

SAFE(ISH) PROTESTING



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*Dedicated to Mrs. P, whose
advice on resisting fascism was
shared over afternoon tea...*

Safe(ish) Protesting

This guide is intended to help you, as an individual, learn how to be part of a protest as a member of a community. Sometimes, as just one person, it feels like you are powerless to do anything at all. Sometimes, it feels like you have to do everything yourself. Both are false.

We are going to go into the things that you can do, as one person, to join in with your community in engaging in activism, specifically, protesting. This includes the things that you have personal responsibility for, such as your own behavior and your kit, but also the ways in which you can support and be supported by the community you are becoming a part of.

There are other courses and materials to cover more advanced topics, including what is needed for various community roles. This one is for you, as one person wanting to join in, to build a solid foundation to do so.

Legalities of Protesting

Public protests have played critical and pivotal roles in the history of American social justice. We teach multiple classes on the history of activism, including the history of herbalism as activism and the history of street/protest/riot/action medicine, so I will not belabour this point here.

It is important to understand the right to protest, and both its broad protections and narrow limitations. The government does have the ability to restrict protests under certain circumstances.

The First Amendment states, “Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Although the First Amendment does not explicitly refer to “protest”, courts have repeatedly held that the First Amendment’s protection of free expression encompasses the right to protest through the constitutionally protected rights of free speech, peaceable assembly, and petitioning the government for change.

The right to freedom of speech grants protesters the right to express their opinion on public property, including with speeches, signs and banners, and symbolic acts. Courts have made exceptions that this speech and these acts cannot contain true threats (expressing the intent to commit an act of unlawful violence to a particular person or group) and incitement (speech directed at producing imminent lawless action that is likely to produce it).

That doesn't mean that a protest can never mention or advocate for violence. Free speech can express philosophical support for violence, general endorsement of it, or even assert a "moral propriety" or "moral necessity" for violence. Freedom of speech protects hateful, insulting, and offensive speech, as well.

The right to peaceable assembly grants protesters the right to gather in groups to protest at demonstrations, rallies, and marches. The right to petition the government means those protests can include requests and demands that the government address injustice or change legislation.

Recently, threats have been made to withdraw federal funding from "any college, school or university that allows illegal protests." "Agitators" have also been threatened with imprisonment and deportation without trial. But agitator is not a legal term, and agitation is a form of free speech.

But there is no such thing as an "illegal protest." Law enforcement can't declare an assembly unlawful without an exceptionally strong reason to do so. The First Amendment prohibits law enforcement from declaring an assembly unlawful because of the assembly's message. Any attempt to shut down a protest because of its message would bluntly violate the Freedom of Speech.

So, where is speech protected?

How much protection a protest has under Free Speech depends on its location and on what type of "forum" a location is. The Supreme Court has recognized spaces such as sidewalks and parks as areas that have been used "immemorially" for public expression, and the government's authority to regulate speech in those spaces is "sharply circumscribed." Immemorially refers to things that originate in the past or are very old, so this refers to traditional use.

Locations that are not traditionally used for free expression can still be designated a space of public forum and have the same First Amendment protections as those that have been used immemorially. However, any space that is designated as this can lose that

designation. But while it has it, it has the same protections as speech in a public park or on a sidewalk.

There are also “limited public forums”, which are opened for a particular purpose rather than for all free speech expression. The government can limit expression in a limited public forum to particular groups or topics, such as when a town council allows public comments related to council or town business and policies. The government is not permitted to engage in viewpoint discrimination, where it attempts to regulate what opinions the speakers can express. The First Amendment protects speech in a limited public forum so long as the protester belongs to the class of people for whom the forum exists and the focus of their speech is within the topics for which the forum was opened.

There are also nonpublic forums, which are public properties that have not been immemorially used for free speech or designated as open for public expression. Examples include polling places, travel terminals, and military bases. The government cannot restrict all free speech in those areas, for example, it cannot prohibit a traveler from expressing an opinion with what their t-shirt or pin says. However, they can prohibit large rallies. All restrictions are legally required to be reasonable and viewpoint-neutral.

On private property, the government has no right to restrict a person’s speech on their own property, but grants no protections to the right to protest on someone else’s private property without their consent.

So, Are All Kinds of Protests Protected in a Traditional Public Forum?

No, there are restrictions and regulations that the government can put in place. These are generally “time, place, and manner” restrictions. They are only valid if they can be justified without reference to the speech’s content. They have to be specific to significant governmental interests, including traffic safety or residential privacy. For example, the government can restrict people from having a march in a residential neighborhood at 3:00 in the morning.

Any restrictions have to leave open alternative channels for communication of the idea, such as asking that the protest take place during the day.

There are legal arguments to be made that any restriction requiring that free speech in a public forum be restricted by time, place, and manner is not Constitutional, but courts so far have found that these restrictions are acceptable.

Do You Need a Permit?

The answer is “sometimes.” For large protests that require street closures or take over a public park, the government can require notification or permits, but any requirements have to be based on the government’s actual needs and have clear, objective, and content-neutral standards. The government cannot treat protests differently based on the views they are expressing. The notice period cannot be excessively long and must allow for spontaneous protest in response to recent news and events.

Marches on the sidewalks generally do not require permits, so long as marchers do not obstruct car or pedestrian traffic. However, if the march requires blocking traffic or a street closure, if it is going to gather at a park or plaza and take over a lot of it, or if it requires the use of sound amplifying devices, then a permit may be needed.

The route of a march cannot be restricted unless it is necessary for traffic or public safety.

And, if the protest cannot afford to pay the fee for the permit, they should allow a waiver for those who cannot afford it.

