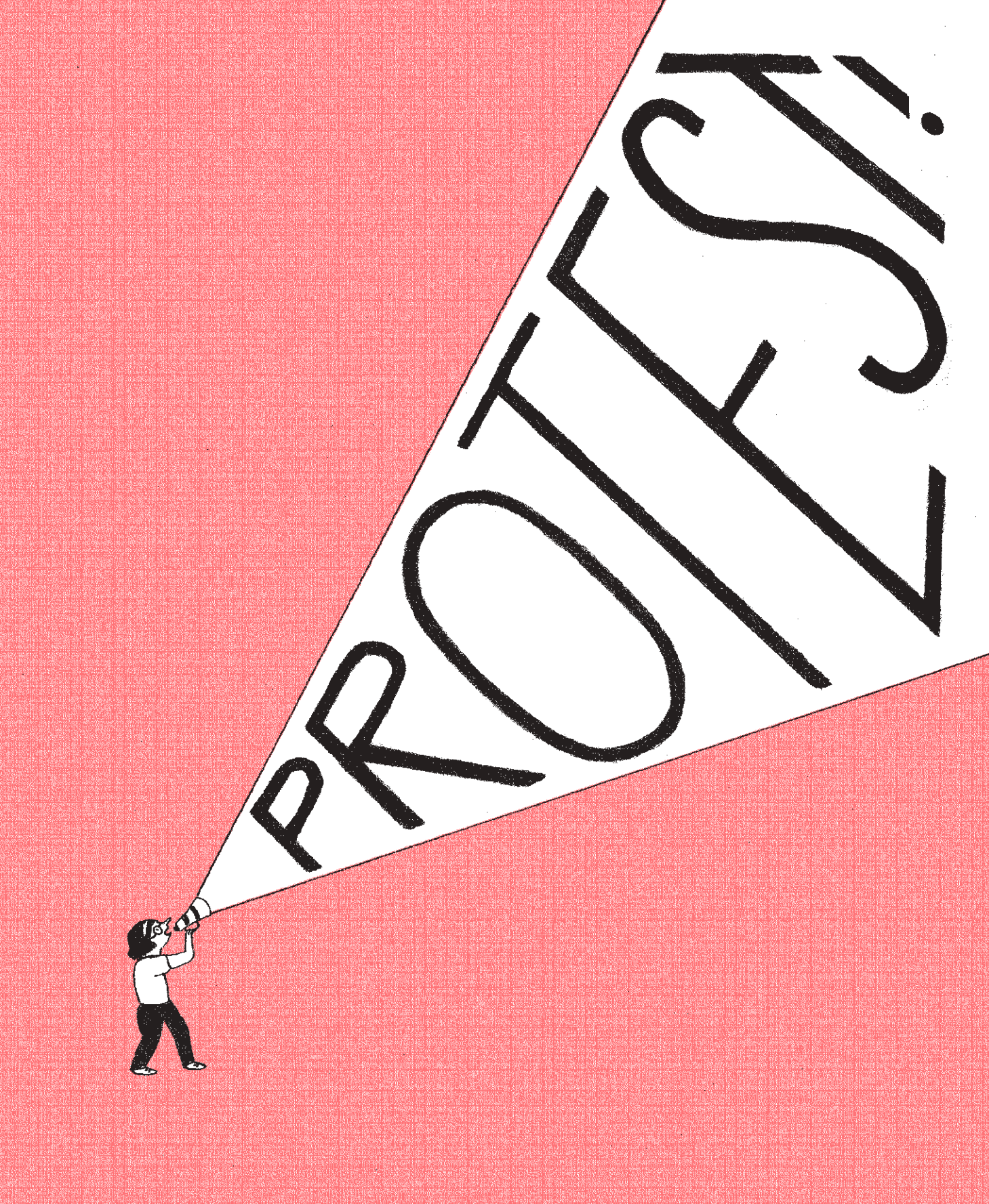
PROTEST!

