Inspiration to Take Action

*Untitled*, Mia Bella Chavez, 2018

**Grade levels:** 9–12

**Duration:** One 45-minute classroom period
Learning Objectives

Who Inspires You?

Message to Educators

Some changemakers know exactly what change they want to see in the world, and how they’re going to accomplish that change. But each person needs inspiration, guidance, assistance, and encouragement.

When you ask your students to take action using their photography skills, the first step is motivation. This lesson begins with some inspiring photographs to explore and consider. With inspiration as their foundation, you’ll give them important skills to get their action plans off the ground.

Using the structure of a graphic organizer, students will set out their goals, resources, and timetables for their action plans. Students communicate these aspects in whatever way is most comfortable and helpful for them. A standard framework for project planning is coupled with the key question of how students’ roles as photographers support their projects. Finally, students set their intentions as social justice advocates by completing the statement, “I am the right person to implement this advocacy action plan because…” Discussion and reflection help students hone their plans and prepare to actualize their advocacy.

You do not need to be practiced at facilitating discussions using photography to effectively lead this lesson. Getty is committed to supporting meaningful dialogue through art, and the lesson plan was created with educators to carefully walk you through the steps.

Lesson Plan Seven: Inspiration to Take Action

In the previous lesson, students began to focus on their plans for action. They put together an approach by crafting a statement of purpose, identifying community partners, and drafting a general plan of advocacy.

This lesson asks them to translate the general advocacy plan into a detailed plan of action, which includes the strategic use of photography. In a collaborative process, classmates and mentors check the plans for
thoroughness and feasibility. Finally, students use their photographic skills and talents to advance and document their plans.

This lesson is built to encourage reflection on advocacy actions, along with making them sustainable over time. Reflection is as important to service learning as taking action.  

Associated Standards and Learning Objectives

- Create a detailed plan of action (road map).
- Consider backup plans or alternatives to a plan of action.
- Engage in advocacy.
- CCSS (California Curriculum State Standard).ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence, and to add interest.

Materials

- Projector
- Photographs from Getty Unshuttered community
- Photograph from Getty Museum collection
- Advocacy Action Plan graphic organizer
- A digital camera or smartphone

Vocabulary

**Advocate, Advocacy**
Someone who publicly supports and speaks up for an idea, a cause, or members of an identity group.

**Agency**
Denotes an individual’s power to think independently and act freely in a social context, in ways that determine their experiences and life trajectories. Can also take collective forms.

**Bias**
A preconceived and unreasoned inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartiality or fairness.

**Community**
A network or group of people, sometimes living in a particular place, who share interests, values, characteristics, responsibilities, or physical spaces.

**Discrimination**
Actions stemming from conscious or unconscious prejudice, which favor and empower one group over others based on differences of race, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, language, age, national identity, and other categories.

**Disenfranchised**
Deprived of access to rights, opportunities, and services.

**Equity**
When all people or groups gain access to the resources needed to realize equal results. Differs from equality, which focuses on the equal distribution of resources rather than equal results.

**Identity**
An individual’s distinguishing characteristics. May include age, gender, religious or spiritual affiliation, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, ability, education, and socioeconomic status. Some identities confer majority status or privilege, while some confer minority status.

**Institutional Racism (see also: Racism)**
Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The
institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

**Justice, Injustice**
In different contexts, “justice” refers to both moral correctness and fairness, and also the rule of law. By contrast, “injustice” usually describes unfairness.

**Marginalize**
Treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or powerless; placing them outside of a group, society, or community; and enforcing prejudice through societal institutions.

**Nonviolence**
A strategy employed by social justice and civil rights advocates that stresses social and political change through acts that do not involve physical violence against oneself or others.

**Oppression**
The systemic use of power and privilege to disenfranchise, dominate, or marginalize a group of people, for the benefit of another group.

**Power**
The ability to make decisions and set rules regarding access to resources, or to control or influence people, based on privileged identities. Power may be personal, social, structural, or institutional.

**Prejudice**
A preconceived judgment or attitude about a person or group; usually a negative bias, often based on stereotypes.

**Race**
A term used to identify individuals as part of a distinct group, based on physical characteristics and heritage. Though, at one time, the term purportedly was based in biology, race is now understood as a social construct that is not scientifically based.

**Racism (see also: Institutional Racism)**
Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions by individuals or institutions with power, based on perceived racial groups, to benefit a dominant group. Racism differs from mere prejudice, hatred, or discrimination, because of the power dynamics employed to carry out systematic discrimination through
institutional policies and practices, and by shaping cultural beliefs and values that support racist policies and practices.

**Social Justice**
The practice of ally-ship—taking action to promote equality, equity, respect, and the assurance of rights to fair treatment and resources, both within and between communities and social groups.

**Upstander**
A person who chooses to take positive action in the face of injustice. Can refer to individual incidents or broader societal situations. The opposite of a bystander.

**White Privilege**
Refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits, and choices bestowed on people solely because they are White.

