

## Political Graphics

*Carol Wells and Ted Hajjar*

The political posters on the following pages represent a small selection of graphic art produced by the New American Movement (NAM). They come from the archives of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics founded and directed by **Carol Wells** and located in Los Angeles. These posters indicate the breadth of activities that NAM engaged in and the causes that it championed. They also reveal the humor of the organization, as well as its sense of how art could help articulate its vision for social transformation.

With her husband, **Ted Hajjar**, Wells joined the New American Movement (NAM) in 1978 at the encouragement of their neighbor, Ed Pearl, who was a NAM member and an important Los Angeles cultural and political activist. From 1958 to 1975, Pearl ran the Ash Grove, one of the most famous folk music clubs of the 1960s; it was also a hub for movement politics in Los Angeles. Wells and Hajjar had known Pearl through Hajjar's involvement in the Peace and Freedom Party, which Pearl had helped to organize in Los Angeles. The couple was attracted to NAM because of the way it charted a new course for radical politics that drew on the best of the social movements of the 1960s, and because it seemed a welcoming organization for the couple's solidarity work with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which took power in Nicaragua in 1979.

As their work developed around Nicaraguan solidarity, Wells and Hajjar found an increasing disconnect between NAM and their commitment to supporting the FSLN, which came under military attack beginning in 1980 through the formation of the U.S.-supported Contra counter-revolutionary forces. When the Los Angeles NAM chapter began discussions around the merger with the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC), Wells and Hajjar left the organization and formed the Nicaragua Task Force in 1982, a non-sectarian solidarity group that existed until 1989.

Alongside her activism, throughout the 1970s Wells pursued a doctorate in art history at the University of California, Los Angeles, with a focus on medieval art. However, in 1979 when Pearl approached her to do a poster for the Nicaraguan Literacy Campaign, Wells had an epiphany. "Here I was, struggling with this dissertation on twelfth century French architecture," she explains, "And I said, 'If only fifty people read this poster, it's going to be forty-seven more people than will ever read my dissertation.' Something clicked there, and I began questioning how I could make the best use of my time." In 1989, she founded the Center for the Study of Political Graphics and serves today as its executive director.

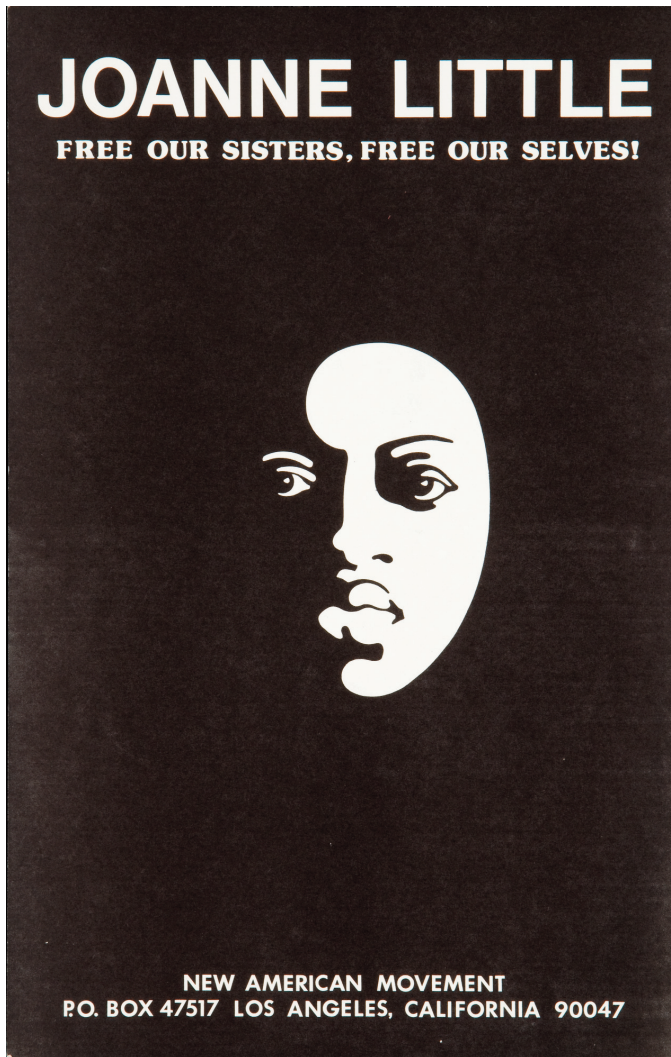
The Center currently holds more than 70,000 political posters from 1900 to the present, including the largest collection of post-World War II human rights and protest posters in the U.S. The collection as a whole, however, is almost evenly divided between international and domestic graphics. The Center's mandate is to collect, preserve, research and exhibit explicitly political art; the only requirements a graphic needs to satisfy to be archived at the Center are that it must be overtly political in content and produced as a

