BEAUTIFUL TROUBLE
A TOOLBOX FOR REVOLUTION
STUDY GUIDE
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“Students loved it! Hands down, it was the most engaged they were throughout the semester.”
— Alison Bodkins, James Madison University

“Simply the most up-to-date and complete compendium of creative activist case studies and theories out there. It’s indispensable.”
— Stephen Duncombe, NYU

“The format of the book is ideal for a classroom environment. It provides readily digestible material that students can present, discuss, critique, and build on. Through engaging this text, readers can develop their views on what kind of activists they want to be.”
— Michael Heaney, University of Michigan

“The one-to-two-page entries are just right. The indexical quality of the pages is amazing — it mirrors the way that young people browse the Internet.”
— Ian Reilly, Concordia University

“My students loved seeing how ‘politics’ could be at once so serious, creative, and fun. They appreciated that these were not examples from the 1960s (yawn); they loved the DIY and punk vibe to a lot of it. The artists in class loved how artistic so much of it was. And nearly everyone commented on how repellent ‘angry’ politics are to them, and how Beautiful Trouble seemed something different, more inclusive and inspiring.”
— Jeremy Varon, The New School

“After I give a talk, students often come up to me and ask, ‘Well, what can I do now?’ From now on, I’m going to hand them a copy of Beautiful Trouble, and say, ‘This!’”
— Frances Moore Lappé, best-selling author, visiting scholar and recipient of 17 honorary doctorates
The following study guide is a complement to Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution, a college-level resource for studying the convergence of art and politics, praised by Naomi Klein as both “elegant and incendiary.”

Designed primarily for undergraduate use, this study guide is also suitable for high school and graduate school, as well as book clubs and study groups. While the terminology is general enough for laypeople and for students just being introduced to media studies, cultural studies, sociology, political science, social movement theory, and related fields, the content can be approached through any number of advanced perspectives.

Similarly, the additional resources suggested throughout are written for the non-academic reader, but offer insights of value to researchers at all levels.


Thanks to all our reviewers: Daryn Cambridge, Michael Beer, Donald Crumpet, Rae Ableah, Todd Hawley.

Brought to you by Verdana Eleven.

Bulk discounts of Beautiful Trouble are available. Please contact classroom@beautifultrouble.org for more information.
Welcome to Beautiful Trouble, an innovative mapping of contemporary creative activism. It’s intended to help all comers, from artists to veteran organizers to the merely activism-curious, reflect on the principles, tactics, and theoretical frameworks that social movements and groups employ to make radical change.

Revolutionary praxis (see PRINCIPLE: Praxis makes perfect, (p. 162) is rarely a solo enterprise. We learn together: in the classroom, in reading groups, in heated conversations over cold beverages. This study guide offers discussion questions, group exercises, and further readings designed to help you take your learning to the next level, as well as a host of ways to engage with the material in the same creative spirit the book celebrates (see the “Beyond the Page” section).

Every day, people come up with new ways to creatively resist. To capture this constant inventiveness, rather than a finished product, Beautiful Trouble is a living, growing archive of best practices. New pieces are added all the time, and are tracked at beautifultrouble.org/new. In fact, quite a few of these additions (for example: CASE: Conflict Kitchen, PRINCIPLE: Jury-rig Solutions and CASE: Pimp My Caroaca) originated as undergraduate research projects. Let us know if there’s a tactic, principle, theory, or case study that you think deserves to be added — especially if you think you’re the person to write it.

Please email your insights and feedback to classroom@beautifultrouble.org. Happy exploring!

— Andrew Boyd, Nadine Bloch, & Dave Oswald Mitchell
Wrangler-in-Chief, Training Director & Editorial Director, Beautiful Trouble

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What’s beautiful about trouble? Isn’t that a bit of an oxymoron?
- Bertolt Brecht, the renowned 20th-century German playwright, famously said, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.” Do you agree? What, then, is the difference between art and activism?
- After the 1932 U.S. Presidential election, a labor delegation met with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to lobby for laws to make dangerous workplaces safer. He responded famously: “I agree with you. I want to do it. Now go out and make me do it!” What does this exchange tell you about how power operates? What is the role of creative activism in this understanding of power?
- In the introduction, Beautiful Trouble describes itself as a “pattern language of creative activism.” What do they mean by this? In what ways is Beautiful Trouble like a language? Is this a useful way of approaching the subject? Why? Why not?

## EXPLORE FURTHER

The Grammar of Social Change | Dave Oswald Mitchell, TEDx Talk, TEDx Regina, June 4, 2013

Do You See a Pattern?: An architectural theorist who has inspired smart-growth advocates, counterculture DIY-ers, and computer programmers | Witold Rybczynski, Slate Magazine, December 2, 2009

See our complete list of further readings, documentary films, websites and other resources at beautifultrouble.org/classroomresources/
Beautiful Trouble’s “pattern language” of creative action has four components: tactics, principles, theories, and case studies. These are the building blocks of the art and science of creative action, guiding us to be both strategic and effective as we struggle for social change.
Tactics

Specific forms of creative action, such as a flash mob or an occupation, designed to move a strategy forward.

Tactics are the action verbs of social change work. If you think of a strategy as an overarching plan, then tactics are the specific actions that advance the plan. They move the ball forward. We try something and see if it sticks. A tactic that proves spectacularly successful in one situation may fall flat in another. Coming up with the right tactic for the right moment requires creativity and experimentation, as well as an ongoing reassessment of your goals and context.

Tactics carried out without strategy are like shots fired in the dark — hitting our target is unlikely, and how would we know if we did? But strategy without tactics is like a bicycle with no gears: we’re pointed in the right direction, spinning our wheels, going nowhere.

Questions for Discussion

- Which activist tactics are you most familiar with, either from participating in them yourself or from seeing them in the media? And, in your experience, how effective have those tactics been?
- Which Beautiful Trouble tactics did you find most interesting? Are there any new ideas that might have been useful in a change effort that you were a part of or that you heard about?
- How can groups tell if these tactics have been successful?
- Do some of the tactics feel more like works of art? Do others feel more like politics?
- Turn to the template on page 92 of Beautiful Trouble, and, as a whole group, or breaking into smaller groups, brainstorm and share ideas for new tactic entries that could be added to the Beautiful Trouble toolbox.
- Take a look at the principle "Choose tactics that support your strategy" on page 112. Do you agree with the relationship between strategy and tactics that this piece outlines? Are there any examples of tactics in Beautiful Trouble (or in your experience) that don’t support, or fail to support, the larger strategy they’re supposed to be a part of?
- Take a look at the theory "The tactics of everyday life" on page 268. How is De Certeau’s conception of the relationship between strategy and tactics different from the one outlined on page 112? Which conception do you find most applicable to the social change efforts you’ve studied and/or been involved in?
Principles

Hard-won insights that can guide or inform creative action design.

After decades of trial and error, veteran creative activists tend to acquire a set of mental shortcuts that guide their work. Whether they’re conscious of them or not, they bring these “operating principles” to bear on each new action or campaign. When assembling the book, we invited a range of veteran and cutting-edge creative activists to tease out the principles that have guided their work so others could learn from their successes and failures.

Questions for Discussion

• Which principles from Beautiful Trouble resonate most for you? Which principles are central to the causes you’re involved in? What principles would need to be present for you to even consider getting involved? Are there any principles on which you’re willing to bend, and why?

• Can you identify any principles that contradict each other? If so, how do they represent differing views of how social change works? Why might the book have included incompatible principles?

• Bring to class an article about a recent creative action or artistic intervention that inspires you. Can you identify a principle or two that informs the action? (i.e., Is it apparent how the organizers used their “cultural terrain” to their advantage? (p.142) Or maintained nonviolent discipline? (p.148) Or used the power of ritual? (p.198). If the principle you identify is not already listed in the book, try filling in the blank principle template on page 204, and adding your new principle to the Beautiful Trouble toolbox.
**Theories**

*Big-picture concepts and ideas that help us understand how the world works and how we might go about changing it.*

Every time we act in the world, we have a theory concerning how and why our action might make an impact. Sometimes our theories are relatively simple and intuitive, and sometimes they are elaborate and even counter-intuitive. Beautiful Trouble’s theory entries summarize key concepts — big ideas that offer insights on how to understand the world and the forces at play in our efforts to change it.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- Developing a theory requires distilling observed patterns into abstracted concepts. These concepts can provide a lens to look at potential actions — and weigh their chances of success. It is therefore useful to see how theories work in relation to the other elements in the book: tactics, principles, case studies, and even other theories. As a group, discuss how certain theories are at play in a given case study.
- Much like a pair of glasses, not all theoretical lenses work well together. (Some combinations may even give you a headache!) Identify two theory entries that you feel contradict each other. Why don’t they fit together? Is this tension a strength of the book or a weakness, in your opinion?
- Identify an historic movement for change that suffered a strategic failure or serious misstep. Was there a key theory that they got wrong or didn’t pay enough attention to? Can you find it in the book? If not, consider adding it to the Beautiful Trouble toolbox by filling out the blank Theory template on page 274 and emailing it to team@beautifultrouble.org.
- Do you think current efforts to change the world suffer from an overabundance of theory? Or too little theorizing?
Case Studies

Capsule stories of successful campaigns and actions that neatly illustrate how the key principles, tactics, and theories of creative activism are applied in practice.