PAVILION

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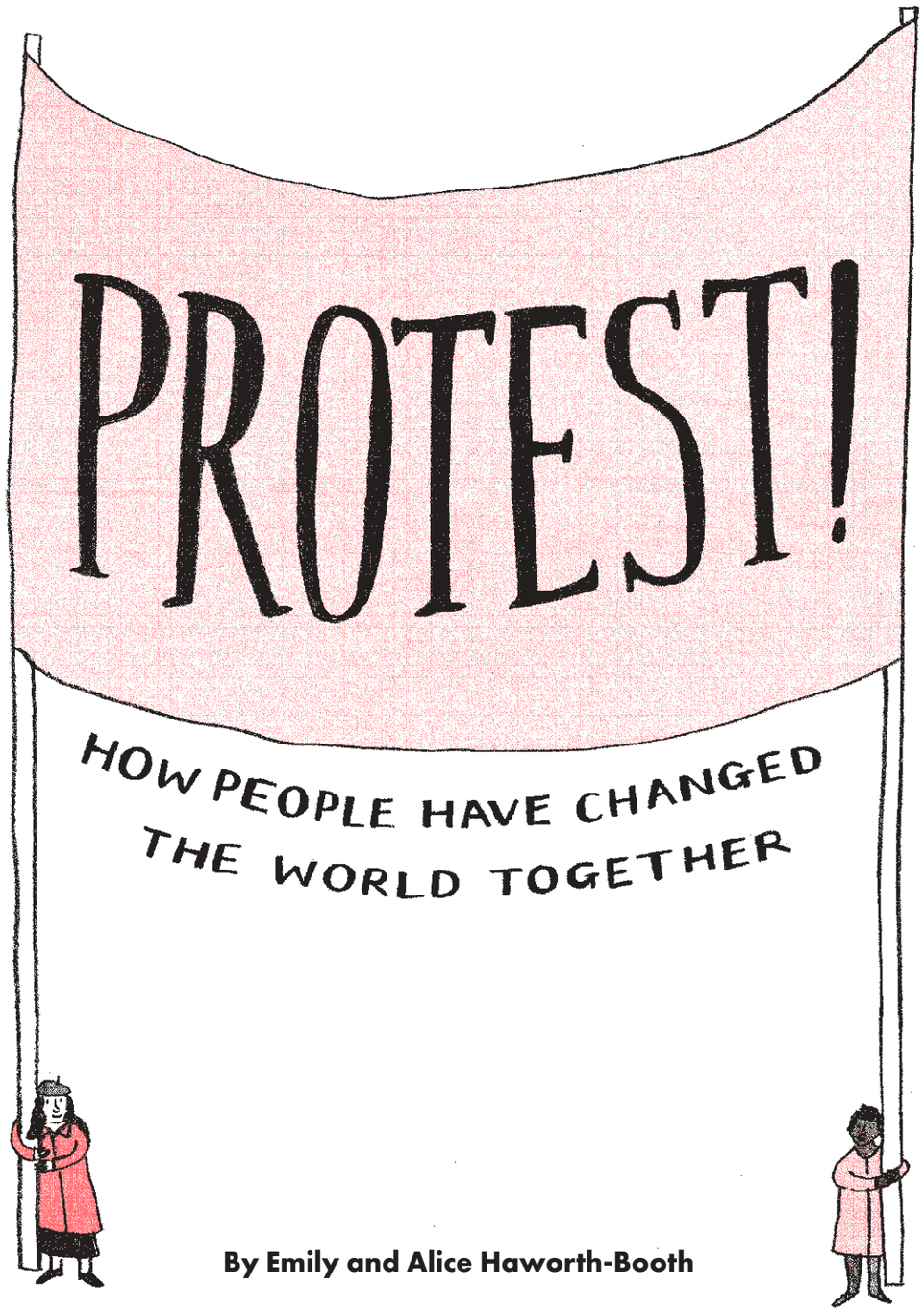

To our rebellious parents

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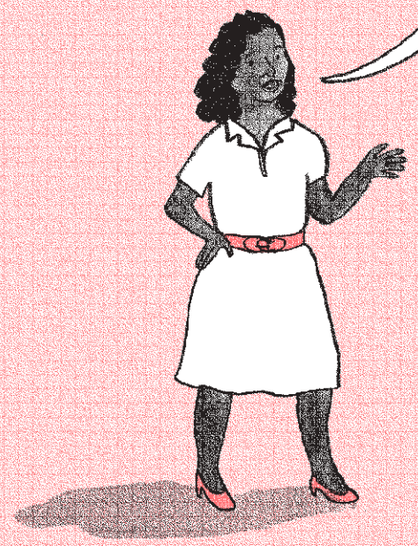
Freedom is, by definition,
people realizing that they
are their own leaders

DIANE NASH, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST



INTRODUCTION

The first big protest we remember going to was the march against the Iraq war in London in 2003. We weren't sure what to expect when we got there, and on the train we exchanged nervous smiles with other people holding placards. When we arrived we saw more people than we'd ever seen together in one place pouring out of the station. But it didn't take long for us to feel at home in the crowd. As the march set off, we took over the streets, singing and chanting together in a huge chorus. We were there to protest something sad, but the main feeling was one of love for humanity.

Because tens of millions of people took part in the protests all over the world, and because the war still happened, it made many people wonder if there was any point in protesting anymore. But marches are only ever part of a larger movement for change. There is no formula for a successful protest, no matter how many people agree with you, and success doesn't always match what's written on your placard.

The way protests work can be mysterious. Sometimes victory means building movements rather than achieving goals, and sometimes it's simply about sustaining hope and joy by coming together. Karl Marx saw revolution as a mole that is underground most of the time, making its way steadily forward, until suddenly it comes to the surface. Sometimes it seems like nothing is happening, but nevertheless, progress is being made.

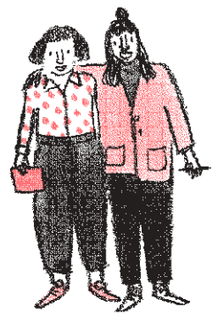
Since that first march we have discovered that protest can take almost any form. Climbing up buildings, sitting at lunch counters, posting yourself wrapped up as a parcel, taking your TV set out for a walk, growing vegetables, camping in the mountains, singing songs, sticking a loaf of bread on the end a pole and carrying it around... all these things have changed the course of history. Protest is a creative art that is constantly reinventing itself. But at its heart is the idea of people coming together to speak the truth and change the world.