Courts have found that requiring individuals or small groups to apply for a notice or permit is unconstitutional, so long as the protest is in a traditional public forum.

Why to Maybe Not Get a Permit:

In recent months, some protest groups have obtained permits from the NYPD for demonstrations. Here are some reasons why obtaining permission and permits from the police for protests might be counterproductive or dangerous.

- Requiring permits at all violates our First Amendment rights, and we ideally should not be complicit in that violation.
- Requesting permission from the apparatus of oppression to protest that oppression is counterintuitive.
- Protests are meant to be disruptive, and disruptive protests are effective. Working with the government and/or police doesn't disrupt the current system, it legitimizes it.
- Permitted routes and locations are restricted routes and locations. They stifle the ability of the protest to be flexible and grow.
- When police know the route and location of every part of a protest, it is easier for them to set up counter-weapons and surveillance technology, block access, and kettle the protesters.
- Permits may create unsafe environments for undocumented people, as law enforcement cooperates with ICE.
- Cops can lie to protest organizers and protesters. It is a common and completely incorrect belief that they cannot. But they may promise one thing and do another.
- Permits do not make protesters safer. Even permitted protests have been targeted by police action

where police have arrested protesters, destroyed protest equipment and medic supplies, and brutalised protesters.

- Some groups getting permits while others don't may pit groups against each other, with some being portrayed in the media as "good" and others as "bad." Those who are perceived as "bad" for not being complicit in the limiting of their own human rights may be targets of more injustice that will be further excused because, "Why didn't they just pull a permit?"
- Permitted protests have to be linked to a person's legal identity, which does not work for anonymized protests and makes it very easy for organizers to be doxxed.

What About Counter Protesters?

On one hand, the government cannot use the expected reaction of other people as a justification to restrict a protest.

But it also cannot restrict counterprotesters from expressing their own free speech, either. They have just as much right to protest your protest as you do in the first place.

Unfortunately, the government can require protesters to pay for insurance to cover damages to public property. However, the government can't place an undue burden on the protesters, and they have to reflect the actual costs and risks based on things like crowd sizes, and they cannot base the price on the protest's message. They also cannot impose a larger financial burden on a protest because counterprotesters might oppose the message of the protest.

The government can also enforce laws against violence, such as fighting with counter-protesters, as well as those against other crimes, like vandalism and destruction of public property.

Additionally, protesters have the right to destroy their own property, but not the property of counterprotesters. For example, a protester can burn a flag that they are carrying anywhere where fire is permitted, but they cannot take the flags of counterprotesters and burn them.

Legalities of Street Medicine

Street medics, riot medics, and action medics fall into a strange state of legal exception. Most have no medical license and would not normally be legally allowed to treat a person in a medical crisis. In emergencies, special laws go into effect, referred to as “Good Samaritan Laws.”

In those cases of emergency, licensed physicians often cannot provide services on the street without special permission from the governing authorities, or they are at risk of losing their license. Although some doctors and nurses operate as street, riot, and action medics, either outside the bounds of the law or with special permission granted to them by the authorities, most street, riot, and action medics are not physicians or nurses. Rather, they have had more specific training, such as Wilderness First Responder (WFR) Training, First Aid training, or Street/Riot/Action training.

The UN Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field requires that there be mutual consent of both sides before medics can serve (Chapter IV, Article 7); however, it’s unclear if the “zone of no protest” (the phrase used in Seattle, 1999) in which activists protest qualifies as armed conflict, or what laws remain to protect them.

There are legal rules for what a Good Samaritan can and cannot do for those harmed in emergencies, although they vary from state to state. The laws offer protection only for people who have no “duty to act”

(i.e., it is not part of their paid job description to provide care).

A medic must not assist someone without their consent.

A medic must not operate outside of the bounds of their competence. (If they are not trained for CPR, they must not provide CPR. If they are trained as a Wilderness First Responder (WFR), they can provide the level of care a WFR would normally provide, and they will be held to a standard of care that a WFR is trained to.)

The care provided must be free.

The specifics of the laws vary from state to state.

The Good Samaritan Laws Do Not Cover Street/Riot/Action Medics Who:

- Give someone an over-the-counter drug (like aspirin or Advil).
- Dispense a prescription drug.
- Administer another person's prescription medicine.
- Commit gross negligence, willful harm, or abandonment.

The Supreme Court of California recently allowed civil suits to continue against volunteer aid providers (aka good Samaritans) (Williams 2008), so a Good Samaritan may still be sued, even if they acted to save a life.

If a licensed medical professional does provide services as riot/street/action medic when legally permitted to do so, they must still follow HIPAA, and so any records generated must stay with the person assisted. Even if a person has extensive Wilderness First Responder or First Aid training, it is our recommendation that they still attend a Street/Riot/Action Medic Training course, and that their first few outings, they operate under the auspices of a Medic Collective. A street/riot/action medic operates

under unique emergency environments that require specialized training.

Organizational Structure

Who's Running This, Anyway?

The assumption of this class is that you are a person who is attending a protest, rather than one of the people organizing the protest. We have a separate seminar for how to organize a protest, and it covers vitally different information than this seminar and the accompanying notes.

There are different kinds of protests organized by different groups of people. A protest can start with a single person in a Signal group, a labor union, a civic advocacy group, the members of a community center, a political party office, or even spontaneously.

It is our recommendation that, with the exception of spontaneous protest, some effort be made to vet the person(s) responsible for organizing the protest.

A person protesting should not show up and immediately feel as though they have the right to take over or take charge of the protest. However, that does not strip them of their individual rights to express themselves, leave if they do not feel comfortable, or take care of themselves or others. For example, if the protest organizers have not provided water, an individual protester could start passing out water bottles if they felt moved to do so.