Troublemakers do not act in settings of our own choosing; nor are we in control of all the factors that determine our success or failure. y looking at actual ‘case studies’ — and examining the unique mix of tactics, principles, and theoretical concepts deployed in particular situations and campaigns — we can better understand the complexities and strategic dilemmas that troublemakers face. The case studies in Beautiful Trouble are where all the other sections of the book come together to get road-tested.

Questions for Discussion

• Read through the case studies and pick one or two that you find particularly compelling. What led you to choose the ones you did? What did you learn from them, and how might you apply what you learned?
• Go around the room and have everyone briefly explain why they picked the case studies they did. Was there a lot of overlap, in either the specific cases chosen, or the reasons for choosing them?
• What kinds of questions might activists want to ask themselves when considering whether or not to ‘import’ a tactic from another case study into their own social change effort?
• The case studies in Beautiful Trouble vary in scope, historical setting, ambition, and many other qualities. Compare, for example, Gandhi’s Salt March to The Teddy-bear Catapult. What commonalities/differences do you notice? If you had to group all the case studies in the book into, say, 5 categories, what would those categories be? And why? Now, group all the cases studies under those categories. Compare the categories you came up with to those another person in the class came up with. How were they different/similar?
Beautiful Trouble can be read front-to-back like any other book, or like a ‘Choose Your Own Adventure’ book: by starting somewhere at random, then following connecting threads via the “related modules” listed in the sidebar. (You can also explore these connections visually at explore.beautifultrouble.org, thanks to the tech wizardry of Dr. Marian Dörk.) Reading the book in this non-linear way can lead you to surprising connections and insights.

Here are a few suggestions of possible paths you might take through the book, based on specific themes and threads:
Art & Activism

Making change requires a lot more than figuring out the right policy goal and then rationally explaining why people should support it. Activists must be able to engage people’s imaginations, activate deep-seated values, and uncover the human face of political issues. When it comes to the emotional and cultural side of social change, the arts offer potent resources.

Toni Cade Bambara once asserted, “The role of the revolutionary artist is to make revolution irresistible.” Artists — both professional and amateur — can breathe life into a campaign, deploying a wide range of innovative and media-grabbing cultural tactics to popularize and re-frame social justice issues. Moreover, practicing art together can be a powerful way of building community, developing shared identity, discussing tough issues, and just having fun. No social movement has succeeds for long without the arts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What are some of the most powerful works of art (image, song, novel, theatrical performance, etc.) that you have seen used by social movements? What made the art powerful in service of the cause?
• How about works of art you felt were ineffective, or even counter-productive, for a movement?
• Have YOUR ideas or outlook ever been changed by a work of art? How? Why?
• In what ways are art and activism complementary, and in what ways might they diverge or even conflict with each other in terms of goals and approaches?
• What do you imagine (or what, in your experience) are the biggest problems that crop up when artists and activists work together

RELEVANT MODULES

TACTIC: Artistic vigil (p. 10)
TACTIC: Detournement/Culture jamming (p. 28)
TACTIC: Image theater (p. 62)
TACTIC: Flash mob (p. 46)
TACTIC: Light brigade (website)
PRINCIPLE: Balance art and message (p. 100)
PRINCIPLE: Don’t just brainstorm, artstorm (p. 128)
PRINCIPLE: Know your cultural terrain (p. 142)
PRINCIPLE: Put movies in the hands of movements (p. 164)
PRINCIPLE: Show don’t tell (p. 174)
PRINCIPLE: This ain’t the Sistine Chapel (p. 188)
PRINCIPLE: Use the power of ritual (p. 198)
PRINCIPLE: Use your cultural assets (website)
THEORY: Action logic (p. 208)
THEORY: Alienation effect (p. 210)
THEORY: Cultural hegemony (p. 222)
THEORY: Ethical spectacle (p. 230)
THEORY: Society of the Spectacle (p. 266)
THEORY: Theater of the Oppressed (p. 272)
CASE: Colbert roasts Bush (p. 308)
CASE: Idle No More and the Round Dance Flash Mobs (website)
CASE: Lysistrata Project (p. 330)
CASE: Mining the museum (p. 334)
CASE: Pimp my carroca (website)
CASE: The couple in the cage (p. 312)
CASE: Virtual Streetcorners (p. 388)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“A User’s Guide to Demanding the Impossible” | Artists Against Cuts. 2010
“Culture Before Politics” | Jeff Chang & Brian Komar, American Prospect. 2010
“Change the Culture, Change the World” | Faviana Rodriguez, Creative Time Reports. 2013
Challenging Power

It isn’t enough to have truth and justice on your side. In order to win real progress, you need to figure out how to effectively challenge powerful people and institutions. Activists tend to start out as underdogs — out-resourced and ‘out-gunned’ by powerful opponents. As such, our task is rarely to overpower our opponents, but to use our creativity and courage to win over allies and to thereby leverage more power than we ourselves possess.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Where does power come from? Where is it located? (Does a person “have” power?)
- List some examples of social movements with relatively little power that successfully challenged powerful people or institutions. How did they do it?
- What are some of the difficulties and constraints that activists face in their attempts to challenge power?
- In the Beautiful Trouble principle “Choose tactics that support your strategy,” contributor Janice Fine suggests that we should always ask the question, “What is the power behind the tactic?” What does she mean by this? Can you identify the power behind three tactics used in Beautiful Trouble?

**RELEVANT MODULES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TACTIC:</th>
<th>Direct Action (p. 32)</th>
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<tr>
<td>PRINCIPLE:</td>
<td><strong>Choose tactics that support your strategy</strong> (p. 112)</td>
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<td>PRINCIPLE:</td>
<td>Choose your target wisely (p. 114)</td>
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<td>PRINCIPLE:</td>
<td>Put your target into a decision dilemma (p. 166)</td>
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<td>PRINCIPLE:</td>
<td>Shift the spectrum of allies (p. 172)</td>
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<td>PRINCIPLE:</td>
<td>The real action is your target’s reaction (website only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>THEORY:</td>
<td>Action Logic (p. 208)</td>
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<td>THEORY:</td>
<td>Cultural Hegemony (p. 222)</td>
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<td>THEORY:</td>
<td>Expressive and Instrumental actions (p. 232)</td>
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<td>THEORY:</td>
<td>Narrative Power Analysis (p. 244)</td>
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<td>THEORY:</td>
<td>Pillars of Support (p. 248)</td>
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<td>THEORY:</td>
<td>Points of Intervention (p. 250)</td>
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<td>CASE:</td>
<td>Justice for Janitors (p. 326)</td>
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<td>CASE:</td>
<td>Taco Bell Boycott (p. 372)</td>
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<td>CASE:</td>
<td>The Salt March (p. 354)</td>
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<td>CASE:</td>
<td>Wisconsin Capitol Occupation (p. 396)</td>
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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- 11 Rules for Radicals A quick summary | Saul Alinsky
- A Quick Guide to Power Analysis | Oxfam
- Gramsci and Hegemony | Powercube.net
- The Left Can Win | Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias on radical politics and what it takes to build mass movements. Jacobin. 2014
In order to change the way things are, we must first be able to imagine something different, to see the possibility of transformation. Prefigurative actions help to spark this kind of imagination. In a prefigurative action, instead of just trying to stop something we don’t want, we seek to build and live out alternative solutions in the here and now. Such an approach can inspire greater engagement and stretch people’s imaginations. Though they are sometimes dismissed as utopian, prefigurative actions, at their best, are not an escape from, but a battle for, reality; for example: turning a sit-in calling for affordable childcare into a temporary daycare center (see CASE: Daycare center sit-in, p. 316), or a park in New York’s financial district into not just a protest against runaway capitalism but a space for radical democracy (Occupy Wall Street).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What are some examples of prefigurative actions (either historical or contemporary) that have shaped your politics and what you imagine to be possible?
- How might prefigurative action distract from or weaken a social change effort?
  - Can it become too “utopian”?
- What kinds of people or groups might be more likely to engage in prefigurative politics?
  - Artists?
  - Religious leaders?
  - Politicians?
  - The desperately poor?
  - Why or why not?