Many of history's most famous protests have an equally famous name attached to them. Figures like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi have brought brilliant ideas and leadership to their movements, but they are individuals in what is most importantly a collective endeavour.

It is groups of people coming together to take action who are the real heroes of the stories in this book. It is their actions rather than their names that have entered the history books and changed the world, which have won breakthroughs in the struggle for civil rights, gay rights and trans rights, brought us things like votes for women and the eight hour working day, ended dictatorships and freed countries.

The next chapter will be written by you.

Alice & Emily Haworth-Booth, 2020



Note to reader

This book is not a complete history. It includes a selection of famous and less well-known movements, focusing on non-violent protest. Rather than describe a handful of protests and their contexts in-depth, we have chosen to present a broad range to give a sense of the many possibilities of what protest can be. And yet there is so much we have left out, because the history of protest is as big as the history of the world itself. Despite this, many movements have not been officially recorded in history, because it is not usually in the interests of the powerful to keep stories of resistance in the public memory.

We have written this book from the perspective of the protesters, and in line with our own sympathies. Protests have diverse aims, not all of which are ones we agree with. Because we want this book to inspire, on the whole we have chosen examples where people are protesting for democracy and human rights and against oppression.

With some exceptions where movements overlap, or where it has felt more helpful to group things together in themes, we have told the story of protest chronologically. You can dip in and out or read it through from beginning to end, seeing how the influence of individual protests often unfolds across time, living on in future movements. The tactics sections at the end of each chapter collect together examples of particular ways to protest, like camping, theatre or making noise.

The experience of protest can be very different depending on where you are and how you are seen by the authorities. Although we have found lots of examples of people successfully finding creative ways to protest safely even when protests are banned, some of the stories in the book don't have happy endings, and many involve police or state violence. That is why it is so important to know your rights and understand that there are sometimes risks involved.

Experienced activists always do their research, prepare thoroughly and use a buddy system so their friends know where they are. If you are planning to protest, look up the laws in your country, take a friend or parent with you, and make sure you do what you need to do to stay safe.