A special note for medics: If you are the person who is running the protest, then you are not the person who is the medic for that protest. These need to be separate roles.

However, the medic is always in charge of the medic spaces. If there is a medic collective that is setting up a clinic or a response station or a medic tent, the medic who is in charge of that space is not in charge of the protest, the action, the event, the response, etc, but is in charge of the space. However, if they are in charge of the space, they are not the medics providing active medic care. These also need to be separate roles.

Collectives and Affinity Groups

An affinity group is the basic social structure of protest politics, the concept of which developed out of nineteenth-century anarchism. An affinity group is a group formed around a shared interest (an affinity), to which individuals formally or informally belong. An affinity group can be anything from a knitting circle to a group engaged in political activism. They tend to be based around a common social identity or ideology, a shared concern, a shared interest or skill, a shared activity, a shared community role, or a shared personal identity.

There is some confusion of terminology because the term collective also refers to a group of individuals coming together, but rather than having a shared affinity, they have a shared goal, sometimes with a focus on social, political, or economic issues. They engage in collective action.

There is absolutely a Venn diagram of overlap where groups fit into both terms, but choose which they prefer to go by.

A medic collective is a group of riot/street/protest medics who provide training and work together.

A note on terminology: Some groups may choose to call themselves street medic collectives or riot medic collectives. Other groups that are

not medics use the term collective to refer to their organizing structure. For the purpose of this section, we will use collectives to refer to groups that have a specific goal and medic collectives to refer to any of the riot/street/protest medic collective groups, and affinity groups to differentiate the social structure that drew the group together.

Some medic collectives work under the umbrella of an affinity group, but many do not. Medic collectives often maintain that it is necessary for them to have autonomy from the groups that form the coalitions of activists and protesters. In the recent history of street medicine, it has been common to teach that medic collectives have been so neutral as to provide assistance as medics at protests for things they do not support, such as Neo-Nazi protests. In some regions of the U.S., this is no longer practical as street medics are being targeted first by police during actions. It's important to know the context in your local area.

An affinity collective or affinity medic has a primary responsibility to their group and not to the protest as a whole.

The Affinity Group

An affinity group is a group formed around a shared interest, to which individuals formally or informally belong. This generally does not include governmental agencies, so would not be, for example, the police, EMTs, or military.

Affinity groups can also contain affinity groups - so, for example, if you belong to a large affinity group for a social cause, it may contain smaller local groups, and within those groups, smaller affinity groups of 4 to 16 people that tend to work together.

Why work with an affinity group?

- They provide support before, during, and after actions
- They can pool supplies and resources

- They can share skills (a couple of medics, some legal observers, various scouts, supply runners, lookouts, etc)
- Arrest and jail support
- Reduced infiltration (although importantly, that isn't the same as "no infiltration")

In mobilizations for large-scale events where there are many groups participating, affinity groups and medic collective members may form a "cluster", or group of affinity groups. For example, if a situation is logistically complex (involving emergency care, clinic/tent care, wellness care, decontamination, response to traumatic situations, etc.), clusters may form in areas where people are mobilizing and working together. Your cluster would be who you're working with, and the collective or affinity group is who you would debrief to. Sometimes these clusters are referred to as teams.

Why to Maybe Not Work With an Affinity Group

- You are essentially giving up part of your decision-making power as to what type of support you will provide, when, to whom, and how. If joining an affinity group, you may be okay with that.
- Increased surface area for potential social networking attacks
- Demands of community building can distract from the interest that brought you all together in the first place
- Potential to be asked to provide an unrealistic level of support if the people making decisions aren't familiar with your capabilities and limitations
- Potential recognition and thus targeting by state actors and/or counteragents

- Organizational activities and meetings can be a heavy time commitment

As Part of a Collective

Working with an existing collective or creating a new one has many advantages compared to working alone.

Why Work with a Collective?

- Skill sharing and pooling experience
- Resource sharing
- Working with a group means that you know that someone else will show up if you can't
- Support before, during, and after protests
- Potential to formalize and register as a nonprofit organization (risk)
- Even without the legal status of a nonprofit, a named, recognized collective may get more support from the local community (risk)

The larger the collective, the more formalized and structured it should be. Someone in the group with a specialized background should be appointed to teach others and share skills and experience. Someone in the group should be appointed to manage stores and resources. Someone in the group should be appointed to info and OPSEC management, etc.

Why to Maybe Not Join a Collective

- Recognition and thus targeting by state power
- Recognition and thus targeting by counter-agents
- Possible moral objection to certain causes that they will end up providing support for (e.g., Charlottesville).

- Demands of community building/internal conflict resolution can distract from accomplishing political goals.
- Practices, walkthroughs, and organizational meetings can be a heavy time commitment.
- You are absolutely giving up part of your decision-making power as to what type of support you will provide, when, how, and to whom

With Other Individuals

Clusters, Working Groups, Teams

It is also possible to partner up for larger actions in a cluster, team, or “working group”, which tends to be made up of individuals who are working solo, belong to collectives, and/or belong to affinity groups, who are choosing to work together for the course of the action. This allows them to benefit from their varying skill levels, experience, tactics, and abilities.

A general protester or medic may end up in a working group in the bloc, at a medic station, at a clinic, at a water and snack station, mobile through an action, at a decontamination area, etc.

Before going out to an action, it is wise to check in with anyone you know in the area to see if working groups are in need of someone with your skill set, if you’re not already working with a collective or affinity group.

Risk or Needs Assessment

As part of preparing to work within various organizational structures, a protester should go through a risk assessment or needs assessment.

At a minimum, here are some questions that a protester could ask themselves as part of that assessment.