**RELEVANT MODULES**

- **TACTIC:** Electoral guerrilla theater (p. 40)
- **TACTIC:** Identity correction (p. 60)
- **TACTIC:** Prefigurative intervention (p. 82)
- **THEORY:** The commons (p. 220)
- **THEORY:** Expressive and instrumental actions (p. 232)
- **THEORY:** Temporary Autonomous Zone (p. 270)
- **CASE:** Daycare center sit-in (p. 316)
- **CASE:** The salt march (p. 354)
- **CASE:** Reclaim the Streets (p. 350)
- **CASE:** Small gifts (p. 360)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

  - Addendum: “more notes on ‘prefigurative politics’.” devoketheapocalypse.org, 2014
- “Should we fight the system or be the change?” | Mark Engler & Paul Engler. Waging Nonviolence, 2014
- Beautiful Solutions: A Toolbox for the Future | ThisChangesEverything.org
Communications & performing for the public

It's not just what you say, it's also how you say it. If troublemakers want their efforts to succeed, they have to learn to communicate effectively with all sorts of audiences: from the general public, to their own social base, to allied organizations, to their political targets. Communication is embedded in everything changemakers do: the messages on our banners, the backdrops at our events, the spokespeople we choose, and even the clothing we wear (see PRINCIPLE: Don’t dress like a protester, p. 126). Effective communication is an art and a science, and above all, it is a theatrical performance aimed at capturing attention and creating new meanings — in order to mobilize action and sympathy and make the powerful pay attention.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some effective communications strategies (and tactics) you’ve seen different social movements and campaigns using? Why do you think they were effective?
- Have you ever seen activists whose cause you agreed with communicating in ways that you felt were ineffective? If so, what specifically were they doing that you thought was ineffective and how could they have improved their messages and presentation?
- To whom should activists aim their communication strategies? Must activists’ messages appeal to everyone? Why or why not?
- Some say that ‘the messenger matters just as much as the message.’ Can you think of an action when the choice of messenger significantly impacted the effectiveness of the action?
- Abbie Hoffman, the prankster-ish 60’s radical, once said, “All protest is theater, so you’d better make it good theater.” What did he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree?

RELEVANT MODULES

TACTIC: Advanced leafleting (p. 8)
TACTIC: Creative disruption (p. 18)
TACTIC: Flash mob (p. 46)
TACTIC: Media-jacking (p. 72)
PRINCIPLE: Consider your audience (p. 118)
PRINCIPLE: Do the media's work for them (p. 124)
PRINCIPLE: Don’t dress like a protester (p. 126)
PRINCIPLE: Lead with sympathetic characters (p. 146)
PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible (p. 152)
PRINCIPLE: Make your actions both concrete and communicative (p. 154)
PRINCIPLE: Play to the audience that isn’t there (p. 160)
PRINCIPLE: Shift the spectrum of allies (p. 172)
PRINCIPLE: Show don’t tell (p. 174)
PRINCIPLE: Stay on message (p. 178)
PRINCIPLE: Think narratively (p. 186)
THEORY: Action logic (p. 208)
THEORY: Ethical spectacle (p. 230)
THEORY: Hamoq and hamas (p. 236)
THEORY: The propaganda model (p. 256)
CASE: Barbie Liberation Organization (p. 282)
CASE: Billionaires for Bush (p. 296)
CASE: Mining the Museum (p. 334)
Stories, framing, and social change

Human beings make sense of the world by crafting stories about it. These stories “frame” the world in different ways, by focusing on some details and leaving others out. Many of the most commonly-told stories legitimize the status quo, including colonialism and racism (think of the classic “First Thanksgiving” story told in the U.S.). But the right story can also disrupt the legitimacy of elites, elevate the claims of social movements, and challenge the idea that the way things are is inevitable.

Stories are everywhere. Commercials tell us stories about the life we could live if we bought their products, while social movement slogans like “We are the 99%” communicate an alternative narrative about how unequal the world has become. Many organizers and advocates find that having people tell personal stories about oppression or struggle can be much more powerful than reporting statistics. From Ronald Reagan’s stories of “welfare cheats” to the the affirmation that #BlackLivesMatter, stories and frames can powerfully undergird everything from blame and acquiescence to solidarity and mobilization.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**
- George Lakoff says, “There is a basic truth about framing. If you accept the other guy’s frame, you lose.” What does he mean by this?
- Think about a cause or campaign that you have been a part of (or that you sympathize with). Who are the ‘protagonists’ and ‘antagonists’ in the story of the campaign? How do the causes opponents tell a different story with different protagonists and antagonists?
- What kinds of ‘dominant narratives’ do challengers need to overcome in order to mobilize people or gain the public’s sympathy?

**RELEVANT MODULES**
- TACTIC: Media-jacking (p.72)
- PRINCIPLE: Brand or be Branded (p. 104)
- PRINCIPLE: Reframe (p. 168)
- PRINCIPLE: Think narratively (p. 186)
- PRINCIPLE: Turn the tables (p. 190)
- THEORY: Homes (p. 242)
- THEORY: Floating signifier (p. 234)
- THEORY: Narrative Power Analysis (p. 244)
- CASE: Harry Potter Alliance (p. 322)
- CASE: Whose Tea Party? (p. 392)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
- “Telling Your Story” | 350.org & Marshall Ganz
- Harnessing the Power of Narrative for Social Change | Center for Story-based Strategy
- Changing the Story: Story-based Strategies for Direct Action Design | Doyle Canning & Patrick Reinsborough
Pranktivism and humor

From the anti-corporate pranks of the Yes Men to Dave Chappelle’s send-ups of racism to Stephen Colbert’s mock SuperPAC, pranks and humor are popular tools for social change. Humor has a famed ability to leaven the facts ("If you’re going to tell people the truth, you’d better make them laugh or they’ll kill you."—Oscar Wilde); it has tactical advantages ("Ridicule is man’s [sic] most potent weapon. It’s hard to counterattack ridicule, and it infuriates the opposition, which then reacts to your advantage.”—Saul Alinsky.); it is a force to be reckoned with and an art/science that deserves to be better understood.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What kinds of political statements does humor allow you to make, that with a straight approach you couldn’t get away with or land effectively?
• “Pranks are symbolic warfare,” said irreverent 60’s icon and founder of the Yippies, Abbie Hoffman. What does he mean by this? Choose a prank from Beautiful Trouble and look at it through this lens. What symbols are involved and how is their meaning being fought over? And why do you think a prank-ish approach was chosen?
• The best humor often plays a dangerous, double-edged game with hot-button topics. Consider this monologue on “open racism” by Dave Chappelle. The mixed black and white audience at the show clearly finds it hilarious, but in sending-up our racial prejudices is Chapelle merely reinforcing them? Could that be why Chappelle abruptly left the business at the height of his career, as this article suggests?
• Can you think of an example when an attempt to use humor to make a point has backfired? And are there social issues that are not appropriate to use humor to address?

RELEVANT MODULES

TACTIC: Detournement/Culture jamming (p. 28)
TACTIC: Electoral guerrilla theater (p. 40)
TACTIC: Hoax (p. 54)
TACTIC: Identity correction (p. 60)
PRINCIPLE: Anyone can act (p. 98)
PRINCIPLE: Everyone has balls/ovaries of steel (p. 136)
PRINCIPLE: The real action is your target’s reaction (website only)
PRINCIPLE: Turn the tables (p. 190)
PRINCIPLE: Use the Jedi mind trick (p. 194)
PRINCIPLE: Use the law, don’t be afraid of it (p. 196)
THEORY: Ethical spectacle (p. 230)
CASE: Barbie Liberation Organization (p. 282)
CASE: Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (p. 304)
CASE: Colbert roasts Bush (p. 308)
CASE: Dow Chemical apologizes for Bhopal (p. 318)
CASE: Santa Claus Army (p. 358)
CASE: Yomango (p. 400)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Funny Joke Politics: How & How Not to Use Humor in Communications | Peter Koechley
The Truthiness Hurts | Michael Sherer, Salon, 2006
PRANKS! | A. Juno & V. Vale, RE/Search, 1987
When racism is no longer funny | Eugene Robinson, SFGate.com, 2005
Open Racism | Dave Chappelle, YouTube, 2012
ETERNAL DEBATES AND CONTROVERSIES

In political life, some debates, after much struggle, finally get settled: is slavery an absolute moral evil? Yes. Should only people with penises get to vote? No. Other debates — for example, ‘Do the ends justify the means?’ or ‘Do you try to change the system from the inside or the outside?’ — remain eternal. These debates are less right vs. wrong than they are a recognition that the truth usually lies somewhere in between, in an artful synthesis that takes into account the specifics of the given context. These debates express two sides of an important, often dialectical question, two poles of a ‘design tension’ that must be constantly considered, navigated, and wrestled with.