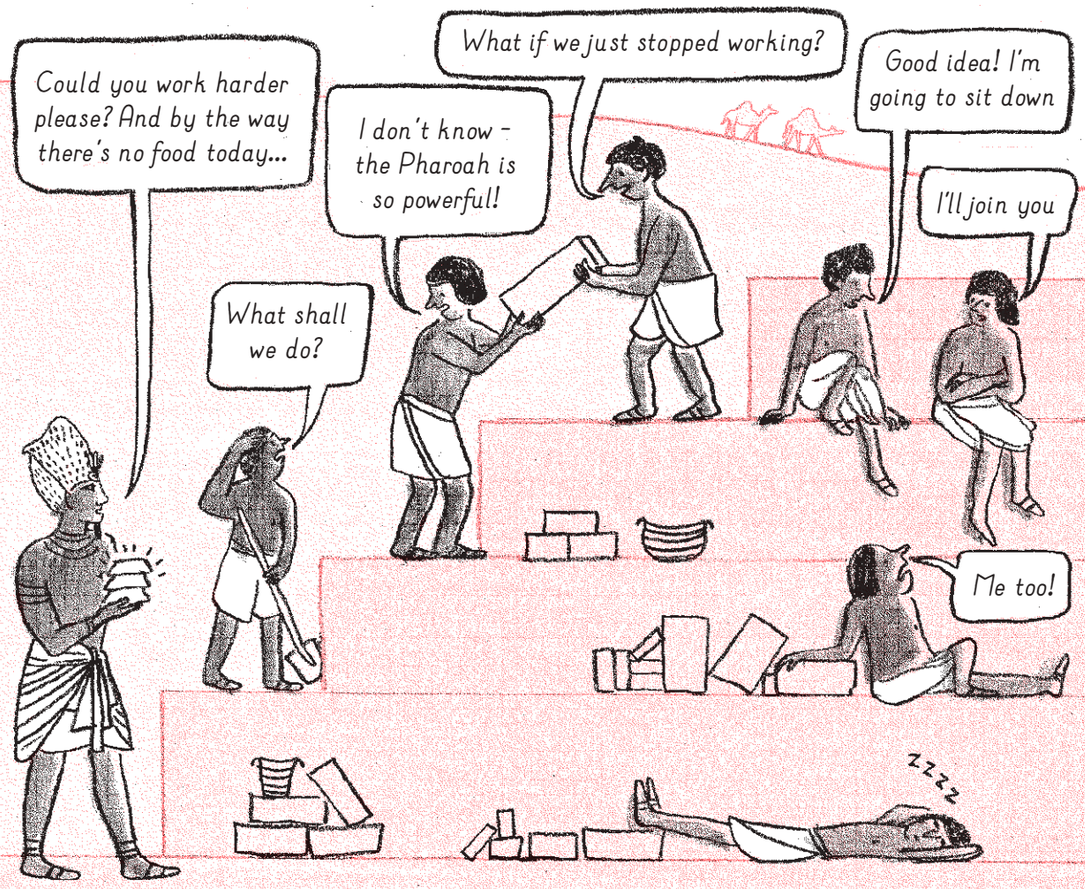
Protest in the Ancient World

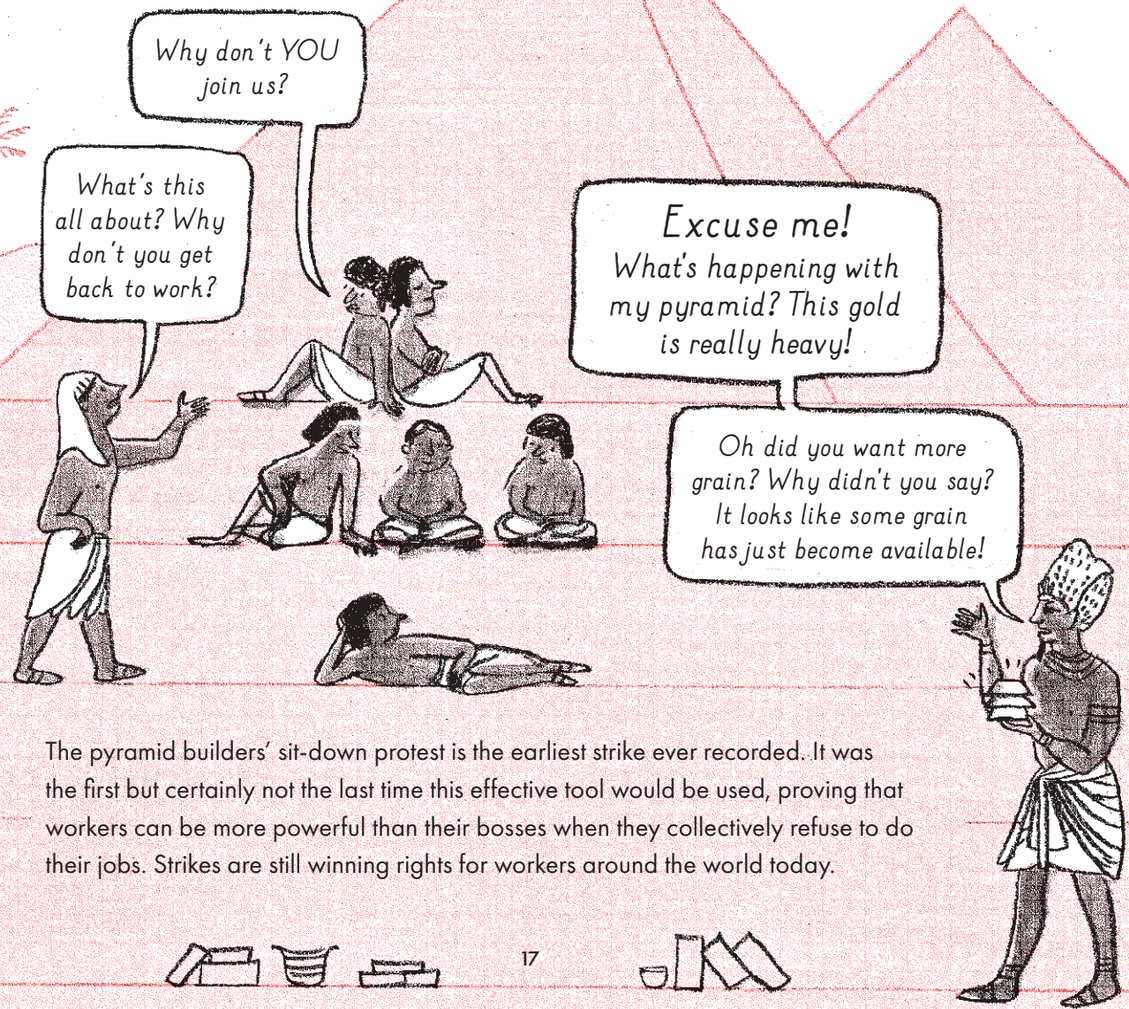
THESE STONES ARE REALLY HEAVY

The first workers' strike, Ancient Egypt, 1170 BCE

Pharaoh Rameses III, the ruler of Egypt, wanted lots of pyramids to store all his gold to take to the afterlife. Pyramids were built as tombs to protect Pharaohs' bodies and belongings after death. Rameses III had masses of jewellery and was terribly worried the pyramids wouldn't be finished before he died.

But the people building the pyramids had even bigger problems. The work was gruelling and they weren't getting enough food to eat. It was hot and dusty and the workers desperately needed things to change. They sat down and refused to work until they got their grain. It was a simple action that changed history.





The pyramid builders' sit-down protest is the earliest strike ever recorded. It was the first but certainly not the last time this effective tool would be used, proving that workers can be more powerful than their bosses when they collectively refuse to do their jobs. Strikes are still winning rights for workers around the world today.

Noise

From singing to drumming, silence to rowdiness, people have used noise to unify, bring hope and make their voices heard.