- What are you preparing for?

- Is this a march, a sit-in, a series of speeches in the park, etc? Is this protest without a permit, blocking traffic, or taking over a government building?
- Does your presence support the cause of the action? Do you understand the topic and purpose of the action?
- Are you qualified for the role you're stepping into?
- How many people are expected to be there? Are you prepared for that? (There's a big difference between a protest of 50 people and 5,000 people.)
- Will you be working with someone else? (An affinity group, collective, a buddy, etc.?)
- Do you or others have the materials you need?
- Do you have plans in place for when things go wrong?

The Buddy Pair

While protesting, you may go with an affinity group, a working group, a medic collective, or as an unaffiliated individual. No matter which way you attend or work at an action, you may wish to go with a buddy.

Although some protest guides or riot/street/action/protest medicine guides say that you must always go or work with a buddy and that no protester or medic should attend a protest or work without one, that isn't something I agree with.

A buddy is not always the same person. It may be someone assigned to you by an affinity group or collective, or the organizer of an action. If you are agreeing to work under the auspices of another organizational or command structure, you may not have an option about being assigned a buddy, though you always have the option to back out and not participate. Other times, a buddy may be someone you

agree to attend a protest with or work with for the course of an action. You can also make a long-term buddy arrangement with another trusted person.

Your buddy does not have to be in any particular role themselves. They may be another protester, a complementary support person, a medic, a supply manager, etc.

Once agreeing to work with a buddy, a protester should not separate from their buddy during an action, with the exception of situations in which they have no choice, such as arrest. If a buddy goes missing, the protest organizers should be alerted.

Why Work in a Buddy Pair?

- Sometimes more than one set of hands is needed (to carry equipment, carry a banner, distribute supplies)
- A buddy can provide a second set of eyes for scanning for danger
- A buddy can guard your back
- A buddy can provide a second perspective or opinion
- A buddy can help check the equipment
- A buddy can help carry equipment
- A buddy can remind you to take breaks
- A buddy can prevent someone from taking photos or videos of you
- A buddy can document anything that happens to you
- A buddy can help you debrief at the end of the day
- A buddy can support your mental and emotional health in the long term

Why to Maybe Not Work in a Buddy Pair?

- An incompetent buddy can be worse than protesting or working alone
- A buddy who isn't a full partner can be an additional mental or emotional drain, requiring support that they do not provide in exchange
- A buddy provides an additional point of failure - everyone can forget things, but you can't control what your buddy forgets in the pre- or post-action steps
- If your buddy runs off to join the protest, riot, etc., you may be stuck hauling their pack as well as your own
- The buddy pair system is like dating; if you have a good partnership, it can be excellent. If not, you are better off single.

Talk With Your Buddy

Buddy teams may be agreed upon one week or one to two days before an action (or sometimes on the day of the action itself). If the buddy partnership isn't an established one, before partnering up, there are some things to ask (this is based on RIVAL from Hakan Geijer's Riot Medicine, but adjusted for general protesting rather than specifically working a protest as a medic).

- What name are you using? What gender and pronouns do you use? What is your primary language?
- What role are you taking on in this protest?
- How "in it" do you want to be? Do you want to be in the thick of the action or hanging near the back? Would you rather be on the street, at the supply station, at the first aid area, etc?

- Do you have other relevant training or experience? Where and when did you train, apprentice, do your residency, etc?
- Do you have any relevant disabilities and impairments, reasons you might be targeted, medical issues, medication schedule, or situations you must avoid? These include asthma, severe allergies, PTSD or CPTSD, diabetes, hypoglycemia, pregnancy, menstruation, migraines, etc. Even a bad back is relevant.
- What risks are you willing to take on? Before a collective assigns a buddy or before a buddy agreement is made, it should be discussed what each person's willingness is to risk arrest (Are they a citizen? Are they on parole? Have they been arrested before?) and physical harm, as well as the level of physical activity they are prepared to take on.

And the important questions to ask yourself before working with this person:

- Do you feel safe with your buddy?
- Do your roles align with each other?
- Does your desire to be in a certain place or performing certain actions align with each other?
- Are you capable of supporting them with their issues that might crop up?
- Are they capable of supporting you with your issues that might crop up?
- Are you both on the same page on how to deal with cops and arrest?

If these answers **do not align**, then that buddy partnership will not work, and the organizers, affinity group, collective, etc. should be informed that you need reassignment or to form an agreement with someone else.

An action should not partner two people who cannot carry, two people with the same medical condition (do not partner two people with asthma), two people who are bad at communication, etc., partner in a complementary fashion.

Solitary Practice

There are many reasons a protester may choose to operate on their own - there may be no affinity groups, collectives, etc., in your area. You may find it appealing not to have an organizational structure that controls, limits, or directs your actions.

There is nothing stopping a person from getting into gear or putting together a kit and going to actions on their own. However, even when operating solo, you still operate within the context of the larger action and will likely need to introduce yourself to the organizers. If you're not just showing up as a protester but as a volunteer with specific skills to offer, you may be expected to declare where you received your training or to prove your capabilities. (If you're a volunteer medic, you may face resistance as a medic without a known collective behind you - you may be treated with suspicion that you are an infiltrator or that you don't know what you're doing.)

Once connections are formed and you demonstrate your capabilities, you may be called upon for future actions. If you are reliable, predictable, and capable, you may find a collective forms around you, or you are asked to join one. If you still want to be independent, make that very clear and have strong boundaries.

The disadvantages of working alone include the fact that there is no one to step up for you if you are unable to help if you've made a commitment to be there. You may also feel as though you have to assist with every single action in your area if you are one of the only people who consistently show up. Both of these can lead to burnout and emotional over-commitment.

