

# NEW TACTICS IN HUMAN RIGHTS

A RESOURCE FOR PRACTITIONERS



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A workbook created by

**The New Tactics in Human Rights Project**

A project of

**The Center for Victims of Torture**





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This book is also available for download free of charge at [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org). Periodic updates will be made.

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**BUILDING CONSTITUENCIES** Human rights messages

are often directed at people already familiar with the issues, people who have already expressed interest and support. Reaching out to new people and involving them in human rights work strengthens the potential for more effective action. It brings in fresh energy, fresh ideas, fresh resources and fresh contacts. The more diverse the group of people acting as advocates on a particular issue, the better able it will be to adapt to changes and the more difficult it becomes for abusers to defend their actions. A diverse and active constituency creates a far more resilient human rights movement.

The tactics in this section all build new constituencies for human rights issues. They reach out to individuals and groups who may never have had the chance to become involved in these issues — young people or local legislators, for example — or to those with particular authority in a community, such as religious leaders, who have great power to influence and engage others.

Discussion groups, forums and workshops are all common tools for raising awareness of an issue and getting new people involved, but these tactics may not be dynamic enough to catch the attention of certain target groups — namely, young people. An organization in Poland has zeroed in on two effective ways to reach young people and hold their attention: music and sports.

Nigdy Wiecej (Never Again) is using pop culture to build an anti-racist youth network in Poland. At rock concerts and soccer matches the group reaches out to large numbers of young people and makes them aware of the problem. It then recruits some to join a network of correspondents who monitor and report on the activities of neo-fascist and racist groups in their hometowns.

As part of its rock campaign Music Against Racism, Nigdy Wiecej organizes concerts and publishes compilation CDs featuring well-known Polish and foreign rock bands. At the concerts and inside the cases of the CDs, Nigdy Wiecej educates the audience about the seriousness of the problem of racism in Poland and calls on audience members to become active agents of social change.

Poland's soccer stadiums had been almost completely dominated by a xenophobic subculture before Nigdy Wiecej started its Let's Kick Racism Out of the Stadiums campaign. As part of the campaign, the group publishes *Stadion*, an anti-racist magazine for soccer fans, has released a CD, organizes amateur soccer tournaments and provides banners and leaflets used during games to show their presence to other local anti-racist groups.

Through these youth-focused campaigns, Nigdy Wiecej has recruited a network of 150 voluntary correspondents who are required to report monthly on racist and xenophobic activity in their communities. Nigdy Wiecej collects these reports, publishes them in its own monthly magazine and distributes them to the Polish and international press. The network and the publication help raise awareness of the problem of racism among a much larger cross-section of Polish society, well beyond young soccer and rock fans.

Read more about this in a tactical notebook available at [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org), under Tools for Action.

ONLINE

Nigdy Wiecej uses pop culture to get young people — a sympathetic, but otherwise often uninvolved constituency — involved in human rights work, but it doesn't stop at concerts and sports. Once people have expressed interest and a commitment to volunteering, the organization ensures that they have the chance to get more involved. Adaptations of this tactic could be used to overcome widespread apathy in a variety of situations, but the issue itself is important: it must be something young people can feel connected to, something that could potentially touch their own lives.

*The very existence of social problems such as racism and xenophobia is often denied by the authorities and the mainstream mass media in Poland, as it is in other Central and Eastern European countries.*

“ ”

— Rafal Pankowski, Nigdy Wiecej, Poland