

# There Is a Woman in Every Color Black Women in Art

## Social Movements and Protests

**Subjects:** African and African Diaspora Studies; Art History; Communications; English; History; Political Science; Women's and Gender Studies

### Activity

1. **In the exhibition gallery:** Students will view the art in *There Is a Woman in Every Color: Black Women in Art*. The class will discuss works that relate to American protests and social movements such as abolitionism, suffrage, Black Power, civil rights, feminism, and Occupy Wall Street.
2. **Outside of class:** Drawing from the gallery discussion, content they have learned in class, and additional research, students will write a short paper about the relationship between visual culture and social movements/protests. They will use a work from the exhibition as an example in the paper.

### Ways to Adapt

-This assignment could be expanded to include a hands-on activity in which students design and make signs for a historical protest. The Mulvane can help supply space and materials for this project if desired.

**Note:** There are about 10 works in the exhibition that visualize protests and people who participated in social movements (see back for examples). Several other works speak indirectly to this topic.

*For assistance with facilitating or adapting this activity, contact:*

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## Selected examples of works *with excerpts from interpretive texts*

Danny Lyon, *Arrested For Demonstrating In Americus, Georgia, Teenage Girls Are Kept In A Stockade...*, 1963  
gelatin silver print  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

Black women have long been on the front lines of activism. Traveling through Georgia in 1963, documentary photographer Danny Lyon took a series of photographs picturing 32 girls, ages 12 to 15, arrested for demonstrating. Recalling the events of her 9-day imprisonment, Henrietta Fuller remembered: "There were no beds, no mattresses, no blankets, pillows, no sheets. The floor was cold ...The water was hot and it was running all the while. The man gave us three cups for the 32 of us."



Elizabeth Catlett, *There is a Woman in Every Color*, 1975  
color linoleum cut, screenprint, and woodcut  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

Elizabeth Catlett contributed to the civil rights movement with politically engaged sculptures and prints. In this work, the woman's dignified face is rendered as both positive and negative, perhaps suggesting a call for racial equality. Catlett's inclusion of the multicolored women on the right can be read as a metaphor for the artist's commitments to global civil rights and equality. The colorful women suggest an accessible and intersectional movement of feminism that calls for the liberation of all women, a prescient forecast that would come into being only during the third wave of feminism in the 1990s.

Accra Shepp, *Shadow, Occupying Wall Street, October 15, 2011, 2011–2012*  
gelatin silver print  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The text on Shadow's dress references the layers of inequality that Black women continue to face in the United States in the 21st century. Her presence at the Occupy Wall Street protest reveals the intersectionality of experiences faced by Black women in American society. Not only do they seek justice due to their race and sexuality, but they also face socio-economic challenges. In this project, photographer Accra Shepp sought to capture the diversity of the participants. His work undermined prevailing narratives that characterized Occupy Wall Street as overwhelmingly white.