Things to ask before you work as an individual, independent protester:

- Are you prepared for being arrested or attacked when on your own?
- Can you carry everything you need?
- Can you take care of yourself? Really? In an emergency, will you remember to take your medications, drink water, eat salty snacks, etc?
- Are you prepared to handle the entire mental load of whatever role you're fulfilling?
- Will you be realistic with your limitations, or will you attempt to overreach them?

Roles You Can Consider Stepping Into

Protests need all kinds of labor. There is nothing wrong with just being a participant – carrying a sign, chanting along, walking if there is a march, and then going home. We need more and more people in that role.

But protests need more than that.

Some roles to look at when you start protesting include, but are not limited to:

- Sign and banner making
- Food and water distribution
- Setup and teardown of stations
- Legal support and jail support

There are more roles than this, like medic, phone monitor, counselor, and press liaison, but they all require much more specific training. A new protester can decide they want to do these things, but should be trained in how to do so before showing up and stepping into the role.

Although we will not tell people who are disabled not to protest (as the vast majority of our collective is disabled and also neurodivergent), we

will say that there are roles that support protests that don't involve having to be at the protest. There are exceedingly important roles that do not require long hours of standing, walking, risk of exposure to communicable illnesses and diseases, risk of arrest without access to medication, and risk of exposure to chemical weaponry.

One of our volunteers has told us that the street/riot/protest/action medic principle of "don't make another patient" has been instrumental in helping them accept that their role might not be as a protester, but as support for the protest. That volunteer edited the print version that will go out to teach people about safe(ish) protesting, which is going to benefit many protests without them needing to endanger their health by being in attendance.

Our primary instructor can no longer do black bloc work or be a running medic at a protest, due to their own disabilities, but can train other medics or run a medic basecamp.

All of these roles are valuable and needed. Pick the contribution to the cause that is right for you.

What is Opsec?

Short for operational security, the fundamental purpose of opsec is to ensure that you can successfully complete your operation (or "op") without interference from any potential adversaries. In this case, your op is a protest.

"The process by which potential adversaries can be denied information about capabilities and intentions by identifying, controlling, and protecting generally unclassified evidence of the planning and execution of sensitive activities." - NIST Special Publication 800-53

Opsec Basics

This version of OPSEC is what you need to know in order to show up and participate in a protest. There is an entirely different, and much longer,

discussion of what is required for being involved with organizing protests. In particular, the important thing to know is that the organizers will most likely be applying something called the principle of least privilege, otherwise known as “need to know.” If you don’t need to know something, you probably won’t, and that’s okay. You probably need to know where to find the medics; you don’t need to know their background or identity. You need to know where to go and what kind of activity to prep for (marching? Sit in?). You may not even need to know the route for the march in advance. Not telling everyone who is coming everything about the plan isn’t a lack of trust; it’s a sign of good opsec on the part of the organizers.

Infosec

Infosec is short for informational security, which is the protection of information and information systems from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction. As an individual protester, you are still responsible for practicing personal infosec (short for information security). This starts before you attend the protest, continues throughout it, and after it.

Data vs Metadata

Metadata is information about information, data about data. In this case, data is something like the contents of a text message, where metadata is everything else about it – when it was sent, who it was sent to, where it was sent from, etc. Data has a certain level of legal privacy protection (although that generally is less relevant if the people trying to look at it are the police); metadata has none.

Metadata is being generated by all of us more or less continuously – for example, the GPS position of your cell phone is considered metadata. This can be assembled into a fairly comprehensive picture all on its own. For example, if someone does a Google search for genital rashes, makes a phone call to a local urgent care, searches for directions to their location, searches for nearby pharmacies, and then has a GPS history showing them traveling to the urgent care and

the pharmacy, it is possible to put together a fairly complete picture without having heard the phone call or been in the doctor's office. Not all of those pieces are trivial to obtain, but all of them are possible.

Metadata is generated with internet activity, phone activity, messaging activity, the use of most apps on a smartphone, and potentially vehicle activity if using a modern car with an infotainment system, OnStar, built-in GPS, etc.

There are steps that you can take to mitigate the amount of metadata that you generate, but most of them come with tradeoffs. For example, you can disable location settings on your phone, which will prevent legitimate apps from knowing where you are located most of the time. However, police, government agencies, and illegal data harvesting services will still be able to access the information, and your location will be recorded if you send or receive text messages or phone calls or use cellular data (based on the cell tower you are connected to). Also, none of your map and direction apps will work. We will provide some basic steps to limit the amount of metadata that people can gather a little later, and there is an entire long-form class of additional material.

One consequence of this is that a decision that you have to make as a protester is whether to bring your phone with you, as it can easily be used to place you at the protest should it be necessary for the police (or anyone else) to do so.

The problem with simply leaving your phone at home is that it creates a break in the pattern. There is a continuous usage pattern associated with most of our smartphones, and if at three on a Saturday, it would usually be at Costco or being used to read fanfic, seeing it be completely unmoving and unused at that time can raise a red flag for someone who is looking.

It would be nice if using a burner phone were the solution to this, but there are several reasons why it's not that simple. First, it does nothing about the break in your daily phone's normal usage patterns. Second, unless the burner is not only turned off but has had the battery removed, it may still show a trackable GPS signal to your house, if it is stored there. And third,

purchasing a phone with absolutely no connection to you is actually a significant challenge for most people.