These debates are woven throughout Beautiful Trouble. Sometimes, modules take up opposite poles of a debate. For example, one may argue that small groups shouldn’t get bogged down in process, or try to be exemplars of an ideal democracy (see PRINCIPLE: “Don’t mistake your group for society,” p. 130) while another emphasizes the importance of “creating a culture where we’re all invited to step up” in precisely those same situations (see PRINCIPLE: “We are all leaders”, p. 202). Below is a guide to exploring some of the more common recurring debates in contemporary grassroots creative activism using the book and the suggested additional readings. For each debate, we have included ideas about how to expand learning in classrooms through discussion questions, additional resources, and “Go Beyond the Page” exercises. More information on facilitating these exercises can be found in the “Go Beyond the Page” section of this guide.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- For any one of these DEBATES, do you find yourself coming down strongly on one side or the other? Or torn between both poles? Or can you appreciate both perspectives? Why?
- Identify one or two of these DEBATES that are currently causing the most polarization in your group or in your community. Is the controversy dysfunctional? Or is it useful for coming to some kind of greater understanding?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Controversies in Nonviolent Action | Lynne Shivers
- Five reasons to go to jail like you mean it | Nadine Bloch. Waging Nonviolence. November 10, 2012

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**

The “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide contains hands-on interactive exercises that are particularly useful for illuminating all of these eternal debates, including:

- Stage a debate in pairs as part of a hassle line. or in front of the whole class in a fishbowl. To up the ante, have people represent the opposite of their own viewpoint.
- Spectrogram
- Ambivalence chart
Everyone is an artist -vs- Auteurs make things rock

The most important thing in a creative political project is everyone finding their own voice.

The most important thing in a creative political project is the quality of the finished product.

Anyone can and should take part in artistic protest. Rag-tag aesthetics reflect the do-it-yourself nature of underdog social movements, showing our grassroots cred. Inclusive arts projects are empowering to participants, who don't have to be the next Rembrandt in order to meaningfully participate. The process of making art together builds community. Elitism in our movements kills spontaneity and creativity.

What's important about the artistry of activism is not the feelings of the participants but the beauty and efficacy of the final product. Slapdash signs, makeshift props, and cacophonous songs make a poor impression on the public. That kind of DIY culture relegates us to the fringes. True artistry lends our message more legitimacy and power, and is more meaningful for participants, who are inspired by being part of an elegantly designed and executed action. Experienced artists should be leading such efforts because they have skills that not all of us have.
Everyone is an artist -vs- Auteurs make things rock (cont'd)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- “Everyone is an artist” is one argument you often hear for maximizing participation in a creative political project. Do you think this is true? What do you think people who advance this argument might be reacting to?
- What can an experienced artist do that an inclusive group of creators cannot? What can an inclusive group do that an experienced artist on their own cannot?
- Are inclusiveness and quality, or process and product, always at loggerheads with one another? Can you think of a creative political project (either that you were involved in or that you came across in Beautiful Trouble) where this was not true — where the two were mutually supporting, or a good balance was struck?

**RELEVANT MODULES**

- **TACTIC:** Artistic vigil (p. 10)
- **TACTIC:** Cacerolazo (website)
- **TACTIC:** Flash mob (p. 46)
- **TACTIC:** Forum theater (p. 48)
- **TACTIC:** Human banner (p. 56)
- **TACTIC:** Image theater (p. 62)
- **TACTIC:** Light Brigade (website)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Balance art and message (p. 100)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Don’t dress like a protestor (p. 126)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Brand or be branded (p. 104)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Don’t just brainstorm, artstorm (p. 128)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Jury-rig solutions (website)
- **PRINCIPLE:** No one wants to watch a drum circle (p. 156)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Put movies in the hands of movements (p. 164)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Show don’t tell (p. 174)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Simple rules can have grand results (p. 176)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Stay on message (p. 178)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Team up with experts (p. 184)
- **PRINCIPLE:** This ain’t the Sistine Chapel (p. 188)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Use the power of ritual (p. 198)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Use your cultural assets (website)
- **THEORY:** Alienation effect (p. 210)
- **THEORY:** Cultural Hegemony (p. 222)
- **THEORY:** Expressive and Instrumental actions (p. 232)
- **THEORY:** Intellectuals and power (p. 240)
- **THEORY:** Pedagogy of the Oppressed (p. 246)
- **THEORY:** Society of the Spectacle (p. 266)
- **THEORY:** The tactics of everyday life (p. 268)
- **THEORY:** Theater of the Oppressed (p. 272)
- **CASE:** Billionaires for Bush (p. 296)
- **CASE:** Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (p. 304)
- **CASE:** Idle No More and the Round Dance Flash Mobs (website)
- **CASE:** Lysistrata Project (p. 330)
- **CASE:** Pimp my carroca (website)
- **CASE:** Reclaim the Streets (p. 350)
- **CASE:** Virtual Streetcorners (p. 388)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Grassroots organizational branding | Jonathan Matthew Smucker. Beyond the Choir, February 1, 2011

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**

- Direct students to create either a group drawing or group song explaining or illustrating their position.
- Using group sculpture, have small teams present their experience with either position in this debate.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
Our tactics and process should embody our values and goals.

If we want to bring about a more just and peaceful world, we have to model peace and justice in our activism. How can we say we want social justice if we're using manipulative (or even violent) means to advance our goals? “The master’s tools,” Audre Lorde admonishes, “will never dismantle the master’s house.”

Overcoming conditions of oppression, exploitation, and ecological crisis requires acting in ways that are not always consistent with our values.

According to Saul Alinsky, “The man [sic] of action views the issue of means and ends in pragmatic and strategic terms... He asks of ends only whether they are achievable and worth the cost; of means, only whether they will work.” And so should we. If a controversial tactic or tool has the potential to end a grave injustice, we can’t afford not to use it just to assuage our tender consciences.

We declare our right on this earth to be a man, to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society, on this earth, in this day, which we intend to bring into existence by any means necessary.

- Malcolm X
ETERNAL DEBATES & CONTROVERSIES

Be the change you want to see -vs- By any means necessary (cont’d)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- It is often said that “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
- A character in novelist David Mitchell’s Cloud Atlas says, “Lying’s wrong, but when the world spins backwards, a small wrong may be a big right.” Do you agree? Can you think of cases where this is true for social change efforts?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Nonviolence as Compliance | Ta-Nehisi Coates
Of Means and Ends | Saul Alinsky, Chapter 2 of Rules for Radicals
Politics as a Vocation | Max Weber, in From Max Weber
Letter from a Birmingham Jail | Martin Luther King Jr.
By Any Means Necessary | Malcolm X, speech at the Organization of Afro-American Unity Founding Rally, 1964

RELEVANT MODULES

TACTIC: Direct action (p. 32)
TACTIC: Prefigurative intervention (p. 82)
TACTIC: Strategic nonviolence (p. 88)
PRINCIPLE: Challenge patriarchy as you organize (p. 108)
PRINCIPLE: Consensus is a means not an end (p. 116)
PRINCIPLE: Don’t mistake your group for society (p. 130)
PRINCIPLE: Maintain nonviolent discipline (p. 148)
PRINCIPLE: Take leadership from the most impacted (p. 180)
PRINCIPLE: We are all leaders (p. 202)
THEORY: Anti-oppression (p. 212)
THEORY: Environmental justice (p. 228)
THEORY: Hanon and hamos (p. 236)
THEORY: Intellectuals and power (p. 240)
THEORY: Pedagogy of the Oppressed (p. 246)
THEORY: Revolutionary nonviolence (p. 260)
CASE: Bidder 70 (p. 290)
CASE: Brazil’s Free Fare Movement (website only)
CASE: Santa Claus Army (p. 358)
CASE: Yomango (p. 400)

GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”

- Throw a snowball fight! Have learners write a statement from their personal perspective defending “Be the change” or “By any means necessary” on a piece of paper, then crumble their papers up and throw them at one another. Have participants read the papers aloud after the fight, and if the class is ok with this, try to guess who wrote which statement.
- Run a spectrogram, where you ask learners to go to one end of a designated line on the ground if they believe “The means must be consistent with the ends” and go to the other side if they think “The ends justify the means.” After folks distribute themselves along that line, add a cross axis and have learners move in a perpendicular direction depending on whether or not they think “The means must be consistent with the ends” is effective in their work; or if “The ends justify the means” is effective. The four quadrants would then be: 1) Means-consistent/Effective; 2) Means-consistent/Ineffective; 3) Ends-justify/Effective; and 4) Ends-justify/Ineffective. Interview participants, asking for specific examples that led them to their particular spot in the grid.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
The spontaneous expression of ordinary people should guide the movement.

