

progressive thinkers. His advocacy of communal living, for instance, inspired 19th-century utopian socialists. And because women as well as men can become guardians, Plato is sometimes called the first feminist, although there are also many places where he speaks disparagingly about women.

—*Philip Gasper*

See also Democracy; Socrates; Utopian Communities

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PLAY, CREATIVITY, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

From the birth of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in 1987 through the rise of the global justice movement in 1994, the largest day of anti-war protest in world history on February 15, 2003, the Republican National Convention protests in August 2004, and the immigrants' rights rallies of spring 2006, the streets of cities around the world have been filled with a new theatrical model of protest. Elements of fun, creativity, carnival, pleasure, and play are cornerstones of this new approach toward protest and community building. In a nutshell, people are playing. Play is a term for drag, ACT UP zaps, the use of food and mariachi bands in the Latino community, dance dramaturgy, culture jamming, the carnival, and other forms of creative community-building activities. It is the exhilarating feeling of pleasure, the joy of building a more emancipatory, caring world.

While some social movements are concerned with specific ends, such as policy making and economic resource distribution, other projects are concerned with the day-to-day activities of clients and participants.

In the former, the ends are the emphasis of day-to-day life (liberal strategy). In the latter, some means and ends overlap, such that engagement with other people in creative and joyful ways is a desired end and it is also a means for drawing attention to a problem. There is a long history of community-organizing models that make use of playful, prefigurative approaches that seek to create an image of the world in which activists hope to live. Play has long sustained social movement activity.

Many elements of creative play have long been part of social movements. Civil rights activists sang and danced even when facing the likes of Bull Connor's attack dogs throughout the civil rights era. Queer youth formed a Rockette kick line and sang "We Are the Stonewall Girls" as they thwarted riot cops during the Stonewall Riots of June 1969. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, environmental activists met at weekend festivals called raves, where dance, performance, and gestures described as acts of beauty overlapped with activism and organizing. By the 1980s and 1990s, ACT UP had made sophisticated graphics, arts, and a defense of pleasure cornerstones of their struggle for life. Pleasure, camp, and fun became vital tools in a struggle against disaster.

By the 1990s, do-it-yourself (DIY) avant-garde agitational groups sought to break down the lines between art and life and introduce creativity, imagination, play, and pleasure into activism. With events such as Critical Mass, bicyclists created protests with amoebalike bike cavalcades. In New York City, community garden activists created their own "Central Park" within the rubble of neighborhood vacant lots, and DJs transformed street parties into political protests. As public spaces were transformed within this burlesque of do-it-yourself protest, creative play was recognized as an effective approach. What links these protest gestures is an appreciation for the transformative possibilities of creative play.

There are many forms of play. For anthropologist Johan Huizinga, play is anything but serious. It is a space for joy. For Richard Schechner, play involves doing something that is not exactly "real." It is looser. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists pages and pages of definitions and meanings for *play* as both a noun

and a verb. Play in social movements is part of a continuum of organizing strategies that can include presentation, dramatic acts, theater, tactical events with flair, guerilla plays with humor or outrageous acts, and even nonplayful confrontation.

Not all the meanings of the noun *play* and the verb *to play* overlap, though many do. The fact that a production is a play does not mean that it is presented in a light and playful spirit. The verb *to play* is the operative function for expressions related to games, such as ball or Russian roulette. The study of play in social movements incorporates both meanings of the noun *play* as a theatrical production, as well as the light, sometimes frivolous, sometimes subversive action of the verb *to play*.

