

PROTEST IN PRIDE



Mary Coble

Louise Wolthers and Mary Coble

Protest in Pride

A performance installation by Mary Coble.

For four days in May, during the 2014 Gothenburg LGBTQ-festival, visual artist Mary Coble will be raising a collection of clenched fists as signs of resistance. Coble has collected an archive of fist symbols used in various kinds of political protest, demands for equal rights and by different sub-cultures and minority groups. A selection of the symbols has then been appropriated into homemade banners. These are reflective of demonstration banners, but here they are hanging in the windows of the exhibition space, visible from the street where the Pride march will take place. Stressing that the LGBTQ-festival in its origin is based on fights of courageous activists and that this final event of the festival is not just a *parade* of visibility but a *march* for solidarity, Coble wishes to make room for the raised fists in the streets of Gothenburg. During the days leading up to the march, she invites festival participants as well as other passers-by to come to the exhibition space and make prints of their own clenched fist. The prints will be united onto larger flags, which the artist will continuously hoist on the flagpole situated on the main street outside the library housing the exhibition. Furthermore a print of each fist will be made into smaller individual flags, and an exchange between artist and participant can take place: While Coble offers you a small banner with your own fist, she will ask you to carry it while walking in the Pride march. By encouraging the participants to raise their fists during the LGBTQ-festival, the piece calls for solidarity and empowerment to the marginalized and oppressed, and Coble visualises the statement that queer rights are human rights!

While it is important to celebrate queer pride and progress for LGBTQ rights, Mary Coble's piece insists on making room for resistance to the normative mainstreaming and the dominating political and social culture, when it produces discrimination, exclusion and repression. The raised fist has been an iconic marker

of minorities' fights against oppression – minorities of not only sexual orientation but also of gender, race, class and ethnicity. As Tommie Smith writes about the infamous gesture of raising his fist on the victory platform at the Olympic Games 1968: “On the night of October 16, 1968, I had stood on a platform on the infield of the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City, with a gold medal around my neck, black socks on my feet, and a glove on the right fist I had thrust in the air. My head was bowed, and inside that bowed head, I prayed— prayed that the next sound I would hear, in the middle of the Star Spangled Banner, would not be a gunshot, and prayed that the next thing I felt would not be the darkness of sudden death. I knew there were people, a lot of people, who wanted to kill me for what I was doing. It would take only one of them to put a bullet through me, from somewhere in the crowd of some 100,000, to end my life because I had dared to make my presence—as a black man, as a representative of oppressed people all over America, as a spokesman for the ambitious goals of the Olympic Project for Human Rights— known to the world.”¹ Smith calls this his ‘silent gesture’ but it spurred a long-time political roar with immense effects for the civil rights movement but also with excruciating costs to his personal life.

Another example of one of the most influential raised fist icons is the feminist sign of a clenched fist inside the biological female symbol – most often drawn in the color red. Robin Morgan designed it on the occasion of a demonstration against the Miss America Pageant in 1969. This powerful symbol united the marks of fierce revolution and femininity – but Morgan worried that the color would be too feminine. As Jo Freeman, activist in the US women’s liberation movement since the 60’s notes: “Initially, Robin Morgan worried over the choice of a red button for this particular demonstration. Ever conscious that major corporations like to co-opt incipient protest movements, she imagined that the cosmetic firm sponsoring the pageant might respond by manufacturing a matching lipstick named “Liberation Red.” Therefore, if we were asked about the button, we were instructed to reply that the color was “Menstrual Red.” No one would name a lipstick that.”². Concerns like this are still highly relevant today with the commercialisation of LGBTQ events and the commodification of ‘gay life’ and related symbols such as the rainbow.

The raised fist indicates that a pride march is initially a social, activist movement that claims space for a community and creates visibility to the otherwise unnoticed. This publication celebrates this fact with Coble’s selection of fist symbols from the 1960s to today accompanied by two specially written essays: Lincoln Cushing provides a historical overview of the clenched fist symbol, and Mathias Danbolt offers a queer political argument for raising our fists today. Finally, a short, reprinted text by Hadassah Damien describes how queer sexual politics and sexual practice intersect in the symbol of the clenched hand. As we march for human rights we need to remember everybody in social struggle – including the ones who do not have the privilege of being able to publicly raise their own fist in protest.

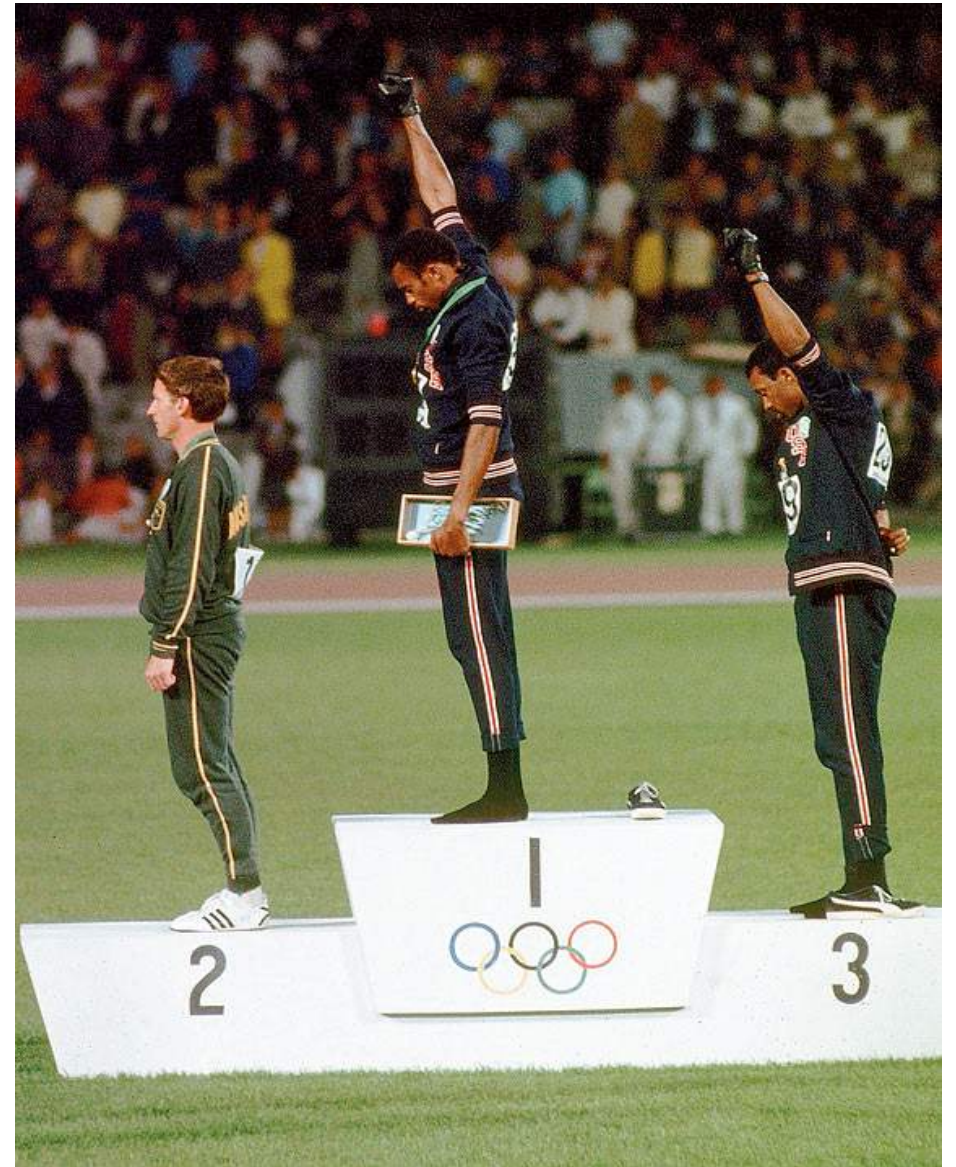
Louise Wolthers is an art historian (who will be raising her fist during the Pride march).