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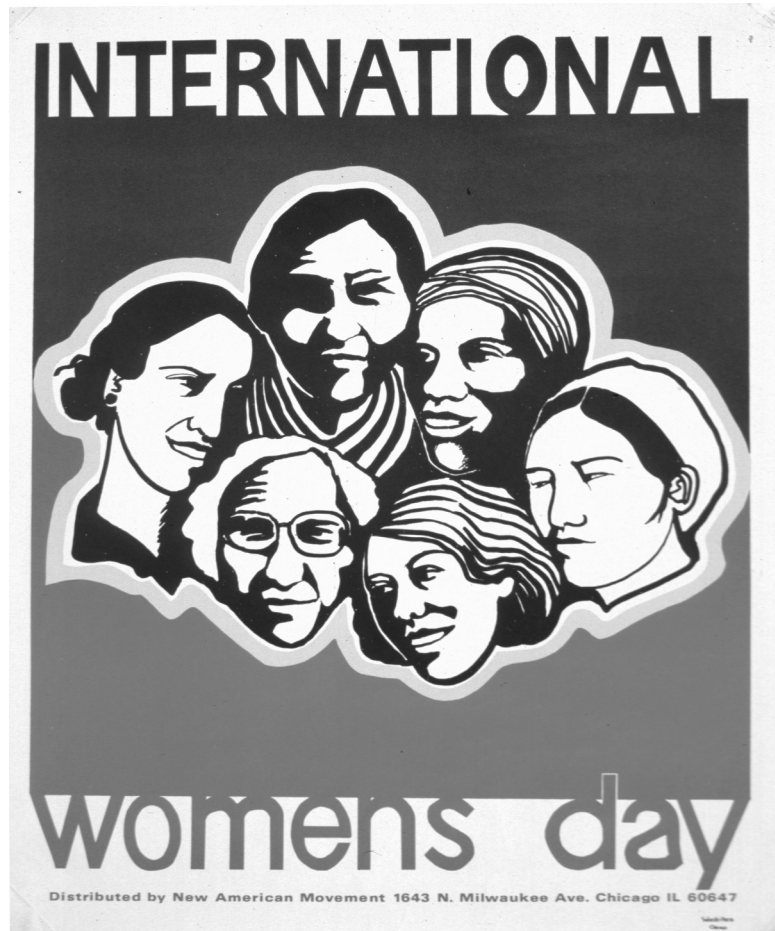
multiple intended for broad distribution. One-of-a-kind pieces are not accepted. Whereas most art collections and museums prefer “unique objects,” Wells explains that the Center’s mission is rooted in grass-roots organizing. “Anyone can make a poster with crayon or paint, but to have it reproduced and distributed requires a broader organizational and political vision.”

The Center is both a home for archival research and a sponsor of a wide variety of travelling exhibitions, including: “Presidential Rogues Gallery—Satirical Posters 1960s to the Present,” which has been exhibited prior to every presidential election since 1992; “No Human Being is Illegal: Myths and Realities of the Immigrant Experience,” which has been displayed ten times since 1988, from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C.; and “Courageous Voices—Posters on Racism, Sexism and Human Rights,” which was exhibited across the U.S. from 1990 to 2007. All exhibits are kept up-to-date, and Wells adds new posters to reflect changing issues. To explore the Center’s archives, as well as its virtual and upcoming exhibits, log onto [www.politicalgraphics.org](http://www.politicalgraphics.org).

*The following descriptions of the posters provide a historical context for the graphics and a brief outline of their relevance to NAM’s politics. Due to the conditions under which these posters were produced, no information was available to cite the artists responsible for them. If readers are able to provide this information, please contact the Center for the Study of Political Graphics at [cspg@politicalgraphics.org](mailto:cspg@politicalgraphics.org).*

