



Life Matters Journal

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When Nations Must Bow to Families: A Christian Calls for Rehumanization

David Franks says we must bear in mind the artificiality of the nation-state when thinking about borders because the free movement of people is a fundamental right.

Tyranny Made Vivid

The Enduring Power of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

John Whitehead reflects on the impact of George Orwell's seven-decades-old classic.

A Timeline of Modern and Contemporary Art Inspiring Rehumanizing Activism

Art and activism have always gone hand-in-hand; here, Christy Yao comments on the highlights of 20th- and 21st-century activist art and its ability to rehumanize.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

In the context of a civil and social movement, art matters because people listen to it.

When political cant, arguments, and apologetics hit hard heads grown harder heads in a violent world, art slides under the surface. This isn't something to take advantage of. Art touches minds and hearts first and foremost because it is trustworthy. As Kate DiCamillo says, "Come closer, dear listener, I am telling you a story." Art creates space; and communicates through relationship. It is inherently *rehumanizing*.

It must convince through showing. It must do, not talk. It cannot say one thing and do another. A story or a piece of fine art meets you, and invites you in...

...and the best art meets you on common ground, but leads you through that commonality to the foreign, and on that journey you discover other is not so very different than you.

When we look to end the violence of abortion; of war; of euthanasia and racism, we do well not to stop at *no* to the injustice. We do much better to show why we must say *yes* to the person harmed.

And a story will always give us the positive along with the negative, the reason why we have that negative: it is the positive practical fact of each human life, intrinsically beautiful. So *no* to abortion! *No* to war. *No* to trafficking, euthanasia, death sentences...because *once upon a time*, is a phrase that begets trust, because art says *yes* to the individual.

Stroll through the pages this issue around to visit *Nineteen Eighty-Four* through John Whitehead's reflection on its 70th anniversary, Christy Yao's timeline of art-fueling-action since Picasso's *Guernica* (and before), along with a prescient reflection from a place of faith and reason by Dr. David Franks on the men, women, and children seeking refuge at our border.

And I challenge you: Do you tell a story, do you create a relationship? Or are you stuck recycling stock arguments, and beating hard heads against hard heads, finding no common ground? Art can be the answer to violence when arguing creates more violence.

Yours for peace and every human life,

CJ Williams



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Life Matters Journal

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REHUMANIZEINTL.ORG

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer: The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the consistent life ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.



To Celebrate Independence Day

By CJ Williams

Hold in one's heart the humbling pain
and rain of hubris — acidic stain on spoken words and promises
abandoned by the will untamed to reality:

“we hold these truths to be self-evident.”

All men — clear as the window-pane —
hold in one's heart the glory and festivity
beside the grief and drain:
that we speak truth and beauty
and also look away.



Woken Into Action By Words: Books to Break Complacency

By Ryan Bagley

Words have immeasurable power. They have the power to soothe the soul or wake it into action. Likewise, a good book can do just the same. As a voracious reader, many books have impacted my life, whether allowing me to make sense of the storm around me or by awakening me from complacency and into interaction with the world. The three books that I am going to showcase here have so powerfully impacted me that they changed the framework of my life, inspiring me to move to an entirely new city, become an adult, and gain greater peace in respect to the darkness and uncertainty around me.

Before I start listing books however, I need to clarify something. While it may be comforting to read things that endorse one's personal worldview, if you want to move beyond complacency into action, you need to read books that challenge your worldview — books that make you uncomfortable. When our perspective is challenged, we're given a chance to consider things with greater circumspection and honesty; and this, in turn, serves to deepen our convictions and beliefs, if only we're brave enough to try. These three books pushed me off the cliff of comfort and into perplexity, but ultimately into the light of new understanding, new perspective, and a new way of acting in the world around me.

1. *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander

Let me start with a very important clarification: I am a white boy from suburban Ohio who grew up in an ultra conservative family. I was immersed in ritual, tradition, and a black-and-white understanding of the world. There was little to no diversity in the area I grew up in. My high school's student body was almost entirely white: there were only three people of color in my graduating class. Growing up in such an environment, racial stereotypes proliferated. I really had no understanding of how to interact with individuals who were of a different race or color than I. Moreover, I held some prejudiced, binary views — mainly because I never knew how to critique my own thoughts. For example, during a de-

bate in high school, I argued that all single mothers were in their position because of drugs and alcohol. I also believed that anyone living in poverty willingly chose it, and that ghettos and inner city environments were the manifestation of this choice.

Looking back at this now, I see how ludicrous these beliefs were. Fortunately my opinions began to evolve in college, thanks to certain professors who exposed me to a new way of looking at things. One such professor required his class to read *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. In her book, Alexander argues that while segregation under Jim Crow laws has long since been over, segregation and division in society is still present through systemic injustices like gentrification, racial profiling, police violence, and harsh drug laws which rule out individuals with felonies from ever getting ahead in the system, thus creating part of the cycle of poverty.