MEDIEVAL BELLS, 1300s

In the English Peasants' Revolt, church bells were used for a new purpose. They could be heard far and wide, bringing the scheming revolters together on village greens.

SINGING REVOLUTION, 1991

The Baltic states had wanted to be free from Soviet rule for years. When huge crowds started singing national songs together, their movements gathered irresistible momentum, and soonEstonia, Latvia and Lithuania won their independence.

RUBBISH MUSIC, 2015

Going on a march in Syria can be dangerous, so instead protesters hid tiny speakers in rubbish bins and piles of manure all over Damascus. The police had to wade through the rubbish to turn off the illegal protest songs they were playing.

NEDA, 2009

When a protester called Neda was killed in Iran, people wanted to share their feelings of sadness, but the government made it illegal to talk about her. Then the people remembered that Neda is a common name that appears in lots of Iranian pop songs. They started to use these as their ringtones, so whenever a phone rang, everyone would remember her.

PUSSY RIOT, 2012

A band of young women in neon stormed into an Orthodox cathedral in Moscow and started playing raucous feminist punk music. Pussy Riot ended up in prison, but this just made the band more famous and their messages about feminism, LGBTQ+ rights and other issues even louder.

FREEDOM SONGS, 1800s

On the plantations where they worked, enslaved Africans sang songs of resistance. Singing kept hope alive and spread secret messages about uprisings and routes of escape. The hymn Swing Low Sweet Chariot has a hidden meaning, the 'sweet chariot' referring to the Underground Railroad which rescued enslaved people: *a band of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home.*

JAZZ NOT HATE, 2020

When a far right politician started giving hate-filled speeches in Denmark, a group of jazz musicians decided to drown him out. Any time Rasmus Paludan was scheduled to speak, the musicians were there with their instruments, making more noise than him. They call themselves Denmark's "potentially biggest band" and specialise in bad music, so that anyone can join in whether or not they know how to play. Anyone, that is, except Paludan himself, who is the only person not invited to join the band.

SILENT PARADE, 1917

One of the first civil rights protests was a silent march. There was no chanting or singing: only the sombre sound of muffled drums could be heard as 10,000 African American men, women and children walked through the streets of New York. It was the absence of noise that amplified their grief in the wake of racist killings.

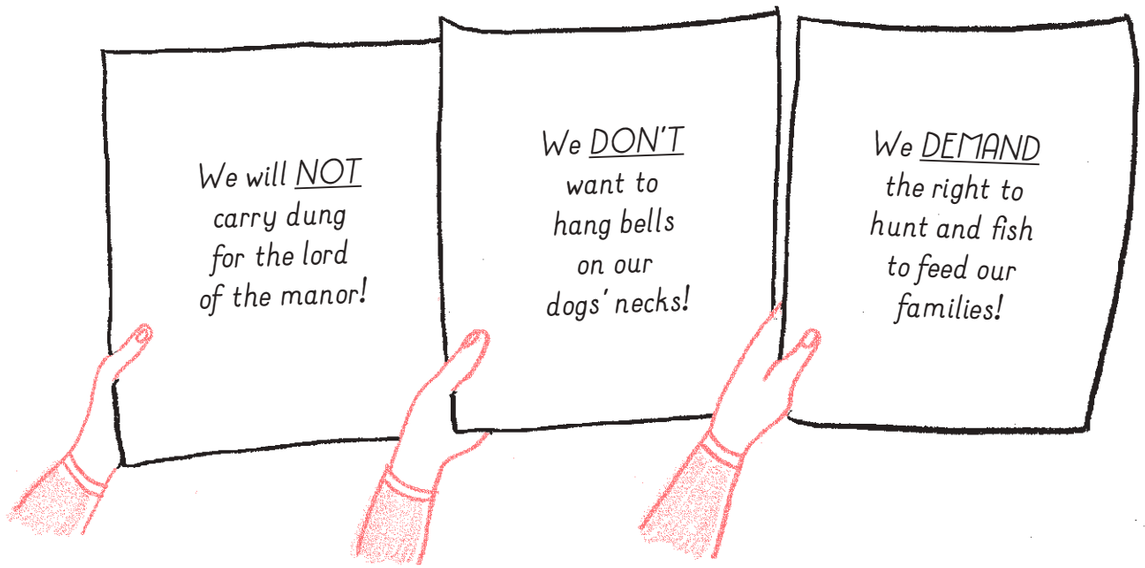
THE WAR OF THE SNAILS

Peasants' Revolt, Germany, 1524

The counts and countesses of 16th century Germany thought they were the most important people in the world. So when the Countess of Lupfen ran out of things to wind her embroidery thread on, she demanded that the peasant farmers who lived on her estates stop growing food and instead look for snail shells for her to use as spools for her yarn.

This was the last straw! It wasn't very fun to be a peasant – they didn't have much freedom and were given the most unpleasant jobs, like carrying dung around for their bosses. Even their rights to hunt, fish and chop wood on common land had been taken away. The peasants refused to work for the Countess anymore, and marched to a nearby town where they found others who felt the same way. Their sign was a shoe tied to a pole, symbolising their march towards freedom.