The problem with the world is that there’s too much talk and not enough action. Academics and ‘armchair revolutionaries’ have a critique of every which thing, without bothering to lift a finger to add capacity to any action that might challenge the status quo. Revolutionary action happens when ordinary people decide they have had enough and they take the streets together to disrupt the gears of the machine. Our job is to take bold action. When we do — when the time is ripe — our actions can provide the spark that ignites a revolution that will spread like wildfire.

Revolutionary theory and strategic planning should guide the movement.

What’s wrong with the world is not only, in the words of Peter Maurin, that “those who think don’t act” but also that “those who act don’t think.” Revolutions and dramatic collective interventions don’t really happen spontaneously; they are the ‘harvest’ moments of years of diligent organizing work. We have a responsibility to study our particular contexts — as well as history and other contemporary struggles — in order to inform our actions with strategic assessments.
**ETERNAL DEBATES & CONTROVERSIES**

**Just do it! -vs- More theory needed (cont’d)**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Can you think of examples of mass spontaneous uprisings? What sparked them? What impact did they have?
- Can you think of examples where planning and strategic calculation played an important role in the progression of a social movement?
- Can spontaneous uprisings be sustained without strategic planning and long-term organization building? Why or why not?
- Do some actions appear to be more spontaneous than they actually are? Do strategic organizers ever work behind the scenes, or intentionally obscure the role they play? If so, why might this be?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- *Networks of Outrage and Hope* | Manuel Castells, 2012

**RELEVANT MODULES**

- TACTIC: [Cacerolazo](#) (website only)
- TACTIC: [Distributed action](#) (p. 26)
- TACTIC: [Mass street action](#) (p. 68)
- TACTIC: [Strategic Nonviolence](#) (p. 88)
- PRINCIPLE: [Anger works best when you have the moral high ground](#) (p. 96)
- PRINCIPLE: [Beware the tyranny of structurelessness](#) (p. 102)
- PRINCIPLE: [Choose tactics that support your strategy](#) (p. 112)
- PRINCIPLE: [Escalate strategically](#) (p. 134)
- PRINCIPLE: [Face yourself](#) (p. 158)
- PRINCIPLE: [Shift the spectrum of allies](#) (p. 172)
- PRINCIPLE: [Simple rules can have grand results](#) (p. 176)
- THEORY: [Cultural hegemony](#) (p. 222)
- THEORY: [Dunbar’s number](#) (website only)
- THEORY: [Intellectuals and power](#) (p. 240)
- THEORY: [Pillars of support](#) (p. 248)
- CASE: [Battle in Seattle](#) (p. 286)
- CASE: [Justice for Janitors](#) (p. 326)
- CASE: [Lysistrata Project](#) (p. 330)
- CASE: [The salt march](#) (p. 354)
- CASE: [Wisconsin Capitol Occupation](#) (p. 396)

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**

- In small groups or as a whole class, fill out an Ambivalence (Pro/Con) Chart for each position, with the columns labeled (+) and (-) or Pro/Con. Compare and contrast the two charts.
- Set up a Hassle Line, with the whole class lined up as if to contradance.
  - Scenario: We are all at an activist meeting. Perhaps it is your action team, or affinity group, or a group just coming together to figure out how to deal with a local proposed development to build a chain store shopping mall in an environmentally sensitive area. One line will take the “Just do it, we need action now” position, the other line will take the “More theory, more research needed” position. Debrief superficially, switch roles, and then do a full debrief.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
The Internet can effectively replace traditional on-the-ground organizing. Social media has changed activism forever. Young people can post a call-to-action on Facebook or Twitter and watch it ‘go viral’—mobilizing tens of thousands to take to the streets, occupy public squares, and even overthrow dictators. The horizontal structure of social media obliterates the need for leaders and hierarchical organizations, while also significantly reducing the costs of mobilization. And activists can now communicate directly with their audiences, bypassing the mainstream corporate media.

Face-to-face relationships are the basis of all organized collective action.

It is delusional to think that social media can replace the need for tried-and-true, face-to-face organizing methods. Take for example the Egyptian uprising in Tahrir Square: it ousted Mubarak, but because organizers had an insufficient ‘ground game’ (i.e., organization and leadership), the military was able to outmaneuver the progressive movement and seize control. Moreover, the Internet’s open structure is not actually horizontal: power concentrates online as much as it does anywhere else. And activists often only talk to themselves online—stuck in self-referential ‘filter bubbles.’
Clicktivism can save the world - vs- The revolution will not be tweeted (cont’d)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- In what ways have the Internet and social media aided social movements? What are some cases where technologies like Twitter or text loops have been useful?
- Are there downsides to social movements using these technologies? If so, what?
- The mainstream media has given a lot of attention to the role of social media in contemporary uprisings and revolutions — have they over-emphasized its role? Are news outlets missing something with phrases like “Twitter revolution”?
- Are there tasks or operations in social movements that cannot be replaced by new online technologies? If so, what?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

*After the Protests* | Zeynep Tufecki

*The Filter Bubble* | Eli Pariser

*What Facebook Is Hiding From You* | Jonathan Matthew Smucker

*Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics* | Jodi Dean

*The MoveOn Effect* | David Karpf

*Bringing the Organization Back In* | Jen Schradie

*Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted* | Malcolm Gladwell

*What Gladwell Missed About Online Organizing and Creating Big Change* | Ben Brandzel, The Nation

*Beyond Clicktivism: Why Political Change Requires Risk* | The Yes Men


*Half-empty or half-full? Online gateways to real-world action* | Nadine Bloch, Waging Nonviolence, November 21, 2012

**RELEVANT MODULES**

TACTIC: *Creative Petition Delivery* (p. 22)

TACTIC: *Debt Strike* (p. 24)

TACTIC: *Distributed Action* (p. 26)

TACTIC: *Mass Street Action* (p. 68)

PRINCIPLE: *Play to the audience that isn’t there* (160)

PRINCIPLE: *Simple rules can have grand results* (p. 176)

THEORY: *Hashtag politics* (p. 238)

THEORY: *Homes* (p. 242)

THEORY: *Points of intervention* (p. 250)

THEORY: *Society of the Spectacle* (p. 266)

CASE: *Harry Potter Alliance* (p. 322)

CASE: *Taco Bell boycott* (p. 372)

CASE: *Virtual Streetcorners* (p. 388)

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**

- In small groups or as a whole class, fill out an Ambivalence (Pro/Con) Chart for each position, “New Clicktivism” and “Old organizing,” with the columns labeled (+) and (-) or Pro/Con. Compare and contrast the two charts.
- Set up a whole group Role Play, or if the group is more than twenty people, do a Fishbowl of about a third of the students, with others observing.
  - Scenario: In a strategy session that is taking place with your group, there are two camps: the die-hard, knocking-on-doors-is-the-only-real-organizing old-timer crew and the mostly younger tech-can-save-us-if-we-only-let-it crowd. Assign roles. Let them plan their proposals for a minute, then act it out.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
In a democracy, the only path to real change is through the system. To change the world, we need to work through existing systems and institutions. Saul Alinsky was totally right when he said, "It is necessary to begin where the world is if we are going to change it to what we think it should be. That means working in the system." In a democracy, no one will take us seriously if we go around talking about "overthrowing" stuff, nor should they. Our electoral system and other public institutions, however corrupt, still offer the best pathway for average citizens to have their voices heard, and to win the changes they want.