This was a radical new way of seeing the world. It mercifully infringed upon my ultra right-wing, black and white stance. Where I had believed that people were poor because of their own free will, I was now seeing that this issue was much more complex than I'd believed: that, while personal choice may be part of the dilemma, it isn't the whole picture. I found that I couldn't even argue with the book or my professor, because they both had their facts straight. There was nothing I could do but accept that this issue was more nuanced I'd made it out to be, and change my viewpoint. Ultimately, this change sparked growth. This was the start of my deconstruction.

2. *The Divine Magician* by Peter Rollins

During my college years I became much more accepting of the fact that much of life exists in shades of gray. I was excited to go out into the world and make a change, and was full of optimism (and idealism). It didn't take long before I encountered one of life's most basic lessons: namely, that you cannot change the world over night. I left college believing I would land a teaching job easily: I was turned down for job after job. This rocked me. I began to doubt many of the beliefs I held dear, especially those religious beliefs that I was raised with. During this time someone introduced me to a writer named Peter Rollins. Peter Rollins is a philosopher from Northern Ireland, and his philosophy and theology are deeply shaped by the Troubles, a period of great instability in Irish History when those who were Ulster Catholic were caught in a violent conflict with the IRA, the Irish Republican Army.

In his book *The Divine Magician*, Rollins embraces a theology of uncertainty. To Rollins, the beauty of religion & life is not in the promise of an afterlife, but in the promise of the here and now. Rollins appeals to the framework of a magician's magic trick to illustrate the sacred as it is imbued in reality. Every great magic trick has three parts: The Pledge, the Turn, and the Prestige. Essentially, a magician shows you something ordinary (the pledge), he turns it into something extraordinary (the turn), only for you to find out that in reality, it is only something incredibly ordinary once more (the Prestige). Look at it like this: a magician takes a quarter. He shows you the quarter and states he is going to make it disappear. This is his pledge. He then does some slight of hand and just like that, the quarter disappears. This is the turn. He then does another slight of hand, and we find out that the quarter did not disappear, but was behind your ear the entire time. This is the prestige.

From a spiritual perspective, Rollins talks about these three as-

pects of "magic" being present in all of reality. For example, in the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Christ took something rather commonplace — death. This death, Rollins argues, is manifested in our drive to possess: our drive to seek out those things which are going to fulfill us, i.e., our own personal utopias. Rollins says that we feel this death whenever we are confronted with the lack we feel in every moment of every day. By embracing the uncertainty of life and the knowledge that we cannot be fulfilled on this earth, we experience freedom — freedom from consumerism, freedom from systemic injustice, freedom from the anxiety that insatiability brings. This concept was instrumental at this point in my life when everything was uncertain and surrounded in darkness. Now, with this idea in mind, I could concentrate in the present moment. I could exist and embrace the depth of life and the lack I was feeling. In this way, I experienced the Prestige. I experienced the sacredness of the present moment, and this enriched my experience of relationship with others: I no longer needed to "know" in order to embrace.

3. *Irresistible Revolution* by Shane Claiborne

While Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* dismantled my societal myopia and Peter Rollins' *The Divine Magician* grounded me in the present, Shane Claiborne's *Irresistible Revolution* taught me how to live in a more radical manner. Claiborne himself realized that if he was going to truly love his neighbor, he had to live radically from day to day. This took Claiborne to many crazy places and into many unusual experiences, including living with the homeless in Philadelphia and sleeping on the streets with the destitute in Calcutta.

Perhaps one of the most profound parts of the book is Shane stating that when he was a conservative, he used to thank God that he was not a liberal. Then he became a liberal, and he would thank God he was not a conservative. As he grew, he realized how flawed and divisive this thinking was. Instead, he wanted to focus on unity and bringing groups of people with different viewpoints and backgrounds together. Claiborne has founded an intentional community in Philadelphia's poorest neighborhood, called "The Simple Way," which allows the impoverished of Philadelphia to come in under his roof and simply be.

Claiborne's radical love showed me that if I am to believe in a reality in which human lives are valuable, I need to believe in the concrete goodness of my neighbor. Moreover, I must take steps to get myself in a position of radical love: this kind of transformation doesn't occur passively. Since reading this book, I have followed that call to live and teach in the Cleveland area, and am daily looking for ways to increase my ability to have a voice, such as writing and entering casual conversations with people.

I don't believe that there are truly evil people; I believe there are hurt people. I believe we are wounded healers, and I believe that if we are to follow the radical call to love, we are called to enter other people's hurt. When we do that, we are called to simply be — to show empathy. It isn't a matter of fixing anyone: it's a matter of simply being with them.