They spread secret messages and everyone helped out. The printing press, which had recently been invented a few towns away, helped them get the word out. They were creating the art of propaganda, and proving that peasants could read and think for themselves.



Count Lupfen started to get worried.

Count Lupfen thought he'd better do something to stop them getting even angrier. He made an agreement with the peasants to make some changes, but there were lots of strange rules that went with them. He didn't really want to change anything – he just wanted the peasants to calm down long enough for him to gather an army to crush the rebellion. The peasants didn't stand for it. Although many peasants were killed in the protests, they kept revolting.

Many of their castles were destroyed, but the counts and countesses managed to cling to power for a few more centuries. However, the peasants' struggles had not been in vain. Their spirit lived on in the revolts and revolutions that would radically change Europe over the next few centuries.

DEEDS NOT WORDS

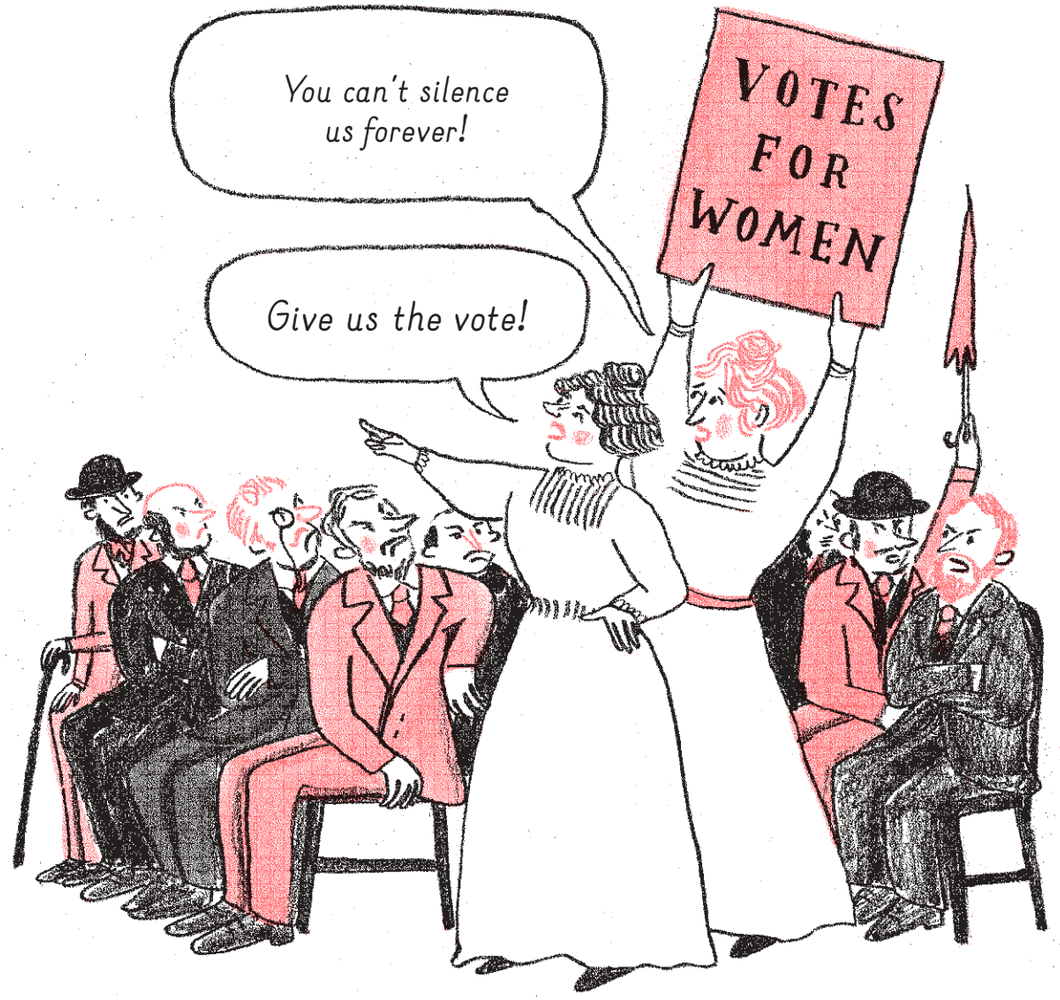
The Suffragettes, UK, 1900s

Women had been fighting for the vote (known as suffrage) in the UK for a very long time. They petitioned and campaigned nicely and got close to changing the law a few times, yet their male representatives in Parliament always found a way to wriggle out of giving them the vote at the last minute. Some women thought this meant they should keep prodding politely, but for others it was time for a complete change in tactics.

A group of women* decided that if they weren't being listened to, they would speak louder. In the run up to an election in 1905, two members of the group smuggled a banner into a political meeting. They stood up and interrupted, repeatedly asking when they would be given the vote. Their bravery got them arrested - it was simply too outrageous that women would speak out in public. Far from stopping them, spending the night in prison made their cause famous and inspired more women to join them in taking action.

