



Rae Johnson: Introduction to Embodied Activism: Practical strategies for reclaiming, resisting, and interrogating the political realities of our everyday lives



Rae Johnson is a scholar/researcher, social worker, and registered somatic movement therapist who chairs the Somatic Studies specialization in the Depth Psychology doctoral program at Pacifica Graduate Institute in California. The author of numerous articles and several books – including *Elemental Movement*, *Knowing in our Bones* and *Embodied Social Justice* – Rae teaches internationally on the embodied experience of oppression, somatic research methods, and the poetic body.

Explore how the body is political, how politics are (or can be) embodied in and through our everyday experience, and how to bring the body into our social and environmental justice work. Learn practical strategies for reclaiming, resisting, and interrogating the political realities of our everyday lives using the felt experience of our bodies as the ground of our activism.

Everyday activism: Activism of the microsociological level of everyday life

- 1:1 and small group interactions, rather than global or community level activism.
- Looking at the role of the body in social justice work.

Non-verbal communication (NVC): Its role in social control, shifting entrenched patterns using NVC

- Body language is implicated in power dynamics
Over 75% of the meaning in our interactions is conveyed nonverbally and unconsciously
- NVC can be a channel for conveying our implicit bias, which we are all socialised to have
- NVC manifests through the way we navigate space with one another, as well as posture, eye contact, gestures, use of touch (including when we don't touch, or make eye contact).
- We convey to each other about who matters, who's in charge, who's included, who's more important, who's not.
- Using body language to shift entrenched patterns of misuse of power, whether conscious or unconscious.

Social control through body norms: The 'ideal body,' politics, body modification, subversion

- Body norms - conceptions of the ideal body, socially constructed, serving a political purpose.
- This idea of an ideal body is imposed as a standard by which all bodies are measured and this standard reinforces and justifies inequity by making most bodies wrong, ugly, broken, sickly or unclean in some way.
- Not accidental, but strategic - reinforcing the inequities that we already live with in so many other ways.
- There are many ways in which we are subtly and explicitly shamed for the ways our bodies look.

Resources

- ❖ **References:** *Power, Dominance and Nonverbal Behaviour* (Steve L. Ellyson and John F. Dovidio), *Pleasure Activism: [Adrienne Maree Brown]*, *My Grandmother's Hands* (Resmaa Menakem), *The Queer and Transgender Resilience Workbook* (Anneliese Singh and Diane Ehrensaft), *Embodied Resistance* (Chris Bobel and Steadman Upham), *Diverse Bodies, Diverse Practices* (Don Hanlon Johnson), *Oppression and the Body* (Christine Caldwell and Lucia Bennett Leighton), *The Body Is Not an Apology* (Sonya Renee Taylor); *Dreaming Disability Justice* (Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha)



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