

## Unit 16

### **Disturbing the Comfortable, Comforting the Disturbed**

“Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable,” writes the pseudonymous street artist Banksy—a sentiment that encapsulates the spirit of graffiti’s defiance.

On 16 July 2024, Abu Sayeed, an unranked organizer of the students' movement for quota reform at Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur, was shot and killed by police as he stood with his arms stretched out, leaving his mother, Monowara Begum, shell-shocked and crying, “My son only wanted a job; if you don’t want to give him a job, then don’t”—but why did you kill him?”

Since the 1960s, graffiti in Bangladesh has served as a powerful voice for resistance. In 1966, student activists spray-painted slogans like “Down with Ayub Khan” on walls, using graffiti as a covert means of protest against a repressive regime. When military forces approached, they shouted “chika! chika!”—a word meaning mole or muskrat—pretending they were killing rodents to disguise their actions. This guerrilla tactic marked the beginning of graffiti as a tool of dissent in Bangladesh, and it played a crucial role in the Liberation War in 1971.

Noor Hossain, with the words “Down with Autocracy” boldly painted in bright white on his bare chest, was photographed by Dina Alam on 10 November, 1987, during a pro-democracy protest in Dhaka. Shortly after, he was shot and killed by Bangladeshi Police.

In recent times, graffiti has resurfaced as a powerful expression of dissent, particularly during the July uprising. Spray-painted messages—like “The country is nobody’s” father’s — invoked the legacy of past movements, echoed in the iconic “Gonotontro Mukti Paak” (Let Democracy Be Free), famously written on the body of protester Noor Hossain during the Ershad regime. Each stroke of paint carried forward a history of defiance that has shaped Bangladesh’s political landscape, drawing connections between past and present struggles for justice.

Graffiti’s potency lies in its subversive, guerrilla nature. Unlike wall art, which is typically organized and sanctioned, graffiti thrives on immediacy, spontaneity, and the risk of persecution. Where wall art may take time and care, graffiti is often quick, requiring speed and anonymity due to the threat of detection. Its purpose is to challenge power, counter surveillance, and inscribe messages that are otherwise censored or suppressed.

The July uprising brought new dimensions to this medium of dissent. Spray-painted slogans defied erasure, embodying collective rage and revolutionary solidarity. Demands like “Ek dofa, ei dabi, shoirachar tai kobe jabi?” surfaced as cries for justice, echoing the French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s assertion that “What cannot be said... must not be silenced but written.”

A strong sense of inclusivity was also reflected in the wall art and graffiti during and after the July uprising, which highlighted the case of the marginalized and minoritized people in multiple instances. Numerous graffiti and wall art pieces not only called for justice but also carried a broader message of liberation, “Not a land of one nation, Bangladesh is a land of many

communities” symbolizing the interconnected struggles of all communities. The true power of graffiti lies in its resilience; it persists as a medium for revolutionary memory and collective consciousness. It speaks for those silenced, ensures the struggles of the marginalized endure, and, as Banksy’s words suggest, comforts the disturbed while disturbing the comfortable.

### MCQs

1. Who wrote the quote “Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable”?
  - a) Pablo Picasso
  - b) Banksy
  - c) Jacques Derrida
  - d) Noor Hossain
2. What is Banksy best known for?
  - a) Poetry
  - b) Political speeches
  - c) Street art
  - d) Music
3. On which date was Abu Sayeed killed?
  - a) 10 November 1987
  - b) 16 July 2024
  - c) 21 February 1966
  - d) 26 March 1971
4. Abu Sayeed was a student organizer at which university?
  - a) Dhaka University
  - b) Begum Rokeya University
  - c) Rajshahi University
  - d) Chittagong University
5. What was Abu Sayeed’s mother’s name?
  - a) Rokeya Begum
  - b) Monowara Begum
  - c) Nazma Begum
  - d) Anwara Begum
6. What did Abu Sayeed’s mother cry after his death?
  - a) “My son only wanted freedom.”
  - b) “My son only wanted a job... why did you kill him?”
  - c) “My son was innocent and peaceful.”
  - d) “My son fought for the country.”