Tyranny Made Vivid: The Enduring Power of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

By John Whitehead

A famous artistic denunciation of tyranny, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell, is now almost 70 years old.

Completed by Orwell in late 1948 and published the following June, the influence of Orwell's novel over the following decades has been tremendous. Probably far more people are familiar with the fictional dramatically repressive, one-party state of Oceania than with the actual history of Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s — the closest real-life parallel to *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* dystopian society. The novel has been widely imitated, perhaps most memorably in a famous Apple computer ad, and certain phrases from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, such as “the Thought Police” and “Big Brother is Watching You,” have entered common usage. Moreover, warnings and accusations that contemporary politicians are turning society into a real-world version of Orwell's dystopia are almost as common as similar invocations of Hitler or Nazi Germany.

The seven-decade-long influence of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* demonstrates art's power to impress real-life injustices and horrors on people's minds. How does the novel accomplish this, though? What did Orwell do that was so effective?

Identifying *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* strengths paradoxically requires first looking at one of the novel's most notable weaknesses. What is striking about Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is how, for a nightmare vision of the future, the society lacks many of the worst features of real 20th-century repressive states. Oceania's regime is

repressive — people are frequently arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and killed for real and imagined offenses against the state — yet large-scale, genocidal killing such as that perpetrated by Nazi Germany does not occur. While everyone outside the ruling elite lives in material poverty, Oceania does not have massive famines that kill millions, which makes it unlike both Stalin's Soviet Union and (years after *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* publication) Mao Zedong's China. Oceania wages constant war against the world's other two superpowers, Eurasia and Eastasia, yet the war consists of relatively low-level, conventional warfare. Nuclear weapons are not used anymore. Moreover, because the three superpowers have a tacit understanding that the war should last forever (so as to justify repressing their populations), there is no danger that Oceania will ultimately be defeated and conquered. National disaster through wartime defeat, which Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan suffered and the Soviet Union almost suffered, does not threaten the citizens of Oceania.

Viewed in this way, Orwell's dystopia seems comparatively moderate. This illustrates *Nineteen Eighty-Four's* biggest flaw, at least as a political statement: to make his fictional tyranny seem as omnipotent and unassailable as possible, Orwell attributes far greater stability to the regime and far greater competence and foresight to its rulers than occurs in real life. This should undermine the novel's power, as it makes the fictional world less realistic and less horrifying than it could be.

I say, “should undermine the novel’s power”; yet, somehow, it doesn’t. Despite its flaws, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* still disturbs and haunts many of us, as its continuing influence shows. The reason is that Orwell depicts features of tyranny that while objectively less severe than mass murder, famine, or devastating war, are subjectively more moving. For those who have never experienced the worst features of tyranny — as most of Orwell’s readers in 1940s Great Britain presumably had not — descriptions of mass murder, starvation, and similar atrocities can be shocking but also very quickly numbing. A reader can sympathize with the victims of such injustices but may not be able to identify with them.

Instead, Orwell describes in great detail aspects of Oceania’s tyranny that readers can identify with and that can stir a deeper sense of revulsion and outrage than greater but more distant atrocities would. I can identify at least four of these:

Poverty. People might not starve by the millions in Oceania, but everyone lives a bleak, meager material existence. Much space in the novel is given to describing the uncomfortable, deprived life that Winston Smith and other characters live, with Orwell including telling details such as periodic power outages, the lack of razor blades, the cigarettes that fall apart if you hold them the wrong way, and the only alcohol available being foul-tasting gin. Winston prizes small possessions such as an old-fashioned notebook not merely because it allows him to keep a diary but because it looks and feels nicer than most of the material objects he encounters: “a thick, quarto-sized blank book with a red back and a marbled cover...Its smooth creamy paper, a little yellowed by age, was of a kind that had not been manufactured for at least forty years past.”²¹

This kind of detail is presumably the legacy of Orwell’s journalistic career living among and writing about the poor, whether in Paris, London, or the north of England, as well as his experiences of wartime and post-war austerity. This part of the dystopia would be something his fellow Britons could definitely identify with. Orwell captures what the novelist Anthony Burgess, in his commentary on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, aptly described as “the cheating of the senses with shoddy food, drink, and tobacco, the rough clothes, coarse soap, blunt razor blades, the feeling of being unkempt and unclean.”²²

Lies. Winston Smith works in the Ministry of Truth, which is the propaganda department of Oceania’s regime. He — and thus we the readers — has a first-hand view of how the regime lies about history and current events so they will fit the political need of the moment. At one point Winston is charged with rewriting an old news story that mentions a Party member who had subsequently been purged and executed. He accordingly writes an article about a speech by Big Brother praising a martyred war hero, one Comrade Ogilvy. As the novel tells us, “It was true that there was no such person as Comrade Ogilvy, but a few lines of print and a couple of faked photographs would soon bring him into existence.”²³ The grotesquerie of this deliberate, blatant lying is somehow more mem-

orable than the mere fact of the purged Party member’s murder.

Such lying parallels real-world government-sponsored fictions. Indeed, the aspect of the Ministry of Truth’s operations with perhaps the greatest relevance is its treatment of Oceania’s foreign relations. As the regime periodically changes its wartime allies and enemies, it switches the stream of hate and vilification from one foreign country to another, going so far as to rewrite history to make the enemy of the moment the enemy from time immemorial. Allowing for a certain exaggeration, I don’t think this aspect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* qualifies as “dystopia” or even “satire.” This is simply a description of how governments and foreign policy work.

Psychological humiliation. The scenes of interrogation and torture that occupy much of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*’s final quarter or so are probably the weakest part of the novel. As Orwell tries to make the tortures lurid and unexpected (as with the horrors of Room 101) and the torturers as villainous as possible (as with “The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake,” “If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face — forever,” and similar mustache-twirling lines), he ultimately undermines these scenes’ believability. Nevertheless, a potent idea — with, again, a real-life parallel — remains behind it all.

The Thought Police seek not merely to hurt or kill Winston Smith and their other victims, but to make them abase themselves by accepting their own guilt and the regime’s essential legitimacy — to love Big Brother, as the novel puts it. This allows the regime to kill dissenters without ever making them into martyrs. This scenario parallels the Stalinist show trials, in which leading Communists were forced to confess to various conspiracies and crimes. Such psychological abuse can be more moving than physical abuse, perhaps partly because the focus on the victims’ emotions encourages us to empathize with them, perhaps partly because

robbing someone of their self-respect is more painful to witness than physical harm.

Breaking the family. Oceania’s regime wants to eliminate love between individuals so that the only love is for Big Brother and the Party. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* focuses on the regime’s efforts to stamp out romantic love, with Winston’s relationship with his secret lover Julia being the book’s key act of rebellion. What receives less attention but is no less powerful is the tyranny’s attack on the relationships of parents and children. Winston’s parents are long gone, vanished in a purge, and he has only vague recollections of them. The only children of note in the book are those of Winston’s neighbors, the Parsons. These children are violent, hyper-aggressive devotees of the regime who threaten Winston with toy guns. Winston later reflects,

Nearly all children nowadays were horrible. What was worst of all was that by means of such organizations as the [regime youth group] the Spies they were systematically turned into ungovernable little savages....[T]hey adored the Party and everything connected with it. The songs, the pro-

[Winston Smith] — and thus we the readers — has a first-hand view of how the regime lies about history and current events so they will fit the political need of the moment.

cessions, the banners, the hiking, the drilling with dummy rifles, the yelling of slogans, the worship of Big Brother — it was all a sort of glorious game to them.⁴

Mrs. Parsons lives in fear of her children. The fear proves justified when, toward the book's end, the family's seven-year-old daughter informs on her father, leading to the father's arrest by the Thought Police. Even Winston's half-remembered relationship with his mother was marred by his bad behavior, brought on by poverty: he remembers constantly demanding more food and even stealing from the family stores, despite the deprivation this means for his mother and younger sister. His last contact with his family was stealing a piece of chocolate from his sister before running away from home; by the time he returns, his mother and sister are gone, apprehended by the police. As Julia comments, "All children are swine."⁵

This bleak portrait of family relationships fraying and even disappearing is another of the terrible yet understandable details by which Orwell makes his dystopia vivid.

Yet family life also provides one of the few elements of warmth and even nobility in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Depicting such elements of human decency, however rare they may be, is no less important to the success of a dystopia such as Orwell's than depicting the horrors of dystopian existence. To act as an effective warning against future tyranny, a dystopia must offer some positive aspect of life to hold on to and set against the tyranny's evils. To the extent Orwell provides a positive alternative to Oceania's poverty, lies, and repression, that alternative is not democratic socialism — Orwell's own political philosophy — or any other explicitly political ideology but a kind of domestic happiness set apart from politics.

Perhaps the most significant and touching moment in Winston and Julia's relationship is not their lovemaking or acts of overt resistance to the regime but when they briefly hold hands in a crowd and Winston feels "a deep tenderness, such as he had not felt for her before...He wished they were a married couple of ten year's standing. He wished he were walking through the streets with her just as they were doing now, but openly and without fear, talking of trivialities and buying odds and ends for the household."⁶

Such domestic life and devotion is exemplified by Winston's shadowy mother, who is perhaps the most admirable character in the book because of her love for her children, despite the hardships of poverty, war, and the regime's repression. She cares for them in the face of her impending arrest and Winston remembers her protective embrace. He reflects on his mother's values:

It would not have occurred to her that an action which is ineffectual thereby becomes meaningless. If you loved someone, you loved him, and when you had nothing else to give, you still gave him love...The terrible thing that the Party had done was to persuade you that mere impulses, mere feelings were of no account, while at the same time robbing you of all power over the material world. When once you were in the grip of the Party, what you felt or did not feel, what you did or refrained from doing, made literally no difference... And yet to the people of only two generations ago, this would not have seemed all-important, because they were not attempting to alter history. They were governed by private

loyalties, which they did not question. What mattered were individual relationships, and a completely helpless gesture, an embrace, a tear, a word spoken to a dying man, could have value in itself.⁷

These moments of human affection and loyalty, as displayed by Winston and Julia and by Winston's mother, provide a contrast to the demands of the tyrannical regime. They offer a glimpse of humanity in a book mostly taken up with depicting inhumanity and perhaps also offer a significant insight. What Orwell places in opposition to the tyranny of Oceania is not an alternative political vision that might in turn become tyrannical if ever put into power but the notion of ordinary people living ordinary private lives beyond the pervasive reach of the state. Along with Orwell's condemnation of tyrannical repression, this championing of ordinary, domestic life and happiness against an all-embracing state is well worth remembering.

Notes

¹ George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (New York: Penguin Books [Signet Classics Reprint], 1992), 9.

² Anthony Burgess, *1985* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1978), 18.

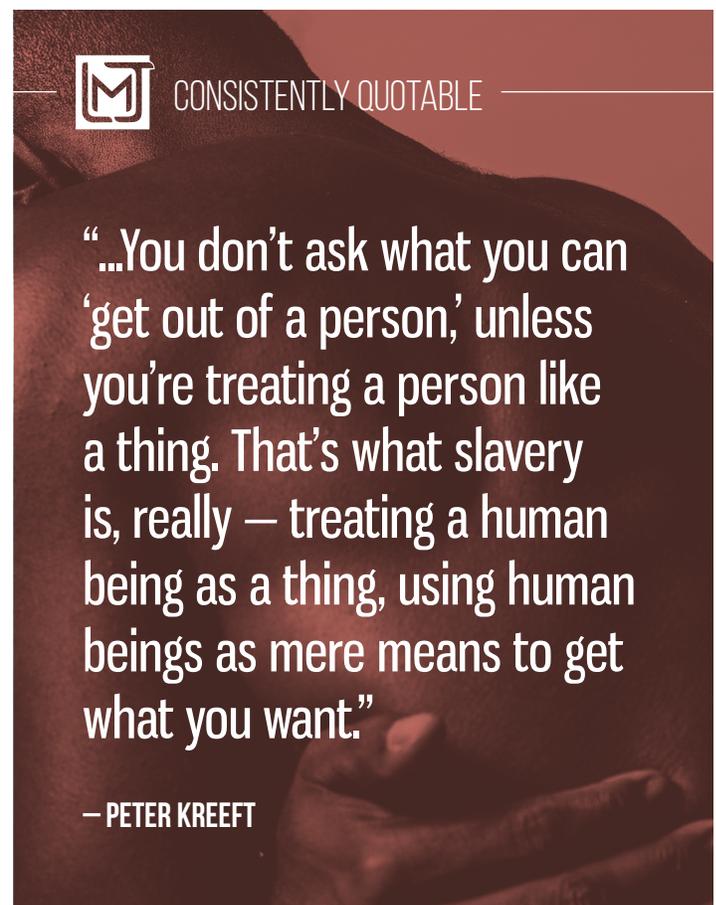
³ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.





When Nations Must Bow to Families: A Christian Calls for Rehumanization

By Dr. David Franks

This President may do profound good when it comes to the Supreme Court (let us hope!), but that does not negate the fact that his xenophobic rhetoric should make every American's blood run cold. Trump rhetorically normalizes the grossest Know-Nothing racism.

His latest offense was to opt for a policy change in immigration enforcement leading to the separation of hundreds of children from their parents — a truly wicked choice indeed by him and the attorney general. Even if one prefers a less generous immigration policy than I prefer, no lover of American liberty can think it acceptable for the coercive power of any government on earth to violate the integrity of any family on earth. Do we only care about government intrusion into the domestic sphere when white babies are involved?

Unjustified state violation of the integrity of the family transgresses one of the most basic principles of social ethics: subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity recognizes the fact that the social body is a complex and ordered whole of nested entities, each with its own formal integrity, each energized to make its own irreducible contribution to the common good. These entities include the person, the family, voluntary associations (such as charities and labor unions), churches, and, finally, the national society as a whole and its government. But the finality of the social whole is not, as Mussolini had it, “all within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.” No, rather, the state is supposed to be the instrument wielded by society to serve the free development of each person and the different groups within the society. And human persons do not drop out of the sky from the beaks of overburdened storks or emerge as fully functioning adults from the minds of bureaucrats. Human persons are spiritual animals, whose spirituality and animality must both be cared for and developed in homes. Government

should serve the family, not break up families to meet national or bureaucratic goals.