**White Supremacy**
The idea (ideology) that White people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions are superior to people of color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Not confined to extremist groups, White supremacy is found in institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the White group while casting people and communities of color as worthless, immoral, bad, inhuman, and “undeserving.” Drawing from critical race theory, the term “White supremacy” also refers to a political or socioeconomic system in which White people enjoy structural advantages that other racial and ethnic groups do not.

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**Instructional Plan**

**Introduction**

Inspiration and motivation are the first steps to taking action. Previously, you inventoried your own and your community’s assets, and identified opportunities for advocacy. Now, it’s time to pinpoint what inspires you, consider what might inspire others, decide how photography can help you in your efforts, and create a detailed plan.
The questions for inquiry at the center of the lesson include: What sparks my curiosity and drive? How do I spark curiosity, interest, and action in others? What unique skills or points of view do I bring to the conversation? How can I use photography to boost others’ understanding and excitement? And, at a tactical level, how do I break big projects down into small steps, and what are the features of a good action plan?

Set the Stage

Project the image shown below. Discussion can begin by simply asking students what they notice about the photograph.

Untitled, Grecia Carey Ortega, 2018
Questions for discussion:

- What do you notice first about this image? (It is a photograph of a wall where art is displayed, some of it hung on the wall, and most prominently on view is a mural)
  - What do you think the photo is documenting? (The photo seems to document both the art on the walls and, through that, perhaps the interests and creativity of the people within the walls of the space.)
- What compositional and photographic elements do you notice, and why?
  - How is the photo framed? (The photo is horizontally oriented, and the wall is at a sharp angle to the picture frame.)
  - What other compositional elements did the photographer use? (The angle of the photo gives a better sense of the space and the scale of the artwork, and it suggests the photographer’s intention to show multiple works of art in the one photograph.)
- Do you think the photographer has a message they are trying to convey with this photograph? (The mural that is the central focus is a collection of portraits of prominent Latinx and Chicano leaders and activists. Some of the subjects are Che Guevara, César Chávez, Subcomandante Marcos, and Emiliano Zapata. The artistic traditions of mural making and printmaking—which the works on paper appear to be—is extremely strong in Latin American art. In general, both murals and printmaking have historically played an integral part in disseminating information and causes among large numbers of people. Photography has had a similar tradition.)

Photographer and Subject

Grecia Carey Ortega started taking photos in middle school with her dad’s camera and credits her time in Getty Unshuttered as an opportunity to learn more of the technical skills. “I tend to focus on telling stories, whether it’s my own or others’. about love, trust, forgiveness, and other themes. I use a lot of symbolism or the materials I have around me that have influenced me or reflect what I want to showcase in my photos.”
Discuss: Pairing Community Issues with Opportunities for Advocacy

Project the image shown below. Discussion can begin by simply asking students what they notice about the photograph.


Most of my life I have been a “professional lesbian.” I have worked with gay and lesbian issues, including AIDS for the last nine years. I feel we should work together for equal protection under the law and that we should accept the increasing diversity in our community.
Questions for discussion:

- What do you notice first about this photograph? (That it incorporates both an image and text. The black-and-white image is a portrait of a woman looking directly at the camera.)
- What do you notice about the subject in the image? (The subject is a woman who stands facing the photographer and viewer. She looks directly at the viewer, and her gaze is steady, though her expression, with slightly furrowed brow, is perhaps a little weary. Her slightly parted lips give the impression she is speaking or about to speak.)
- What compositional and photographic elements do you notice, and why?
  - How is the photograph framed? (The horizontally oriented image is on a vertically oriented paper, with handwritten text beneath it.)
  - What other compositional elements did the photographer use? (The image is divided into two halves: on the left is the subject, and on the right is a poster titled “Stop AIDS Los Angeles.” This suggests that the message of the poster is equally important to the subject of the portrait—and to the photographer.)
  - What does the use of black-and-white do? (This photograph was made in 1990. The photographer is mostly known for working in black-and-white. The black-and-white tones of the image complement the stark, bold, handwritten text on the white of the paper.)
- Once you read the text, how does it add to your reading of the photograph? (The text is written in the first person and states: “Most of my life I have been a ‘professional lesbian.’ I have worked with gay and lesbian issues, including AIDS for the last nine years. I feel we should work together for equal protection under the law and that we should accept the increasing diversity in our community.” Clearly the content of the poster is of utmost importance to the subject, who states that it is her life’s work.)
- Would you say this photograph is inspirational? Would you consider this work an act of advocacy? (The photograph has the potential to be inspirational on a couple of different levels: as a work of art that is intriguing and engaging, and as a work that manages to capture an individual and their vocation and advocacy in a single image and paragraph. Since the subject states that their work has involved AIDS...
awareness and advocacy, it is important to remember that in the early period of the AIDS epidemic there were many unknowns, as well as mass fear. Having individual advocates give a face to the disease encouraged others to pursue research and treatment for all those in need.

