

Creative occupation

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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This spring, the most interesting question for me about the Occupy movement isn't whether it will find focus or whether it will revive or whether it will make a difference in the election. What I want to pay attention to is the ongoing and generative outpouring of creative politics.

The Occupy movement is rich in unedited signs. In my mind, creative placarding will forever be its legacy. In an age of digital media, signs were penned on cardboard boxes and on newspapers. Duct tape, magic marker and masking tape prevailed.

The signs were as quirky as the people who made them:

I won't believe corporations are people until Texas executes one.

Why are we bailing them out when none of them are behind bars?

Lost my job, but found an occupation.

The signs aren't copyrighted or patented. They can be duplicated, riffed, mocked, transformed. One sign leads to another and so on, *ad infinitum*. Sometimes they are laugh-out-loud funny, sometimes ironic, tragic, earnest, cynical, hopeful, passionate--sometimes all of these at once.

Beyond signage, I also look to Occupy for the way that the movement has inspired and transformed political theater, adding music, dancing and, dare I say, [congregational singing](#) to its repertoire. It's also introduced other forms of political action, like [how to use junk mail](#) as a form of speech.

Perhaps I am so inspired by this creative outpouring because I came of age in an era where political protest seemed over, played out. At age 17, in 1989, I took an overnight bus from Minnesota to Washington, D.C. for a gigantic "March on Washington" for homelessness. I remember my intense disillusionment at the form of "action" that was being asked of me. As we marched in large numbers, we were encouraged to yell, "Hey Hey; Ho Ho; Homelessness Has Got to Go."

I can still feel the distinct sensation of shame as I realized that this action had little chance to make any kind of a dent in homelessness. Gathered around me were people who had been marching against everything since I was born. Even as I admired their tenacity, I didn't, even at that idealistic age, have the capacity to believe in change brought about by marching.

I continue to wonder what constitutes a meaningful form of protest. But Occupy Wall Street is opening up new ground for me. I don't think these outpourings of new engagement will go away soon.