The nation-state, the supreme artifice of modernity, is a necessary thing, a good thing. It is also a dangerous thing, given the deep-rooted pull of nationalism (not to be conflated with patriotism) and the totalitarian tendencies of the bureaucratic administration of life. Without subsidiarity, the state (and the atomized populace of such a state), forget the most basic human decencies and the most basic hedges on popular or bureaucratic overreach.

These are perilous times for basic human rights, and a child's right to live and flourish requires remembering that the modern nation is no sacrosanct god and there are rights no power on earth may violate (the right to life, the right to freedom of conscience, etc.) So, we must also bear in mind the artificiality of the nation-state when thinking about borders, because the free movement of people is a fundamental right, absolutely pre-dating the emergence of the nation in modern times.

If we want to rehumanize the world, we must maintain the inviolability of subsidiarity, preeminently when it comes to the right of familial integrity over against state claims. Certainly, subsidiarity cannot be usurped by the state for something so low in importance (compared to, say, the right to life) as the maintenance of borders.

And this is the key question to answer: why is violation of immigration procedure not a serious crime?

The first precept of law (that good be done and pursued, and evil avoided) points towards a few other fundamental natural laws: towards preservation of one's life, towards reproduction of the species, towards life in society, towards the pursuit of truth and the worship of God. To live out these principles we have the secondary precepts of natural law to be found in the Ten Commandments, the violation of which usually constituting a serious crime.

The natural law that humans must live in society to achieve their full development *could* lead, much further downstream, to a need for maintaining national integrity, but a lot of work has to be done before you get there. Again, there is nothing natural, as such, about the nation-state. Although I think it necessary for a decent political life in the modern world, the nation-state is not written in the stars.

There is also the truth that national integrity does not mean one can simply seal one's borders. The right of free movement is a natural right, rooted in the most primal needs for safety from danger and the means to support oneself. You know these basic facts every time you take a step uncompelled. Here the truth that the earth is meant for all is also important.

So, given the artificial reality of nations, there is a need to regulate borders, but there is no absolute right of a people to seal off a realm. (The question of granting citizenship is a different matter.) Immigration regulations, therefore, cannot have any absolute force. They certainly cannot justify a foreign state coming in and breaking a family apart. They do not even come close to justifying it.

So, let's talk as Americans, in good faith, about what it will take, prudentially, practically, to care for the strangers who have made the perilous journey to this land, provisioned with nothing but a desperate hope that this, our shining city on a hill, will make a little place for them, as this great nation has done for every single one of us whose family origins lie in a foreign country. And for those of us who are Christians, let us remind ourselves that the demands of charity are limitless.



A Timeline of Modern and Contemporary Art Inspiring Rehumanizing Activism

By Christy Yao



1916

Dada Movement

Many artists reacted to the violence of World War I by rejecting conventional art and rational thought



1937

Guernica

Picasso creates *Guernica* in protest of the bombing of a Basque Spanish town of the same name



1942

WWII Art

This is Nazi Brutality by Steven Heller informs the world of Nazi brutality when many media outlets are silent



1960s

Craftism

Carrie Reichardt starts the “Craftism” movement, combining craft and activism

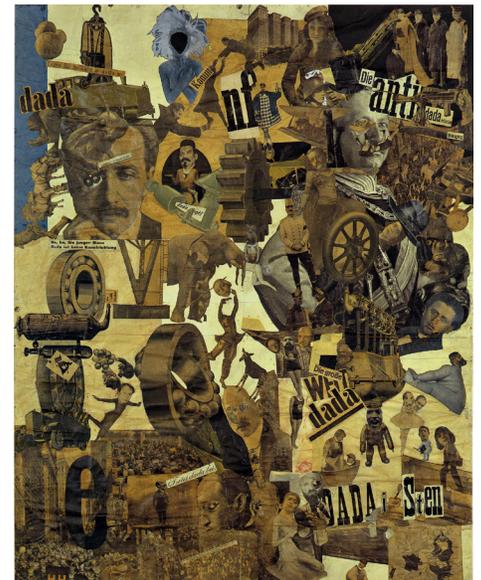


Philosopher Theodor Adorno once wrote that all art is an uncommitted crime.¹ Activism is also often considered law-breaking, because it confronts unjust laws or (in the case of civil disobedience) actually defies them — and in its best form, activism always challenges unjust presuppositions. Activism always breaks the laws of the status quo. Art challenges our notions, so it makes perfect sense that art and activism would go hand-in-hand. Art can also be used as a weapon. It allows the marginalized to be seen and can show artists’ solidarity or raise awareness about a cause.² Nina Simone commented, “How can you be an artist and not reflect the times?”³