Their group grew bigger and bigger and soon they were able to hold huge marches that showed just how many women were part of this new disobedient force. When a newspaper mocked them with the girly nickname 'Suffragettes', they adopted this new identity which marked them out as different from the well-behaved group called the Suffragists. Their sense of humour was as fierce as their bravery.

*They called themselves the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU for short)

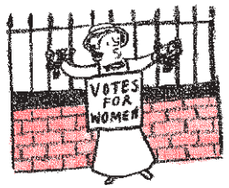


As their numbers swelled, so did the variety of actions they took. Before long, they were disrupting everything with their rebellious spirit . Being a Suffragette was not just a political stance. It was a community and a way for women to live bigger, bolder lives in a world where everything was designed to silence their creativity and intelligence. Ignoring them was no longer an option.

They weren't afraid of breaking the law, in fact that was one of their tactics. They even learned Suffrajitsu – special self-defence moves they could use if they were attacked by the police. Being in prison was a gruelling experience, especially as many of them went on hunger strike and were force-fed. They were welcomed on their release by other Suffragettes, who gave them medals to recognise their bravery. Being prepared to go to prison meant they could be more daring in their actions.

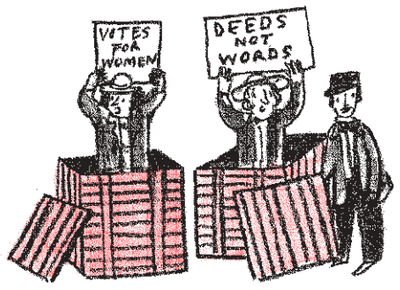
Here are just a few of the things they did...

Chained themselves to the railings outside Parliament...



...giving them time to make speeches while the police cut through their chains

Sent themselves as 'human letters' to the Prime Minister, delivered by post to Downing Street



Stormed Parliament...

...thousands of them banging at the door so loudly that they could be heard by the politicians inside

Hid in a furniture van on its way into Parliament. Two Suffragettes managed to get into the chamber where they shouted their slogans at the MPs

Held theatrical pageants...

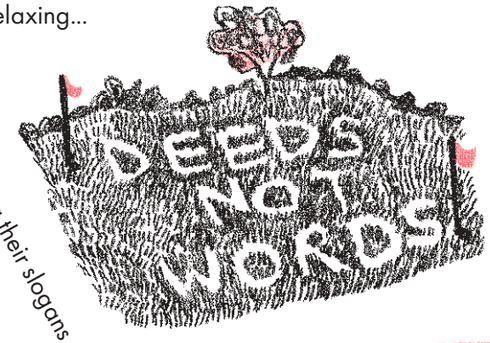
...dressing up as famous women as a reminder of how powerful women had been throughout history

Disrupted the postal system – the main way that people communicated...

...pouring jam, ink and acid into postboxes and sometimes even setting them on fire

Made sure politicans kept the message in mind even when they were relaxing...

...by burning their slogans into golf courses



Chalked slogans on pavements

Smashed windows in buildings all over London using tiny hammers that were meant for breaking toffee...

...in protest at the Prime Minister yet again sabotaging a bill that would have given them the right to vote

DISOBEDIENT DOLLS

Toys Protest, Global, 2010s

In Russia, the only way people were allowed to protest against the regime was if they had a permit – and permits were rarely given.

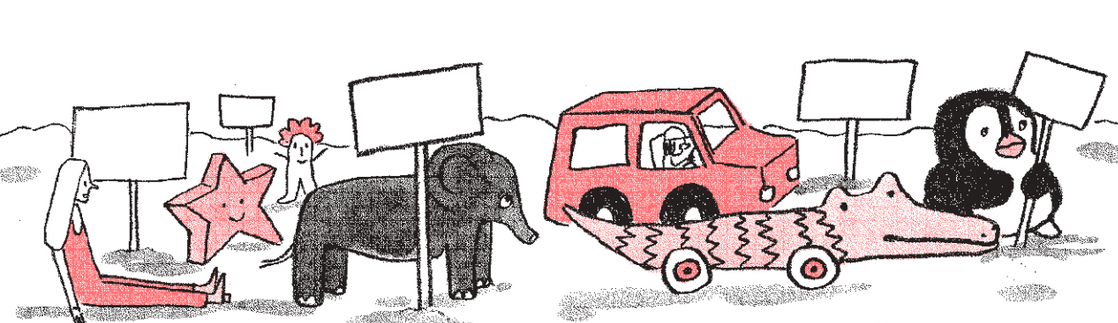
In 2012, the people of a small town in Siberia found a creative way to get around the ban. They couldn't protest, but what if they sent someone or something in their place? One snowy winter's day hundreds of teddy bears, Lego people and toy soldiers appeared holding placards and banners protesting the regime.

It wasn't long before police arrived on the scene and started noting down the slogans. The officers scratched their heads, wondering how to arrest a load of dolls. When photos of the ridiculous scene were shared all over Russia, they inspired a wave of toy protests across the whole country. The authorities knew that the people were making fun of them and they declared public gatherings of inanimate objects officially against the law.

Russia isn't the only place toys have played their part in protests.

