Kids' Guide:
Raise Your Voice

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Ages 7-12

In-gallery & Take-home Activities



Welcome!

Welcome to *Raise Your Voice: New York Activism*, an exhibition that features the stories of individual people and groups that have come together to address different issues in their communities over hundreds of years. These people are called activists. Have you heard that word before?

An **activist** is someone who uses their voice to try to fix a problem they care about. Some activists protest, others sing and dance—as long as their actions are connected to a change they want to see in their communities, city, or the world, they are an activist!

New York City has played an important role in leading and shaping activist movements across many issues, like good education for everyone, accessible subway stations, and cleaner streets. Use this kids' guide to explore the stories of how everyday New Yorkers—ones just like you—have worked individually and through groups, to change, their city and the world.

Ask your grown-up: Share the story of one local activist or activist movement you remember from when you were growing up.

- How old were you?
- Who were the people involved in the movement?
- What issue were they addressing?
- What action(s) did they take?
- Did they achieve their goals?









Glossary

Activist: a person who uses their voice to try to fix a problem they care about

Boycott: when people stop buying from someone to try to make things fair

Campaign: a group of actions people do together to make something happen

Demonstration: when people gather where others can see to show how they feel about something

Direct action: doing something right away to help fix a problem you see

Integration: when people from different backgrounds share the same spaces, like school

Law: a rule for how to act, made by leaders like the mayor

Media: ways of sharing news and information with lots of people

Mobilize: to meet in one place and get ready for action

Organize: to bring people together to work on something

Public art: art made for everyone to see that changes how the space feels

Race: a group of people who share things like ancestors or appearance

Racism: when people are treated unfairly because of their race

Sanitation: keeping communities healthy by collecting trash and cleaning streets

Segregation: when people from different backgrounds are kept apart, like at school

Symbol: A mark, sign, object, or word that stands for something else

Vote: to share your choice about a person or an issue in an election

Cover: **Banner**. *Rebel Arts Group, c. 1936-39. Cotton and ink. Museum purchase, 2022. (2022.28.1).*

How to Read a Museum Label

Every object has a story. Museum labels offer helpful information to understand more about the objects on display. **Practice reading a label below.**

New York City has five boroughs, and Staten Island has been one since 1898. Staten Islanders once **organized** a **vote** asking whether Staten Island should become its own city instead of staying part of New York City, hoping for a bigger voice. Two out of three voters said yes—but New York State's leaders said no, and Staten Island stayed part of NYC.



The order goes like this; Object Number, Object Name, Maker, Date Created, Materials, and Who the Object Came From.

70. Vote Yes Sign. *Staten Island Vote Yes, Inc., 1993. Paint on wood. Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Staten Island Vote Yes, Inc., 1997. (97.176.4).* This sign is from one of several secession campaigns by Staten Island activists, which began soon after the consolidation of the five boroughs into New York City in 1898. Motivated by taxes, representation in city government, and the Fresh Kills landfill, Staten Island voters approved becoming independent in 1993 but were blocked from seceding by the state legislature and city government.

Make a Museum Label

Go around the gallery and locate an object that interests you. Sketch it in the space below and fill out the label.

Object Name _____

Date Created _____

Maker _____

Material(s) _____

Who the Object Came From _____

I Might be Young, but I am Mighty!

You do not have to be a grown-up to be an activist. **Segregation** was against the law in 1964, but schools and neighborhoods were still separated by race. On March 16, 1964, a multiracial group of children led by Reverend Milton Galamison participated in a school **boycott** at Brooklyn's P.S. 21 to show their refusal to accept school segregation in New York City.

What might they have said? **Fill in the speech bubbles.**



Reverend Galamison

Reverend Milton Galamison Leads White Children into P.S. 21 in Brooklyn. *March 16, 1964, © Bettmann/Corbis.*

What might they have felt?
Circle below.

unsure	positive
curious	hopeful

If you could ask Reverend Galamison or one of the children who participated in the boycott a question about the event, what would you ask?
Discuss with your grownup.

The Shape of Activism

Symbols are marks, signs, objects, or words that stand for something else—like a monarch butterfly for migration, or a white dove for peace. Activists in New York use symbols to show what they care about.

After the 2016 presidential election, a group of artists started We Make America to help people speak up about issues that mattered to them. Getting ready for the 2017 Women's March, they invited New Yorkers to an empty Soho storefront, where they worked together making dozens of cardboard torches inspired by the Statue of Liberty.