1. Tommie Smith, Delois Smith, David Steele, *Silent Gesture: The Autobiography of Tommie Smith* (Temple University Press, 2008).

2. Jo Freeman, “Say It With Buttons” *Ms. magazine*, August 1974. Quoted from: <http://www.jofreeman.com/buttons/saybuttons.htm>



1968 Credit: Robin Morgan



Credit: Neil Leifer

Tommie Smith and John Carlos (Gold and Bronze Medalists for the 200-meter race) raising their gloved fists at the Summer Olympics in Mexico City, 1968.

Lincoln Cushing

The Chimeral Clenched Fist

Ever since LGBTQ folk emerged as a publicly visible community – let’s say, starting in the late 1960s, with the Stonewall Riot of 1969 as a common metric – the graphic art of, by, and about those communities emerged as well. And the clenched fist, that persistent symbol of militance and resistance, was part of that visual vocabulary.

The image

The clenched fist (or raised fist) is part of the broader genre of “hand” symbols that include the peace “V,” the forward-thrust-fist, and the clasped hands. The clenched fist usually appears in full frontal display showing all fingers and is occasionally integrated with other images such as a peace symbol or tool.

The human hand has been used in art from the very beginnings, starting with stunning examples in Neolithic cave paintings. Early examples of the fist in graphic art can be found at least as far back as 1917, with another example from Mexico in 1948.



Solidarity, June 30, 1917. The Hand That Will Rule the World—One Big Union.

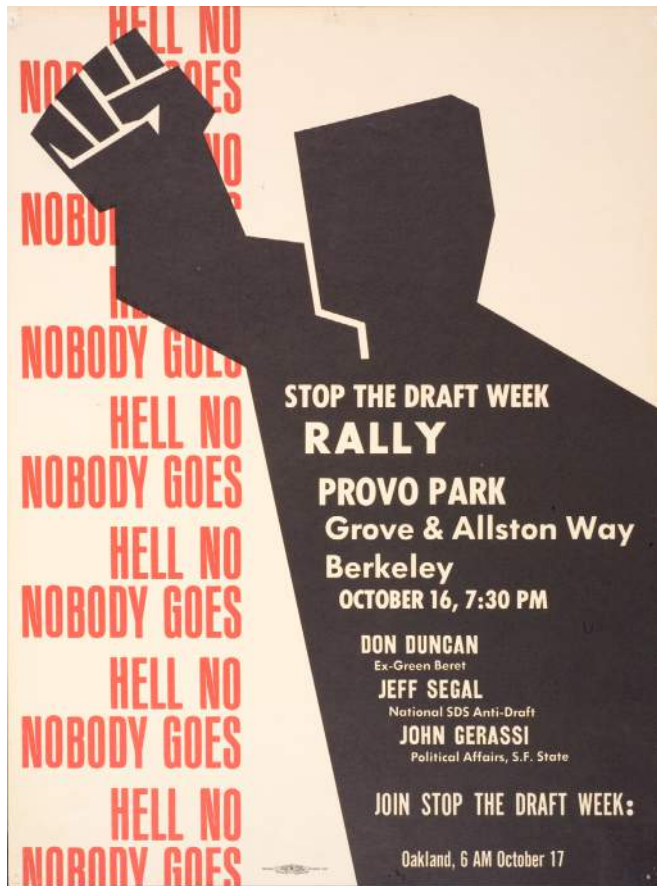
Industrial Workers of the World, 1917



Taller de Grafica Popular, 1948

Fist images, in some form, were used in numerous political graphic genres, including the French and Soviet revolutions, the United States Communist Party, and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. However, these all followed an iconographic convention – it was always *part* of something - holding a tool or other symbol, part of an arm or human figure, or shown in action (smashing, squeezing etc.). Graphic artists from the New Left changed that in 1968, with an entirely new treatment. This “new” fist stood out with its stark simplicity, coupled with a popularly understood meaning of rebellion and militance. It was easy to reproduce at any scale and to modify such as with long lines of fist (a linear pattern of repeated little fists, to create a border) or with sun rays (referring to the appropriated style from Chinese and Soviet revolutionary posters of a sunburst enhancing the power of the fist).

A bit of art history detective work has revealed the moment that this simple, singular version of the “New Left” fist evolved. San Francisco Bay Area graphic artist Frank Cieciorka designed a poster for “Stop the Draft Week” to be held October 16, 1967. The dominant image was a bold, blocky human figure wielding a fist. The subsequent poster, made for a January 14, 1968 event supporting those arrested at that demonstration, simply featured the fist clipped from the previous poster. The “New Left” fist was born.



Stop the Draft Week, October, 1967

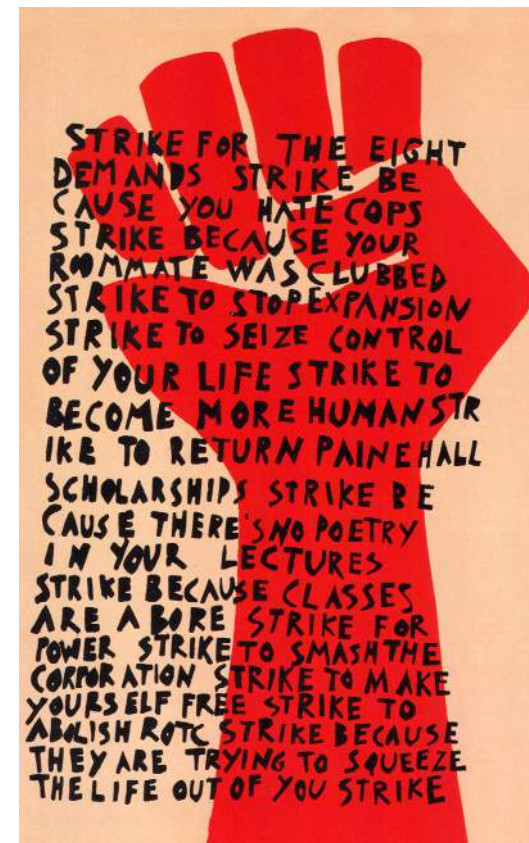
This fist, or versions of it, was soon adopted by liberation and social justice movements. It appeared in numerous posters and flyers for student, antiwar, women’s, and other political groups

within the United States. It showed up almost immediately within the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), who used it in a flyer for the 1968 Chicago National Democratic Convention protest.



SDS, 1968

A virtually identical fist used in the 1969 Harvard student strike traces its design to School of Design student Harvey Hacker.



Harvard strike, 1969

A similar version, though probably evolved from different iconographic ancestry, appeared in the groundbreaking prints made by the Atelier Populaire Paris 1968 poster workshop.