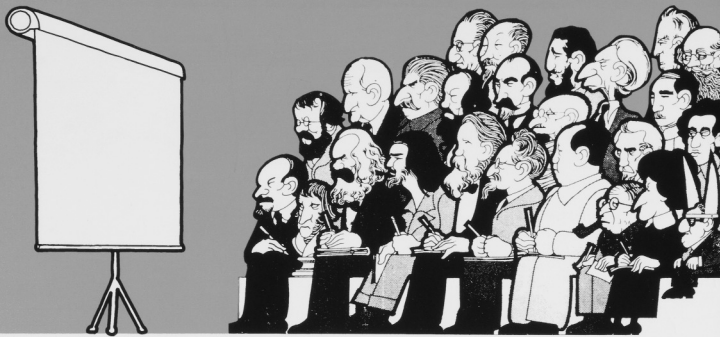


"Joanne Little: Free Our Sisters, Free Our Selves," references the case of Joanne Little, an African-American woman who, while serving time in a North Carolina jail in 1974, killed a white prison guard in self defense resisting his sexual assault. Though subject to the death penalty for her act, Little was acquitted, and her trial gained wide coverage. An array of feminist and civil rights groups supported Little, including NAM.



"International Women's Day" succinctly represents NAM's broad international vision of the potential of socialist-feminism to unite women throughout the world, embodied through its montage of stark portraits of six women. In the original, the women are framed by a yellow line, while the top of the graphic is blue and the bottom red.

## Film and Revolution Series



A film series that brings alive twentieth century popular struggles in several different countries - depicting the victories and defeats, hopes and despair, joys and anger, thoughts and emotions of working people engaged in the process of rebelling against oppression and looking for ways to transform their lives

- |         |   |        |
|---------|---|--------|
| Feb. 17 | ADALEN-31 (Widerberg)                     | Sweden |
| 24      | MEXICO: THE FROZEN REVOLUTION (Gleyzer)   | Mexico |
| Mar. 3  | JOE HILL (Widerberg)                      | U.S.A. |
| 10      | LA TERRA TREMA (Visconti)                 | Italy  |
| 24      | DREAMS & NIGHTMARES (Osheroff & Klingman) | Spain  |
| 31      | STRIKE (Eisenstein)                       | Russia |