Sketch the details of the torch in the space below. **Write** your message for the country around your torch starting with the words:

My wish for America is...

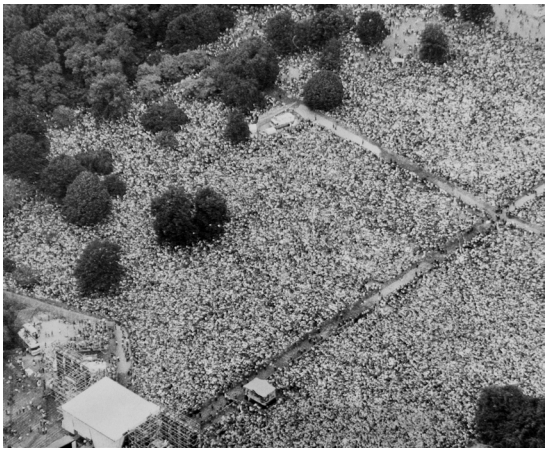


Statue of Liberty Torch. *Mark Rosen and Ron Baron with the assistance of We Make America artists, 2017. Acrylic on cardboard. Courtesy of We Make America.*

The Statue of Liberty's torch is a symbol of the United States. Between 1886 and 1924, millions of immigrants arriving in New York Harbor could see its flame welcoming them to their new home.

Big City, Bigger Issues Scavenger Hunt

New York City has millions of residents and more than 1,700 parks, playgrounds, and spaces for people to gather. New Yorkers have demonstrated in parks, and other public spaces, like courthouses and the streets, to tell others what they believe in. Some events have drawn massive crowds and the attention of people from around the world. **Find the pictured mobilizations and their labels to answer the questions in the spaces below.**



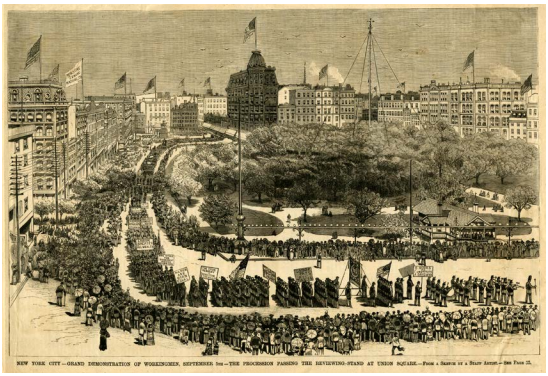
1. How many people marched in the Protest and Survive mobilization?

2. What were they marching against?



3. What is another word used to describe the draft card burners?

1. Masses of People Gather on Great Lawn in Central Park for Anti-nuclear Demonstration. *Dan Farrell. June 12, 1982. NY Daily News Archive via Getty Images.*
2. Women Burning Draft Cards of Husbands and Sons in Foley Square. *Federal Building, NYC, in Action Against the War in Vietnam, June 18, 1968. Fred W. McDarrah, 1968. Gelatin silver print. Gift of the Goldman-Sonnenfeldt Family, 2023. (2023. 50.19).*



4 What year did Labor Day become a holiday in New York?



5 Where did the 1970 protest to free the 'Panther 21' take place?



6 What was the name of the rally and silent march shown in this photograph?

3. New York City—Grand Demonstration of Workingmen, Sept 5th—The Procession Passing the Reviewing Stand at Union-Square. *Unknown maker. Published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, September 16, 1882.* **4. Demonstration: Black Panthers Fred W. McDarrah, 1970.** *The Goldman-Sonnenfeldt Family, 2023. (2023. 49.15). © The New York-Historical.* **5. Black Trans Lives Matter.** *Brooklyn Museum. Cindy Trinh, June 14, 2020. © Cindy Trinh.*

Business as Usual?

The Young Lords were a group of Puerto Rican, Black, and other Latinx youth who organized **direct action** campaigns to address challenges that impacted the health of their community, East Harlem. They worked to improve access to healthcare, food, and basic services.



What do you see? Pay particular attention to the areas highlighted with circles.

Young Lords Garbage Offensive—Summer/Fall 1969. *Hiram Maristany, 1969. Gelatin silver print. Museum of the City of New York, Museum Purchase, 2026. (2026.24.2).*

Reflect and discuss. Where do you typically see stoplights in your neighborhood? What part of the street do you think the photograph was taken on?