Atelier Populaire (Paris), 1968

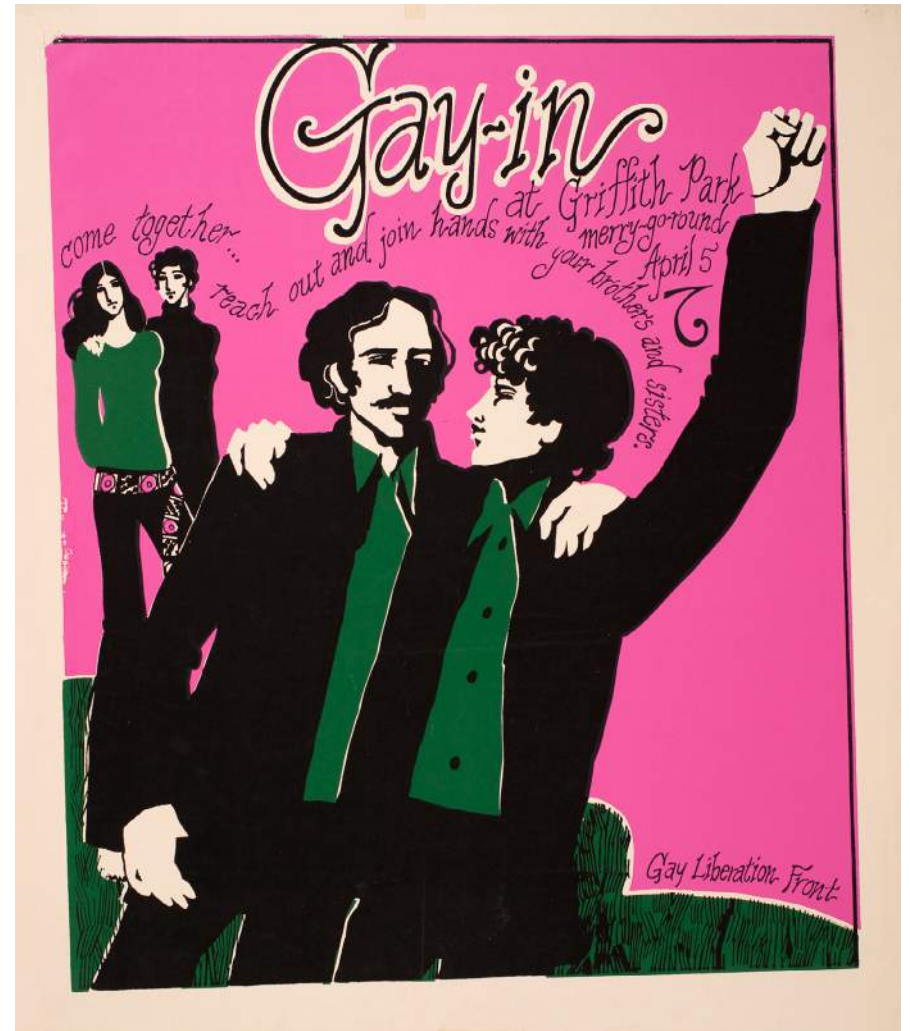
The militant fist continues to be coopted, even as a tool for capitalism, right-wing, and conservative groups. Progressives, in turn, use this potent image for labor film festivals, environmental activism, and the labor resistance. Unlike some icons, such as the Nazi swastika, the fist has become embraced across the political spectrum. The fist has become universal, and now demands that context be applied before assuming meaning.

LGBTQ usage

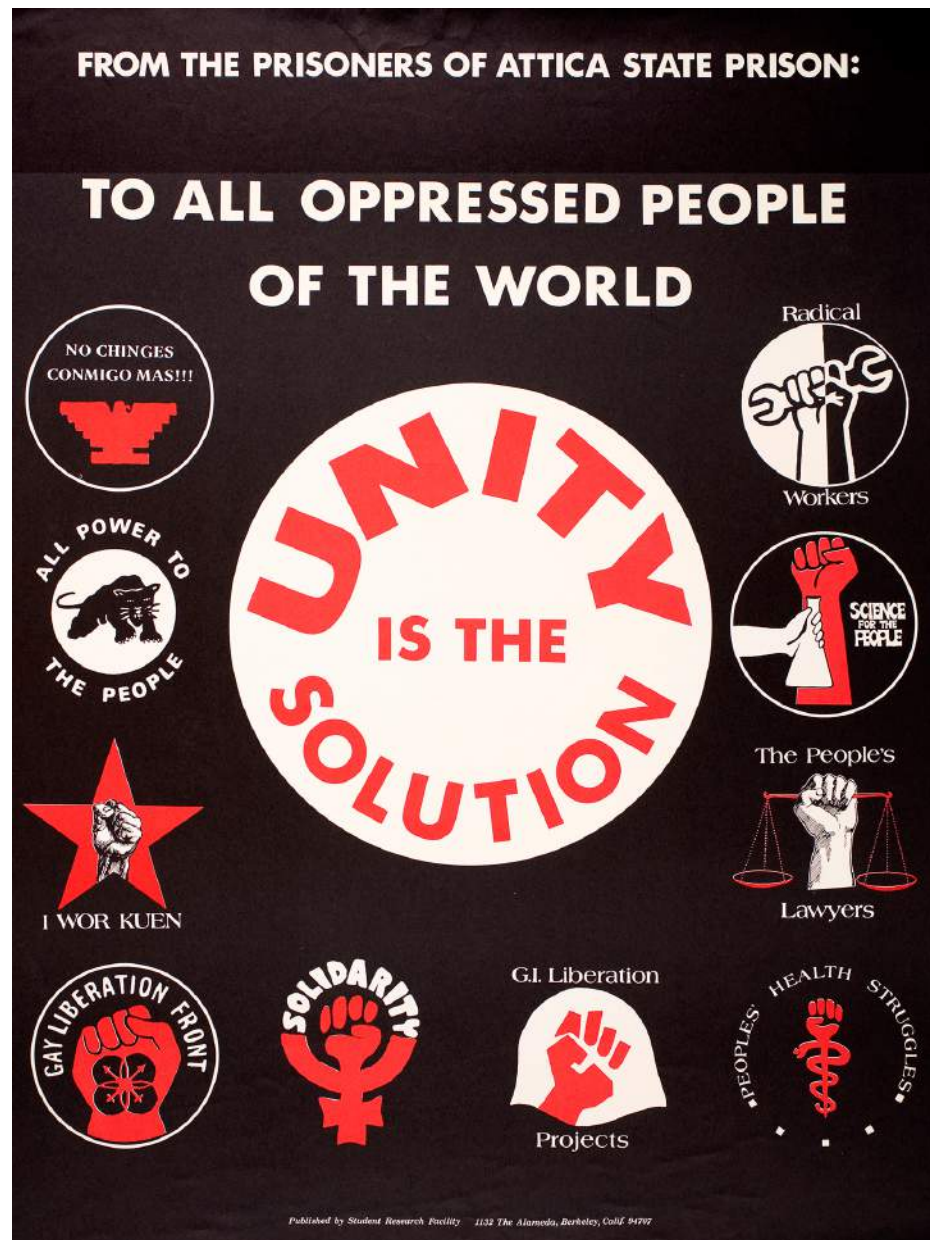
The fist cannot be said to be one of the primary symbols identified with LGBTQ community. Currently, the rainbow flag or the enmeshed gender symbols seem to be dominant but the fist has – and does – emerge under certain circumstances.

One early example is the “Gay-in at Griffith Park” (Los Angeles), 1970, by the Gay Liberation Front.

Bruce Reifel, 1970



The Gay Liberation Front graphic “Unity is the solution” (circa 1971) embedded a novel clenched fist with enmeshed gender symbols among other movements.



“Miami Means Fight Back” (1977) referred to the conservative “Save Our Children” campaign in Florida, the first organized opposition to the gay rights movement in the U.S.