One of the first examples of a widespread use of art specifically as protest is the Dada Movement, which lasted from 1916 to the mid-1920s. Artists all over the globe began rejecting the idea of “conventional” art, and even rational thought. Legend has it they chose the name for their movement by stabbing a knife into a dictionary and seeing what the knife chose. These artists had just witnessed World War I kill eight million military service members and an estimated equal number of civilians. The horrors of war had been magnified by trench warfare and technological advances that made it easier to kill. The artists who embraced Dada used their work to express their disgust with violence, corruption, and repression by distorting and emphasizing the disproportionate death and destruction the first global conflict left in its path.⁴

After the Dada movement, artists continued to express their political sentiments through their works as the next global conflict unfolded. In 1937, Pablo Picasso created *Guernica*, which has been called “modern art’s most powerful anti-war statement.”⁵ Picasso was a known supporter of democracy in Spain, so other artists, colleagues, and representatives from the democratic government asked him to make a piece of artwork against the fascist Francisco Franco. Picasso resisted at first, because he did not enjoy getting into politics, much less overly political art. His heart changed when Franco supported the bombing of *Guernica*, a Basque village in northern Spain, by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy’s air forces. The small town was bombed for over three hours and burned for three days. The number of people killed is unclear, but certainly many died in a bombing that made no attempt to distinguish between combatants and civilians. As soon as Picasso heard of the attack, he rushed to his studio and started creating his mural.

Guernica was shown at the 1937 World’s fair and was criticized by both supporters and opponents of Franco’s regime. Despite the negative reviews, *Guernica* toured Europe and North America and raised awareness about the dangers of a fascist government. From World War II until 1981, *Guernica* was kept in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City with trips abroad, but never to Spain, which remained under Franco’s rule for much of that time. Even though Picasso wanted *Guernica* to belong to the Spanish people, he did not want the mural to go to Spain until the



Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch in Germany (1919)

Hannah Höch, German Dada artist
(Image source: Flickr user Juliana)



1966

Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks photographs Muhammad Ali, a controversial figure due to his opposition to the Vietnam War



1969

Vietnam War Art

The Art Workers' Coalition and Ron L. Haeblerle use their work *And Babies* to bring light to the atrocities of the War in Vietnam



1980

Protest & Survive

Peter Kennard highlights nuclear threats with his "Protest and Survive" piece



1980

Labor Arts

Glenn Legion creates "I AM A MAN," representing the 1,300 African American Memphis sanitation workers protesting for better wages and working conditions



1985

Feminist Art

The Guerilla Girls start demonstrating for the inclusion of woman and people of color in the art world



country was free. *Guernica* was moved to Spain on what would have been Picasso's 100th birthday, after Spain had become a republic. *Guernica* challenges the notion of warfare as noble and heroic.⁶ Picasso can be easily seen as the modern trailblazer for artists that followed, and for an example of art that blurs the line between social activism and the creative. The mural helped inspired the modern human rights movement.⁷

Gordon Parks carried on this tradition of art as a tool of human rights activism. Parks was one of the first African American filmmakers, as well as a photographer and writer. He worked from the 1940s to the 1970s. He is well-known for documenting the poverty of African Americans in the 1940s.⁸ His best-known photograph is of boxer Muhammad Ali in 1966. At the time, Ali was well known for his opposition of the Vietnam War.⁹

Many artists, such as Ronald Haeblerle, Peter Saul, Carl Andre, Norman Carlberg, and Nancy Spero, used their work to oppose the Vietnam War.¹⁰ In the late 1960s, Artists and Writers, Protest, Inc. held anti-war demonstrations. To raise money for their efforts, Jack Sonenberg organized 16 artists to contribute to a portfolio project protesting the war; one of the contributions was titled "Kill for Peace."¹¹

In the same era, art became a way of speaking out against sexism, racism, and classism. Judy Chicago made large collaborative installations as part of the Feminist Art Movement. In 1985, the Guerilla Girls started wearing gorilla masks while they protested in order to keep their day jobs as artists. They wanted women and people of color to have a more prominent place in the art world.¹² In the 1980s, many artists spoke out against AIDS, both to raise awareness about the illness and criticize those who did not acknowledge the extent of the AIDS crisis.¹³ In 1987, Donald Moffett criticized President Reagan's silence and incompetence in dealing with AIDS with his poster "He Kills Me."¹⁴

Protest art often takes the form of photographs. One of the most famous examples of this is *Tank Man* by Jeff Widener. *Tank Man* was taken the day after the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989. Widener was sent to China to report on the massacre, and saw a man who was carrying shopping bags stop in front of the army tanks in the square. The ad hoc protester waved his arms and refused to move. The tanks tried to get around the man, but he would get back in their way. At one point he even climbed on top of one of the tanks. The man was eventually taken away, and he has never been identified. The image of him bravely standing in front of the tanks, however, has become a global symbol against tyranny.¹⁵

