

# PRINCIPLE USE OTHERS' PREJUDICES AGAINST THEM

Your opponent's prejudices against you are a weakness that you can exploit to your advantage.

## CONTRIBUTED BY

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## "BEWARE OF SIMPLY REINFORCING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES."

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A prejudice is a mental shortcut that leads a person to make assumptions about others — assumptions that are often false in predictable, and therefore useful, ways. Sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism — all the -isms and associated stereotypes held by your target can be used in one way or another to your campaign's advantage.

For example:

### *Sexism*

Need to distract a security guard so you can complete your action? Activists in Washington D.C. planned to dump a ton of bloodied scallop shells on the doorstep of Shell Oil (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible) to commemorate the anniversary of Ken Saro-Wiwa's death and pressure the company to withdraw from Ogoniland, Nigeria. One cute young woman posing as a lost tourist was all it took to distract the guard and provide enough time for the truck to position itself, dump its load, and drive off.

### *Ageism*

Need to get information through enemy lines? During the First Intifada (uprising) in Palestine, 1987–1993, the Israeli regime tried to quash the nonviolent resistance in many ways, including cutting communication and restricting travel between Palestinian cities. In order to get the word out to coordinate strikes, boycotts, and other actions, youth were enlisted to carry memorized information between cities. The Israeli soldiers let the kids through, never imagining they were doing the real work of connecting the resistance.

### *Racism*

Need to put more pressure on a target from unexpected directions? Saul Alinsky, in his book *Rules for Radicals*, relates a classic example

## POTENTIAL RISKS

Beware of simply reinforcing negative stereotypes. Try to only deploy stereotypes in situations where the bigot eventually realizes that it was his own prejudices that put him in a compromised position (see: PRINCIPLE: Turn the tables). Also, try to be transparent within your own work group about what forces are at play.

## RELATED TOOLS

### Stories

- Barbie Liberation Organization
- Billionaires for Bush
- Dow Chemical Apologizes for Bhopal
- Justice for Janitors
- Mining the Museum
- Modern-Day Slavery Museum
- No vote, no sex
- Panty power
- Public Option Annie
- Stripping Power in Uganda

### Tactics

- Advanced leafleting
- Creative disruption
- Culture jamming
- Electoral guerrilla theatre

of using racism to win in Chicago in the 1950s: In a campaign to improve slum conditions in an organized black ghetto, organizers took the fight beyond their neighborhoods into the lily-white suburb where the slumlord lived (see: METHODOLOGY: Points of intervention). The presence of black men and women picketing outside his house led to a flood of phone calls from the neighbors who didn't care at all about the slums and would not have gotten involved otherwise, but wanted to keep their own neighborhood segregated, and so pressured the slumlord into capitulating.

### *Classism*

Need to find your way into a corporate office or exclusive event? Many a time the most radical, hairy, and scruffily adorned activists have shaved, ironed, and primped their way into a situation that would have been off limits to those in scrappy activist garb (see: PRINCIPLE: Don't dress like a protester). You know you are hardcore when you will cut your hair, or wear pantyhose, to insure the success of an action!

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## **LEARN MORE**

Salt of the Earth

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047443/>

A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Resistance

Mary Elizabeth King, 2007

<https://books.google.com/books?id=IYztAAAAMAAJ>

- Flash mob
- Guerrilla projection
- Hashtag campaign
- Identity correction
- Invisible theatre
- Reverse graffiti

## **Principles**

- Anyone can act
- Challenge patriarchy as you organize
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Don't dress like a protester
- Know your cultural terrain
- Lead with sympathetic characters
- Make the invisible visible
- Reframe the issue
- Seek common ground
- The real action is your target's reaction
- Turn the tables
- Use the Jedi mind trick

## **Theories**

- Action logic
- Anti-oppression
- Cultural hegemony
- Decolonization
- Direct action
- Environmental justice
- Feminism
- Glitch feminism
- Strategic nonviolence

## **Methodologies**

- Action star
- Peel the onion
- Pillars of power
- Theory of change

## **TAGS**

Action design, Communications, Gender and sexuality, Indigenous rights, Climate justice, Racial justice, Wealth inequality, Women's rights