SAFETY IN THE STREETS
Acknowledgements

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WHO WE ARE AND WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

Hello! We are a group of young organizers and between us, we hold a multitude of cultures, personal background, histories, and experiences doing the work for liberation in the South. This guide is an offering to share some of the information we have learned in our respective organizing and movement work. There are many more resources to explore and we hope this is one helpful guide you can use to build Safety in the Streets!
ORIENTING TO THE MOMENT

We are in an unprecedented moment in global history and many folks are engaging in actions in the streets for the first time. We are facing a crisis of police brutality, where police have access to militarized equipment, surveillance technology, and have violently harmed thousands of folks on the streets.

During the current pandemic, financial crisis, climate crisis, and global context of intersecting systems of oppression (imperialism, colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and many others), it is even more necessary to learn how to take care of yourself and your community (because not a single police gonna do it).

Quick Guide

Below are tips inspired by the teachings of community leaders Sharon Lungo and Lynn Stone:

Important Considerations

Follow BIPOC leadership, especially locally.

Constantly check in with yourself and others. There is a lot of pain and trauma present, and it does more damage to ignore that.

Do not play into divisive tactics, either by the police or the media.

Before Direct Action

• Do not protest alone. Form a group if you can and stick together.
• Support and give direction to newcomers.
• Participate in know-your-rights training.
• Packing list: money (especially cash), water, ID, snacks, any medication you may possibly need at any point in the day or night*, phones (whether it is your personal phone or a burner phone), gloves, masks, sanitizer, and legal aid phone numbers (either written down or memorized).
• *Assume you will not return home at the time you think you will, and prepare accordingly, such as by making arrangements to care for pets, children, and loved ones in your absence.
• Practice widening your visual field ahead of time to get a better sense of all your surroundings.
Quick Guide

Before Direct Action Cont.

- If you’re with a group, have a conversation ahead of time on how to keep each other safe and what each person will do given any situation.
- Talk about what kind of role your group wants to play during protests. Decide ahead of time and make sure everyone in your group is comfortable with the decision.
- Establish good communication, especially nonverbal communication because police will be listening for things that they can use against us and there may be moments where it’s difficult to hear.
- Have a solid exit plan. And then a solid backup exit plan. And then a solid backup backup exit plan.
- Be clear on what kinds of risk you are willing to take. Stay far away from the front or the back (most vulnerable spots) of the demonstration if you are vulnerable or uncomfortable with the risks associated.
- Assess the risks for your family if you are arrested or detained by police (especially important if you or your loved ones are undocumented).
- Acknowledges people’s different levels of risks (legal risk, police brutality risk, health risk, etc...), respect those differences, and plan/act accordingly.

Quick Guide

Before Direct Action Cont.

- Fill out legal forms before hitting the streets.
- It’s possible that people protesting together will get split up when detained, so have attention on that and plan accordingly.
- Think through different scenarios and how you might respond in each of them.

During Direct Action

- Remember: frontline community members speak first and foremost. Make sure they can be seen/heard and create a barrier around them.
- Maintain clear communication with those you are protesting with, especially to ensure that everyone is safe throughout the day/night.
- Document any kind of abuse or instigation that you see.
- Consider how you can show up as a calming presence for others. It is not your job to de-escalate any situation, but take seriously that de-escalating can save lives and do what you can to support that end.
- Be strategic about where and how you choose to intervene in situations of high tension or police confrontation.
- Hand out and share as much information as you can. It won’t incriminate you unless you are inciting violence or destruction.
Dealing with the Police

- Anticipate the ways police will obstruct protesters’ movement. Always be aware of your surroundings so you know when you/your group need to leave or relocate.

- Avoid the cops at all costs, not just because they are brutal, but because they often disregard measures to protect public health, especially in light of COVID-19.

- Have people in your group doing police outlook so you can always be aware of where the police are and what they are doing.

- Cops will be easily triggered, so be ready for their aggression and use of force.

- Try not to run if you can help it. Police are predatory and may instigate violence if they see anyone running.

- Be aware of the fact that if the population protesting is getting smaller and smaller, police may swarm on and arrest people once the crowd gets small enough.

- Read police body language, movement, and attire. They give clues as to what the police are going to do next.

- There are apps that can access police scanners—tune in if you can.

Friends Don’t Let Friends Forget the Don’t List:

- Don’t put vaseline, mineral oil, oil-based sunscreen or moisturizers on skin as they can trap chemicals.

