



# 50 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

CREATIVE ACTIONS FOR POWERFUL IMPACT

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



# INTRODUCTION

Art and movements have supported each other for as long as human beings have suffered through and fought against oppression. From the struggles of indigenous uprisings and the Civil Rights Movement to current struggles against the forces of racism, sexism, ableism, colonialism and other human rights abuses, people have used creativity to subvert censorship and the limitations placed upon them. They have used art to unveil the normalcy with which we accept and follow abusive and discriminatory laws.

The Black Panthers in their black leather jackets and berets, and their heads held high in natural afros took fashion as a medium to make themselves visible in all their blackness. The underground zines, literature study circles and the poetry of protest chants continue to ring truths about unjust systems and mobilize minds to challenge the truths that are doled out to us. Posters and sculptures scattered around public spaces bring people to a stop asking them to consider the messages underlying the aesthetics of the designs.

Creative actions help us tell a story, raise awareness about an issue, and inspire others to join us. Use this guide to inspire you. You'll see examples that use symbolism, public displays, actions that engage the public, and those that disrupt the everyday order, from across the U.S. and around the world. Creative actions also encourage us to have fun while putting in the much needed hard work. So often in movement work do we become overwhelmed by the difficulty and the length of our struggles that we forget to step back and appreciate the immense joy in working with our communities and for our collective futures and happiness. This joy is what sustains us to carry on and keep fighting.

*\*The following examples of Creative Actions were in part sourced from "Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution."*

*\*\*Amnesty International USA does not officially endorse any of these actions.*

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## 1 BANNER HANG

Hang a large banner in a prominent area of your campus/ neighborhood to disrupt the visual landscape.

**Example:** *The Amnesty chapter in Northern Arizona University dropped a massive banner (pictured above) in their campus commons to highlight Refugee & Migrant Rights campaign work.*

## 2 CREATIVE BANNER DISPLAY

Utilize visuals that catch the eye and leave the passerby thinking about the message behind the visual.

**Example:** *Before the opening of the World Trade Organization meeting in 1999, a banner was hung with an iconic visual of a street sign with arrows pointing in opposite directions: democracy this way, WTO that way.*

## 3 VIDEO/ IMAGE PROJECTION

You can turn the side of a building into a huge advertisement for your cause.

**Example:** *Greenpeace projected a huge cartoon "KABLOOM" onto the side of a nuclear reactor to remind people how dangerous nuclear power can be.*

## 4 OCCUPY SPACE

Sit-in or occupy a prominent area of campus/ significant location to push a target to act on the issue at hand. This also attracts attention to the issues that you want to bring to light.

## 5 CREATIVE DISRUPTION

Disrupt spaces with large numbers of people wearing the same colored clothing or with striking visuals.

**Example:** *In the wake of 9/11, people gathered wearing all black and a dust mask (common in NYC after 9/11), at Times Square at exactly 5 pm, and remained absolutely silent. Each participant held a sign that read "Our Grief Is Not a Cry for War."*



## 6 THE POWER OF SYMBOLISM

Take one item and place many of the same en masse in a public area to showcase the immensity of the issue at hand.

**Example:** *The activist group Avaaz placed 7,000 pairs of shoes in rows all across the US Capitol lawn, each one standing in for a child killed by gun violence since the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting.*

## 7 PORTABLE MURALS

Create a mural on a makeshift wall made from cloth and a wooden frame. Place the mural in a prominent part of your campus or neighborhood and distribute leaflets while engaging in conversation with people who ask about/ notice the mural.

## 8 FLASH MOB

Harness the political potential of flash mobs for organizing spontaneous mass actions on short notice.

**Example:** *Dissidents in Belarus in 2011 began organizing impromptu demonstrations where protesters would simply gather in public spaces and clap their hands in unison, an action which would lead to their arrest. This sight became a powerful challenge to the legitimacy of an increasingly irrational regime.*

## 9 SOAPBOX PLATFORM

Create a visible public platform on campus where students can take a pledge on EGV and/ or Refugee Rights.

## 10 POLITICAL THEATRE

Stage an enactment of injustice in a prominent area in your campus/ community.

**Example:** *Students for Free Tibet regularly stage political theatre pieces to raise awareness about human rights abuses in Tibet. They use props such as a paper-mache head of Xi Jinping, the president of the PRC, and iconic green Chinese army uniforms so that passerbys can immediately recognize the context of the ongoing play.*



## 11 CREATIVE VIGIL

Bring people together in interactive actions that showcase support or pushback against an issue.

**Example:** *Columbia University's Amnesty student group held a candle lighting ceremony (pictured above) where they invited students to light one candle for every 100 people impacted by Trump's decision to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for a total of 320,000 people.*

## 12 IMPACTFUL STATISTIC DEPICTIONS

String paper cranes/ use other physical materials to represent a statistic and display in a prominent part of your campus or community.

