made that show why I am moved to leadership on this cause? In my story, I describe the results of my choices and shed light on what gives me hope.

- Second is *the story of us*: I seek to learn the stories of members of my community and I weave them together around the values that we share. This story describes who we are, what our shared challenges are, and some milestones in the journey we've walked so far.
- Third is *the story of now*: What is the price of inaction? I share images portraying the consequences of inaction and other images showing what our action can achieve. After creating a sense of urgency and hope, I end my narrative with a specific and doable call to action.

Public narrative is a practice of leadership; it's the *why* of organizing — the art of translating values into action through stories.

LEARN MORE

Public Narrative: Self, Us, and Now
Marshall Ganz, 2011

<http://marshallganz.usmblogs.com/files/2012/08/Public-Narrative-Worksheet-Fall-2013-.pdf>

Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power
Marshall Ganz, in **Accountability Through Public Opinion: From Inertia to Public Action**, 2011

<http://marshallganz.usmblogs.com/files/2012/08/Public-Narrative-Collective-Action-and-Power.pdf>

What is Public Narrative and How Can We Use It?
Working Narratives

<http://workingnarratives.org/article/public-narrative/>

الرواية العامة على موقع مجتمعي
الملاحظات الكاملة لمارشال غانز عن تنظيم المجتمع، ٢٠١٣

<http://mujtama3i.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Marshal-chapter-2.pdf>

p.m. from the central station towards Parliament to submit the petition with 20,000 voices.”

- If you're telling a *story of self* and a *story of now* without a *story of us*, you're basically playing the hero and asking people to follow you, instead of engaging in collective action and encouraging them to develop their own leadership.
- This is not a public speaking exercise; it is an exercise to develop agency and build community. It's not to put *gloss* on a speech but to bring out the *glow* from within us that moves us for our cause.

Remember, having a strong public narrative capable of mobilizing people does not replace the need for a strong campaign strategy and program of action, both online and in the field. Similarly, a good *story of us* that ties a group together around shared values and experiences does not replace the need to establish shared norms and culture around leadership, decision making, commitment, and accountability, among other things.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Bidder 70 (Tim DeChristopher)
- Birthright
- Unplugged/Replugged
- Boxing Gender Oppression
- Conflict Kitchen
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Round Dance Revolution

- Trail of Dreams

Tactics

- Artistic vigil
- Creative disruption
- Cultural disobedience
- Hashtag campaign
- Lamentation
- Public filibuster
- Storytelling

Principles

- Anger works best when you have the moral high ground
- Be the change you want to see in the world
- Beware the tyranny of structurelessness
- Brand or be branded
- Change is the only constant
- Don't dress like a protester
- Enable, don't command
- Expose inequality with a viral gesture
- Know your community
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Recapture the flag
- Show, don't tell
- Start a conversation
- Stay on message
- Take leadership from the most impacted
- Think narratively
- Use your radical fringe to shift the Overton window
- We are all leaders

Theories

- Action logic
- Anti-oppression
- Cultural hegemony
- Feminism
- Framing
- Gerontocracy
- New Pan-Africanism
- Pedagogy of the Oppressed
- Political identity paradox
- Postcolonialism

Methodologies

- Action star
- Battle of the story
- Peel the onion

TAGS

Campaign strategy,
Communications, Community
building, Education, Language,
Media, Movement building

METHODOLOGY

THEORY OF CHANGE

Lay a solid foundation for a campaign by working backwards from long-

CONTRIBUTED BY

Juman Abujbara

An editor of the Beautiful Rising book and toolkit, Juman is an aspiring philosopher, a campaigner for social change, and a human rights defender.

Fill out the sentence above to help you identify what actions you believe will lead to the change you desire. For example: "IF... we mobilize enough people to make Members of Parliament aware of the flaws in the law, THEN... they would change the law, BECAUSE... they need our votes to be reelected." And then question these propositions.

LEARN MORE

Leading Change: Leadership, organization and social movements
Marshall Ganz

<http://marshallganz.usmblogs.com/files/2012/08/Chapter-19-Leading-Change-Leadership-Organization-and-Social-Movements.pdf>

What is theory of change?

Theory of change website

<http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

Theory of change

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_change

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Battle in Seattle
- Earth First!
- Replacing Cops with Mimes
- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan
- Taxi drivers strike against taxation
- #ThisFlag

Tactics

- Civil disobedience
- Consumer boycott
- Creative lobbying
- Cultural disobedience
- Debt strike
- Divestment
- General strike
- Occupation
- Phone blockade

Principles

- Change is the only constant
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Create many points of entry
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Know your community
- Use organizing strategies that scale

- Use others' prejudices against them
- Would you like some structure with your momentum?

Theories

- Hamoq and hamas
- Prefigurative politics
- The social cure

Methodologies

- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Points of intervention
- Power mapping
- SMART objectives
- Spectrum of allies
- SWOT

TAGS

Action design, Campaign strategy, Language, Movement building