What action(s) could have led to the garbage being turned over in the street?

What role do you think the police are playing in this event? How do you think they relate to the people standing on the sidewalk?

Spreading the Word

Brooklyn-based artist Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya launched a **campaign** during the COVID-19 pandemic to address **racism** experienced by Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities in NYC and around the world. She designed a **public art** series with the city's leaders using portraits of API New Yorkers to capture the attention of people at bus stops, trains, and other spaces around NYC where Asian Americans experienced anti-Asian **racism**.



I Am Not Your Scapegoat. *Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya,2020. Ink on paper. Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya and the City of New York Commission on Human Rights and Department of Cultural Affairs, 2022. (2022.9.3).*

What stands out to you about the subject's facial expression, pose, and direction of their gaze?

What do the colors make you feel?

* A scapegoat is a person or thing taking the blame for others.

What Kind of Activist Are You?

Everyone has a role to play in the movement. Whether you like to be on the main stage with all eyes on you or you prefer to be behind the scenes working to make the movement happen, there's a place for you.

Explore the roles different activists have played in NYC movements by reading the descriptions below. **Which do you identify most with?**



THE LEADER

The person who attends important meetings, gives speeches, and rallies people around the cause

Example: Malcolm X

Malcolm X at a Rally / 115 St and Lenox Ave Harlem. *Fred W. McDarrah, September 7, 1963. Museum of the City of New York. A gift from the Goldman-Sonnenfeldt Family, 2023. (2023.49.64)*



THE CANVASSER

The person who tells others about their cause and encourages them to get involved in the movement by making phone calls or knocking on doors

Example: Phonebankers

Billboard Planning for 50 State Initiative at For Freedoms Headquarters at Fort Gansevoort in New York City. *Evan Blaise Walsh, 2018. Courtesy of For Freedoms.*

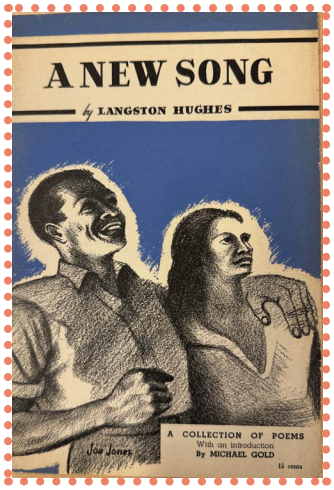


THE PROTESTOR

The person who uses their body and voice to join with others in speaking up for what they believe

Example: ACT-UP for a Cure

ACT-UP for a Cure. *Vincent Cianni, 1993. Museum of the City of New York, Museum purchase. 2025. (2025.6.3.).*



THE COMMUNICATOR

The person who is behind the scenes, writing and spreading the message through different media

Example: Langston Hughes

A New Song. *Langston Hughes, 1938. Ink on paper. The International Workers Order. Private Collection.*



THE STRATEGIST

The person who carefully plans the ways that people engaged in the movement will get things done, like the route for a protest or the permission to gather from the city

Example: New York Radical Women organizers

New York Radical Women organizers at a planning meeting, SCEF Offices, Summer 1968. *Bev Grant, 1968. © Bev Grant Photography, Courtesy of the artist and OSMOS, New York.*



THE ARTIST

The person who uses their creativity—through design, singing, dancing, and more—to turn people's attention to their cause

Example: Sally Apfelbaum for East Village Neighbors Who Care

Portraits of EVNC Mutual Aid Group (Including St. Marks Church Members). *Sally Apfelbaum, 2024/2025. Acrylic on canvas. Lent by the artist.*

ANSWER KEY:

Big City, Bigger Issues Scavenger Hunt

1. One million
2. Nuclear weapons
3. Pacifists
4. 1887
5. Foley Square outside the Federal Courthouse
6. Brooklyn Liberation: An Action for Black Trans Lives

Business as Usual?

The Young Lords organized a direct action campaign in their neighborhood as a direct response to concerns expressed by their neighbors who were frustrated by the lack of sanitation services in East Harlem, including regular garbage pickup and street cleaning. They first organized their neighbors to engage in street cleanups, but recognized it wasn't leading to the change they wanted to see: garbage collection every day and garbage cans and brooms for neighborhood residents to support keeping the neighborhood clean. They took matters into their own hands and dumped the neighborhood's trash at a busy intersection to draw the attention of their neighbors and the mayor to the issue of sanitation in their community.

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