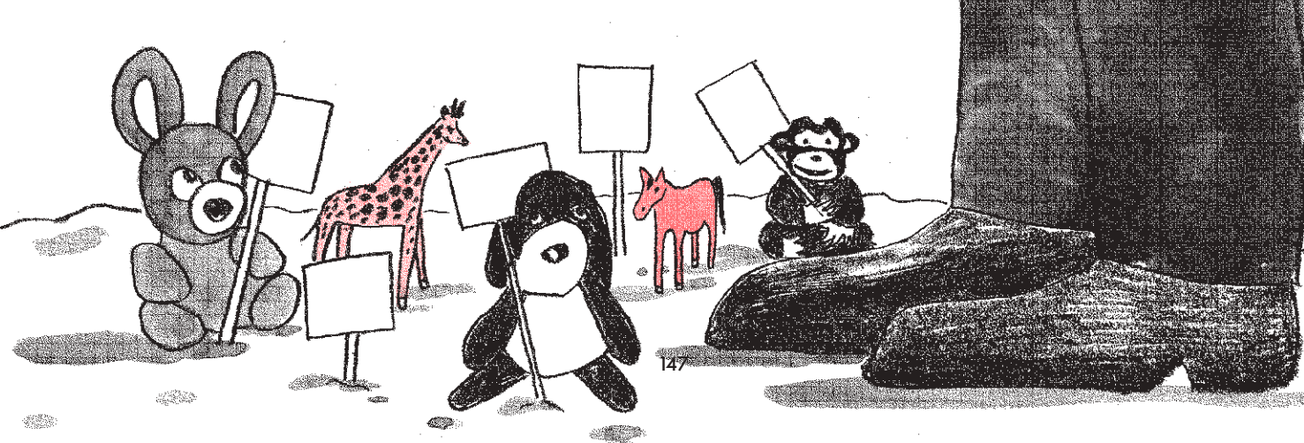
In 2018 gatherings were banned in Krajina Square, in the Bosnian-Serb city of Banja Luka. The next year, a 'Protest without People' appeared. 'Enough of you toying with us!' read one of the banners held up by stuffed elephants and teddy bears. 'You can buy us in toy shops, not in elections,' was written on another. Once again, the sight of police officers looming over the tiny scene made it clear just how worried the government were about anyone criticising them, even cuddly toys.

The Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei decided toys would make good material for his protest art when he was making portraits of political prisoners in 2014. Their photos online were often pixelated and blocky, almost like they were made up of Lego bricks.



Once he had run out of his son's supply of bricks, he got in touch with the Lego factory in Denmark to ask them to send him some more. To his surprise they refused to sell him any. Instead, a letter arrived, explaining that as Weiwei's art was usually so political, letting him play with the toys might imply that Lego agreed with whatever subversive statement he was making. And asa politically neutral company, they couldn't have that.

But it turned out he didn't need Lego to supply him with bricks – hundreds of thousands of tiny Lego bricks started pouring in from toy boxes all around the world when Weiwei's fans and supporters heard about the ban. The company soon apologised, and Weiwei has been making portraits with the donated Lego ever since.



The world is full of young people leading the fight for environmental justice.

Indigenous activist Autumn Peltier was thirteen when she challenged Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the oil pipeline being built on indigenous land. She is now the chief water commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation, protecting native land and water.

When Vanessa Nakate heard about the global school strikes she wanted to start one where she lived in Uganda. Because protesting there can be dangerous, none of her friends wanted to strike, but her siblings joined her. Since then, she has led three national climate strikes, and battled racism in media coverage of climate activism.

Artemisa Xakriaba is a 19 year-old indigenous activist from Brazil who is passionate about rainforests. She has seen first-hand the effects of the fires in the Amazon, and works with The Guardians of the Forest, a group of indigenous communities which protect over 400 million hectares of rainforest and its people.

In Guilin, China, youth activist Howey Ou has taken bold risks to protest for climate action – she has been expelled from school for striking, and has had to move away from home. After she was told to leave government offices where she was holding a lone protest, Ou started planting trees around the buildings, an initiative she calls Plant for Survival.

Elizabeth Wanjiru Wathuti from Kenya planted her first tree aged seven. By the time she was 21 she had founded the Green Generation Initiative, which has planted over 30,000 trees by working with schools and young people.

Isra Hirsi, the 16-year-old co-founder of US Youth Climate Strike, is helping to create a climate movement in which activists of colour have a strong voice. She speaks up about how they are the most affected by the climate crisis.

Like Isra Hirsi, Zanagee Artis works to draw attention to the connections between colonialism, racism and the climate crisis through the youth organisation Zero Hour movement. Together they have organised youth climate summits, marches, lobby days and art festivals.

Youth-led political group The Sunrise Movement held a thousand-person sit-in at politicians' offices in Washington D.C. to demand a Green New Deal. They work tirelessly to bring climate change into focus in political debate.

Indian climate activist Ridhima Pandey was nine when she sued the Indian Government over inaction on climate change. Since then, she has joined Greta Thunberg and other youth activists from around the world in filing a complaint with the United Nations, accusing five countries of violating children's rights by ignoring the risks of climate change.