

Youth Activism

An International Encyclopedia

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Lonnie R. Sherrod
Editor

Constance A. Flanagan and Ron Kassimir
Associate Editors

Amy K. Syvertsen
Assistant Editor



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nts. The Online Action leaders to collaborate planning their Global key resources about campaigns and new opportunities; and receive direct support from NetAid mentors throughout their

participants to interact. Further, the GCC Online creates a sense of cooperation among participants of the country. Adding the GCC to other networks of youth from this online platform citizenship education. In addition, the GCC encourages to collaborate with local mentors, eager to help train global citizens (e.g., volunteers, college leaders, international students) and who can interact online and in person.

of the GCC will come from Global Action Days. A GCC leader and implementer of his or her group of peers. By participating throughout the United States campaigns, the Global Action Days averages the attention of the student body around a series of globalized days, such as December 1 or the United States' Access to Education's Access to Education Day of each year. During these days, GCC leaders are encouraged to use creative ways to raise awareness of development issues, show empathy for others, and build momentum. The GCC provides direct support to participants working to alleviate

For each Global Action Day, NetAid provides GCC leaders with a variety of resources and suggested activities which can be adapted to work in a variety of settings—from hosting a classroom hunger banquet to convening a school-wide simulation to demonstrate the prevalence of HIV/AIDS around the world. Actions might include collecting signatures for a petition calling for increased U.S. humanitarian aid, conducting a virtual e-card campaign online, or organizing a fundraising event to collect resources to help support a specific grassroots development project. Thus, Global Action Days pair experiential activities with concrete opportunities for action.

NetAid's Global Citizen Corps is designed to complement existing global education programs in the United States and abroad by growing the network of youth in the United States who are active and engaged global citizens. In bringing these inspired young leaders together, the GCC helps create a momentum greater than the sum of its parts, a coordinated national youth movement with the aim of alleviating global poverty. Ultimately, by promoting connections between young global citizens in developed and developing countries, the GCC supports the emergence of a global partnership for international development among today's youth.

See also Character Education; Citizenship Education Policies in the States; Civic Virtue; Democratic Education; Digital Divide; Diversity Education; Environmental Education (EE); Global Justice Activism; IEA Civic Education Study; Just Community High Schools and Youth Activism; National Alliance for Civic Education (NACE); New Media; Prosocial Behaviors; School Engagement; School Influences and Civic Engagement; United Nations, Youth Activism and.

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Abigail Falik and Justin van Fleet

Global Justice Activism. The rise of mass-based transnational movements against corporate globalization during the past decade represents one of the most important expressions of radical grassroots dissent of the past generation. Beginning in November 1999, when 50,000 protesters converged on Seattle to shut down the



Young Brazilian anarchists march against war and neoliberalism at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2002. *Courtesy of Jeffrey S. Juris.*

World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings, anticorporate globalization activists have organized highly visible direct-action protests against multilateral institutions and alternative forums in cities such as Prague, Barcelona, Genoa, Quito, Porto Alegre, and Cancun, uniting diverse movements and networks in opposition to growing corporate influence over people's lives, communities, and resources. At the same time, a new form of networking politics has emerged involving decentralized coordination, open participation, consensus decision-making, and the free and open circulation of information.

Although anticorporate globalization movements are intergenerational, youth activists have occupied their leading edge, infusing them with a confrontational spirit and emphasis on technological, political, and social innovation. Young people have assumed prominent roles within many important struggles since the 1960s, includ-

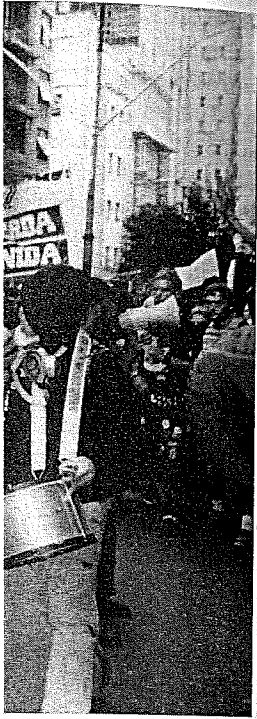
ing student, peace, and environmental activism. Contemporary anticorporate globalization movements are characterized by three features, which make them particularly attractive to younger generations. First, they are organized around informal network-based forms facilitated by new information and communication technologies, such as the Internet. Second, they involve nontraditional and highly theatrical forms of direct-action protest. Finally, anticorporate globalization movements are global in their geographic reach and thematic scope, as activists increasingly link their locally rooted struggles to diverse movements elsewhere.

