

## Handout 13b: Art, Action, and Social Justice

Art plays an important role in many social justice movements. Creative expression can convey much more than a newspaper or politician's speech. Sometimes it is a form of direct action. Consider non-traditional ways to address social justice.

### Option One:

From the list attached, choose a song that interests you and research its connection to a social justice movement. Consider the lyrics and background:

What is the artist writing/singing about?

What is the background of that movement?

What was the outcome?

How did music play a role? What other songs were connected to the issue? What did the music do?

Do you agree with the message?

### Option Two:

Research the impact of another social justice art-action. Many are provided.

What was the message?

How has art played a role?

Were there well known paintings, exhibits, demonstrations that used art to convey a message about social justice?

Did it work?

Do you agree with the medium and message?

### Option Three:

Create your own form of creative expression to convey a message about social justice.

What is your message?

Who will it impact?

What will you do with it?

Will it work?

“Don't Mourn-Organize” -Joe Hill, labour leader

“If I can't dance, it's not my revolution!” -Emma Goldman, anarchist

“I think that people should have democratic control over the profits that they produce. It is not real democracy until you have that.” -Boots Riley, The Coup

“Get up, stand up, Stand up for your rights. Get up, stand up, Don't give up the fight.”

— Bob Marley, Legend

## Ideas:

### Social justice song links:

<http://www.sojust.net/songs.html>

**Social justice Song Index** at <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/arts/songs.html>

### Song suggestions:

9 to 5 by Dolly Parton  
Beds Are Burning by Midnight Oil  
Biko by Peter Gabriel  
Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Buffy Sainte Marie  
Classwar by Menteroja  
Dear Mr. President by P!nk  
Dig it by The Coup  
Equal Rights by Peter Tosh  
Fight the Power Public Enemy  
Get Up, Stand Up by Bob Marley  
In the Red by The Molotov  
The International and Solidarity Forever sung by Billy Bragg  
I Ain't Marching Anymore by Phil Ochs  
Keep Ya Head Up by 2Pac  
Mosh by Eminem  
On Every Corner by Ani DiFranco  
People Have the Power by Patti Smith  
Pump Your Fist by Kool Moe Dee  
Rockin' in the Free World by Neil Young  
Strange Fruit by Billie Holiday  
Sunday Bloody Sunday by U2  
The thing about it by Sweatshop Union  
This Land Is Your Land by Woody Guthrie  
Universal Soldier by Buffy St Marie  
Working class hero by John Lennon (numerous covers also)  
Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards by Billy Bragg  
We Shall Overcome by Pete Seeger  
Where Is the Love by the Black Eyed Peas  
Which Side Are You On? Florence Reece

**Labour Specific:**

<http://unionsong.com/songs.html>

The Little Red Songbook, IWW

Don't Mourn-organize! Songs of Labour Songwriter Joe Hill

**Other examples of creative people, organizations, movements, culture-jammers, and social justice**

Ai Wei Wei

Atomic Duo

Barbie Liberation Organization

The Beat Generation

Billboard Liberation Front

Judy Chicago

Dadaism

Fluxus

Idle No More's drumming and dancing flash mobs

Guerrilla Girls

Langston Hughes

Mecca Normal

Hollywood 10

Pussy Riot

Raging Grannies

Diego Rivera

Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping

David Rovnicks

Whirl Mart

'Swing Youth'

Yomango

Youth International Party ("Yippies")