

## Majken Jul Sørensen; Humorous Political Stunts

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“Humorous political stunts can be powerful stories because they frequently speak to the imagination,” writes Majken Jul Sørensen in her fascinating new book *Humorous Political Stunts: Nonviolent Public Challenges to Power*. The author invites readers to walk with her in her journey to explore the creativity, and wit involved in nonviolent activism. The author in this well documented scholarly book, shares stories, and instances of her participation in political stunts, to provide glimpses of previously unnoticed political advantages that are innate to humorous political stunts.

Armed with artistic skills, and seamless narrative style that traverses through the unseen, this book speaks the language of the ordinary people. Ms. Sørensen, astutely identifies typologies of humorous political stunts, and they are: supportive, corrective, naïve, absurd, and provocative. A very funny, and powerful account is presented about John Howard—the notorious conservative former Prime Minister of Australia—who apparently had a “fan club.” The members of this fan club exaggerated their love and loyalty towards the ex-Prime Minister while satirizing his racist policies through actions such as “White Blindfold,” where tram riders were asked to put on a white blindfold so they could not see anything. The message this group tried to convey was that white supremacism could ‘white out’ everything in sight. Humorous political stunts like this are not just entertaining, argues Sørensen. She claims that these stunts serve to enable outreach facilitation, movement mobilization and cultivation of culture(s) of nonviolent resistance. Most importantly, the imaginative power of humor can weaken the dominant values and beliefs.

This book is worth your attention for three reasons:

First, the book documents creative actions of nonviolent groups that aspires to change their societies, and the world around them. Therefore, seasoned activists should read this book to learn, and to incorporate tactics defined in the text in their own struggle.

Second: Because the author analyzes complex narratives, and stories of more than ten activist groups operating across three continents (Asia, Australia, and Europe), her analysis provides new insights into political effectiveness of humorous stunts, which hasn't been studied enough in the existing scholarship of nonviolence, and social movements.

Lastly, while some may argue that the book preaches to the choir, the theoretical role, examined in the book, that of humorous political stunts on discrediting power, and challenging it, should not be discounted. Domination is at the discursive level, and mobilization for change will not occur without reframing current situation, and humor can activate this cognitive function through creating images of alternative reality. Further, this may help alter the fatalistic outlook—the point from where change is viewed as a foreign unattainable object—which is embraced by oppressed people. Also, Sørensen asserts the transformative power of humor through her ethnographic research.

However, some questions remain unanswered. While some are peskier than others, I will put forward some troubling ones here: What will happen, if and when, the dominant power holders adapt to humorous political stunts? Could it be possible that the dominant system has already developed resilience to humorous political stunts, and thereby the web of domination is immune to discursive shifts? Perhaps, answers to these questions will be answered in Sørensen's next book.

*Janjira Sobatpoonsiri, Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University*