By significantly enhancing the speed, flexibility, and global reach of information flows, allowing for communication at a distance in real time, digital computer networks provide the technological infrastructure for the emergence of contemporary network-based social-movement



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forms. Anticorporate movements thus belong "computer-supported" as activists use new communicate and regional, and global back and forth between political activity. Generations have grown should come as no surprise been at the forefront



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An anarchist group known as the Pink & Silver Bloc protests at a meeting of the G8 in Genoa, Italy, in July 2001. *Courtesy of Jeffrey S. Juris.*

forms. Anticorporate globalization movements thus belong to a new class of "computer-supported social movements," as activists use new digital technologies to communicate and coordinate on local, regional, and global scales, while moving back and forth between online and off-line political activity. Given that younger generations have grown up using computers, it should come as no surprise that they have been at the forefront of incorporating new

technologies into their everyday organizing routines.

Specifically, anticorporate globalization activists have employed digital networks to organize direct actions and share information and resources, as well as plan and coordinate activities. Although activists primarily use e-mail and electronic Listservs, they also create temporary Web pages during mobilizations to provide information, resources, and contact

lists; post documents and calls to action; and sometimes, to house discussion forums and IRC chat rooms. Moreover, particular movement networks, like People's Global Action (PGA) and the World Social Forum (WSF), and individual organizations have their own Web pages where activists post reflections, analyses, updates, calls to action, and links along with more logistical information. Interactive Web sites offering multiple tools for coordination are becoming increasingly popular, including open publishing projects like the Independent Media Center (IMC), or Indymedia, which allow users to freely post news and information without editorial selection and control.

Moreover, independent media activism increasingly forms part of an emerging radical media culture among young anti-corporate globalization activists. For example, Indymedia, established during the anti-WTO protests in Seattle, has become a global network of local Web-based media projects, allowing activists to create and circulate alternative news and information. During mass actions and gatherings, hundreds of activists take to the streets to record video footage, snap photos, and conduct interviews, while IMCs become dynamic communication hubs, buzzing with activity as protesters upload files, swap reports and information, and edit videos. There are now more than 120 local IMC sites around the world, while the global network receives up to 2 million page views per day. Younger media activists have also practiced "tactical media," including the playful parodying of corporate advertisements, as in "culture jamming," or new kinds of electronic civil disobedience, such as the "virtual sit-in." Beyond specific objectives, activists also use new digital technologies within temporary media hubs to experiment with horizontal collaboration, while expressing directly democratic political ideals.

New technologies have greatly reinforced the most radically decentralized network-

based organizational forms within anticorporate globalization movements, leading to highly flexible, diffuse, and often ephemeral formations, like the Direct Action Network (DAN) in the United States, the Movement for Global Resistance (MRG) in Catalonia, or People's Global Action (PGA) on a global scale. Grassroots movements and collectives can now directly connect up across space without the need for organizational hierarchy. In contrast to traditional parties and unions, network-based politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces where diverse organizations, collectives, and networks converge around a few common hallmarks while preserving their autonomy and specificity. Young people are typically attracted to such informal, grassroots forms of political participation, which are increasingly seen as concrete political alternatives in and of themselves, particularly given the widely perceived crisis of representative democracy.

Younger activists are also characteristically drawn to more unconventional forms of direct-action protest, involving creative, expressive, or violent repertoires. Despite emerging in different cultural contexts, the various tactics employed by young anticorporate globalization activists all produce theatrical images for mass-mediated consumption, including the following: giant puppets and street theater; mobile street carnivals; militant protesters advancing toward police lines with white outfits, protective shields, and padding; and black-clad, masked urban warriors smashing the symbols of corporate capitalism. Whether broadcast images depict samba dancers dressed in pink and silver, thousands of Michelin men advancing toward a "red zone," or skirmishes between robocops and hooded stone throwers, mass actions are powerful image events, while the overall summit blockade strategy where diverse formations "swarm" their target produces high-powered social drama.

In addition to their more utilitarian purpose of shutting down major summit meetings, mass actions are complex cultural

performances that communicate symbolically to a diverse audience while also producing and expressing solidarity. Performances staged by a diverse networks—confrontation (black bloc) (white overalls) or (pink bloc)—capture but also embody diverse political identities.

Beyond putting their bodies to work to communicate political action, activists also style themselves through their adornment. During globalization actions, activists consciously appropriate and assemble diverse symbols, including black bloc, white overalls, wigs, and pink dresses and identities of activist youth.

Among more radical networks, squatting and various tactics, styles, and the "black bloc" core of a militant youth network is not an action tactic involving private property, using national storefronts in conjunction with the police, defensive practices, marching in small, tight formations, elbows linked, and various tactics are connected to a specific style, including the use of jumpers, combat boots, and bandanas to cover their faces. These practices are worn for instrumental purposes to protect activist identity and security—but also to express solidarity through and

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performances that allow participants to communicate symbolic messages to an audience while also providing a forum for producing and experiencing shared meaning and solidarity. The theatrical performances staged by activists associated with diverse networks—including physical confrontation (black bloc), symbolic conflict (white overalls) or carnivalesque revelry (pink bloc)—capture mass-media attention but also embody and express alternative political identities.

Beyond putting their bodies on the line to communicate political messages, direct-action activists also express themselves stylistically through clothing and bodily adornment. During mass anticorporate globalization actions, youth activists consciously appropriate, recombine, and assemble diverse products and cultural symbols, including white overalls, industrial tubes and tires, black boots and masks, wigs, and pink dresses, to express the values and identities associated with alternative activist youth subcultures.

Among more radical anticapitalist networks, squatting and the use of aggressive tactics, styles, and icons associated with the "black bloc" comprise central elements of a militant youth counterculture organized around performative violence. The black bloc is not an organization or even a network but rather a specific set of direct-action tactics involving the destruction of private property, usually banks and transnational storefronts, ritualized confrontation with the police, and a series of defensive practices, including "de-arrests," marching in small, compact groups with elbows linked, and jail solidarity. These tactics are connected to a broader militant style, including the use of black pants and jumpers, combat boots, and black masks or bandanas to cover the face, and an aggressive, confrontational attitude. Masks are worn for instrumental purposes—to protect activist identity for individual security—but also serve symbolic functions, such as expressing collective solidarity through anonymity or portraying

archetypal images of youth rebellion. Militant styles and practices are the physical embodiment of a political vision based on anticapitalism, direct confrontation, and a total rejection of the market and the state.

Young people have grown up in a more globalized world than ever before, given that geographically dispersed actors can now communicate and coordinate through transnational networks in real time. Contemporary anticorporate globalization movements, which extend from largely middle-class, youth-based movements in Europe and North America to mass-based poor people's struggles throughout Latin America, Asia, and Latin America, are thus truly global in reach. Indeed, despite their uneven geographic distribution, transnational activist networks like PGA, the WSF process, or Indymedia provide the infrastructure for the emergence of global fields of meaning and political identification, which accord with the life experiences and political imaginations of many young activists in the global North and urban areas of the global South. As a young Barcelona-based activist once put it, "This is a global protest... We are building networks in Barcelona but with a global consciousness. If there is a revolt around water in Bolivia or in Washington or Monterrey, wherever, even if far away, I feel part of what is happening."

In addition to a more general sense of global solidarity, youth activists have also used the Internet to plan and coordinate concrete actions, gatherings, and activities across transnational space, while periodically coming together in concrete locales. For example, young people from countries around Europe, including Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Holland, and England have used Listservs to organize European PGA conferences and No Border camps, while many have also helped coordinate the more radical fringe of the regional and global social forum process. A Barcelona-based Indymedia activist had this to say regarding the

excitement generated through such long-distance collaboration:

I learned how a group of people, some in the U.S., others in London, and others, who knows where, coordinated through a global Listserv. Suddenly someone would send an e-mail saying, "I think this story is important, what do you think?" In less than a week, ten people had answered, one or two saying it wasn't clear, but most feeling it was important, so we distributed the tasks: "I'll reduce it to so many characters," "I'll translate it into German," and "I'll do Italian." The next day we started working, and the messages began arriving: "Spanish translation done," "Italian done," "French done." Then someone sent a photo, "What do you think about this picture?" The comments went around, and then someone sent another picture, and suddenly we had created an article!

Moreover, now that images and slogans travel instantaneously through alternative and mainstream global media networks, protest styles and practices circulate rapidly from one site to another. Despite local variation, black-bloc, pink-bloc, or white-overalls tactics are increasingly similar in places as diverse as Italy, Spain, the United States, Brazil, and Mexico. Indeed, today's anticorporate globalization movements have ushered in a truly global youth culture of protest.

Beyond geographic reach, contemporary anticorporate globalization movements are also global in their thematic scope, bringing together diverse struggles in opposition to growing corporate influence over politics, society, and the economy, as well as increasing commercial penetration into the most intimate aspects of everyday lives. Corporations have specifically targeted adolescents with their ever more aggressive "branding" campaigns, and consequently, young people have been at the forefront of forging a broad resistance to corporate domination and, increasingly, to global capitalism itself. An emphasis on corporate power and the symbols of corporate capitalism, including the WTO, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), has thus allowed previously disconnected

movements to unite against a common enemy. At the same time, young people are also more likely to be motivated by the "postmaterial" values associated with anticorporate activism, including respect for human rights and the environment, gender and class equality, egalitarianism, direct democracy, and global solidarity.