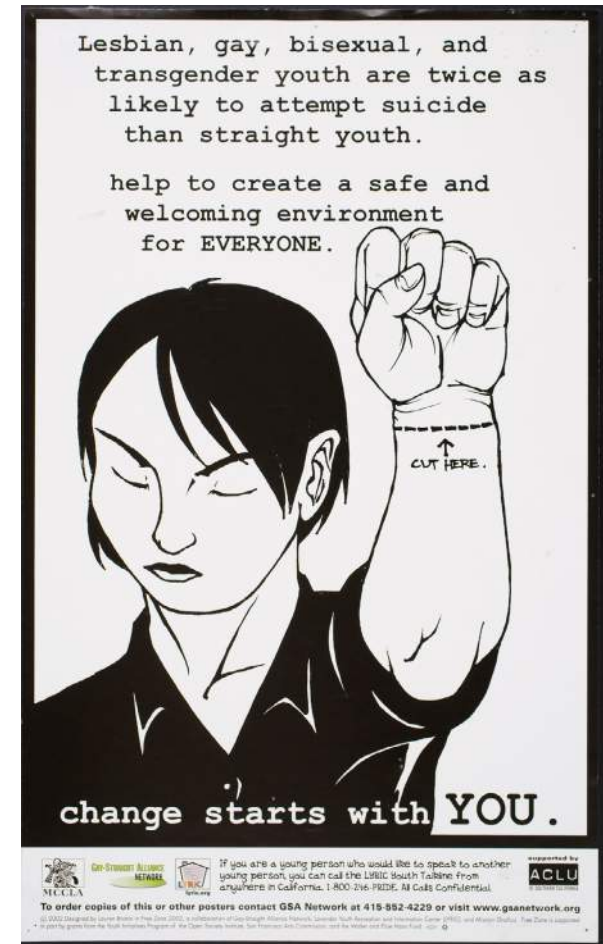
The Tom Robinson Band, an important though underappreciated early gay/revolutionary group from England, used a clenched fist logo like the SDS fist on their first album (1978). However, they garbled its historical roots, claiming that “The TRB fist logo... was from a 19th century miner’s union banner...” Inquiries to Tom Robinson led to a three-way conversation in which the designer, Roger Huddle of Rock Against Racism revealed he’d first seen it in a Black Panther context.





“Muerto Harvey Milk” (Harvey Milk is Dead, 1979) is from New York’s Come! Unity Press, which was a 24-hour open-access print shop run by a gay anarchist collective. The fist is embedded in a double-bladed axe, a symbol of lesbian resistance.

“Change Starts with You” (2002). This poster, a campaign to reduce LGBTQ suicides, features an illustration of a wrist labeled “cut here.” Although wrist-slashing is a common form of suicide, *this* raised fist and militant stance makes it clear that the “cutting” is about unleashing the force of the fist, making it a tool of empowerment and self-determination. It’s a fitting example of how far this symbol has come since Frank Cieciroka first “cut here” from one Vietnam War era poster to another and unleashed this powerful icon.



Lincoln Cushing and Docs Populi

As a scholar of social justice posters Lincoln Cushing “is committed to documenting, cataloging, and disseminating socially and politically significant graphic material which otherwise might be left behind in the digital revolution.”

Please visit “Docs Populi-documents for the public” at www.docspopuli.org

Cushing is the author of recent essays such as *Cataloging as Radical Practice* (2014) & is the author of books such as *All Of Us or None: Social Justice Posters of the San Francisco Bay Area* (2012), *Agitate! Educate! Organize! American Labor Posters* (2009, co authored with Timothy W. Drescher) and *¡Revolucion! Cuban Poster Art* (2003).

Mathias Danbolt

The Time for Raised Fists

One of the most cherished garments in my queer activist closet is a yellow t-shirt with an outline of a triangle from which an arm raises up in a clenched fist. The combination of a fist (resist!) with the pink triangle's stigma-laden history of sexual dissidence, has always seemed like a fitting statement whether marching in ad hoc queer actions against hate crimes, or large-scale demonstrations against imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While hardly a radical act in and of itself, I enjoy wearing these symbols that signal my investment in fighting unfinished histories of oppression from a queer perspective.

However, the queerness of this fist was apparently not explicit enough for the police officers who threw me and my queer activist friends out of the Copenhagen Pride Parade in the summer of 2009. Dressed in my yellow t-shirt, I was one of perhaps thirty people who had joined behind a freshly painted banner reading "ASYLUM FOR ALL / LEFT-RADICAL LGBTQs IN CPH".

This queer asylum block had been organized last-minute by a group who sent around an email suggesting the importance of giving presence to some of the urgent political issues that many of us in the queer activist community were working on—issues that we expected otherwise would be



Photographer unknown

absent from this increasingly capitalized-oriented spectacle. The banner not only expressed support for the over sixty rejected Iraqi asylum seekers that had taken refuge in the Brorson's Church in Copenhagen, located close to start of the parade trail.¹ The banner also responded to recent statements by conservative politicians who feared that many participants in the World Outgames—a large LGBT-oriented sports, culture, and human rights event taking place in Copenhagen that same week—would refuse to return to their home countries in the Global South and instead seek asylum in Denmark.

When the parade started moving, the volunteers monitoring the sequence of participants relegated our unannounced queer block to the tail of the procession. We did not march for long before a group of police officers approached us and accused us of having attached ourselves to an event we were not part of. Our asylum banner apparently made us stand out, and despite the fact that we were a fairly diverse group of people of different ages, including small kids, the police saw us as a group of radical political opportunists who parasited on the attention given to an event we had nothing to do with. Our insistent efforts to explain that we were just another group of LGBT people participating in the Pride Parade like everyone else was to no avail. The police, as well as the Pride Parade organizers that they conferred with on the phone, were clearly of a different opinion. Unable to see any relationship between asylum activism and a LGBT event, we were told to immediately leave the Parade, as this was "a party, and not a political demonstration." This was not the time and place for fists of resistance.

* * *

¹ Despite massive activist campaigns and resistance, less than two weeks after Copenhagen Pride, the police stormed the Brorson's Church on August 13 in the middle of the night with brutal force and imprisoned the asylum seekers. While the activist campaign and immense debate that ensued their eviction from the church asylum did pressure the Immigration Service to re-open some cases which eventually led to granted asylum, many were deported to Iraq shortly after their imprisonment.

Our abrupt exit from Copenhagen Pride in 2009 serves as an example of some of the wide-ranging changes that have taken place in the field of LGBT politics in many Western European countries during the last several decades. The fact that the police are now actively involved in protecting and monitoring LGBT Parades from “troublemakers”—like us—gives an indication of how far Pride has moved from being a political march in the spirit of the 1969 Stonewall Riots, to functioning as a state-sanctioned parade for LGBT people in all our commodifiable “diversity.” In Denmark—as in other geographies in the Global North—there has been a widening gulf between those who view the shift from “march” to “parade” as a natural and positive outcome of the remarkable progress that has been made in terms of legal rights and cultural acceptance of lesbian and gay (more than bisexual and trans*) subjects, and those who see the streamlining of Pride as yet another example of the pervasive “gentrification of the mind” in neoliberal times, where the queer struggle for alternative lifeworlds is being replaced by de-politicized and commercialized assimilations to the normal.² The political disagreement over the aim and purpose of Pride has in many localities resulted in total separation between the mainstream event and its so-called political alternative, often organized by left-wing activists who boycot the parade. While Copenhagen for years has given room for such alternative events made in opposition or to the side of Pride, the queer asylum block in 2009 hoped to be able to carve out a space for a political presence in the mainstream—but the strategy was rejected and the message failed to register. A failure that works as a reminder of how the current format of large-scale Pride Parades—dependent on commercial sponsors and the blessing from the police and local municipalities—seem unable to encompass the co-existence of pride *and* shame, partying *and* demonstrating, joy *and* anger, desire *and* politics, fists *and* limp wrists.

* * *

2 Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2012).

The fact that our queer asylum block was seen as exterior to and thus unwanted in Copenhagen Pride can also be related to the ways in which questions of sexuality traditionally have been approached separately from other social vectors of difference in mainstream LGBT-political work in Denmark, as well as the Nordic countries more broadly. A separation that has resulted in a lacking ability and/or willingness to engage with intersections of other forms of oppression. Questions of racialization and racism have far too often been relegated to the “waiting room of history” in LGBT contexts, as something to deal with when homophobia is terminated.³ Over the last years many white LGBT organizers and activists have complained that sexuality has been “contaminated” by race, ethnicity, religion, and other so-called particularities. Conflicts have erupted on the relevance for LGBT politics of complicated questions concerning asylum rights, Western exceptionalism, national border customs, foreign policy, and the war on terror. While such debates of the “proper object” of LGBT politics can be important, the claims of “racial takeovers” are problematic, as they only make sense under the presumption that the production of sexual subjectivities have been and can be disentangled from its imbrication with questions of gender, class, racialization, and citizenship. The recurrent split between sexual and racial politics in Denmark and beyond has widespread consequences as it not only disregards the ways in which conceptions of sexuality and race are constituted in relation to one another, but it also risks contributing to racist political configurations where “sexual rights and migrant rights [...] become constructed as mutually contradictory,” as Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir, and Esra Erdem make clear in their important article “Gay Imperialism” (2008).⁴

3 I borrow this term from Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008 [2000]), p. 8.

4 Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir, and Esra Erdem, “Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the ‘War on Terror.’” *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*. Edited by Esperanza Miyake and Adi Kunstman (York: Raw Nerve Books, 2008), p. 73.

Narrow-sighted, single-issue approaches to sexuality have deep consequences for coalition work across social movements, as it privileges the ascendancy of whiteness and debilitates necessary alliances between raised fists of different kinds.

*

*

*

Mary Coble's installation and performance *Protest in Pride* provide a welcome opportunity to consider the queer connections between different groups fighting against oppressive structures. The carefully crafted banners show an inciting concatenation of images of clenched fists whose props and accompanying statements evidence the wide range of political call to arms: A fist declaring Black Power stands alongside a fist of gay liberation; a fist of Native American indigenous rights is side by side with a fist fighting the prison industrial complex; a gloved (fisting) fist marking a dyke march hangs beside a fist united against war; a fist raising up from a book in defense of libraries and education is shoulder to shoulder with a fist calling for a general strike; a carrot-carrying fist demanding "food not bombs" is on display next to a fist fighting against housing evictions in dispossessed communities... The abundance of fists are fascinating as much as they are bewildering: What is the relationship between these divergent political declarations, except the shared iconographic identification with the clenched fist? All the groups and positions presented on the banners are connected to left-wing political contexts—here are no fists supporting "white pride" or neo-fascism—but Coble's installation still leaves it up to the viewer to consider the relationships and dissonances between them. While approached separately each fist seems to deliver a clear message, when seen together the number of hands bring so many demands on the table that the picture gets messier. It is precisely this "messy" political picture that the installation invites us to inhabit—a picture that in the context of a Pride event prompts questions such as: Which political subjects are recognized as part of the LGBT/Q community? What political causes are relegated to the foreground and which are placed in the background, presented as extrinsic to the realm of LGBT/Q politics? What are the effects

of separating the fight against sexual oppression from the fight against racism and imperialism? What are the benefits—or drawbacks—with fighting separately, side by side, or simultaneously against structures of oppression?

The questions raised by Coble's *Protest in Pride* seem particularly pertinent in the context of this year's decision to rename Gothenburg's LGBTQ festival "West Pride." Although the change might seek to highlight the festival's geographical location in the Western part of Sweden, the name unavoidably calls forth uncomfortable echoes of right-wing claims of taking "pride" in the "West"—claims intrinsic not only to racialized narratives of Western sexual exceptionalism but also to ideologies of "White Pride." The bundle of clenched fists in Coble's installation disturb such narratives of pride by calling attention to the urgency of ongoing fights against unfinished histories of injustice. *Protest in Pride* invites us to challenge the presuppositions that we know in advance about what a LGBTQ event can encompass, what political subjectivities it will produce, and what coalitions and alliances it might generate. The banners with the raised fists flag a reminder of the importance of remaining vigilant and attentive to the claims that can be mustered when bodies in difference gather to discuss, march, and party together. The spirits of the fists thus highlight the need to resist accepting forms of pride that are conditioned on the marginalization of others.

*

*

*

Some say that the time for clenched fists is over, and that social movements and their genres of resistance—including symbols of fists and demonstrations—no longer work in our period of repressive tolerance and increasing commodification of the aesthetic of resistance. Even though clothing brands capitalize on activist fashion and that the style of the "rebel" might sell well, the desire for a different world can never be replaced by the empty promises of consumer capitalism. Willful arms keep raising their fists in resistance across the globe, and a LGBTQ march ought to provide opportunities to develop and enact solidary politics across difference. The increasing state repression and policing

of resistance in Sweden, Scandinavia, and beyond threatens the possibilities for gatherings of bodies who seek to take stand against the escalation of fascist and neo-nazi violence, and the intensification of neo-liberal political orders that fuel the perpetual inequity that shape the present.

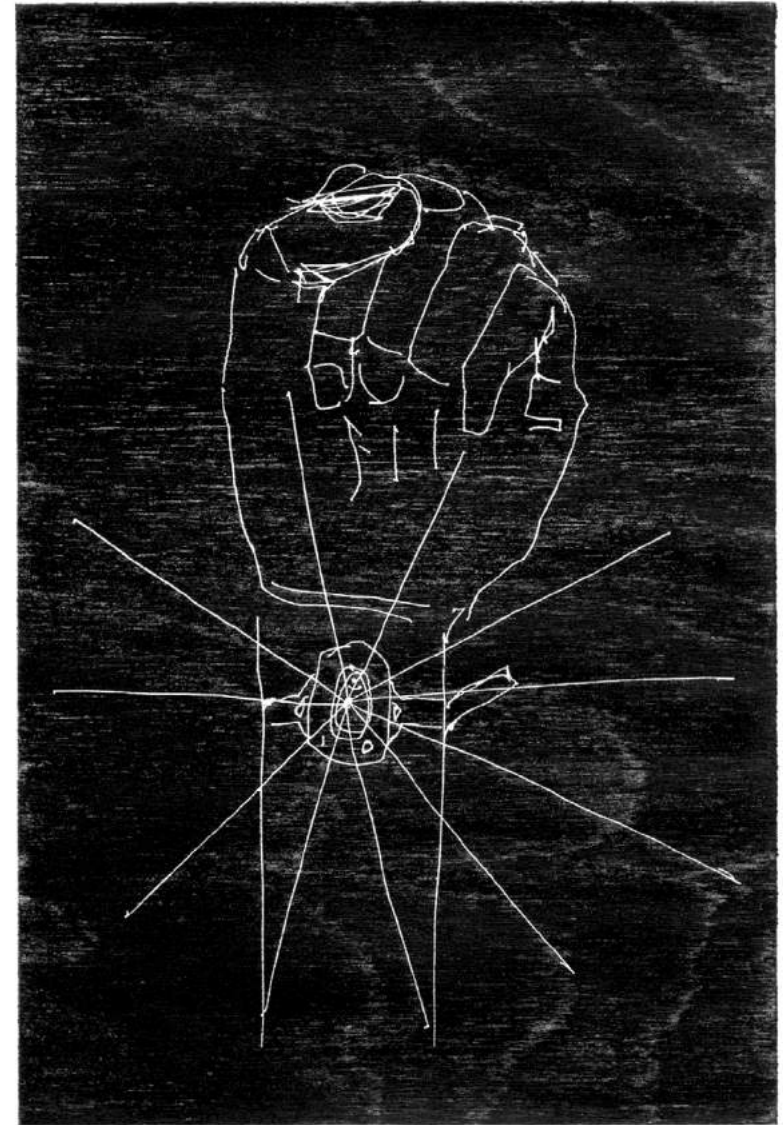
Reading the newspaper, watching the news, talking to friends, going to work, writing articles, visiting asylum activists in prisons and camps, I increasingly find my queer limp wrist tightening, fingers clenching, fingertips touching the palm of my hand, nails digging into my skin as my hand closes tightly into a fist. It is always time for raised fists—for resistant desire and desirable resistance.