Here, play is considered in the context of social movement activity encompassing a range of affects and outcomes, including joy, social eros, liberation, and policy change. For studies of play, a few core assumptions are useful. The first is that play is nearly impossible to completely define. Instead, it is useful to think of it as an irrepressible spirit, which encompasses theatrical presentation as a construction, motion, and ethos. But it is also paradoxical. Sometimes, play is a formal commercial or competitive activity one participates in or enjoys; examples include a tennis match at the U.S. Open or an off-Broadway show. In its less formal incarnations, play includes a pickup soccer game in the park or social gatherings. Play can be seen as part of a continuum from work to leisure and games, as Stanley Aronowitz, Herbert Marcuse, the situationists, and even Max Weber suggest. The paradoxical nature of play also extends into realms of human desire, imagination, and exploration. Many people have both orderly and playful sides, as Friedrich Nietzsche explores in his work on the conflict between the linear logic of Apollo and playful eros of Dionysus. Yet the approaches are intimately connected. In social movement activity, it is useful to consider play along a continuum from its meanings as a noun—a performance—to its meanings as verb—as forms of action.

While there are countless ways to conceptualize and define play, it is probably useful to begin with Huizinga, whose 1950 work *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* has inspired social

movement players for decades. His definition encompasses many of the threads established in this opening discussion. These include the conception of play as a free activity that is not serious but is absorbing.

In Roger Caillois's study *Man, Play, and Games*, Caillois built on Huizinga's work. While Caillois suggested that ludic activities were relegated to children's play, scholars of play in social movements view forms of subversive play as a vital dimension of the process of social change. Here, notions of playing by a different set of rules and shifting the parameters of the work and leisure activities from hyperregulation toward more liberatory functions present an entirely relevant context for the work of social movements.

Shifts in the way people play reflect clues about the process of social change. Caillois insisted that play and games offered innumerable clues into cultural life. In much the same way that researchers have mined the functions of religious, economic, familial, and political institutions, Caillois suggested researchers interrogate the play elements of culture. This work contends that the study of social and cultural play offers a number of essential insights into mechanisms of social change.

The place of play in social movements has only increased in the years from 1968 to the present. This period begins with President Richard Nixon's rise to power and his "southern strategy," which led to a renewed focus on crime control rather than social services. The mobilization leading up to Bill Clinton's election in 1992 was built around the goal of universal health care, and that was a key aim of the first years of the Clinton administration. By the end of 1994, the health-care initiative had died without much of a fight. The same pharmaceutical companies that ACT UP had fought for years worked with the American Medical Association, the insurance industry, and political conservatives to generate a climate of fear that helped sink the proposed health-care plan. Many commentators have located the failure of the Clinton plan within a broad cultural backlash, even anxiety, around elements of collectivity—anything that even resembles socialism—which can be traced back to the fevered years of the McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s. Shortly after the 1994 midterm election, universal health care was put on the

back burner of the national policy agenda. The year 1994 witnessed the passage of a federal crime bill, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. The same year, the state of California passed its three strikes law, setting in motion a nationwide reallocation of resources from social services and education to criminal justice and the prison industry.

With the election and reelection of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in New York City in 1993 and 1997, “broken windows” policing became a model emulated nationwide. This model of policing was designed to address the smallest urban problems—a mural on a wall, an infraction such as running a subway turnstile, a gathering of friends on a street corner—as criminal justice matters. With the passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, New York and cities around the country were given the resources to fight such minuscule crimes. The problem was that this form of crime control also took away a city’s edge, its color, and threatened the possibilities of public space as a site for pluralistic democratic engagement.

The justification behind the push for “broken windows” policing, of course, was that it helped cultivate a better business climate for urban growth. While entrepreneurs suggested that a pro-growth regime should not be augmented or inhibited, others countered that such a strategy actually organizes inequalities among jurisdictions and residents. Pro-growth opponents noted that the underside of quality-of-life campaigns was increased police brutality and social control. Recent histories of police violence in New York City dedicate considerable attention to Giuliani’s aggressive policing approach aimed at countless elements of urban life. The litany of complaints is not short, yet the former mayor’s pro-growth and social control model of urban governance has been emulated across the country. These get-tough policies have only continued with Mayor Bloomberg. In response, a new cohort of political actors has utilized countless forms of creative play to challenge these policies.