Some have argued that the most powerful act of creation is destruction. Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei has embraced this notion. In "Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn," Ai rejects the legacies of the Han Dynasty by smashing a 2,000-year-old urn. He has created other pieces where he has painted on similar urns.¹⁶ Ai has also been a prominent protest artist against the Chinese government. His work has also taken aim at China's human rights



Guernica (1937)

Pablo Picasso

(Image source: Wikimedia Commons)



American Gothic (1942)

Gordon Parks

(Image source: Wikimedia Commons)



Tank Man (1989)

Jeff Widener

(Image source: Time)



Late 1980s

The AIDS Epidemic

Many artists use their work to create awareness about the AIDS epidemic, such as Keith Haring's *Fear/Silence=Death*



1993

Police Brutality

The Whitney Biennial includes a home video of police beating Rodney King



2011

Civil Rights Art

Theaster Gates uses firehoses from the Civil Rights Era to create *In the Event of a Race Riot* and donates all proceeds to community projects



2011

Graffiti Art

The Arab Spring causes many to create social and political commentary using graffiti



2012

Ai Weiwei

Chinese protest artist Ai Weiwei is imprisoned



violations.¹⁷ Ai denied that he was a political figure and claimed he was just an artist — until he was imprisoned in 2012. He then realized his art was his activism. The two cannot be separated.¹⁸

Arguably the most famous merger of art and activism today is Banksy, who uses graffiti as under-class “revenge” to take power from the privileged. Banksy has used his street art for pacifism, anti-consumerism, anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, anti-authoritarianism, and anarchism. He has done work among ruins in the Gaza Strip in Palestine and Syria. He created murals protesting the treatment of refugees in the Calais, France, refugee camp.¹⁹ In 2006, Banksy placed a life-sized figure of a Guantanamo prisoner in Disneyland’s Big Thunder Mountain Railroad ride. It took 90 minutes for the Disney staff to realize it was in the ride and subsequently remove the figure.²⁰

Visual art can be used to represent an idea of the need for change in a way that verbal communication cannot. Art is physical and nuanced. It represents a sort of bravery and freedom of ideas. Danish protest artist Michael Elmgreen said, “People are easy to control if they are fearful... (art) can make people less fearful.”²¹ Art can encourage people to rise up and try to change their own corner of the world. Art can also be spread to represent change itself. After all, it’s a matter between life and death. Literally.

Notes

¹ Carol Hunt, “Art Is Economic Bread and Butter—So Why Don’t We Put Jam on It?” *Independent*, June 26, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2KDYWCj>.

² Elena Martinique, “Greatest Protest Art Examples—From Picasso to Banksy,” *Widewalls*, May 18, 2016, <https://bit.ly/2KTIM4K>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “World War I and Dada,” MoMA Learning, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://mo.ma/1pWs7B5>.

⁵ “Guernica: Testimony of War,” PBS.org, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://to.pbs.org/1vrNwPM>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Martinique, “Greatest Protest Art Examples.”

⁸ Rachel MacFarlane, “A Brief History of Protest Art,” *Format Magazine*, August 3, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2m3ICM5>.

⁹ “A Brief History of Protest Art from the 1940s until Now—In Pictures,” *Guardian*, September 6, 2017, <https://bit.ly/2wHaImK>.

¹⁰ Martinique, “Greatest Protest Art Examples.”

¹¹ “A Brief History of Protest Art from the 1940s until Now—In Pictures.”

¹² MacFarlane, “A Brief History of Protest Art.”

¹³ Martinique, “Greatest Protest Art Examples.”

¹⁴ Belinda Lanks, “History’s Most Powerful Protest Art,” *Magenta*, November 23, 2016, <https://bit.ly/2J6Uh6g>.

¹⁵ “Tank Man,” *Time*, accessed July 7, 2018, <https://ti.me/2fYFHAP>.

¹⁶ Annie Godfrey Larmon, “Can Art Change the World?” BBC, May 2, 2018, <https://bbc.in/2N3Y-6fw>.

¹⁷ Martinique, “Greatest Protest Art Examples.”

¹⁸ Tim Adams, “Power to...the Art of Protest,” *Guardian*, September 11, 2016, <https://bit.ly/2cvW0ad>.

¹⁹ Martinique, “Greatest Protest Art Examples.”

²⁰ BBC, “Artists Banksy Targets Disneyland,” September 11, 2006, <https://bbc.in/2KZxyum>.¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹ Adams, “Power to...the Art of Protest.”



Ignorance = Fear (1989)

Keith Haring

(Image Source: Wiki Art)

Interested in getting involved?

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