Securing Information

At Rest and In Motion

Information at rest means data that is just sitting there. In analog form, this might be something like a journal. Digitally, this might be something like the contents of your phone, including your text messages, contacts list, call history, etc. For the purposes of a protest, you are most likely to be concerned with a phone, assuming that you have brought it. Make sure the device is fully encrypted and that it is set to unlock with a passcode, not biometrics. If you get arrested, the police have the right to your biometrics (e.g., fingerprints, Face ID), but your password is protected. This protects not only you but anyone you may have been in contact with. If you don't have a very good, specific reason to bring another digital device, then leave it at home.

Information in motion means data that is moving from person to person, place to place. You want to make sure that it is being sent via secure, encrypted channels. Encryption means that the information that you are sending has been encoded so that it cannot be read easily by anyone who intercepts it in transit. End-to-end encryption, which is ideal, means that there is no point between where the information starts and where it arrives when it is not encrypted. A normal phone call is not secure. Email is not secure. A normal text message is not secure. Facebook Messenger may claim to be end-to-end encrypted, but I would not trust it to be secure. The best secure messaging app is Signal. It leaves no metadata trail to speak of (under the right circumstances, someone can find out the closest major airport).

Messages can be set to completely self-destruct, are fully end-to-end encrypted, and are not stored at any location in the middle. In cases where the company has been compelled to provide information in court, all it retains is the last time a

given account connected to the Signal network. It also supports encrypted voice calls.

Securing Information in Person

When you are communicating with someone in the same physical location, you should assume that anyone nearby can be potentially listening to you, and that any device with a microphone can be potentially listening to you. Have sensitive conversations indoors, with your devices (phone included) in another room. Ideally, do this in a room without windows, as there are devices that can be pointed at your window and used to hear the conversation happening on the other side.

Securing Online Activity

When you are using the internet in preparation for a protest, you should be using anti-surveillance tools while you do so. This may include looking up public transportation or parking options, searching “what to wear to a protest”, or potentially accessing our course material.

Online activity is, by nature, subject to surveillance. There are a few simple steps that you can take in order to improve your privacy online. First, consider switching to a privacy-focused browser. I personally use the Zen browser, which is based on Firefox technology, but there are many options out there. TOR is by far the most extreme, fully anonymizing your internet browsing (as long as you don't log in to, for example, a Google account) while also allowing access to dark web sites. Notable downsides include a significantly slower connection.

Second, consider using a VPN. VPNs essentially let you tunnel your web traffic requests through a centralized server, so that anyone monitoring your traffic will see that it is going to the VPN and not know what happens next. Make sure that any VPN you are using is trustworthy and not owned by a company that has a history of selling malware (Kape Technologies, formerly known as Crossrider, now owns ExpressVPN, CyberGhost, Private Internet Access, Zenmate, and a collection of VPN review websites). The only free VPN that I personally recommend is ProtonVPN.

Passive Surveillance

The dystopian surveillance state is already here. The two most relevant forms of all-encompassing passive surveillance are ALPRs and CCTVs. Both are cameras that are continuously recording.

ALPRs stand for Automatic License Plate Readers, and are high-speed, computer-controlled camera systems that are typically mounted on light poles, traffic poles, overpasses, etc. They automatically capture all license plate numbers that come into view, along with the location, date, and time. This information, typically including photographs, is then uploaded to a central server. These are privately owned, but police are granted access for a fee. They can be used to determine the path a vehicle has taken, as well as providing images of the passengers.

CCTVs are networks of security cameras, including both those installed by the police and those installed by private entities. However, real-time crime centers generally have the ability to access all of the above, and will use them (potentially with technologies such as facial recognition) to maintain visual tracking of a person of interest. Additionally, many of the cameras are directly connected to the internet, so they can be accessed by private individuals or groups.

It is worth noting that any and all electronic devices with microphones (your cell phone included) should be assumed to be listening to you at any time. That means that you should assume that any conversation that can be overheard by any smart device is no longer private.

Before the Protest

Do preparatory research online using privacy-protecting tools. Communicate regarding the protest in person, away from devices with microphones, or using a secure messaging app such as Signal. Only ask for information that you need for your role in the protest. Encrypt and password protect your phone, and consider deleting any incriminating files or photos.

Determine whether you are going to try to anonymize your presence at the protest. If so, create a pattern of leaving your phone at home in advance, or arrange with a friend to take it with them in a normal usage pattern during this time. Arrange transportation to the protest, either using public transportation or by parking somewhere with plausible deniability and arranging secondary transportation. An example would be parking at a location several blocks away where you already have a history of parking on that day of the week. If you have driven your car somewhere, make sure that whatever you have arranged to do with your phone is consistent with where you are parked (e.g. if you are parked near a restaurant that you often eat at, and don't have a pattern of leaving your phone at home, have your friend go to that restaurant with your phone). Wear normal clothing, and bring your protest gear to change into at another location in order to disrupt the ability of cameras to automatically track your location from your transportation to the protest. You will also need some form of face covering or makeup to deter automatic facial recognition.

During the Protest

If there is any level of police presence at your protest, you should assume that any and all cell phone usage is going through a Stingray. A Stingray is essentially a portable, temporary cell phone tower that will capture all cell connections within a certain limited geographic area. It will automatically request as much metadata from cell phone usage as possible, and will hand that data to the police controlling the device. Signal provides minimal metadata, but its use will still place your device at the protest.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has developed a device called a Rayhunter that can be used to detect if your cell phone traffic is coming with unusual requests for metadata, and therefore likely to be going through a Stingray. If someone near you has one and it is coming back as a clean connection, then you may be able to be slightly more liberal with your phone use.

Avoid greeting people by name unless you are certain that they are comfortable with a random stranger knowing that they are present at the protest. Do not photograph anyone at the protest without their explicit consent. Yes, this includes group photos. Do not answer phone calls where the noise of the protest is audible in the background, as even if you are comfortable with people knowing where you are, others who are audible may not be.