Throughout the 1990s, there remained significant opposition to supporters of the hypercontrol and redevelopment of urban space. A core theme of John Logan and Harvey Molotch’s study is the competing narratives

involved in the struggle over urban public space in New York City during the quality-of-life years. Despite its inherent contradictions and inequities, the city remains a space of countless possibilities. When Mayor Giuliani’s draconian approach toward broken windows and zero-tolerance policing resulted in 99 bullets in the body of an unarmed African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, the incident united New Yorkers in protest against his aggressive stance.

Countless actors have successfully thwarted elements of the pro-growth machine, even when they have been cloaked within the politics of fear. Despite increasing rents and social inequalities, community activists have created counternarratives to the quality-of-life campaign. They did so by advancing compelling and workable alternative strategies that preserved public spaces for services and community building. Political actors made use of a new series of innovative strategies, including creative protest and play. Faced with an environment of panic, many activists looked to the politics of play, creativity, and joy. Yet they built on the creative work of actors dating back decades.

A realization of the use of play as political prank began with the situationists and the Yippies in the 1960s (although they locate their project in the work of the dadaists). By the 1970s, an understanding of the political possibilities of play as a vehicle for pleasure and personal freedom became a cornerstone of movements for sexual freedom. At the same time, play functioned as way of understanding a struggle for leisure time as opposed to traditional work with the labor movement. With ACT UP, notions of play as both guerilla theater and as affect, camp, and pleasure became cornerstones of the group’s work. Many of these conceptions overlapped by the time the global justice “movement of movements” picked up steam in the 1990s. Here, play evolved into an understanding of a wide range of movement strategies—including social and cultural activity, creative and disruptive engagement, “hard” fun and game playing, carnival and community building, storytelling and struggles—as forms of democracy renewal. The new activism borrowed from countless previous movements and theoretical conceptions to come to these understandings.

Organizations that have made use of play include the Yuppies, the Young Lords, the Gay Liberation Front, and the still-functioning AIDS/harm reduction, DIY, public space, and global justice movements—all of which make use of innovative and creative approaches to social change practice. The Yuppies took a distinct approach to the use of pranks, theatrics, media, and pleasure as part of political engagement and direct action. Following the Yuppies, the gay liberation movement made the defense of pleasure a central part of their work. For gay liberationists, pleasure and play were intimately connected with their work throughout the 1970s.

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s and into the new millennium, ACT UP and its offshoots defended the right of political actors to engage in play when the AIDS crisis hit in the early 1980s. ACT UP's offshoots include those in the harm reduction movement, whose aim is to create more inclusive programs for substance users with HIV/AIDS. One of the primary advocates of this movement is Housing Works, a militant AIDS service organization, which has fought to create a bold, generative form of community building and activism within the trajectory of service provision. Their work includes struggles against social controls in public health, including surveillance of recipients of public services.

By the late 1990s another subset—pleasure activists, including members of SexPanic!, a New York direct action group that fought for the political defense of pleasure in New York City from 1995 to 1999—actively defended the right of citizens to play in the global city. SexPanic! led the struggle against Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's war on public sexual culture under the banner of his quality-of-life campaign. Their work included a struggle against closure of private spaces where communities of sexual outsiders converge, comparing Giuliani's efforts with those of anti-vice crusader Anthony Comstock. Other ACT UP spinoffs include the Church Ladies for Choice, which links AIDS activism to the reproductive rights movement, and the Lesbian Avengers. These struggles can be understood as part of a lineage of protest against prohibition dating back to the days of the temperance movement through the sex workers activism and

lesbian sexuality activism, which was a response to the sex wars of the 1980s and 1990s.