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7. When did graffiti in Bangladesh start serving as a voice for resistance?
    - a) 1947
    - b) 1966
    - c) 1971
    - d) 1987
  8. Which slogan was spray-painted in 1966?
    - a) “Let Democracy Be Free”
    - b) “Down with Ayub Khan”
    - c) “Down with Autocracy”
    - d) “Joy Bangla”
  9. What word did activists shout to disguise their graffiti actions in 1966?
    - a) “Lal salam”
    - b) “Chika! chika!”
    - c) “Joy Bangla!”
    - d) “Azadi!”
  10. What does “chika” mean?
    - a) Freedom
    - b) Mouse
    - c) Mole or muskrat
    - d) Revolution
  11. When did graffiti play a crucial role in Bangladesh?
    - a) Liberation War of 1971
    - b) War of 1965
    - c) Language Movement 1952
    - d) 1987 Uprising
  12. Who was photographed with “Down with Autocracy” painted on his chest?
    - a) Abu Sayeed
    - b) Noor Hossain
    - c) Ayub Khan
    - d) Dina Alam
  13. Who took the famous photograph of Noor Hossain?
    - a) Monowara Begum
    - b) Dina Alam
    - c) Banksy
    - d) Jacques Derrida
  14. When was Noor Hossain killed?
    - a) 16 July 2024

- b) 10 November 1987
  - c) 21 February 1952
  - d) 26 March 1971
15. What was written on Noor Hossain's chest?
- a) "Let Democracy Be Free"
  - b) "Joy Bangla"
  - c) "Down with Autocracy"
  - d) "No More Dictatorship"
16. Which uprising brought graffiti back into prominence recently?
- a) Liberation War
  - b) July uprising
  - c) Language Movement
  - d) 1987 protest
17. Which spray-painted slogan was seen during the July uprising?
- a) "The country is nobody's father's"
  - b) "Joy Bangla"
  - c) "Down with Ayub Khan"
  - d) "Shadhinota"
18. What is the meaning of "Gonotontro Mukti Paak"?
- a) Let Freedom Live
  - b) Let Democracy Be Free
  - c) Freedom for All
  - d) Down with Dictatorship
19. Who famously had "Gonotontro Mukti Paak" written on his body?
- a) Noor Hossain
  - b) Abu Sayeed
  - c) Banksy
  - d) Ayub Khan
20. What is graffiti's key characteristic compared to wall art?
- a) It is more colorful
  - b) It is spontaneous and risky
  - c) It is legal
  - d) It is more permanent
21. What is the main purpose of graffiti?
- a) Beautification
  - b) Challenging power and censorship



- c) Advertising
- d) Entertainment

22. What does wall art usually require?

- a) Anonymity
- b) Speed and secrecy
- c) Organization and sanction
- d) Spray cans only

23. Why is graffiti often created quickly?

- a) Because paint dries fast
- b) To avoid detection and persecution
- c) To finish before rain
- d) To match political slogans

24. Which philosopher said, “What cannot be said... must not be silenced but written”?

- a) Banksy
- b) Jacques Derrida
- c) Karl Marx
- d) Michel Foucault

25. Which demand was spray-painted during the July uprising?

- a) “Ek dofa, ei dabi, shoirachar tai kobe jabi?”
- b) “Down with Autocracy”
- c) “Let Democracy Be Free”
- d) “Joy Bangla”

26. What broader message was highlighted in wall art after the July uprising?


- a) National unity only
- b) Liberation for all communities
- c) One nation, one identity
- d) Silence the opposition

27. Which slogan symbolized inclusivity during the uprising?

- a) “Bangladesh for Bengalis”
- b) “Not a land of one nation, Bangladesh is a land of many communities”
- c) “One land, one people”
- d) “Unity through power”

28. What does graffiti preserve according to the passage?

- a) Government propaganda
- b) Revolutionary memory and collective consciousness
- c) Political neutrality
- d) Commercial interests