Building on previous youth involvement in antisweatshop campaigns, radical ecology, squatting, Zapatista activism, and other forms of global solidarity, anticorporate globalization movements have provided a forum for the emergence of globally linked radical youth countercultures. Although, as mentioned above, anticorporate globalization movements are intergenerational, young people have played key roles, particularly within the more grassroots, technologically innovative, and direct-action oriented sectors. Indeed, the importance of new technologies, flexible network-based forms, informal channels of political participation, nontraditional styles of symbolic protest, as well as their global reach and thematic scope make anticorporate globalization movements particularly conducive to youth engagement. Young anticorporate globalization activists are thus experimenting with new technological, cultural, and political practices and forms that may one day lead to broader social transformation.

See also Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in the United States; Global Youth Action Network (GYAN); United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS); Zapatista Rebellion (Mexico).

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Global Youth Act

Why do many young people have a strong interest in global issues? Why are they so fully engaged? Why do they participate in movements inspired by global justice? How are they mobilizing tens of thousands of people, yet develop few links to the global movement? Global Youth Action Network (GYAN) asserts that social movements are limited by "fragmentation"—a lack of new relationship building between segregated groups and the availability of quality resources to liberate many new voices. GYAN, a WTO protester in Africa, and a young woman in Africa need each other. How are they linked? GYAN facilitates global issues and local action. GYAN is a program that links global issues and local action through collaborative projects. For more information on the GYAN program, visit www.gyan.org. Participation in the GYAN program was first initiated in 2004 in São Paulo, Brazil, and is now a "local jam."

GYAN was founded through collaboration between young people. In just five years it has become a dozen global projects and partnerships between young people while supporting dialogues from campaigns and movements and political action. GYAN is a program, GYAN is in the field and promoting collaborative action, to

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Jeffrey S. Juris

Global Youth Action Network (GYAN).

Why do many young people today demon-
strate interest in activism but fail to get
fully engaged? Why are new social move-
ments inspired by globalization capable of
mobilizing tens of thousands of protestors
yet develop few links to lobbies that pro-
mote alternative economic policy? The
Global Youth Action Network (GYAN)
asserts that society and development
are limited by "fragmentation" and that
defragmentation—defined as the creation
of new relationships between traditionally
segregated groups combined with the new
availability of quality information—can
liberate many new opportunities. The
WTO protester in Seattle and the over-
whelmed finance minister of sub-Saharan
Africa need each other. How can they be
linked? GYAN facilitates the integration of
global issues and local processes through a
program that links personal relationships,
collaborative projects, centralization of
information on the Internet, and youth par-
ticipation in democratic structures. This
program was first implemented in June
2004 in São Paulo, Brazil, and is called the
"local jam."

GYAN was founded in 1999 to support
collaboration between youth organizations.
In just five years it has launched several
dozen global projects and incubated part-
nerships between youth organizations
while supporting diverse activities ranging
from campaigns and research to confer-
ences and political lobbies. When design-
ing a program, GYAN examines the actors
in the field and proposes a structure for col-
laborative action, taking into account five

levels of youth participation in social
change: (1) awareness, (2) action and recog-
nition, (3) networking, (4) collaboration of
social groups, and (5) policy. GYAN recently
used this five-level model to design youth
campaigns that support the United Nations
millennium development goals (MDGs). It
consulted hundreds of youth experts, wrote
a white paper on the contributions of youth
to MDG implementation, and published a
campaign framework for groups to take
action. Two of GYAN's largest projects
include Global Youth Service Day, the
world's largest celebration of youth volun-
teerism, and www.TakingITGlobal.org, a
Web site with the Internet's largest commu-
nity of youth activism.

The local jam is dedicated to "defrag-
menting youth" and was developed by
GYAN's South American regional office in
São Paulo, Brazil. It created a youth net-
work in the city in response to two obser-
vations of local researchers: a majority of
young people in the city wanted to get
more involved in some cause, and as of
2003, only 8 percent of youth participated
in cause-related groups. As a network-
driven organization focused on interna-
tional youth mobilization and participation
in global decision-making processes, GYAN
developed a program to integrate the activ-
ism of local youth organizations while
addressing international goals.

In the first stage the organization mapped
international youth movements and sought
their contacts in São Paulo. It then mapped
local youth movements, joining the work
of the mayor's office, and placed the results
into a municipal Web site that is integrated
within the TakingITGlobal Web platform.
The mapping process, originally led by
the mayor's office of São Paulo, identified
more than 1,700 youth groups. The Web
site became a virtual space for ongoing
local networking and at the same time
became a node within the wider global
youth movement.

For the second stage GYAN launched an
outreach and selection process to connect
with groups and identify representative