The system is rigged and real change can only come from the outside. No matter who we vote for, the government wins. Status quo institutions have failed us, and the Democratic Party has been the graveyard of every progressive movement. And now, with the accelerating role of campaign cash in our electoral system, and corporate influence in everything from congressional lobbying to news media to sports sponsorship, our system is irredeemably corrupt and inaccessible to the average citizen. Only an autonomous people’s movement that bypasses corrupt institutions and stays directly accountable to the people can hope to make real and lasting change.
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Can you think of examples of radical changes that came as the result of elections and/or legislation? How was working through the system important in these cases?
- Can you think of examples of changes that came from ‘outsider’ movements? How was working outside the system important in these cases?
- Can you think of situations where ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ strategies were at odds with each other? Other situations where they were complementary?
- Some protest movements in the USA show their disgust at the lies and crimes of the American government by burning the American flag. Do you think this is a revolutionary act? An effective protest technique? Who is it supposed to reach? Consult the Beautiful Trouble principle Recapture the flag (on website only) for one opinion on these questions.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy | Robert Michels, 1915
- Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail | Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, 1979

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**

- In pairs, run a **diad listening exercise**. Invite one person in each pair to speak their feelings about working inside of, or outside of, the system. Ask them to address a time they saw change from one or both perspectives. After 2 minutes, the partner has 90 seconds to reflect back what they heard. Switch roles, and repeat. Come back together as a big group for a debrief. Ask: How did it feel about to be listened to uninterrupted? Was it difficult to reflect back what you heard, or not interrupt? Then, offer time for some folks to share what content they heard, noticing similarities, differences, and learnings about challenges and opportunities of working inside/outside systems.

- Run a **spectrogram**, where you ask learners to go to one end of the room if they believe we must “Work within the system to make real change” and go to the other side if they think we must “Work outside the system to make real change.” After folks are distributed on that line, add a cross axis, and have learners move perpendicularly to one side or another depending on whether they think their answer to the first question is Effective or Ineffective. The four quadrants would then be: 1) “Within the System / Effective;” 2) “Within the System / Ineffective;” 3) “Outside the System / Effective;” and 4) Outside the System / Ineffective.” Interview participants, asking for specific examples that led them to their particular spot in the grid.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
How can we possibly fix the world if we can’t fix ourselves?

We can’t make a liberated society out of broken people. The most effective way to work for a better world is to work on our own patterns of greed, hatred and confusion — and then be a model to others. We must heal from the trauma of oppression and systemic violence. As Kim Christoffel wrote, “taking care of ourselves in the emotional & physical sense is a revolutionary act.” If we don’t do this, with whatever power we attain, we will simply revisit those same patterns on others. Change starts with oneself or not at all.

A corrupt society produces corrupt people; we must fix the world first.

Lots of assholes and hypocrites have done wonders for the world. Personal change does not equal political change. No matter how many meditation retreats we go on (or how much we recycle), polluters will keep poisoning poor communities unless they are stopped by concerted political action. As individuals, we’re all in some ways flawed, but that’s no reason not to work together to change the world. Let’s start now, assholes!
**ETERNAL DEBATES & CONTROVERSIES**

**The problem is inside ourselves -vs- The problem is in the world around us (cont’d)**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- The phrase “the personal is political” is often used to promote lifestyle choices or healthy personal relationships as an important form of political action. Do you agree? What would it mean for you to live by the slogan, “the political is personal?”
- Antonio Machado said, “there is no road, the road is made by walking.” What light does this statement shed on this debate?
- Gail Straub writes, “the health of the human psyche and the health of the world are inextricably related, and we cannot truly heal one without healing the other.” If we accept this as true, then which should we spend more time on—personal or political wellness—and what would it look like to find more balance between the two?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- *The Personal is Political* | Carol Hanisch, 1970
- *Mindful Occupation: Rising Up without Burning Out* | Occupy Mental Health Project, 2012
- *The Icarus Project*

**RELEVANT MODULES**

- **TACTIC:** Prefigurative intervention (p. 82)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Challenge patriarchy as you organize (p. 108)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Don’t mistake your group for society (p. 130)
- **PRINCIPLE:** If protest is made illegal, make daily life a protest (p. 138)
- **PRINCIPLE:** Kill them with kindness (p. 140)
- **PRINCIPLE:** We are all leaders (p. 202)
- **THEORY:** Anti-oppression (p. 212)
- **THEORY:** Pedagogy of the Oppressed (p. 246)
- **THEORY:** Political identity paradoxa (p. 254)
- **THEORY:** The social cure (p. 264)
- **THEORY:** Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) (p. 270)
- **THEORY:** Theater of the Oppressed (p. 272)
- **CASE:** Conflict Kitchen (on website)
- **CASE:** The Couple in the Cage (p. 312)
- **CASE:** Modern-Day Slavery Museum (p. 338)
- **CASE:** Small gifts (p. 360)
- **CASE:** Trail of Dreams (p. 384)

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**

- **Write-around:** Ask each person to write a defense of their position. Offer the option to draw the response instead of writing a narrative.
- **Diad listening exercise:** Break up your group into pairs and invite one person in each pair to speak their mind about the importance of personal change vs. directly tackling external issues. Ask them to reference a moment they personally experienced the importance of one or the other. After two minutes, the partner has 90 seconds to reflect back what they heard. Switch roles, and repeat. Come back together as a big group for a debrief. Ask: How did it feel about to be listened to uninterrupted? Was it difficult to reflect back what you heard, or not interrupt? Then, offer time for some folks to share what content they heard, noticing what surfaced about the challenges and opportunities of doing personal work faced with immense global issues.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
Identity politics -vs- Class politics

Movements should be built around people’s most deeply felt group identity (cultural, ethnic, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, etc.)

Social change happens when groups of people organize against oppression, on the basis of shared identities, to end the injustices against them, not when we pretend to set those identities aside to fight for some presumed common interest that fails to resonate with our daily experience.

Effective movement building can only happen when people organize consciously around their own class identity and material self-interest.

It’s the class war, stupid! Oppression and inequality are fundamentally about maintaining differentials of wealth and power, with the 1% exerting power over, and fomenting divisions among, an oppressed majority. Unless we band together across differences of race, culture and gender identity, this wealthy minority will never subordinate its interests to the needs of the majority — even if it may be compelled to share power with elite segments of certain cultural groups.
Identity politics -vs- Class politics (cont’d)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**
- There sure are a lot of crusty white men with PhDs arguing that class is more important than race or gender! What’s up with that?
- Both Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X were assassinated after their politics turned more towards questions of class inequality spanning racial divides. What does this suggest about how the 1% perceives the threat from a powerful mass movement focused on class politics?
- Was the American civil rights movement of the 50’s and 60’s, to take one historical example, primarily organized around identity politics or class politics? If both, what were the arguments and who were the main spokespeople for which tendencies?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
- Where We Stand: Class Matters | bell hooks, Routledge, 2000
- Women, Race, & Class | Angela Davis, Vintage, 1983
- What is Socialist Feminism? | Barbara Ehrenreich, 1976
- Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity | Judith Butler, Routledge, 1990

**RELEVANT MODULES**
- TACTIC: Debt strike (p. 24)
- TACTIC: General strike (p. 50)
- PRINCIPLE: Challenge patriarchy as you organize (p. 108)
- THEORY: Anti-oppression (p. 212)
- THEORY: Capitalism (p. 216)
- THEORY: Debt revolt (p. 226)
- THEORY: Environmental justice (p. 228)
- THEORY: Narrative power analysis (p. 244)
- THEORY: Political identity paradox (p. 254)
- THEORY: The shock doctrine (p. 262)
- CASE: 99% bat signal (p. 278)
- CASE: Billionaires for Bush (p. 296)
- CASE: The Couple in the Cage (p. 312)
- CASE: Mining the Museum (p. 334)
- CASE: Modern-Day Slavery Museum (p. 338)
- CASE: Taco Bell boycott (p. 372)
- CASE: Trail of Dreams (p. 384)
- CASE: Wisconsin Capitol Occupation (p. 396)

**GO “BEYOND THE PAGE”**
- Writing exercise: Have students write a news headline or radio PSA for ten or more years in the future that reflects the role they think class or identity politics will play in social movements and creating change in that future. A prompt could be, “In 10 years, you open up your digital daily news journal, and see a headline that frames the impact class (or identity politics) is having on a current issue—electoral politics, housing, immigration, racial justice, etc. What is that headline? Or, ten years from now, what will be the opening story on your favorite daily broadcast that includes the impact of class or identity politics on a topical issue?”
- Mind Blazing Conversations: Set aside some open discussion time (30 min +). Have everyone write 1-3 burning questions for the group to address around identity and/or class politics. Great way to generate themes for future projects.