*

*

*

Mathias Danbolt is an art theorist and queer critic based in Copenhagen. His work centers on questions on contemporary visual art and performance, queer temporalities and the politics of history, and feminist, queer, antiracist, and decolonial art and theory. He is currently a Postdoc in Art History at University of Copenhagen, and is part of the blog collective Peculiar.dk.



iheal fist, Sidsel Meineche Hansen, woodcut print, 2014

“The wrist cuff ‘iHeal’ is a medical device that sends pulsed magnetic energy waves into the body’s tissue in order to stimulate cellular regeneration in the treatment of injuries from repetitive strain. Although ‘immaterial labor’ is produced socially through communication, it would be wrong to separate the production process of immaterial labour, from corporeal materiality. The computer’s keyboard connects email to the manual task of typing and in this sense the positional tendon, located in the fingers, is at the core of communication technology.”



**WE WANT
BLACK
POWER**



1967, Cover of a pamphlet distributed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

Black Panther Party, 1967, *Black Panther Newspaper*

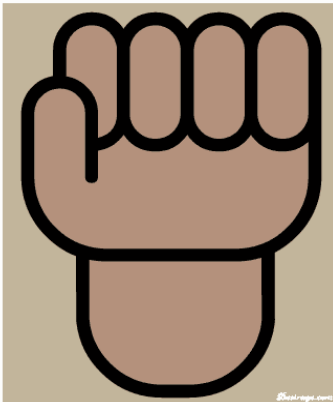
“What We Want Now!”

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the white men of our Black Community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

**BROWN
POWER**

Brown Power emphasizes Desi pride and the creation of Brown political and cultural institutions to nurture and promote Brown collective interests, advance Brown values, and secure Brown autonomy!

show it. feel it. love it.



Brown Power “was a movement that Chicanos organized to end discrimination and segregation in education, to gain political influence, and to fight police brutality.”



Credit: Rolando Córba, 1977, From the OSPAAAL archive (Organization in Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America)



Indigenous Reoccupation of Ancestral Lands

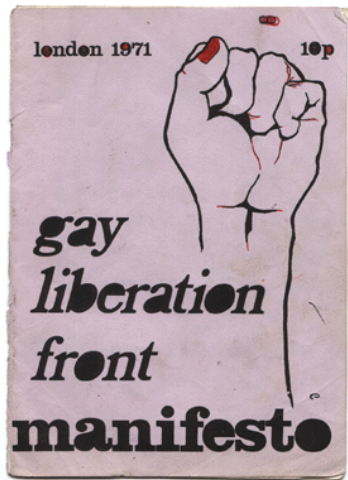


The Indigenous Nationhood Movement (INM) is a peoples’ movement for Indigenous nationhood, resurgence, and decolonization.

- We are a movement for land, life, languages, and liberation.
- We are fighting for the survival and independence of Indigenous nations.
- We are an alliance of mutual support and coordinated action that branches out in all Four Directions.
- We are an Indigenous-led movement that includes women, men, and two-spirited people of all ages, colours, and nationalities.
- We will protect the land, water, and air that provide the basis for all life.
- Indigenous cultures, spiritualities and governments are the foundation for our continuing survival.
- It is our responsibility to take action and to live according to our original teachings and natural laws.
- Colonial laws and systems must be abolished.
- Restitution must be made for the theft of our lands and the failed attempt to exterminate our peoples.



Idle No More Movement
Credit: Dwayne Bird

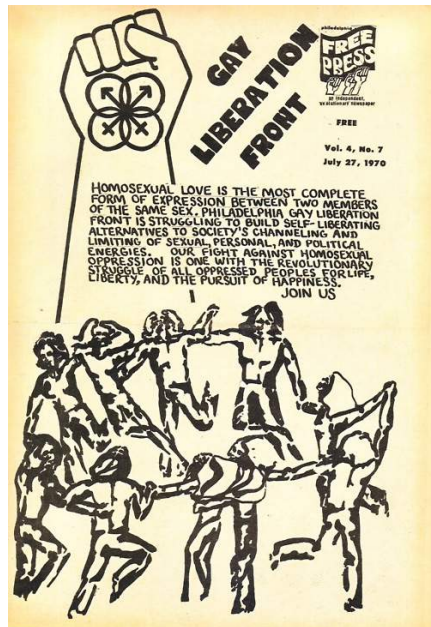


Excerpts from gay liberation front manifesto

“Throughout recorded history, oppressed groups have organized to claim their rights and obtain their needs. Homosexuals, who have been oppressed by physical violence and by ideological and psychological attacks at every level of social interaction, are at last becoming angry.”

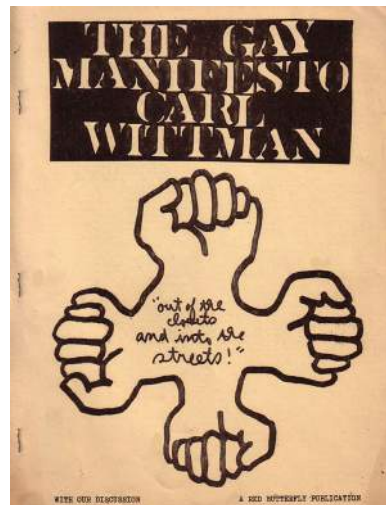
“But gay liberation does not just mean reforms. It means a revolutionary change in our whole society.”

The GLF manifesto from the cover of Temple University’s Free Press, July 27, 1970



CONCLUSION: AN OUTLINE OF IMPERATIVES FOR GAY LIBERATION

1. Free ourselves: come out everywhere; initiate self defense and political activity; initiate counter community institutions.
2. Turn other gay people on: talk all the time; understand, forgive, accept.
3. Free the homosexual in everyone: we'll be getting a good bit of shit from threatened latents: be gentle, and keep talking & acting free.
4. We've been playing an act for a long time, so we're consummate actors. Now we can begin to be, and it'll be a good show!



Carl Wittman was a member of the national council of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The Gay Manifesto was written in 1970.

“Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ prisoners and “free world” allies who support each other. Our work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We are outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and respond through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.”

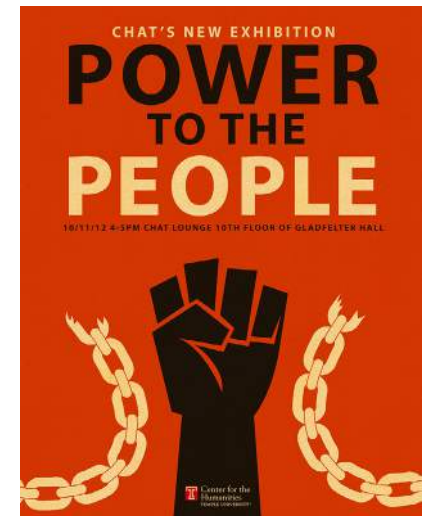
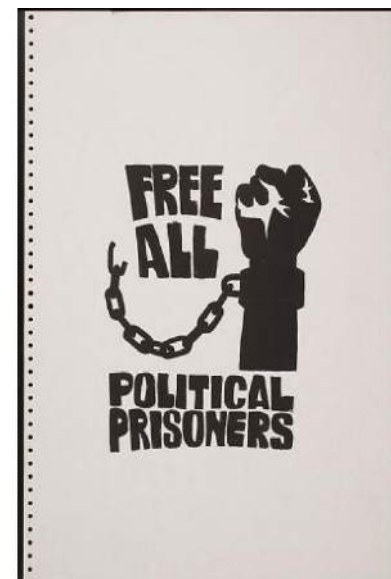


Power to the People: Incarceration Imagery and the Black Panther Party



“The Queer Detainee Empowerment Project is forging to fill a gap in NYC to serve queer, trans, and HIV+ detainees.” Credit: Jamila Hammami

“This exhibition of art and ephemera on the theme of mass incarceration in America is curated by Professor Jennifer Zarro’s honors students in the Tyler School of Art. All material is courtesy of the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University Library.”