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29. Graffiti is described as a medium for:
- a) Tourist attraction
  - b) Revolutionary memory
  - c) Art competitions
  - d) Academic expression
30. Who does graffiti speak for?
- a) The rich and powerful
  - b) The silenced and marginalized
  - c) The ruling class
  - d) Art critics
31. What did graffiti during the July uprising resist?
- a) Economic sanctions
  - b) Erasure and suppression
  - c) Technological change
  - d) Cultural festivals
32. What is a risk for graffiti artists?
- a) Loss of paint
  - b) Persecution and detection
  - c) Too much sunlight
  - d) Lack of walls
33. Which regime was Noor Hossain protesting against?
- a) Ayub Khan's regime
  - b) Ershad regime
  - c) British colonial rule
  - d) Mujib government
34. What type of tactic was used by 1966 activists shouting "chika! chika!"?
- a) Guerrilla tactic
  - b) Peaceful negotiation
  - c) Parliamentary debate
  - d) Legal petition
35. Which movement used graffiti as a tool in 1966?
- a) Quota reform
  - b) Anti-Ayub Khan protest
  - c) Liberation War
  - d) July uprising
36. What differentiates graffiti from mural art?
- a) Graffiti is always more artistic

- b) Graffiti is spontaneous and unsanctioned
  - c) Graffiti uses brushes instead of spray paint
  - d) Graffiti is done indoors
37. What was the role of graffiti in 1971?
- a) Entertainment
  - b) Political propaganda for the regime
  - c) Tool of dissent in the Liberation War
  - d) Festival decoration
38. What was the tone of spray-painted messages during the July uprising?
- a) Humorous
  - b) Revolutionary and defiant
  - c) Romantic
  - d) Commercial
39. Who is associated with the idea that art should disturb the comfortable?
- a) Karl Marx
  - b) Banksy
  - c) Jacques Derrida
  - d) Pablo Neruda
40. What do Banksy's words suggest about art?
- a) It must be beautiful
  - b) It should comfort the disturbed and challenge the powerful
  - c) It should only be decorative
  - d) It should be censored

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Here's the **answer key** for the 40 MCQs:

**No. Answer**

- 1 b
- 2 c
- 3 b
- 4 b
- 5 b
- 6 b

**No. Answer**

7 b

8 b

9 b

10 c

11 a

12 b

13 b

14 b

15 c

16 b

17 a

18 b

19 a

20 b

21 b

22 c

23 b

24 b

25 a

26 b

27 b

28 b





**No. Answer**

29 b

30 b

31 b

32 b

33 b

34 a

35 b

36 b

37 c

38 b

39 b

40 b

1. How does Banksy's statement relate to the political use of graffiti in Bangladesh?
2. Why was Abu Sayeed's death significant in the context of the July uprising?
3. In what way did Abu Sayeed's mother's reaction highlight the core issue of the protest?
4. How did the 1966 graffiti movement demonstrate creativity in avoiding detection?
5. Explain how the term "chika! chika!" served as both a code and a disguise.
6. Why was graffiti an effective tool during the Liberation War of 1971?
7. How did Noor Hossain's protest symbolize defiance against autocracy?
8. What role did photography play in amplifying Noor Hossain's message?
9. How did graffiti during the July uprising connect with earlier movements?
10. Why is spontaneity an important characteristic of graffiti?
11. How does graffiti differ in purpose from wall art according to the passage?
12. What does Jacques Derrida's quote imply about suppressed voices?
13. Why were the spray-painted slogans during the July uprising hard to erase symbolically?
14. How did the slogans of the July uprising reflect revolutionary solidarity?
15. In what ways did the graffiti movement address inclusivity?
16. Why is the slogan "Not a land of one nation..." significant in Bangladesh's political context?
17. How does graffiti preserve revolutionary memory?

18. Why does the passage describe graffiti as “resilient”?
19. How does Banksy’s philosophy apply to the struggles of marginalized communities?
20. Why can graffiti be considered both an art form and a political weapon?