Laura Aguilar

Through photography Laura Aguilar (1958-2018) explored notions of identity, the female body, and society’s assumptions about beauty. In her “Latina Lesbians” series of black-and-white portraits of women who self-identify in those terms, she aimed to provide role models to defy negative stereotypes and foster empathy and understanding. In an often quoted passage in an artist statement Aguilar said, "I am a mostly self-taught photographer. My photography has always provided me with an opportunity to open myself up and see the world around me. And most of all, photography makes me look within."2

View Laura Aguilar photographs in the collection: https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/37918/laura-aguil-
american-1959-2018/

Exercise: Creating A Plan of Action

In this exercise, you will translate your plan into action. Project and pass out the graphic organizer linked to this lesson, Advocacy Action Plan. [See Resources section]. This organizer assumes that students already have a fairly well-formed idea of their advocacy project, developed by taking inventory of their own backgrounds, and the needs and resources of their communities. The project planner asks students to break down their advocacy plan into goals, tasks, budget, and timeline. The organizer follows a pretty standard approach to project planning and management, with a couple of twists. First, students are asked to think through and clearly set out the role of photography in their projects. Second, students will complete the statement, “I am the right person to implement this advocacy action plan because ...” Both of these steps are intended to encourage students to see themselves as

photographers, and to affirmatively set their intentions as social justice advocates.

Students will probably complete this organizer individually, though small teams can work as well. If time allows, an individual discussion between each student and a mentor about their action plans will be helpful, to sharpen ideas and encourage consideration of potential pitfalls and alternative ideas. Students may also come back together as a class to share their ideas and questions, and give feedback on each other’s plans. Sharing plans can be a vulnerable moment for students. Enlist the support of your students to keep feedback constructive, and to create a safe space.

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**Practice: Taking Action for Advocacy**

In this challenge, students implement their plans and photograph them in action. Remind students to document it all—the successes and the challenges.

If time allows, this can be a good point to call out additional photo and narrative skills for the students. In the earlier photography discussion, we mentioned elements such as framing, perspective or angle, lighting, color versus black-and-white, foreground and background, and the subject’s position and pose. The related photography skills videos listed under Video Resources can also serve as quick skills refresher. Ask students how they will apply these skills and understanding in their own practice.

This exercise is designed to be assigned as homework. This affords students time to practice the photography skills they have learned, put their action plans to the test, ask for help from community partners, and become advocates for social justice in their communities.

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**Reflect**

The following lesson is entirely about reflecting on advocacy actions. If time is short, a quick reflection at the beginning of the group meeting following students’ advocacy actions can be effective. Ask students to share one to three photographs of their advocacy actions with their peers. They can each choose to speak about their experiences taking the photo(s), or not. Having the viewers provide positive feedback is key to the exercise. However, sharing can be a vulnerable moment for students. Use your best judgment
about whether a group reflection is appropriate, and enlist the support of your students to create a safe space.

Questions for discussion:

- What is the first thing you notice about the photograph?
- What works artistically in the photograph?
- What story is the photographer telling about the advocacy action?
- What do you think is the photographer’s point of view on the action? Is the photographer documenting or advocating?
- What part are you most proud of, and why?
- What would you do differently next time?

Alternatively, individual reflection can be useful using the same framework of questions.

Assessment

- Observe the group’s discussion of the lesson. Assess contributions to the discussion. Did students pose thoughtful questions? Did they respond to questions with reasons and evidence? Did they listen to different points of view? Did they clarify and challenge ideas and conclusions when appropriate? Did they synthesize evidence and ideas and provide constructive feedback?
- Make copies of the completed graphic organizers. Check for completeness of the Action Plan and whether the goals set out follow the SMART framework. Assess students’ responses for clear communication and well-supported ideas.
- Encourage students to share photographs of service on the Unshuttered platform, and collect and display that work.

Thank You...

...for your commitment to using photography to inspire youth creating social change in their communities. Please adapt and improve upon this lesson plan to meet the needs and age range of your group. Now is the time! We are grateful for educators like you who listen, learn alongside their students, and inspire action.
Resources

Advocacy Action Plan Graphic Organizer [See pages 15 and 16]

Related photography skills videos:

Lifestyle Portrait: https://youtu.be/qHtzKQdtmal

Candid Portrait: https://youtu.be/FebvMZWsQww

Artificial Light: https://youtu.be/Hzs-ThbwW2M

Natural Light: https://youtu.be/lqK0JAtAKt8
Unshuttered: Advocacy Action Plan

Use the organizer as a framework for your plan. Respond with drawings, photographs, text, or otherwise.

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| Goal(s)                |                           |
| Check that they are:   |                           |
| Specific               |                           |
| Measurable             |                           |
| Achievable/Attainable  |                           |
| Relevant               |                           |
| Time-bounded           |                           |

| Resources              |                           |
| (Your own, and those   |                           |
| from community partners; budget as well the skills, talents, facilities, equipment, etc., needed.) |
**Steps and Timeline**

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**Plan for Sharing Out**

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**Role of Photography**

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I am the right person to implement this advocacy action plan because: