The Arts of Protest: Cultural Resistance

The broad use of arts, literature, and traditional practices to challenge or fight unjust or oppressive systems and/or power holders within the context of nonviolent actions, campaigns and movements.
Why study Cultural Resistance?

*To broaden understanding of the use of CuR within Civil Resistance*

*To identify and analyze strategic functions of CuR.*

*To increase the capacity and effectiveness of the use of cultural activity/arts in organizing, mobilizing, and accomplishing nonviolent direct actions.*
Categories of Cultural Resistance Work

1. 2-D arts
2. 3-D arts
3. Sound/Music
4. Theater
5. Movement/Dance
6. Media/Documentation
7. Traditional Crafts
8. Language preservation
9. Literature/Writing
10. Delineation of Space
11. Traditional Ritual/Celebration
12. Cultural Institution Building
2-D Art

Otpor!
Serbia, 2001

Act Up posters,
USA, 1980’s
3-D Art

Bread and Puppet Theatre, 2008

Gigantonas, Grenada Nicaragua

Greenpeace Human Banner, 2004
Sound/Music

Somali Protest Poetry

Plastic People of the Universe, Czech 1977

Drum Circles, Congo Square, LA 2008
Theatre

The Yes Men, 2009

Bread and Puppet Theater, 2008

Aarohan theater group, Nepal, 2008
Movement
Dance

La Bomba, Puerto Rico

Salt March, India 1930

CIRCA Rebel Clown Army, UK, 2000

www.prfdance.org
Media/Documentation

Mumia Abu-Jamal and Prison Radio

Indy Media
Traditional Crafts

Khadi, Indian homespun fabric

Palestinian Traditional Dress
Language Preservation

The Qiang people of China

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Literature/Writing

White Rose Collective
Germany, 1940’s

Yes Men Spoof, USA 2010

Czechoslovakia
autobiography

The New York Times
IRAQ WAR ENDS

Disturbing the Peace
Traditional Ritual/Celebration

ACT UP Funeral, Steve Michael, 1998

Feminist and Anti-Occupation Seder Plate
Cultural Institution Building

St. Joseph’s Indian School, South Dakota
Cultural Resistance Examples

1. Chile, Anti Authoritarian
2. Palestine, Anti Occupation
3. India, Anti Occupation
4. Indonesia, Anti Corruption and Authoritarian
5. USA, Rights
6. South Africa, Rights
7. Estonia, Anti Occupation
Chile: Arpillera
La Cueca Sola
Chile

La Cueca Sola
Palestine, Traditional Dance Dabke, Olive Harvest, Hip Hop Group DAM
Palestine
Banksy, 2005
India: Homespun and Salt
Indonesia: Shadow Puppets
Taring Padi
Indonesia: Taring Padi, Woodcut Prints
Woman House, CAL State, 1971

The Dinner Party, 1972-74
USA
Do women have to be naked to get into U.S. museums?

Less than 3% of the artists in the Met. Museum are women, but 83% of the nudes are female.

Guerilla Girls, NYC 1985

The advantages of being a woman artist:

- Working without the pressure of success
- Not having to be in shows with men
- Having an escape from the art world in your 4 free-lance jobs
- Knowing your career might pick up after you're eighty
- Being reassured that whatever kind of art you make it will be labeled feminine
- Not being stuck in a tenured teaching position
- Seeing your ideas live on in the work of others
- Having the opportunity to choose between career and motherhood
- Not having to choose between big cigars or paint in Italian suits
- Having more time to work when your mate dumps you for someone younger
- Being included in revised versions of art history
- Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a genius
- Getting your picture in the art magazines wearing a gorilla suit
South Africa, Toyi Toyi Funeral Procession
1970--80's
5 Strategic Function Categories of Cultural Resistance

Cultural Resistance can:

1. **Motivate:**
   * articulate a vision
   * provide psychological & emotional support
   * offer a framework for commitment

2. **Promote Group Formation:**
   * build group identity
   * create a container for consciousness raising and self recognition
   * establish group culture and values
   * encourage unity

3. **Develop Cause Consciousness:**
   * Increase effectiveness of internal and external education and public relations
   * Expand potential for political discourse
   * Undermine control of authorities
4. Create Space:
* To self organize and ID leaders
* To have political discourse
* For opposition that can minimize the risk of oppression
* To practice organizational development and self government

5. Serve As Constructive Programs:
* The Cultural work can often be the direct action itself, modeling the future
* Encourage tactical innovation through creative and traditional programs
* Provide mechanisms for fundraising