- Don’t wear contact lenses, which can trap irritating chemicals underneath.

- Don’t wear things which can easily be grabbed (i.e. dangly earrings or other jewelry, long backpack straps, etc.).

- Don’t go to actions alone, if you can help it - go with a group, pod or some friends who you trust.

- Don’t bring your phone unless you’ve taken steps to keep it secure

- Don’t forget to make a meetup plan in the case you get separated from your friend(s)

- Don’t forget to eat food and drink lots of water.
Quick Guide

After Direct Action

- Follow up with everyone at the end of the night to make sure everyone is safe.
- Follow up on injuries and arrests.
- Debrief the action: how can we do better? What worked that we want to build upon?
- Consider getting COVID testing after action.
- If people from your group are detained, have things ready for them when they come out of detention, like food, water, medicine, something comforting, etc.
- Support people if they are summoned to trial, such as by accompanying them to court.

Direct Action and Media

- Avoid posting photos of people that shows them doing something that could be incriminating. NEVER post photos without people’s consent.
- Do not post photos directly from your phone. Instead, take a screenshot of your photo, and then upload the screenshot from your computer after you delete the original photo from your phone. Uploading the original photo from your phone provides data that can be used to hurt or incriminate you and others.
Moving With A Pod During COVID-19

What is a Pod?
(def.) A Pod is a group of people who would turn to each other to support us with things such as our immediate and on-going safety, accountability and transformation of behaviors, or individual and collective healing and resiliency. (From the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective)

Why do we need Pods?
It is almost always safer to organize with others than to do so alone. In order to remain healthy in ourselves and in our movements, it is crucial to have people close to you to coordinate with, process and reflect with, and create lines of interdependence and support.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and movement uprisings, pods can also be a small group of friends that you coordinate shared boundaries with around health, physical safety, and keeping track of each other’s wellbeing.

How Do You Make A Pod Map?

Write Your Name in the Center Circle
You’re Pod is specific in centering you-- your pod might overlap a lot with other folks who are close to you, but think of your Pod not necessarily as a unit, but as a list of supports in different areas to support you in different types of collective work/ times of stress.

Identify the Pod’s Purpose
Is it for planning a disaster preparedness plan with your friends before hurricane season?
Is it coordinating a mutual aid network?
Is it for supporting you if you are facing emotional, spiritual or physical instability?

Think About The People You Can Lean On For Support In This Pod
Is it family/chosen family members? Movement friends? Community elders? A lawyer? A healer? A roommate? Is it a neighbor who has a generator that will charge your wheelchair when the electricity is out?
Is it someone who can buy and drop off groceries? What about a friend who will take care of you when you’re sick?

Talk to your people and ask what they feel able to provide. Then ask them what they need from you to be in their pod, or let them know what you can offer.
How Do You Make A Pod Map?

The Inner Circle
The inner circle is for people who you would immediately contact in need for support. You have their contact saved and know how best to reach each other.

You have talked to each other about different ways you can support each other. Write specific names, as well as what supports they can provide.

The Middle Layer
These are people who are movable—they could become part of your pod if you have some conversations and build relationships.

Outer Layer
The larger circles on the outside are bigger community groups, networks, organizations, etc that could be resources for you.

Pod Roles

Pod Roles For an Action
Having a well coordinated pod can be used for a number of contexts, from coordinating mutual aid efforts in your area, to planning to go to an action together, and many other purposes.

We’ve compiled a list to outline some roles that you might want to assign to folks in your pod.

Planning Facilitator
Facilitate Group discussion on your plan for moving together. Where will you meet up? Who will play what role? What supplies will you each bring? How will you communicate while in the streets?

The Planning Facilitator will make sure you have this conversation prior to going out, will make sure everyone is clear on the plan/ back up plans, and will communicate any changes to the plan to the whole pod (or use another system for communicating updates with your pod).

Scout
The Scout’s job is to be active eyes and ears on the ground and communicate vital information to the rest of your pod. Is there a blockade ahead? Do folks need to prepare for a gas assault? Where are the nearest routes to get away from danger?

If there are police assaults happening, the Scout may also need to play the role of observer and either record with a camera or write in a notepad to name what is happening (see guidelines for Cop Watching and Legal Observing)
Pod Roles

Wellbeing and First aid
The Wellbeing and First aid person(s)’s roles is to be prepared to help your pod members and others if someone is hurt or is in distress.

If you are trained in first aid, use your skills! If not, carry a first aid kit with basic supplies (disinfectant, large and small band-aids, saline wash, etc.) as well as hand sanitizer, extra masks, gloves, extra water, non-perishable snacks, etc.

Tips for Wellbeing
- Get some rest, pack your go-bag and review your safety plan before you go out
- During summer, one of the most common concerns is dehydration and overheating if protestors are out for hours in the heat. Make sure you are keeping an eye out for signs of disorientation, slowing down, flush, and other signs of heat exhaustion
- Pack extra water and bandanas or other cloth that you can use to wet down and cool the head and neck
- Remember that if your pod is gassed, you will all need to change your masks and may also need to wash your eyes and skin. Bring extra masks, soap, and water
- Prepare to face high stress environments. Remember to breath, hydrate, slow down and make the best decisions you can for the wellbeing of yourself and your people.

Debrief Facilitator
After your pod is back from the action, and had some time to rest and recover, it’s a good idea to debrief some of the experience together--Are you physically safe, hydrated and fed? What are your first reactions to the action today? How did everyone feel about their role? What would you do differently next time? How can you reground in your commitment to this movement and your own wellbeing to continue this work? How can the pod support you?

Taking an hour to process what feelings are coming up for people allows for a more profound process than addressing what worked and what did not work. Examine either what was triggered or what needs to be healed and repaired in the group.

Do not wait until dynamics are untenable to address them and do not hesitate to appreciate the skills and commitment of your co-organizers.

Courageous vulnerability and conversation can become the cornerstone of how we build relationship and trust. This is a practice that facilitates group appreciation, self-reflection and accountability. This can be used as a foundation for a process unique to your pod.
Pod Roles: Jail Support

Jail support

Jail support is a good role to have planned if there is any risk of arrest (it is good to plan even if you don’t expect you will be at risk).

A key priority of the Jail Support person is that they are available to support folks who are arrested, keep track of them, and help get them out safely. This means it is important that the Jail Support person not be arrested. If an action is higher risk, it is a good idea to ask someone who will NOT be at the action to play the role of Jail Support Person.

Checklist for Jail Support Point Person/ Team

Pre-Arrest Forms
Make sure everyone has filled out a pre-arrest form and you have it in a safe and secure location (do NOT bring these documents to an action or anywhere that police could seize them)

Your Contact Info
Make sure everyone has your contact information on their body (somewhere less visible is better, like under clothing or shoes, so that your information is not visible to police or doxers)

Legal Support
Identify local National Lawyers Guild, or other local support lawyer’s contact information and know how to reach them in case of anyone in your pod being arrested.

Bail Funds
Identify any local bail funds or crowd sourced funds to help bail out protesters. Find out how to get in touch with them and what the process is for receiving bail support in case you need it.

Pod Roles: Jail Support

Checklist for Jail Support Point Person/ Team Cont.

Holding down obligations for those inside
Help coordinate taking care of folks obligations/ needs if they are detained (i.e. these should be listed on the pre-arrest form, such as “call my mom,” “let my boss know I can’t come to work,” “feed my dog,” “take my kids to their grandparents’ house,” etc.)

Pick up and Transportation
Help coordinate pick-up and transportation for when folks get out. You won’t always know exactly when folks will be released, so be prepared for a long wait and bring anything you need to stay well (particularly in very hot weather, waiting outdoors).

Also bring any care items that will support those getting out, like favorite drinks or snacks, a change of comfortable clothes, a precious object, or other items that they request.

Make sure that everyone coming out has a safe ride (either by you or another trusted person) to bring them home and offer some immediate connection after they come out, if they would like to be with others.

Debrief
Having space to process is necessary to heal and remain well in our movement spaces. Not everyone has to debrief together, but sharing with others who went through the experience with you can be very powerful.
Centering and Grounding

In the preparation for an action, we often get singularly focused on our targets, our messaging and all the logistics that come with organizing our people into the streets. What often gets sidelined are the emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects of our work that impact our ability to stay rooted in our fullest selves.

Taking the time to center and ground, even if it is just breathing together or sitting in silence, is critical for becoming aware of ourselves, our bodies and how we are showing up in the moment. By doing these practices, we can self-identify moods, thoughts, anxieties, and energy levels that will contribute to how we engage with each other and how we show up in actions. Once we start to identify our own needs, we can make adjustments.

What could make me more grounded? Do I need to eat? Do I need to make physical contact with someone else? Do I need to sit out? In the end, how you really feel always shows up in some way or another - in either interpersonal or physical manifestations. Grounding brings awareness that informs our self-care and our communications with our co-organizers.

Grounding Exercises

Breathwork
Breathing is fundamental to life, but our breath can also be used consciously to control our nervous system. If we are short of breath, as an example, whether from asthmatic crisis or chronic anxiety, the resulting feeling we have is often panic.

Deepening our breathing, even for a moment, can help us soothe our anxiety, calm our panic, and restore a grounded nervous system.

Box Breath
Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, release for 4 counts, and hold at the bottom for 4 counts. Repeat several times. Notice if your shoulders are able to drop, notice how thoughts and moods shift.

Body scan
Together, notice your bodies and what is happening for you internally. We spend a lot of time, especially if we are feeling unsafe, tracking what is happening outside of ourselves and in the minds of others. Take time (and breath!) to get curious about what is happening within your own bodies.

Share out a mood and a sensation you noticed for the first time. Chanting Chanting and group singing are great ways to ground on a shared purpose or feeling. They are proven to regulate and sync up nervous systems within a group.
**Grounding Exercises**

**Chanting**
Chanting and group singing are great ways to ground on a shared purpose or feeling. They are proven to regulate and sync up nervous systems within a group.

**Visioning**
Taking time to remember and reaffirm our vision is key to centering healing justice in our work. The reason why we fight is for a vision for ourselves, each other, and our communities where Black people are liberated. This visioning can continue to ground us in how we treat each other, how we listen, and how we commit to collective work.
DEFINITION OF POLICING

Policing is a social relationship made up of a set of practices that are empowered by the state to enforce law and social control through the use of force. Reinforcing the oppressive social and economic relationships that have been central to the US throughout its history, the roots of policing in the United States are closely linked the capture of people escaping slavery, and the enforcement of Black Codes.

Similarly, police forces have been used to keep new immigrants “in line” and to prevent the poor and working classes from making demands. As social conditions change, how policing is used to target poor people, people of color, immigrants, and others who do not conform on the street or in their homes also shifts.

The choices policing requires about which people to target, what to target them for, and when to arrest them play a major role in who ultimately gets imprisoned.

Common Police Tactics

Kettling
When police surround demonstrators to keep them in a particular place, this is called a ‘kettle’, or in official police language, ‘containment’. Kettles can be very large, holding hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, or can be very small, containing only a dozen.

The key feature of a kettle is that people are held within it until the police decide to let them go. In a number of recent incidents, police have decided against releasing kettled protesters, and instead have carried out a mass arrest of everyone held.

Baiting
Cops have been luring or maneuvered protesters onto private property or onto a road in order to arrest them. Sometimes cops just heavily watch individuals’ movements so they can find a justification to arrest them.

Curfew baiting
Curfew baiting is when Cops combines some of the tactics of Kettling and Baiting together. It is when Cops show up where there is a gathering of people shortly before a night-time curfew starts. The gathering does not necessarily need to be engaged in protest, it could just be people out in neighborhoods.

Cops will either surround the area discreetly until the curfew starts and then suddenly start arresting people, or they will overtly start kettling people and holding them in one place until the curfew starts and then arresting those in the kettle.
Common Police Tactics

Digital Surveillance
There are two main aspects of digital surveillance to be concerned about while at a protest. One is the data that police could potentially obtain from your phone if you are detained, arrested, or they confiscate your device.

The other is law enforcement surveillance, which can include wireless interception of text messages and more, and tracking tools like license plate scanners and facial recognition. You should be mindful of both.

Think Carefully about Bringing Your Phone
A smartphone broadcasts all sorts of identifying information; law enforcement can force your mobile carrier to track data about what cell towers your phone connected to and when.

Police also use “Stingray Devices”, or IMSI catchers, that impersonate cell towers and attract the phones nearby to connect to them. This means cops routinely gather phone identification data of everyone at a protest at a given time, meaning they can know the identity of the entire crowd instantly.

Sheltering From Police
In neighborhoods across the country, residents have been sheltering sometimes very large groups of protestors in their homes overnight to avoid curfew arrests. Being crowded for several hours in a large group presents a lot of different risks.

There may be folks who have been injured or have been exposed to tear gas or pepper spray and still have it on their clothes, for example. Remember, it can be very helpful to know some basic medical and emotional care practices and keep extra supplies with you.

Chemical Weapon Safety Guide

The Basics of Tear Gas and Pepper Spray
Some of the most common weapons used against protestors are tear gas and pepper spray. They are chemicals designed for use by the military/police to disrupt, confuse, demobilize, and incapacitate crowds and individuals. They irritate and can burn your skin, eyes, nose and mouth.

How They Are Used

Disoriented, panic
Severe eye pain and temporary blindness
Nasal effects include burning, nasal mucosal swelling, and a runny nose
If inhaled pepper spray may also develop sudden elevation of blood pressure which can precipitate a stroke or heart attack.
Shortness of breath, people who have asthma may be at higher risk for complications.
Chemical Weapon Safety Guide

Danger of Chemical Projectiles
Tear gas and pepper spray can be sprayed from small hand-held dispensers or large fire-extinguisher sized tanks. When pepper spray is shot from projectiles, the force of the projectile is also a source of harm.

Chemical Projectiles can:
- Cause an extremely hot explosion
- Break glass
- Hit, cut, bruise and break bones at short range
- Stun, confuse, or temporarily paralyze from shock
- Mark protestors with residue that police can use to identify them later

How pepper spray is dispersed

Semi-automatic launcher filled with projectiles containing pepper spray.

180 rounds
Range: 150 feet
High pressure air

Aerosol canister containing the natural chemical capsaicin, found in chili peppers.
Spray range: Up to 12 feet

Responding to Chemical Weapon Exposure

Throwing Gas Canisters Away From Crowd
Only pick up and throw the canister with thick gloves; they are extremely hot and can cause burns. Throwing a canister will take about 3-10 seconds, enough time to heavily expose your entire body to the canister’s gas.

Disabling the Canister
The canisters dispense spray through a heat reaction and getting the canister cooler and wet will reduce or stop the reaction. Contain it with a traffic cone, bucket, or other hollow object and pour water on the gas canister.

Note: you may need several bottles of water to disable one canister. Pack several and prioritize hydration and medical water needs over disabling canisters if you begin to run low on water.

Methods For Putting Out Tear Gas WITH A GROUP
From Hong Kong
Remember that eye protection and dust masks can help protect you from tear gas in general.
Solid gloves are also useful for avoiding contact with gas canisters.
Chemical Weapon Safety Guide

After Care
You can gently wash exposed skin with diluted dish soap and cold water (to keep pores closed). Remove any goggles or masks that were exposed and either clean them or replace them. Take a cold shower and wash your clothes thoroughly (in a load by themselves) as soon as you can.

Eyewash:
Wash eyes, with water or saline solution for at least 5 minutes. Always pour liquid from the inside corner of the eye towards the outside, with head tilted back slightly to the side. The goal is a gentle, constant stream of water, which is easiest with an eye-flush bottle from a pharmacy, a sports bottle or a plastic water bottle with a small hole poked into the top.

Preparing Yourself and Your Environment For Gas Exposure

Clothing and Protective Gear
Close-toed shoes you can move in
Cover your body as much as possible to avoid skin exposure
Cover your eyes, nose and mouth as best you can
• Cover eyes with full face mask, swim goggles, or safety goggles
• Cover nose and mouth with respirator, N-95 mask, cloth mask, or wet bandana

Elastomeric Half Facepiece Respirators are reusable and have replaceable cartridges or filters. They cover the nose and mouth and provide protection against gases, vapors, or particles when equipped with the appropriate cartridge or filter.

Elastomeric Full Facepiece Respirators are reusable and have replaceable canisters, cartridges, or filters. The facepiece covers the face and eyes, which offers eye protection.

Filtering Facepiece Respirators are disposable half facepiece respirators that filter out particles such as dusts, mists, and fumes. They do NOT provide protection against gases and vapors.
Chemical Weapon Safety Guide

What to avoid

- Oils or lotions, including oil-based sunscreen, because they trap the chemicals on your skin and can prolong exposure
- Contact lenses, because they are extremely difficult to remove if you are exposed and can trap chemicals in your eye

What to pack with you

- Have at least a few water bottles or saline solution, in case you need to flush your eyes or another person’s eyes.
- Heat-proof gloves (thick cloth, leather, etc.) and kitchen tongs to move canisters
- Small bottle of diluted dish soap to wash off chemicals from your skin and clothes
- Extra bandanas or cloths to use for cleaning, extra face coverings, etc.
Preparing to Risk Arrest: Before

- Fill out a Pre-Arrest Form and give it to your Jail Support Person
- Write trusted number (of a lawyer, comrade, family member who won't be getting arrested) on some part of your body
- Your bag may get taken long before you are searched, so put anything you want to have with you, maybe ID, medications and money, somewhere on your person.
- If you can, consider giving your bag, phone, keys, and anything valuable or with sensitive information to someone who won’t get arrested.
- If you have your phone with you, turn off location settings, touch ID, and face recognition. The police cannot force you to enter your passcode. Turn your phone completely off if possible.

Preparing to Risk Arrest: During

What to Say
State your legal name (do not lie) and that you will not answer any questions until you can speak with your lawyer. They will probably ask more questions. Repeat “I need to speak to my lawyer” as many times as needed. Do not engage. This is for your safety and the safety of others.

Try to Stay Calm
Breath. Do what you can to calm yourself so that you can think clearly, make quick decisions if needed and observe the situation around you for your own safety and others. You may be forced to wait for hours before you have access to food or a bathroom, so do what you can to stay comfortable and safe.

Health Concerns
If you or anyone in your group starts having a medical problem tell the police ASAP (with the person’s consent), and request immediate professional medical attention.

Do this early, as it may take a long, long, long time for the police to do anything. If you don’t get a response initially keep asking until help arrives. Consider using chanting or other group tactics to get the police to respond.
Preparing to Risk Arrest: During

**Handcuffs**
Try not to move around too much. This can tighten the cuffs. You can request to be cuffed in front, or ask if anyone in your group can demonstrate how to adjust yourself to get the cuffs in front.

If you have pain, numbness, or tingling in your hands at any time do what you can to adjust the position of the cuffs yourself and request that the cuffs are loosened as soon as you can to avoid possible nerve injury.

**Your Phone Call**
You might not be invited to make your call. *If you are not, continue to for your phone call until it is granted.*

Preparing to Risk Arrest: After

**Injuries**
If you have any injuries from the arrest or encounters with police have this documented ASAP by a medical professional and try to get in touch with your local street medic organization for support.

**Bail Funds**
If someone was able to bail you out using a bail fund, you should be able to leave jail without using your own money for bail. If you did use your own money, contact a local bail fund or legal support team and see if it is possible to be reimbursed for the bail you paid.

**Legal Support**
Keep in contact with your lawyer and make sure you know how to stay up-to-date on any court dates or other legal steps that the court summons you for. See if you can collaborate with others who were arrested with you to fight you cases together.
Know Your Rights Basics

**Do I have to answer questions?**
No. You have the constitutional right to remain silent. You do not have to talk to anyone, even if you have been arrested or are in jail. Clearly state that you wish to remain silent and that you would like to speak to a lawyer.

Do not say anything else. Repeat to every officer who tries to talk to or question you that you wish to remain silent and that you wish to speak to a lawyer. You should always talk to a lawyer before you decide to answer any questions.

**Can Police Lie to Me?**
Yes. Keep in mind that although law enforcement agents are allowed to lie to you, lying to a government agent is a crime. Remaining silent is not.

The safest things to say are “I am going to remain silent,” “I want to speak to my lawyer,” and “I do not consent to a search.” It is a common practice for law enforcement agents to try to get you to waive your rights by telling you that if you have nothing to hide you would talk or that talking would “just clear things up.”

The fact is, if they are questioning you, they are looking to incriminate you or someone you may know, or they are engaged in political intelligence gathering. You should feel comfortable standing firm in protection and defense of your rights and refusing to answer questions.

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**Know Your Rights Basics**

**What if I speak to government agents anyway?**
Even if you have already answered some questions, you can refuse to answer other questions until you have a lawyer. If you find yourself talking, stop. Assert that you wish to remain silent and that you wish to speak to a lawyer.

**Do I have to give my name?**
In some states you can be detained or arrested for merely refusing to give your name. Generally, refusing to give your name may make police suspicious or more hostile and lead to your arrest, even without just cause, so use your judgment. Give your real name—lying to a government agency is a crime.

**If I refuse to answer questions or say I want a lawyer, won’t it seem like I have something to hide?**
Anything you say to law enforcement can be used against you and others. You can never tell how a seemingly harmless bit of information might be used or manipulated to hurt you or someone else.

That is why the right not to talk is a fundamental right under the Constitution.
Know Your Rights Basics

**Do I need a lawyer?**

It is a good idea to talk to a lawyer if you are considering answering any questions. Once you tell the agent that you want to talk to a lawyer, he or she should stop trying to question you and should make any further contact through your lawyer. You have the right to have a lawyer present during any interview.

Remember to get the name, agency and telephone number of any investigator who visits you, and give that information to your lawyer. The government does not have to provide you with a free lawyer unless you are charged with a crime, but the NLG or another organization may be able to help you find a lawyer for free or at a reduced rate.

**What if the police stop me on the street?**

Ask if you are free to go. If the answer is yes, you are free to walk away. If the police say you are not under arrest, but are not free to go, then you are being detained. The police can pat down the outside of your clothing if they have reason to suspect you might be armed and dangerous. If they search any more than this, say clearly, “I do not consent to a search.”

They may keep searching anyway. If this happens, do not resist because you can be charged with assault or resisting arrest. You do not have to answer any questions. You do not have to open bags or any closed container. Tell the officers you do not consent to a search of your bags or other property.

**What if police or agents stop me in my car?**

Keep your hands where the police can see them. If you are driving a vehicle, you must show your license, registration and, in some states, proof of insurance.

You do not have to consent to a search. But the police may have legal grounds to search your car anyway. Clearly state that you do not consent. Officers may separate passengers and drivers from each other to question them, but no one has to answer any questions.

**Document the incident**

Write down the officer’s badge number, name or other identifying information. You have a right to ask the officer for this information. Try to find witnesses and their names and phone numbers. If you are injured, take pictures and document the injuries as soon as you can. Call a lawyer as soon as possible.
Recommendations & Love for Cop Watchers/Legal Observing

Adapted from the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Justice Committee

Video footage and documentation of police of has played an undeniable role in exposing police brutality in this country. Filming can be used to document, deter, and deescalate police violence. Here are some steps to monitor, document and expose abusive policing and to fight to build safe, healthy and empowered communities.

When you begin to film:
Try to get the full bodies of the cops and the people they are targeting in your frame. Record the date, time, location and identifying information about the officers by saying them into your camera. Describe any police misconduct you see. (E.g. “They are searching her pockets. She did not give her consent.”).

Don’t fully narrate what’s going on or add commentary as you may drown out what’s being said during the incident and/or inadvertently incriminate yourself or others.
Tips for Cop Watching/ Legal Observing

**Do your best to continue filming:**
If the police approach you, let them know you’re not trying to interfere, you are simply exercising your right to document them while they’re doing their jobs.

Use your judgment! If a community member is emotionally disturbed and/or your presence seems to be escalating the situation, take a step back and evaluate how to best engage.

**If the police tell you to get back:**
While taking a step back say, “I’m cooperating. I have stepped back. I’m not trying to stop you from doing your job. I’m just exercising my legal right to observe the police.”

Let someone know you’re Cop Watching: Send a message to someone at another location letting them know where you are and that you’re filming a police incident. Check in with that person when you are finished filming to let them know you are okay.

**Guidelines for posting footage:**
Never post footage to the internet without consent from the person being filmed, particularly if it includes anything that might incriminate a community member or yourself.

If you are unsure how to proceed, reach out to an organization with expertise in this area or a lawyer first. They can also give you advice if you are afraid of backlash by the media or the police.

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Tips for Cop Watching/ Legal Observing

**Keep your love for your community in mind:**
Cop Watching is not about agitating the police or making a statement. It’s about protecting one another and exposing police violence.

Finally, keep in mind that footage alone will not ensure police accountability. Real community safety comes from investment and empowerment of our communities through sustained organizing and movement-building.
BYP100 #SheSafeWeSafe: 5 D’s of De Escalation

Direct:
Being direct means approaching the situation using clear, straightforward communication. There are many ways that we can deliver a direct message without escalating a situation. Being mindful of tone, affect, and body language can help us in delivering a direct message without coming off as aggressive or hostile.

Assess your safety first. Speak up about the harm. Be firm and clear. You can also talk to the person being harmed about what’s going on. Ask “Are you okay? Should I get help? Should we get out of here?”

Distract:
Distraction is a great way to intervene and stop harmful interactions. By interjecting with a distraction, we can interrupt the interaction and get the survivor out of the situation, or redirect the attention of the harasser.

Take an indirect approach to de-escalate the situation.
Start a conversation with the person causing the harm or find another way to draw their attention away from the person being harmed.

You could ask them for directions or the time, or drop something to divert attention. You could also start a conversation with the person that is being harmed and walk them away from the situation in a casual manner. This is where you get to be creative.