## 13 CREATIVE PETITION DELIVERY

Give an abstract issue a physical and visual presence. You can use existing numbers on Amnesty petitions/ other petitions signed around EGV and Refugee Rights, and translate those numbers into real-world action.

**Example:** *Avaaz, an activist organization set up 200 cardboard pigs — each representing 1,000 petition signers — in front of the World Health Organization (WHO) building in Geneva urging the WHO to investigate and regulate factory farms.*

## 14 PHOTO PETITION

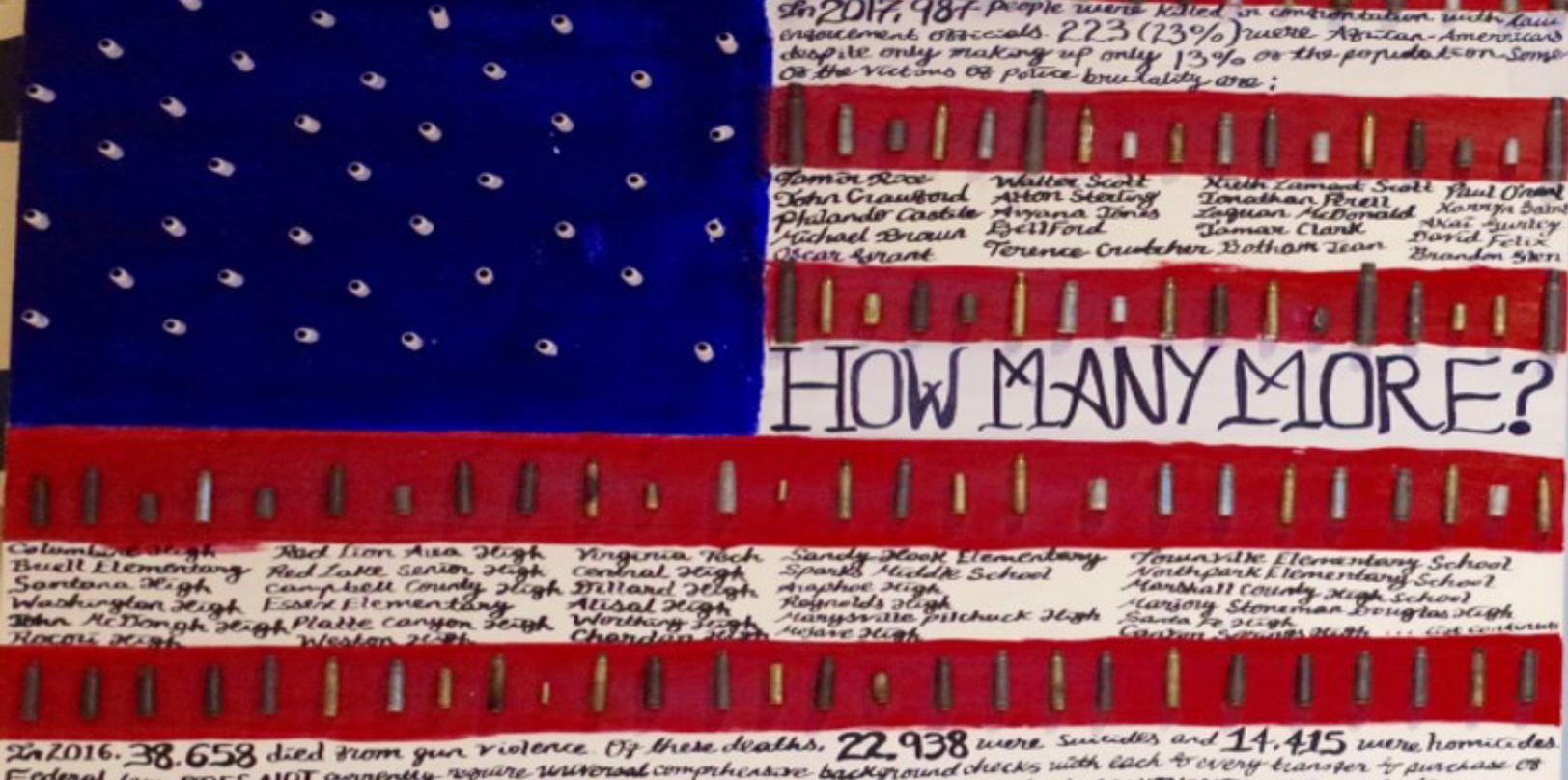
Get supporters to take a picture with a whiteboard message/ social media filter.

## 15 THE PETITION GIFT

Have students and other supporters sign a large banner or student made artwork and deliver this to a decision-maker.

## 16 CHALKING

Get creative with impactful messaging and bold, insightful visuals.



## 17 REAPPROPRIATE POPULAR ARTIFACTS

Take popular media symbols that are easily recognizable by the general public and manipulate the design or symbol in the context of your issue.