Rebstock Auditorium

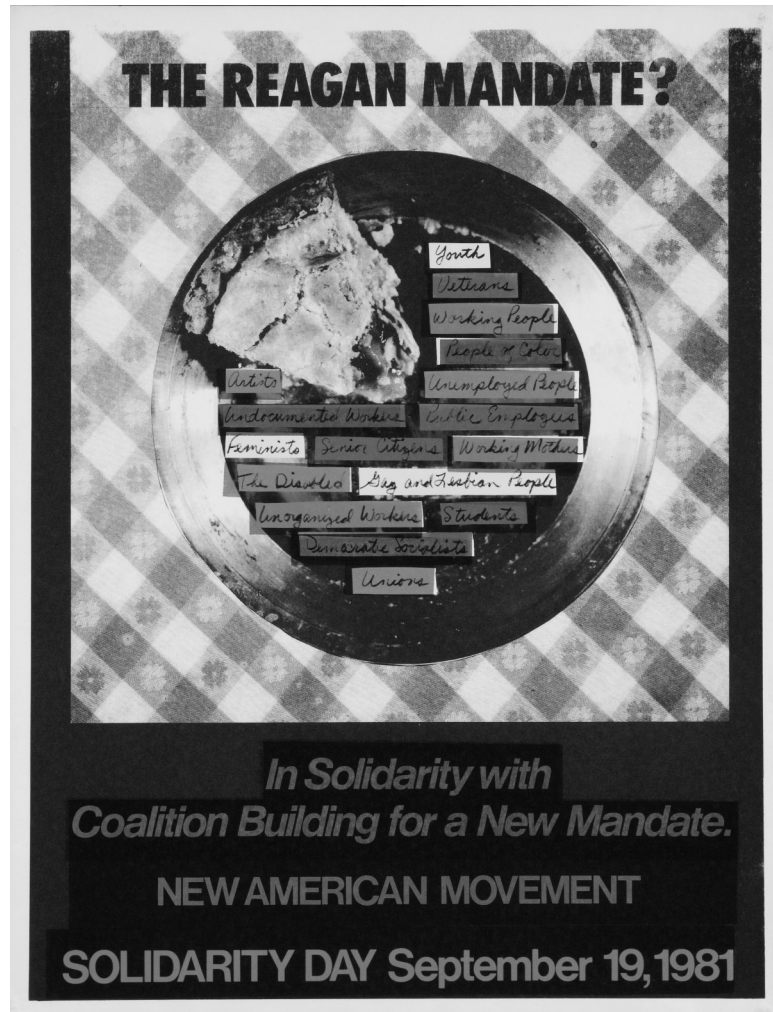
Thursdays

\$1.25 donation

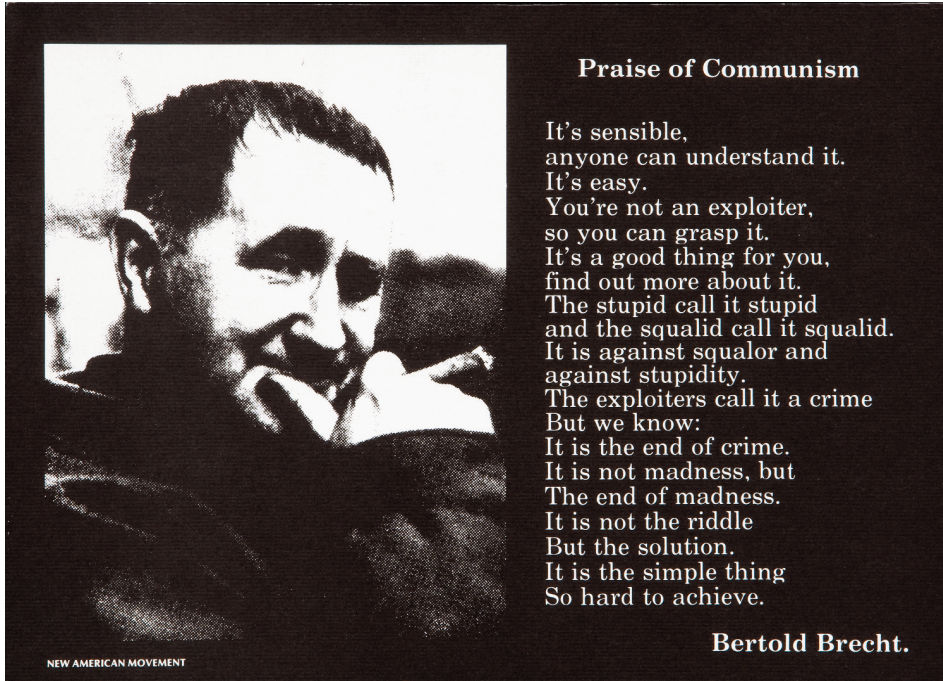
7:30 & 9:30 pm

Sponsored by the New American Movement and St. Louis TELOS Group.

**“Film and Revolution Series” identifies NAM’s ecumenical approach to relating to global revolutionary struggles and the cultural forms that represent them. Careful readers will note the wide range of revolutionary figures (from Lenin to Gandhi) the poster imagines as the audience for these films, as well as the equally diverse range of revolutions and social movements represented on the screening list.**

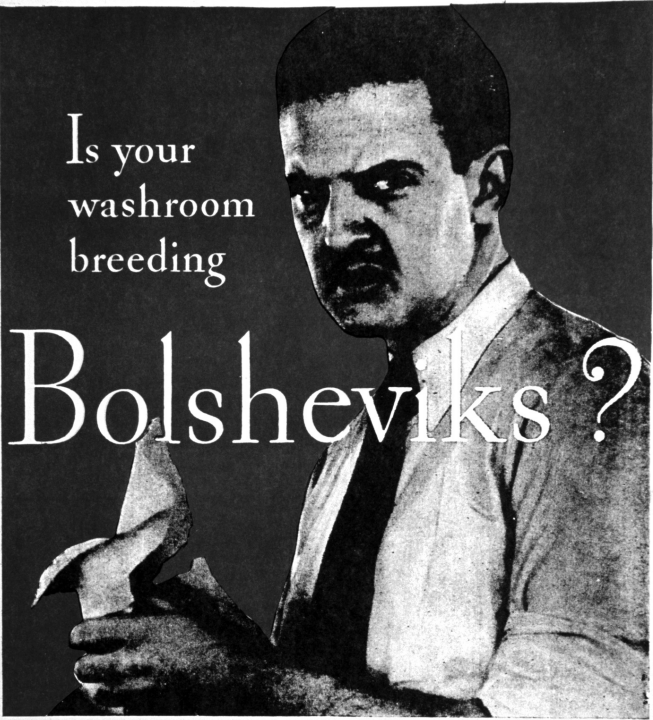


“The Reagan Mandate?” playfully challenges that administration’s proposition that by gutting the social welfare state, it could produce a better society for all. The poster uses the image of a single piece of pie left in a pan as a metaphor for the meager resources to be divided by the broad cross-section of the population, represented by name in longhand in the pan. The poster also identifies groups hurt by Reagan’s domestic policies, from feminists and youth, to working mothers and unions. In the original, these group titles are colored in Warhol-like pastels, as is the text at the bottom. This poster was produced to generate interest in the Solidarity Day march on Washington, which took place on September 19, 1981. The march was organized by the AFL-CIO and took occurred month into the strike of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO). According to various accounts, it drew between 250,000 and 500,000 people, including members of NAM. The title of the march is a pointed allusion to the Solidarity movement in Poland.