See the “Beyond the Page” section later in this guide for more details.
Beautiful Trouble wasn’t written to be the kind of book that a lecturer reads dryly at the front of the classroom to their yawning pupils. Grounded in the techniques of experiential and popular education, there are many creative and generative ways to engage minds, bodies, and spirits with the ideas in Beautiful Trouble. These techniques encourage deeper engagement with the concepts and often more meaningful and empowering participation in the learning process. Participatory learning builds on and synthesizes knowledge and skills that already exist in the room — recognizing that every learner has something to teach and every teacher has something to learn — while accommodating a variety of learning and communication styles.

The table below contains 10 tools or exercises that are highly adaptable, effective at catalyzing student engagement, and work well with BT content. Used alongside a traditional lecture format or in an experiential flow, these tools can help generate common experiences to harvest learnings from. The tools are ordered by “activity level” from low risk/low energy activities to high risk/high energy activities.
### BEYOND THE PAGE: HOW TO USE THIS BOOK MORE CREATIVELY

#### BEYOND THE PAGE EXERCISES

*see following pages for details on how to facilitate each tool.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 TOOLS AND EXERCISES</th>
<th>WHAT’S IT’S GOOD FOR / LEARNING EXPECTATIONS</th>
<th>TIME &amp; MATERIALS</th>
<th>ACTIVITY LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing or drawing — Solo</td>
<td>Focusing; working through emotions; quieting the group; writing skills; increasing self knowledge; working with introverts; defusing or processing intense situations; accessing somatic, kinesthetic, visual knowledge</td>
<td>2+ minutes; requires paper/writing implements</td>
<td>very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing or drawing — Group</td>
<td>Focusing; building teams; building consensus; building community identity; writing skills; improving collaborative process; carrying out research; working with introverts; defusing or processing intense situations; drawing skills; accessing somatic, kinesthetic, visual knowledge</td>
<td>5+ minutes depending on sharing; requires paper/writing implements</td>
<td>low +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diads or small group listening</td>
<td>Focusing; building empathy; working with introverts and unknown participants; calming the group; increasing self knowledge; defusing or processing intense situations, accessing emotional knowledge</td>
<td>3-15 minutes</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured brainstorms: Pro/Con chart; mind mapping, &amp; mind blazing conversations</td>
<td>Critical thinking; peer learning; building teams/groups; comparing and contrasting possibilities; analytical skills</td>
<td>5+ minutes; requires paper/writing implements; timekeeping</td>
<td>low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song/chant (rewrite lyrics or just chorus to existing tune) — Group</td>
<td>Building teams; building consensus; leveraging shared culture (holiday or pop songs); engaging meter and music; problem solving; having fun</td>
<td>5+ minutes, more to perform and/or teach rest of group</td>
<td>low to moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Paper) snowball fight</td>
<td>Energizing; engaging text; learning from peers; defusing or processing intense situations; having fun</td>
<td>2+ minutes prep, 5-10 minutes depending on question/size of group; requires paper/writing</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectrograms (2D and 4D)</td>
<td>Critical thinking; pluralistic thinking; peer/collaborative learning; team/group building; comparing and contrasting possibilities; accessing somatic, kinesthetic, visual knowledge</td>
<td>10+ minutes per comparison</td>
<td>moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassle lines</td>
<td>Peer/collaborative learning; energizing; experiential learning; critical thinking; public speaking; rehearsing or practicing skills; self knowledge; problem solving; accessing somatic, kinesthetic, visual and emotional knowledge</td>
<td>10+ minutes - 30+ minutes depending on size of group and debrief</td>
<td>moderate - high but less risky than individual performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculpture — group or solo</td>
<td>Kinesthetic and visual learning; experiential learning; peer/collaborative learning; team/group building; creative exploration; accessing somatic and emotional knowledge</td>
<td>10+ minutes - more if including presentation/sharing and debrief</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play (improv) or skits (scripted) — group or fishbowl style</td>
<td>Experiential learning; peer/collaborative learning; public speaking; improvisation; performance; logical thinking; rehearsing or practicing skills; critical thinking; Problem solving; accessing somatic, kinesthetic, visual and emotional knowledge</td>
<td>15 minutes - 1 hour</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW TO FACILITATE BEYOND THE PAGE EXERCISES

1 & 2 WRITING OR DRAWING — INDIVIDUAL/GROUP
Use the ideas below to prompt writing or drawing.
- Develop a **Backronym**: a backronym is a specially constructed acronym created to fit existing word(s). Instruct the writers to attempt to make the backronym fit the topic area. For example: ACT UP which stands for **direct action** group AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power.
- Complete a phrase à la ‘mad libs.’
- Pen a poem/haiku/spoken word piece
- Write a headline, news story, radio PSA for some time in the future (great for visioning and goal setting support)
- Write a chant
- Answer prompt questions
- Hand out paper and colored pens or markers and invite people to sketch an answer or report back rather than use text.

3. **DIADS OR SMALL GROUP LISTENING** (MORE INFO)
- Provide prompts (either elicitive questions or incomplete sentences to fill in) and have participants do reciprocal speaking/listening/reflecting with their partners or group members. In a diad, consider having a prompt question that one person answers for 2 minutes uninterrupted; the listener then reflects back what they heard in 90 seconds. Switch roles and repeat. Debrief by addressing both content that may have surfaced, emotions that came up, and assess the process (how did it feel to be listened to uninterrupted? etc.

4. **STRUCTURED BRAINSTORMS**
- **Pro/con (ambivalence) chart** — Set up a two-sided list, and have a scribe write in front of the entire group to encourage participants to follow along as you harvest ideas. The sides could be Pro/Con, or Plus/Delta (Change); etc. For more info, see these training tools from the Christian Peacemaker Teams.
- ‘**Mind mapping**’ — Create a visual map of ideas. Start with relevant keywords/phrases written on the board, and record new ideas spreading out from those keywords in an interconnected web.
- **Mind blazing conversations** — Give everyone a small number of slips of paper (2-4) with instructions to write their most pressing questions about the topic at hand. Collect all papers and place them in a container; have the facilitator pull out one question at a time, with a goal of getting through as many questions as possible. Anyone can respond within a certain short time period, say 2 minutes. (Thanks to the Highlander Institute for this version.)

5. **SONG/CHANT — GROUP**
- Pick a well known melody and then rewrite the lyrics — consider just rewriting the chorus for a quicker hit.
- Take an existing chant and change the words; or come up with a simple rhythm (have someone clap it out) and set words to that.

6. **(PAPER) SNOWBALL FIGHT**
This fun game of throwing balls of paper at each other can add kinetic activity to your class, while the anonymity of responses offers opportunities to learn things about participants previously unspoken because of stigma or fear.
- Provide prompts (either elicitive questions or incomplete sentences to fill in) and direct each person to write their answers on a piece of paper. When all responses are in, ask everyone to crumple up the paper into a ‘snowball’, and have a short ‘snowball’ fight with them. Call time, and have each person read whichever paper ball they are holding (or standing near) out loud.
- **Variation:** Candy bag — instead of throwing the papers at each other, place them in a hat or bag and then have people draw out one paper from the bag and read it aloud to the group.
- **Optional** (if used for a non-sensitive topic) — Finish up by guessing/identifying who wrote which piece.
7. SPECTROGRAMS, AKA SOCIOTRAMS (VARIATIONS: LINE AND QUADRANTS)
This exercise blends light kinesthetic movement with introspection and listening, helping a group explore similarities and differences of opinion visually.

- **Line version:** First, explain that participants will put their bodies on a line that will represent a continuum from one answer or opinion to another. This line can be delineated virtually or marked on the ground with tape or by some existing physical feature. Ask your group a question, or make a statement, and then explain what the ends of the continuum stand for and ask people to move to a spot along the line where they feel they fit in relation to the 2 ends. For example—the two ends could be described as: Nonviolence is a tactic vs Nonviolence is a way of life. Or, Property Destruction can be part of a Nonviolent Action vs Property Destruction has no place in a nonviolent campaign.

- **Quadrant version:** The ‘line’ approach above can be expanded with an additional axis running perpendicular to the first one through the center. After participants have lined up on the first axis, set up a second statement or question, eg: Nonviolence is effective, Nonviolence is ineffective. This will result in 4 quadrants with the extremes being: Nonviolence is a tactic and ineffective; Nonviolence is a tactic and effective; Nonviolence is a way of life/effective; Nonviolence is a way of life/ineffective.

- **Invite remarks from several participants in diverse locations to talk, as specifically as possible, about why they chose to stand where they are. (Try doing this in the character of a confrontational news reporter or interviewer!) Allow folks to move in order to reflect changes in their relative understanding as others speak. Debrief as needed with questions that help to address your objectives for this exercise (you do have them, right?).