Delegate:
Get help from someone else. Delegating is an efficient way to elicit help from others to put a stop to the harassment or other violence. Delegating could involve getting a friend or asking someone else to keep an eye on the situation while you call for help (when such action is necessary).

Find someone in a position of authority and ask them for help. Check in with the person being harmed. You can ask: Would you like me to call a friend or someone you trust?

Delay:
A delayed response is still a response! If you see harassment and harm happening, but are not able to provide help in the moment, it is important to follow up with that person afterwards and make sure they are okay.

This follow up can provide the survivor of harm with meaningful support, and is an opportunity for you to present them with their options for next steps. After the incident is over, check in with the person who was harmed. You can say: “What do you need? Can I accompany you somewhere?”

From SheSafeWeSafe.
Depending on the situation it can be helpful for the person being harmed to have a video of the incident. *Keep a safe distance and say the day and time. Film street signs or other landmarks that help identify the location.

Always ask the person being harmed what they want to do with the footage. Never post it online or use it without their permission.

Keep your attention on the person being harmed – make sure anything you do is focused on supporting them, not agitating the person who is causing the harm. Remember: the next step should always be the choice of the survivor. Our responsibility is to listen to them, offer options, and respect their decision.

We understand that our safety involves more than an absence of violence and that creating empowered, accountable, self-directed communities requires providing mechanisms that support full participation of the most vulnerable people.

Harm Free Zone is based on the understanding that past and present laws and policies are meant to keep some people safe, while harming others, have on the economic, physical, emotional health of poor people and people of color and begin to explore the process of community accountability.

Historically in this country, we have been taught that people who committed acts that harm others must be removed from our communities through incarceration, displacement and deportations. These guideposts can be used to develop implementable practices and community centered solutions that leave no one behind.
Foundations/Principles of Community Accountability

When a person causes harm, the processes of community accountability allow the person harmed, the harm doer, and the impacted community to be taken seriously.

The person causing the harm can be held accountable, and the community can also hold itself accountable for its responsibility to create an alternative set of social practices, relations and institutions. Community accountability recognizing that we are answerable to each other.

We must therefore see the harm doer as:

- Inseparable from the community,
- Affected by a historical and present-day reality of oppression that influences the beliefs, character, desires, sense of self and relationships.
- Capable of acting, desiring, believing differently.
- A mirror for and of the community,
- Holding promise for the community.

Building Blocks of Community Accountability

Prevention

The act of preventing harm within the community. Prevention ensures that basic needs are met for all community members and that information is available and accessible for all.

Intervention

The act of directly intervening when harm occurs. Intervention values all community members and emphasizes active care and compassion.

Reparation

The act of repairing harm among all community members. Reparation analyzes the root causes of harm. It enhances individual and collective investment in the well-being of the community to secure healing, trust, forgiveness and responsibility for all community members.

Transformation

The act of completely transforming individual and collective power relationships. Transformation honors and encourages individual and group imagination, critical thought, communal reliance, self-determination and democratic decision-making.
Closing

There is no mistaking the fact that the majority of the methods to remain safe in the streets are aimed at protecting you and your comrades from the police.

The violence that police are inflicting on protestors, rioters, looters, freedom fighters currently and the violence they inflict on Black, Indigenous, Brown, queer, trans and poor folks everyday are both unacceptable and not at all surprising.

The police are operating exactly as they were designed to: to enforce the laws of an inherently racist, oppressive settler state. As you finish this guide, we hope that you feel more grounded and prepared to engage in movements with care, interdependence, and vision to build a new world.

Thank you for reading this guide and please share it with others to expand our skills for bringing people powered Safety to the Streets!

Other Resources To Explore

If You're New To Abolition
A Legal Guide For Activists With Physical Disabilities and Health Issues
A Legal Guide For Transgendered, Transsexual, Intersexed and Genderqueer Activists
Organizing support and solidarity for arrestees
SHIT! WE'RE GONNA GET ARRESTED!
The Abolitionist Toolkit – Critical Resistance
Durham Beyond Policing Community Based Safety and Wellness
Before, During, and After Arrest – Herbal Self Care
Healing in Action: A Toolkit for Black Lives Matter
Healing Justice & Direct Action
Protest Safety from Street Medics

building an abolitionist future

Abolition means care, not punishment. We keep ourselves and our communities safe by investing in housing, health care, mental health care, access to food, public transportation, jobs that provide living wages, and strong relationships with each other. Police, prisons and jails do not provide safety — our communities do.

From BYP