After the Protest

Don't give any information away. If you are comfortable identifying yourself as having been at the protest, then you may say so publicly regarding **YOURSELF ONLY**. Do not name anyone else who was present. Do not share any photographs that include any other people. Filters can be removed after the fact, and should not be relied upon. Do not discuss what occurred at the protest or who was present outside of secure channels with people who need to have that information.

If you are trying to keep your presence anonymous, don't inform anyone about your presence at all. Change back out of your protest gear and remove facial covering or makeup in a public restroom on your way back to your transportation. Return via your pre-arranged public transport or to your dropped-off vehicle, with a story about what you were doing in the area. Return home as normal.

Pre-Action Planning

Pre-action planning is a vital step that must not be overlooked. Even for actions that cannot necessarily be predicted, like a sudden natural disaster or a quick response protest, planning can and should be done in advance. Organizations should come together and determine what their long-term goals are, what kind of work they intend to take on, what resources are available, who is available to commit to participating in what kind of actions, and how they will respond and allocate those resources when taking action.

Both long-term and short-term planning should take place.

Organizations should meet regularly and continually update their planning for the future as goals shift, resources change, and participants come and go.

Although this class and accompanying information are designed to help someone with no experience be able to show up and protest, whether or not they've been involved in any organizing or planning efforts, it is still our recommendation that people become involved in the broader movement, including planning.

Long-Term Planning

Long-term planning prepares for actions on the timescale of months to years. These actions may be support the homeless, assistance to communities in need, support for longer actions (the ongoing situation in Appalachia or Flint, for example), preparation for expected climate emergencies, or preparation for known upcoming actions (BLM hasn't gone away, for example, and the fight for reproductive rights is

picking up), or anticipation of known dates when protesters might be needed (elections, May Day, etc.)

Questions to Ask During Long-Term Planning:

- What are the issues of concern? Are you/your group focusing only on political issues, social equality, environmental issues, etc?
- How committed are the allies? Are people going to lose interest, fall away, or make commitments elsewhere?
- How will you fundraise for the necessary equipment?
- What amount of violence, repression, action by the state, or action by counter-agents is expected? What is the range of possibilities? (Yes, this means paying attention to politics.)
- What scale of action are you planning?
- How often are each of you prepared to assist?
- How will you avoid over-commitment and burnout?
- Who are you interested in working with?

Contingency Planning

Even if the action you are planning to support is considered legal and safe, there is never zero risk to participating in an action. (We teach a much more in-depth class on Bug Out Bags and many classes on long-term contingencies, but this is the quick nutshell relevant to this class.)

Long-term risks/contingencies to consider:

- What is your health situation like? Are you physically up for what you've decided to do?
- There are multiple epidemics ongoing. Can you risk bringing it home?

- If you have animals and/or children to take care of, have a contingency plan for what will happen if you are injured or arrested. Does your backup know the animals' and/or children's routines and needs?
- What is the plan if you are arrested or hospitalized? Prep a bag with a change of clothing, phone chargers, medication, etc. and keep it offsite with someone who will come to pick you up from the hospital, jail, etc. (This is a variant on the recommended Bug Out Bag for an Emergency that we teach in our Bug Out Bag class, but with less supplies.)
- If your home is raided by police for any reason, make sure there isn't anything illegal and/or incriminating that they can find, for you or any group that you work with.
- Make a "Bug Out Bag" for having to flee in a hurry.
- Have all your important paperwork in a fireproof, waterproof container that you can get to quickly.
- Store a backup of all your personal data off-site from your home. This can be an encrypted USB with a strong passphrase on which to store all important documents. You can seal it in a waterproof and fireproof container and hide or even bury it somewhere obscure. Note that you will need to charge this periodically.
- Consider talking to a legal professional who specializes in social movements and put them on retainer. If you cannot afford this individually, consider finding a legal professional who will take on many clients from the same protest, affinity group, or collective for a group fee. If you have reserved legal counsel, put their number on you in indelible ink when you go to the action.

- Come up with a media plan and make sure the people who might go to the media on your behalf know what it is.
- Prep another bag with your protest supplies, unless you intend to keep it on all you. This is your “Protest Go Bag”. If everything is going in pockets, have it all collected in one area, ready and accessible?

Emergency Contacts

An emergency contact is someone who is informed if something has gone wrong, who has an emergency plan in place for various contingencies. The contingency plans should be set up in advance of any participation in potentially unsafe activities. The emergency contact should be a person who is informed of the medical history of the person they are serving as a contact for, as well as their preferences on emergency and life-saving care. Ideally, the emergency contact is a parent, partner, or person with legal standing to make decisions such as retaining an attorney or medical choices.

A set amount of time should be established during which the contact can expect a protester to be out of touch. If they exceed that time, there should be a plan in place for how long the emergency contact should wait before they reach out to establish that the protester is well. If the protester does not respond to the attempt to contact, the emergency contact should know how long they should wait before trying again and how many times they should try to establish contact before implementing an emergency plan.

The emergency plan should include other points of contact (the action organizers, the buddy in a buddy pair) and assistance from other parties (attorneys, bail funds).

Planning for an Action

Not all actions can be planned for in the same way. If the group who is planning the protest intends a march, a sit-in, a vigil, a blockade, a strike, a mass street action, etc, those all require different plans.

As a reminder, we teach a separate class on being the person planning the action, but here are some simple steps that should be taken while planning that the protester can observe and participate in.

It is better to have plans in place for these specific actions, rather than to anticipate being able to gather and plan a week in advance or a day in advance of the action.