U.C. Berkeley Workshop Poster

From the “The All Of Us Or None (AOUON) archive project, Started by Free Speech Movement activist Michael Rossman in 1977 to gather and document posters of modern progressive movements in the United States. In the collection of the Oakland Museum of California”



Project Fierce Chicago “aims to provide affirming, longer-term transitional housing and support services to LGBTQ young adults. An estimated 15,000 youth in Chicago experience homelessness each year, and an estimated 32 percent to 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ.”

TEACH Alliance
 “We are safer-sex educators, community outreach leaders and trans* activists. Our goal is simple: to address problems in queer communities with humor and positivity. We feel that, too often, issues within our communities are presented in negative and dire ways, so we began leading workshops about topics such as queer leadership, safer-sex and gender presentation using humor and candor. We focus on addressing these topics in positive and affirming ways.”



“A non-racial movement made up of poor and oppressed communities in Cape Town, South Africa. It was formed in November 2000 with the aim of fighting evictions, water cut-offs and poor health services, obtaining free electricity, securing decent housing, and opposing police brutality.”



“West Papua Media (WPMA or WestPapuaMedia.Info) aims to provide a professional service to international media covering West Papua, ensuring high quality, verifiable reporting gets into the international media, directly from the ground, and not from those who seek to distort the truth of daily experience in Papua. By reporting Papuan campaigns to end human rights abuses and bringing these unreported Papuan issues to the front page, we hope to hold the abusers to account.”



Librarians Against Digital Rights Management, Credit: Nina Paley
<http://readersbillofrights.info>



“Founded in 1990, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) champions user privacy, free expression, and innovation through impact litigation, policy analysis, grassroots activism, and technology development. We work to ensure that rights and freedoms are enhanced and protected as our use of technology grows.”

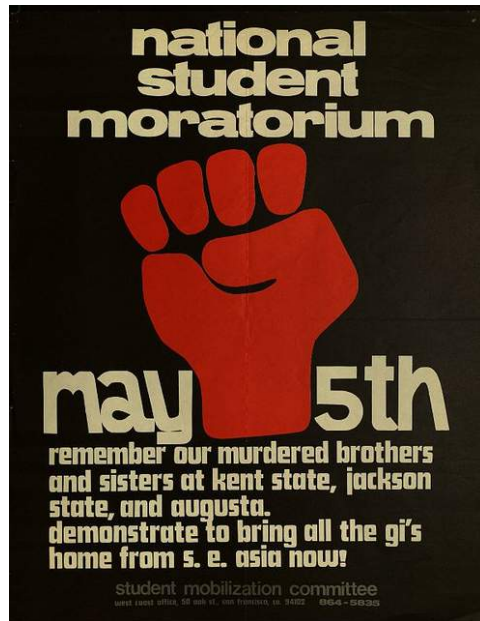
1970
Copyright Students for Peace



"Otpor! was a civic youth movement that exist from 1998 until 2003 in Serbia employing nonviolent struggle against the regime of Slobodan Milošević as their course of action."



ОТПОР!



1971
By the Student Mobilization Committee



1970
Credit: Wally (Wayne) Zampa, poster from Michael Rossman's AOUON (All OF US OR NONE) archive.



The Free Univeristy is "an experiment in radical education and an attempt to create education as it ought to be. First conceived as a form of educational strike in the run up to May Day, 2012, the Free University has subsequently organized numerous days of free and open education in parks and public spaces in New York City. Our project is born out of a recognition that the current system of higher education is as unequal as it is unsustainable. With increasing tuition at public and private institutions, the increasing use of precarious adjunct labor, and the larger and larger amounts of debt that students are expected to take on, a university education is systematically becoming a rarefied commodity only available to the few. It is in this context that the Free University operates as a radical and critical pedagogical space."



1999, Poster celebrating the 10th anniversary of Vancouver's "Under the Volcano Festival for Art and Social Change"



2014
By The Pittsburgh Youth Empowerment Summit, "Raise Your Fist Up, Save the August Wilson Center for African American Culture", Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



1996, By the California School Employee's Association, Service Employees International Union, Local 1000

#OCCUPYTORONTO

Occupy Toronto began on Oct. 15, 2011 as part of the international Occupy Movement



ST JAMES PARK
KING ST. / CHURCH ST. OCCUPYTO.ORG
FOLLOW US ON TWITTER @OCCUPYTORONTO • LIKE US ON FACEBOOK.COM/OCCUPYTORONTO



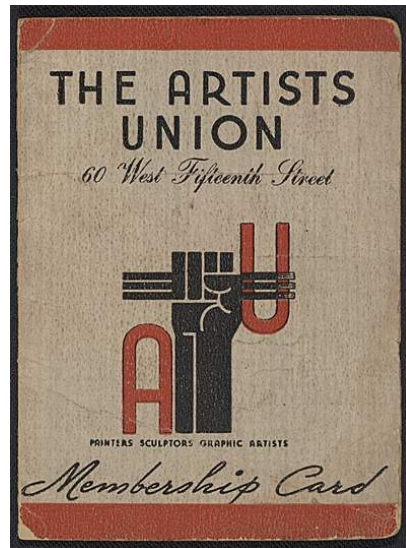
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Founded in 1890



Wisconsin American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
Credit: Carrie Worthen, 2011



2011, General Strike & Mass Day of Action called for by Occupy Oakland



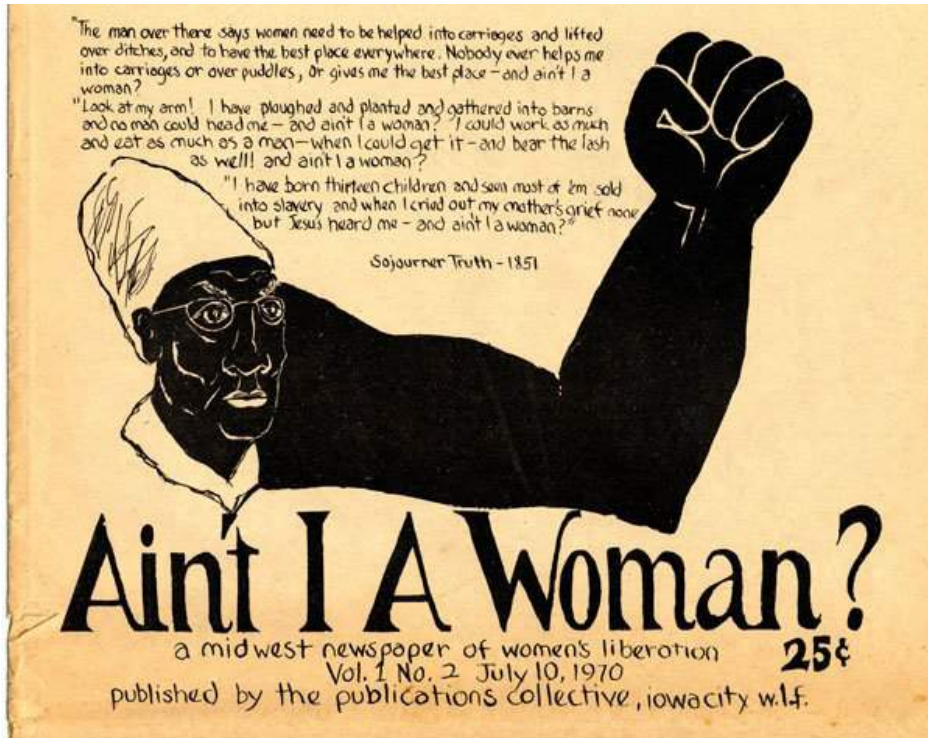
Harry Gottlieb's Artists' Union membership card, 1935.
Harry Gottlieb papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Creator Unknown



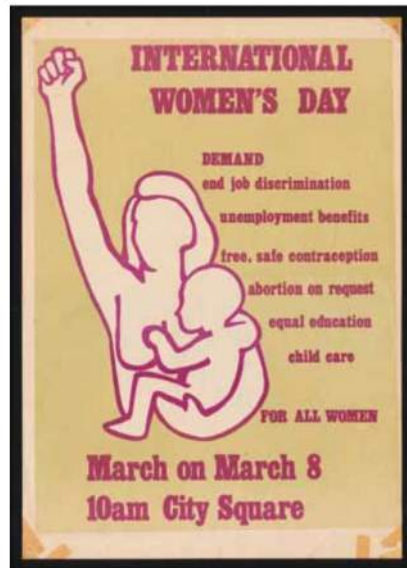
Founded in Chicago in 1905, the IWW is open to all workers.