**“Praise of Communism” is a simple graphic of Bertolt Brecht’s poem and neatly captures NAM’s basic tenet that radical social transformation was not beyond the grasp of the majority of people in the U.S.**

**TIME MAGAZINE— 1932**



Is your  
washroom  
breeding  
**Bolsheviks?**

*Employees lose respect for a company that fails to provide decent facilities for their comfort*

**TRY** wiping your hands six days a week on harsh, cheap paper towels or awkward, unsanitary roller towels—and maybe you, too, would grumble.


Towel service is just one of those small, but important courtesies—such as proper air and lighting—that help build up the goodwill of your employees.

That's why you'll find clothlike Scot-Tissue Towels in the washrooms of large, well-run organizations such as R.C.A. Victor Co., Inc., National Lead Co. and Campbell Soup Co.

Scot-Tissue Towels are made of "thirsty fibre" . . . an amazing cellulose product that drinks up moisture 12 times as fast as ordinary paper towels. They feel soft and pliant as a linen towel. Yet they're so strong and tough in texture they won't crumble or go to pieces . . . even when they're wet.

And they cost less, too—because one is enough to dry the hands—instead of three or four.

Write for free trial carton. Scott Paper Company, Chester, Pennsylvania.

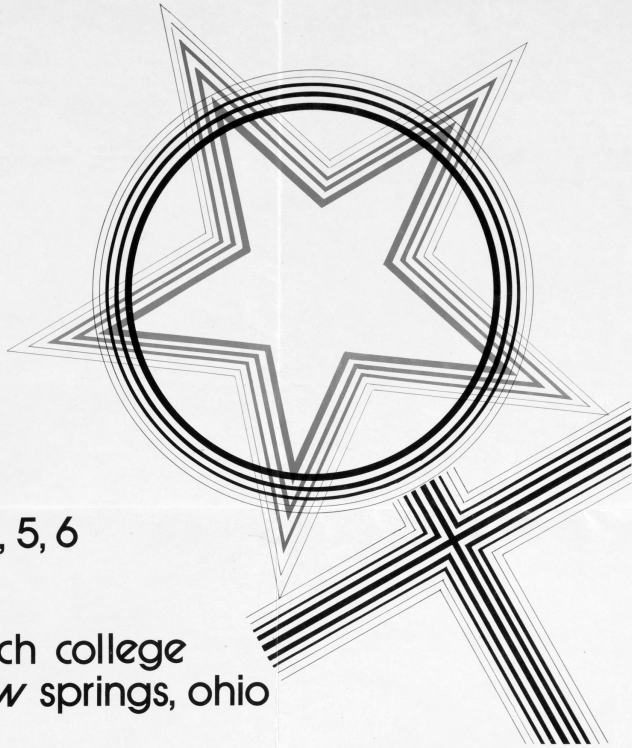


**Scot-Tissue Towels - really dry!**

Reprinted by the NEW AMERICAN MOVEMENT  
2936 W. 8th Street, Los Angeles

"Is Your Bathroom Breeding Bolsheviks?" highlights NAM's humor. While this advertisement from a 1932 issue of *Time* has become commonplace today, it was first reprinted by NAM and sold to generate funds for the organization, which it did quite well by all accounts. At the bottom of the poster, NAM is listed as the organization responsible for recovering and reprinting this now-iconic figure of pre-WWII anti-Communist propaganda.





july 4, 5, 6

antioch college  
yellow springs, ohio

**NATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE:**

Chicago Women's Liberation Union  
New York City Women's Union  
Boston Socialist/Feminist Organization  
Lexington Socialist/Feminist Union  
Twin Cities Women's Union (Minneapolis-St. Paul)  
Valley Women's Union (Northampton, Mass.)  
New American Movement Women's Caucus  
(represented by the Dayton Socialist/Feminist Group  
and Charlotte Perkins Gilman Chapter, Durham, N.C.)  
**Radical Women (Seattle)**

**FOR LOCAL  
INFORMATION,  
contact:**

**socialist  
feminist  
conference**

FOR INFORMATION, contact: Socialist/Feminist Group, 1399 North Main St., Dayton, Ohio 45405.

**VI.**  
***Academic Freedom and  
Intellectual Activism in the  
Post-9/11 University  
Revisited***