### Answers

1. **Banksy’s statement** reflects how graffiti challenges those in power while giving hope and voice to the oppressed. In Bangladesh, it has historically served as a medium to express resistance and call for justice.
2. Abu Sayeed’s death became a symbol of state violence against peaceful protest. It intensified public outrage and strengthened the unity of the July uprising.
3. Monowara Begum’s reaction showed the human cost of the protest. Her words emphasized that the demand was simply for fair employment, not violence or rebellion.
4. The 1966 activists used creativity to evade detection by pretending to hunt rodents. This allowed them to spread anti-regime messages without immediate arrest.
5. The term “chika! chika!” acted as a secret code among activists. It also misled onlookers and authorities into thinking their activities were unrelated to politics.
6. During the Liberation War, graffiti helped spread messages quickly and secretly. It inspired unity among the population and resisted enemy propaganda.
7. Noor Hossain’s painted chest was a bold and public rejection of autocracy. His willingness to display the message openly symbolized fearlessness in the face of danger.
8. Photography immortalized Noor Hossain’s protest and message. The image became an enduring symbol of Bangladesh’s struggle for democracy.
9. July uprising graffiti reused historical slogans to connect present struggles with past resistance movements. This created a sense of continuity in the fight for justice.
10. Spontaneity allows graffiti to respond instantly to political events. It also reduces the time for authorities to intervene and stop the act.
11. Graffiti’s purpose is to provoke, resist, and challenge censorship, while wall art is usually sanctioned and decorative. Graffiti thrives on risk and urgency.
12. Derrida’s quote means that suppressed truths should be expressed rather than hidden. In graffiti, this translates into making censored voices visible.
13. These slogans symbolized ideas and emotions that could not be erased, even if physically removed. They became part of the movement’s collective memory.
14. The July uprising slogans carried strong messages of defiance and unity. They encouraged people from different backgrounds to stand together against injustice.

15. Graffiti during and after the uprising addressed issues faced by marginalized groups. It linked their struggles to the broader fight for democracy.
16. The slogan challenges the idea of Bangladesh as a monocultural nation. It promotes recognition of the country's diverse communities and their rights.
17. Graffiti records and transmits the spirit of resistance across generations. It keeps past struggles alive in public consciousness.
18. Graffiti is called resilient because it persists despite efforts to erase or suppress it. The ideas it carries continue to inspire new movements.
19. Banksy's philosophy aligns with amplifying the voices of marginalized groups. It suggests that art should disrupt unjust systems and comfort those who are oppressed.
20. Graffiti is both an art form for creative expression and a political weapon for challenging authority. Its visual impact makes it an effective tool for protest.

Fill in the blanks

1. Graffiti's potency lies in its subversive, guerrilla nature. Unlike wall art, which is typically organized and sanctioned, graffiti thrives on (a)\_\_\_\_, spontaneity, and the risk of persecution. Where wall art may take time and care, graffiti is often quick, requiring speed and (b)\_\_\_\_ due to the threat of detection. Its purpose is to challenge (c)\_\_\_\_, counter surveillance, and inscribe messages that are otherwise censored or (d)\_\_\_\_. The July uprising brought new dimensions to this medium of dissent, with spray-painted slogans defying (e)\_\_\_\_ and embodying collective rage.

- (a) immediacy
- (b) anonymity
- (c) power
- (d) suppressed
- (e) erasure

2. On (a)\_\_\_\_, Abu Sayeed, an unranked organizer of the students' movement for quota reform at Begum Rokeya University, was shot and killed by police as he stood with his arms stretched out. In 1966, student activists spray-painted slogans like (b)\_\_\_\_ against Ayub Khan, using graffiti as a covert means of protest. They shouted (c)\_\_\_\_, meaning mole or muskrat, to disguise their actions from authorities. On 10 November 1987, Noor Hossain was photographed with (d)\_\_\_\_ painted on his chest during a pro-democracy protest. This photograph was taken by (e)\_\_\_\_\_.

answer