- **Another closing variation:** Have people find someone in a quadrant different than they are in and have a 1:1 dialogue. This can also be done in groups.

Two good explanations of how to do spectrograms are written up by Knowledge Sharing Toolkit and Training for Change.

8. HASSLE LINES
Hassle lines are essentially mini-role plays done in lines with participants facing each other, or in concentric circles facing each other. This exercise will get everyone physically active and up on their feet, and create a common experience in the room that can be a reference point for later workshop discussions.

- Have participants arrange themselves into two parallel lines facing each other. Everyone should have a person standing directly across from them. Have everyone shake hands with the person across from them to make sure that everyone knows who their partner is. (If it’s an odd number, one of the facilitators can join the shorter line, or have the odd person out take observation notes.)

- Give a scenario for the role play once people are in their 2 lines. Assign roles, one to each line of people. Instruct folks to interact only with the person they shook hands with; ignore others around them.

- Encourage people to be theatrical, and get into their roles “The more you put into it, the more you get out of it.” (Just like life!) Give them 10 seconds to get into their character.

- Say GO, and run the role play for 90-120 seconds. Call out FREEZE or clap to stop the activity.

- Shake it out, open up the circle, and debrief. Some prompt questions: How did it feel to….? Were you successful at…. (de-escalating, escalating, achieving your goal, etc?) What specific tools did you use? What did your partner try, and did it work? What do you think they should have done?

- Before the debrief loses energy, set up another Hassle line, with new roles for each line, giving each line time to be the assertive or aggressive role.

- Things to notice while the role play is happening, and then to highlight during the debrief:
  - **PHYSICAL:** body posture/stance, what hands, eyes are doing, rate and type of movement
  - **VERBAL:** level of sound, noise; speed; content of conversation
  - **EMOTIONAL:** relationship built? listening used? commonalities or differences focus?

For more info on hassle lines, see: the 99 Spring curriculum (pages 38-41) and Beautiful Trouble’s Training Library. As well as a blog post on Waging Nonviolence by Nadine Bloch: 10 Reasons to Love Hassle Lines.
9. SCULPTURE — GROUP OR SOLO
This kind of movement exercise comes out of the Theater of the Oppressed repertoire of Image Theater games. It allows people to move out of their heads and analytical thinking into a more holistic experience and analysis, and tap knowledge embodied in themselves. It also expands modes of communication, surpassing language barriers both written and verbal while building creativity.

- In small groups (3-8 people), ask participants to create a sculpture or a tableau (a non-moving, non-speaking image) answering a particular question or direction. Direct folks to do this in silence.
- Instruct the groups to do this as follows: Ask one person to assume the ‘sculptor’ role; they can then put people in the position of the image they have in their head, placing themselves into the image as the last step so everyone knows it is complete. Sculpting can be done in two ways (both silently!) 1. Physically position folks *but verbally ask for permission to touch your fellow group mates before you start! or 2. Silently have them mimic a stance or position you take on.
- These tableaus might be recreations of actual events, or they may be more esoteric, generalized representations of a feeling of an event.
- Allow enough time for each person who would like to be a sculptor to set up a tableau with their group.
- Option: Have each group pick one tableau to share with the other groups.
- Invite the remaining folks to come see this beautiful sculpture in the “Museum of ....(whatever the subject of the prompt was)” Encourage people to walk around the sculpture.
- As they view the sculpture, ask them to call out what they see: What adjectives would you use to describe this? What do you think is happening?
- Then invite the sculptor to explain what was the impetus for this sculpture.
- Debrief: Any learnings from participating? From working silently? Why did we do this in this way? Any commonalities? AHA moments?

Examples of directions or questions to sculpt:
- What is power? Sculpt an example of power.
- Show a time in your life that was instrumental to who you are now; that had great impact on your life’s direction.
- Think of a time you witnessed oppression of some kind. Sculpt that moment.
- Think of a creative nonviolent protest that you thought was extraordinarily powerful. Sculpt that protest.

10. ROLE PLAYS — WHOLE GROUP OR FISHBOWL
A whole group scripted or improvisational role play offers experiential learning to everyone involved. It supports people in accessing somatic knowledge, to move out of their heads into a more holistic experience and analysis. Moreover, it offers a rare opportunity to walk in another’s shoes, and participate from a perspective outside of one’s usual position.

Role plays and skits can involve everyone at once or be performed by smaller groups for larger audiences, in front of a group or in a ‘fishbowl’ - aka, in the round. They can be done in a ‘stop action’ format, whereby the role play can be paused for debrief and then resumed, or run again with changed parameters to explore additional learnings.

- The key to effective role plays are specific and appropriate scenarios for the teaching goals or training objectives you have identified.
- Set the stage with physical information i.e. There is a four-lane road here; You are part of a large group of people who are marching; You have 10,000 signatures on a petition you want to deliver to the Mayor at City Hall; you are scientists on a public panel; etc
- Let participants have some time to get into ‘character’: if there are a group of police or a group of protestors, let them meet together to determine their hierarchical structure or their action plans, for example.
- If props are available and appropriate, provide them if possible. Even simple things like name tags or police badges can help set the stage.
- Have an obvious and agreed on start and finish signal; have a facilitator in charge of both.
- Use directions or prompt sheets to help folks get into character if needed; could also provide a script or have participants develop one before presenting.
- Allow 2-3x more time for debriefing than the length of the role play. Debrief the What and How, as well as Feelings and AHA! moments.
Professors across the world are using and adapting Beautiful Trouble in their classrooms. Many have shared with us the curriculums and classroom activities they've developed. See the classroom section of our website for a full inventory. We've assembled the greatest hits for this study guide. Here you go:
1. PROFESSOR ANDY BICHLBAUM’S “WRITE AND RESEARCH YOUR OWN BT CASE STUDY” EXERCISE, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

[From Professor Bichlbaum’s NYU Undergraduate course “Building An Activist Knowledgebase”; instructions below edited for length.]

All students will be required to tape and transcribe a video interview (up to 20 minutes in length, in person or via Skype; if those are impossible, phone is ok but must be recorded) of a practitioner of creative activism who has not yet been featured in Beautiful Trouble. After the interview, you’ll transcribe it. Then you’ll use the interview to craft a “case study” for inclusion in Beautiful Trouble, and will also devise a new “principle” (not yet included in that book) based on your subject’s experience. When writing the case study entry, consider not only the action itself, but its historical, political, and social contexts that led the practitioner to accomplish the action. Ultimate inclusion in Beautiful Trouble is not guaranteed, but we’ll workshop entries to give them the best shot they can have.

SUGGESTIONS/GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING FOR BEAUTIFUL TROUBLE

Before you actually interview your subject, you should already have a hypothesis about what you’re going to find, as if you were doing scientific research; the interview is the evidence that will support or disprove your hypothesis. In other words, the interview should enhance and enrich your entry, not determine it. So, to that end:

- Start by reading about your subject, including if possible some interviews; get familiar with what’s already been figured out by others. Your subject will love you for not asking the same old questions. (You should theoretically be able to write the entry without actually interviewing your subject.)
- Before the interview, make a list of some of the BT principles you think your subject’s experience might demonstrate. Also, think of a brand-new principle (not yet listed in BT) you think it might demonstrate.

Begin your interview by explaining the concept of the piece—that it’s about helping activists learn from your subject’s experiences in doing their own projects and actions. Explain that you’ll work with them to figure out the lessons learned, the “principles” behind their action(s).

If, towards the end of your interview, you’re still not sure whether the principles you’ve found make sense, collaborate with your subject in figuring it out. Maybe say things like: “Do you think what you did is an example of escalating strategically (p. 134)?” or “I think your story really demonstrates that you just can’t be too precious about the way you go about things (p. 188). Does that make sense?”

Note: you may find out, when you interview your subject, that everything you thought about them was wrong and that your entry has to be rethought from the ground up. That’s life.
2. PROFESSOR RENE KEEP’S THEORY EXPLORATION: 
THE SALT MARCH; DE ANZA COLLEGE

[From Professor Keep’s course “Arts, Ideas & Values”]

In preparation for a discussion of the salt march case study, you have been assigned to explore one of the following related theory topics:

1) Hamoq and hamas
2) Pillars of support
3) Points of intervention
4) Ethical spectacle

Read the assigned theory article in Beautiful Trouble, along with the salt march case study. Write a response that explores the assigned theory by:

a) explaining the theory in your own words.

b) relating it to the salt march. AND

c) relating it to your life.