ACT UP's work dovetailed with a global justice movement struggling for public space in New York City and around the world. These actors are involved in activism against restrictions on and removal of open public spaces. Relevant case studies include struggles over community gardens in New York, as well as other spaces where people meet, such as the streets for bicyclists and cruising spots for gay men such as public parks and the Hudson River Piers. In addition, these public space groups have struggled against global trade agreements and organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund. Play and creativity were vital parts of the campaigns to shut down the WTO meetings in Seattle in 1999.

Finally, as the global justice movement became a global peace and justice movement, much of the flamboyance of the global justice years has overlapped with efforts to turn the tide against the war in Iraq. Groups such as the Absurd Response to an Absurd War and Code Pink have made use of play as a response to the politics of vengeance propelling the push to war.

—Benjamin Shepard

See also ACT UP; *Adbusters*; Billionaires for Bush; Bové, José; Bread and Puppet Theater; Code Pink; Critical Mass Bicycle Movement; Culture Jammers; Direct Action; Earth Day; Graffiti Art; Gregory, Dick; Guerrilla Girls; Guerrilla Television; Guerrilla Theater; Hill, Julia Butterfly; Hip-Hop; Outsider Art; Performance Art, Political; Political Humor; Political Satire; Radical Cheerleaders; Raging Grannies; Reverend Billy; Semiotic Warfare; Situationist International; Slam Poetry; Slow Food Movement; Theatre of the Oppressed; Virtual Sit-Ins; Yomango

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See CIVIL RIGHTS ACTS

POLICE BRUTALITY

Police brutality refers to excessive, unjustified, or undue use of force. Recent surveys indicate that most people agree with police officials that brutality is not a widespread problem but is instead limited to a few “bad apples.” Surveys of people who have experienced contact with the police tell a different story. The most prominent of these surveys is the 1999 Survey of Police-Public Contact, which consists of a random sample of 80,000 people. One fifth of respondents had contact with the police in 1999, half of which were for traffic violations. Most of the rest resulted from calls to the police. Of those respondents, 3% claimed that force was used and three fourths of them thought the force to be excessive. Ethnographic studies normally find even higher numbers. Part of the problem appears to be that police generally draw lines between brutality and acceptable behavior in very different ways from ordinary people.

Another part of the problem is the adoption of more aggressive policing in major urban areas under the rubrics of zero tolerance and quality of life. The

ideology that equates quality of life with public order supports numerous urban trends, including gentrification, the spread of clean industries, office buildings, and chain stores. It inheres in a compelling narrative on the causes of dramatic crime rate increases over the 1960s that, in this view, caused a mass exodus of business, middle-class populations, and white people. In this view, there was too much tolerance among politicians and the courts—which supposedly had the effect of handcuffing the police—resulting in small infractions and public disorder.

Quality-of-life policing appeared in various urban areas in the 1980s and was popularized in New York City a decade later, when newly elected Mayor Giuliani and Police Commissioner Bratton promised an aggressive policing policy that would result in lower crime rates and that would make the city a place where law-abiding citizens could live free of fear as well as unpleasant sights. Quality of life, as defined above, entails a new urban aesthetic, in which aesthetic infractions such as sleeping on sidewalks or in train stations seem to require police engagement, rather than social service intervention—or tolerance. The most vulnerable populations of society—derelicts, drug-addicts, the homeless and displaced—now became its new criminal class. The movement of such people from public space, without the creation of any alternative places for them to go, amounted to a policy of constant harassment. Crime rates did in fact recede in New York City over the last decade, year after year. The model, emulated in urban areas across the country, became less controversial as a reduction in crime rates materialized. At the same time, the scant data on complaints of police brutality indicated steady increases in urban America. In New York City, complaints rose 37% from 1993 to 1994, immediately after the introduction of the quality-of-life program, as noted in 1995 by Gary Pierre-Pierre, and continued to rise throughout the decade. Amnesty International cited New York as a place where police brutality was unchecked and even encouraged. Yet a majority of the population, not only New Yorkers, appeared willing to tolerate this problem for the sake of the apparent results—less crime and more order.