Scottish Education Workers Network, "Worker and student rights and self-organization"



"Ain't I a Woman? a midwest newspaper of women's liberation" was published from 1970-1974 in Iowa City, US by the AIAW? Collective.



1972
 From the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives, University of Melbourne



Arming Sisters
 "A campaign using Women's Self Defense as a tool to bring about empowerment, self love, and ownership of body to indigenous women across the US and Canada."



2009
 Credit: Damien Luxe
 damienluxe.com



Anarcha-Feminist



2013
 Credit: Alexandra Falagara & Brita Lindvall
 For *Bang's* "March 8th" issue "with the ambition to make an updated and inclusive struggle icon, with queer as a natural starting point."



Trans Feminist Symbol
 Credit: Helen G.



Earth First! "is an international movement composed of small, bioregionally-based groups. Earth First!ers (EF!ers) take it upon ourselves to become intimately familiar with the ecology of our area and the most immediate and serious threats to it. We apply "direct pressure" to stop the bleeding, with a combination of education, litigation, and creative civil disobedience."



Blue Frontier Campaign "promotes unity, provide tools to and raise awareness of the solution-oriented marine conservation community."



Occupy Wall Street Farmers March, 2011 "Farmers, Gardners, Food Workers, Food Justice Activist and Occupiers coming together to resist corperate control of our food system and speak on ideas of local resilience and urban-rural solidarity."

Detroit Local Foods Supporting community-based urban agriculture

Food Not Bombs Founded in 1980



"What is the concept behind Food Not Bombs?"

We recover food that would have been discarded and share it as a way of protesting war and poverty. With fifty cents of every U.S. federal tax dollar going to the military and forty percent of our food being discarded while so many people were struggling to feed their families that we could inspire the public to press for military spending to be redirected to human needs. We also reduce food waste and meet the direct need our community by collecting discarded food, preparing vegan meals that we share with the hungry while providing literature about the need to change our society. Food Not Bombs also provides food to protesters, striking workers and organize food relief after natural and political crisis.



Is Food Not Bombs labeled a terrorist organization by the United States government?

The United States government started to claim we were "America's Most Hardcore Terrorist Groups" soon after we were first arrested for sharing free vegan meals in Golden Gate Park in the fall of 1988. This is a year before the end of the Cold War and all we had done was claim we had the right to feed the hungry in protest to war and poverty. Military contractors are worried that we might influence the public to realize our taxes could be spent on human needs instead of war and that this could threaten the billions of dollars they were making arming the United States government. The fact that we didn't stop sharing food when told was also a concern as that threaten their ability to manipulate the hungry by moving food programs to more desirable locations or by threatening to withhold food if the public didn't cooperate with the authorities. Since we will provide food where ever and when ever it is needed this interferes with their ability to use food for social control."

Hadassah Damien

Raised Fist[ing]

Raised fists in activist settings symbolize strength, unity, resistance, and community. To many queer communities, fists themselves have additional meanings: while often one thinks of hitting or violence, additional meanings lurk pruriently behind the surface. After raising for LGBTQ rights throughout the 1980s, and for AIDS activism in the 1990s, a confluence of fists and safer sex rhetoric emerged visually through the production of images of raised fists in gloves in the late 2010's.

In the late 1980's and early 1990s, queer artist groups like Gang, Gran Fury, Dyke Action Machine!, fierce pussy, OutPost, Anonymous Queers, Camp Out and more pulled artists, energy, anger and ideas from activist groups including Queer Nation, ACT UP, Women's Action Coalition, Lesbian Avengers, Pink Panthers, Lavender Panthers, and the Lavender Left [pictured].



MARK KOSTOPOULOS

OCTOBER 1954 - JUNE 1992

This t-shirt of the group Lavender Left, on which there is little research or documentation, was a small group of lesbian and dyke identified individuals who did direct actions protesting the treatment of people with HIV/AIDS. In 1988, this photo of AIDS activist Mark Kostopoulos being restrained [perhaps arrested?] was taken, and we see that his sweatshirt bears a logo: a raised fist in an upside-down triangle, with the words "Lavender Left" on the right side. The image itself is a combination of icons: the raised fist, of course, to invoke and symbolize resistant group power as demonstrated by a marginalized or oppressed group. The fist is in an illustrated, thumb-over con-

vention. The upside down triangle is a commonly used symbol of gay liberation, and is often printed in a pink or purple color.

A fist like the Lavender Left's logo and other well-known quee-activist images from that time like SILENCE = DEATH, which includes a pink triangle is Fist Triangle. In 2012, SF-based visual artist Lex Non Scripta created *Fist Triangle*, which looks quite similar, with one major exception: the denotation is the sexual act of fisting, not the resistant act of punching. Non Scripta's raised fist is wearing a black glove and instead of fingers curled, the hand is shaped in the position one uses when one is going to enter a body with it—fingers shaped into a point, thumb tucked in. This is an image that manifested as an illustration and print after it was first made as a stencil. Generated for "Best Revenge, a giant, roving spectacle of art and performance with 35 artists and 5 different locations about building community and resistin assimilation, that [NonScripta] co-organized with Caitlin Sweet for the National Queer Arts Festival."



Credit: Lex Non Scripta, 2012, lexnonscripta.com

One year later, the NYC Dyke March used a raised fist – with a thumb tastefully tucked in – for its 2013 logo. It exists in parallel to a queer cultural refocus on 1990’s activist anger and honors deep connections between lesbians’ places in HIV/AIDS support work and the history of using sexualized in-your-face images as a form of cultural resistance. In this context artist and RISD professor Cat Stephens created this image for the annual Dyke March in New York City, itself an activist space contesting assimilationist lgbtq cultures.

The creation of activist ephemera is as much about the presence of bodies as it is about messages – t-shirts, buttons, and patches are worn, placards are held, guerilla posters are present in the streets and witnessed. Tactics of activist art are as much about affect and human presence as they are about messages demanding some kind of change or sharing information. This is a special and queer confluence of meaning: the prurient use of hands, and fists specifically, as sexual instruments and the body-centered social space which activist ephemera exist in.



NYC Dyke March Logo, 2013
Credit: Cat Stephens

This text was written by Hadassah Damien, 2014
Reprinted with permission, www.femmetech.org

For more info about Hadassah’s project “*The Fist Is Still Raised*: a book, digital humanities project, and traveling activist event examining and inspiring social movement history and resistance strategies from a visual cultural lens” visit: <http://raisedfist.femmetech.org/>

questions? fists to share? want a slideshow?

write to: info@raisedfist.femmetech.org



Credit: Damien Luxe, 2013

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Lincoln Cushing
Hadassah Damien
Mathias Danbolt
Louise Wolthers