**Example:** A winner of last year's Activism X, St. John's College Amnesty School Group in Santa Fe, NM collected bullet shells from two Bureau of Land Management public lands to create the flag pictured above. They used the bullet shells to represent victims and communities affected by gun violence. A QR code on the display directed to Amnesty's End Gun Violence website. They also tabled to collect signatures for AIU-SA's End Gun Violence petition targeting Ohio.

## 18 PREFIGURATIVE IMAGINATION

With your club members, collectively imagine/ plan how it would be to live in a world you want to live in, where there is no gun violence and all refugees are guaranteed security.

**Example:** The lunch counter sit-ins of the U.S. civil rights movement where mixed-race groups of people violated the law by sitting at lunch counters demanding to be served, prefigured the world they wanted to live in.

## 19 REPURPOSE EVERYDAY ACTS AS RADICAL ACTIONS

Engage in simple, everyday acts that are ironically considered threats to established rules and governing systems.

**Example:** #WhyLoiter is a campaign in India and Pakistan that fights for women's rights to freely loiter in public spaces without scrutiny and fear of harm. Women gather together in parks, tea shops, river banks and other public spaces traditionally dominated by men and occupy space.

## 20 WALKING TOUR

Learn about how your region approaches gun violence, migrant and refugee rights and other issues. Plan a walking tour around key sites such as detention centers, community organizations, etc. and educate your audience using a specific storyline such as the ease of accessing guns, the difficulties that undocumented migrants face when trying to acquire jobs, etc.



# DON'T PUT A PRICE ON OUR LIVES

There are 988,973\* students enrolled in Wisconsin. Ron Johnson has received \$1,269,486\*\* from the NRA. That comes out to \$1.28 per student.

ON MARCH 24TH WEAR THIS PRICE TAG TO PROTEST POLITICIANS WHO ACCEPT NRA BLOOD MONEY AND DEMAND THEY PASS MEANINGFUL GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION NOW.

#### DIRECTONS:

1. Print this .pdf (in color if possible)
2. Cut out, fold, glue and poke a hole in the tag
3. Attach to a piece of string, rubber band or bracelet
4. Wear proudly on your wrist



\*Total number of students enrolled in both public and private WI schools  
 \*\* <http://www.worldpress.org/article.cfm/nra-money-to-congress>

## 21 PRICE-TAG STICKER/ BAND

Students can print and wear this simple but impactful price tag shown above. The price tag symbolizes the price politicians—calculated by dividing the amount they received from the NRA by the total number of students—put on student lives. Made by March for Our Lives, the price tag acts as a walking awareness piece. The price tags are downloadable and vary from state to state.

## 22 COSTUMED LEAF-LETTING

Dress in symbolic wear and utilize short powerful messaging to engage in quick, impactful interactions with passerbys.

**Example:** *In the 1980s, activists opposed to U.S. 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 expected “no” response 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.*

## 23 A LONGER TABLE

Create a literal “longer table” on your campus or in your local park – with food and props – and invite passerbys to stop for a quick bite and to talk about the issue you are advocating for. You can be imaginative with the table by drawing it with chalk or tape.

**Example:** *The Rubin Museum in NY held a long-term exhibit called “The Long Table,” an open-source participatory project for the public to engage in self-serve pop-up discussions as well as monthly scheduled discussions. This Longer Table encouraged participants to engage in conversations on power.*

## FORMAL STATEMENTS

- 24 Campaign for a city or campus resolution
- 25 Signed public statements
- 26 Publish an op-ed/ letter to the editor in your local newspaper
- 27 Work with (school or local) reporters to write a human rights story

## COMMUNICATION WITH A WIDER AUDIENCE

- 28 Invite a speaker
- 29 Panel discussion
- 30 Public speech

## DRAMA & MUSIC

- 31 Film screening
- 32 Open mic night
- 33 Human rights concert (JAMnesty)
- 34 Poetry slam (SLAMnesty): Invite a spoken-word artist as the feature performer

## PROCESSIONS

- 35 Organize or attend a demonstration, rally, or silent protest
- 36 Plan a 5K/10K run or walk

## PRESSURES ON INDIVIDUALS

- 37 Call elected officials
- 38 Visit your legislators
- 39 Blockade: Pressure school officials/ student government to take positions

## LETTER WRITING & CANVASSING

- 40 Host a Write-a-thon
- 41 Letter writing competition with local or rival schools
- 42 Write solidarity and support letters
- 43 Canvass for signatures in a public place

## COALITION BUILDING

- 44 Co-sponsor events with community partners and build relationships with like-minded groups
- 45 Host a community discussion and invite elected officials
- 46 Host a Teach-in to provide education on the issue

## LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

- 47 Participate in or organize a Tweet-in
- 48 Create a digital human rights series specific to your issue (ex: on Instagram stories)
- 49 Design a social media filter
- 50 Create a podcast or filmed news feature