Other actions may not require a great deal of planning and may be able to be addressed using an affinity group or collectives' developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

So, what's an SOP?

A standard operating procedure (SOP) is a set of instructions that describe the step-by-step process that must be taken to properly perform a routine activity. SOPs should be followed in the exact same way every time, in order to ensure that the response remains consistent. SOPs reduce errors, increase efficiency, and create a safe(r) work environment. They help participants in an action know how to resolve issues and overcome obstacles.

An affinity group or collective can come up with its own SOPs or use ones created by other collectives. Either way, they work best when **practiced**. A collective should be practicing responses when not in a crisis or an emergency state.

Consider taking a page from the US military and actually drawing up and writing out plans that respond to various emergency scenarios, ranging from the plausible to the implausible.

It can also be useful to practice by going out for smaller actions before larger ones. For example, a collective could hand out flyers/leaflets/pamphlets, go on a flyer or banner hanging action, pass out lunches or blankets/sleeping bags to the unhoused, etc., as a way of testing organization and ability to pack up, roll out, and unpack efficiently. Group camping trips can also be very helpful.

Developing these responses is often how issues become apparent. Practicing running through plans is where flaws are shown, which is true with everything from walking through plays in the context of a sports team to doing a walkthrough of a play. During practice, you learn who has what flaws, who tries to take on more authority over others, who flakes or forgets, and what kind of cliques or factions are forming.

In an ideal scenario, where the action is known in advance and is something with a limited scope, scale, and duration, the planning steps should look something like this:

One Week Before

Roughly one week before a known action is going to take place, a general plan for the day should be made, during which the following questions (and then some) should be answered:

- What is the context of the action?
- Is everyone in agreement on participation? Is a unanimous consensus required, or can some people sit out?
- Where is the action taking place?
- What time is the action scheduled to start?
- What needs to happen before the action's start time?

- Where is the affinity group, collective, protest group, etc. meeting?
- What time is the action scheduled to end? Is it possible that it will run late?
- How many people are likely to be there (including counter agents and law enforcement)?
- Is repression and/or counter-activity likely? What is the plan of defense?
- Is this a moving event or a non-moving event? Is anyone setting up a non-moving clinic, food and water tent, or other supply area?
- Who is bringing what equipment? Who is taking what equipment home? What is the top priority to retrieve and keep, in the event that the action goes wrong and equipment loss happens? Who is responsible for equipment checks and who is double-checking them?
- What is the route to get to the action? Has it been used in the past? What happens if it is blocked? Is everyone taking the same route?
- What is the expected weather?
- Who is taking on what roles? (Aforementioned equipment check, set-up, communication, defense, etc)
- Does anything need to be purchased or made? Who is making those purchases or making that material?
- Who is providing food, water, snacks, and other materials for people to make use of themselves in order to sustain the action, or is everyone bringing their own? If everyone is “bringing their own”, who is bringing extra because someone will inevitably not bring any or enough?

- What are your “nope, out” conditions? If you get to the action and there are no organizers present, are you going through with it? If you get to the action and there is a militarized opposition, are you going through with it? If the weather turns, when do you leave?
- Where are you all meeting for a debriefing? Is that an in-person or digital meeting? How is the equipment getting back to storage?
- If everything goes wrong and people are arrested, injured, hospitalized, or even killed, what then?
- Is someone arranging legal counsel and a bail fund? Someone needs to be assigned to inform the legal counsel that action is taking place. The group also needs to make sure the contact information hasn’t changed so that, on the day of, each person can write that information on themselves with an indelible marker.

During this meeting, if possible, the organizers should pull up maps and satellite images of the location. There should be clearly drawn out routes, marked where non-moving installations will be and their backup locations if the protest has to withdraw. There should be a mark on those maps for emergency re-meeting, or a known location everyone will retreat to. Ideally, someone should make sure every single person has a physical copy of these maps.

Sometimes these meetings are closed to only the major organizers, but the answers to major questions should still go out to all the participants of the protest.

One to Two Days Before an Action

One to two days before an action, everyone who can should meet again. At this meeting, the following questions (and then some) should be answered:

- Do the organizers have any major announcements?

- Have any major details changed since the plan was made one week before?
- What is the confirmed weather, and is everyone prepared for it?
- What is the physical state of those in each assigned role? Do they need to be reassigned (if someone has gotten sick, injured, called into work, etc, now is the time to find out, not at the action.)
- Are the travel plans the same? Have someone check the route before the meeting – is there any new construction, etc.
- Are emergency contacts alerted? Is legal counsel prepared?

The equipment team should perform an equipment check (yes, even if one was done a week ago.) Everyone should pack up their signs, kit, medic bags, larger equipment (tents, chairs, etc). If you are missing supplies, now is when to find out and acquire them. Do not expect that anyone will bring equipment for you the day of – make sure you’ve covered everything you are responsible for.

If you shave or buzz your hair, do so two days in advance if possible, one at the least, to allow micro-cuts to heal in the event of chemical weapon attacks. If you have significant facial hair, and chemical weapons are expected and protesters will be wearing gas masks, consider shaving it so that there is a better seal.

Eat well, drink water with electrolytes, and rest as best you can.

Day of an Action

Questions to ask and ensure the answers to before the action starts, on the day of the action:

- Has anyone backed out? Who is covering for them in this event?
- Is all the equipment loaded, ready, and good to go?

- Did anyone get struck with last-minute inspiration in the middle of the night and realize a problem? If they did, that information needs to be shared with the organizers.
- Is everyone still meeting at the same location, at the same time as planned? If so, reach out and confirm, especially if that information has changed multiple times.

Individual Prep:

- Do a final bag and gear check. If possible, have another person double-check you, such as your buddy.
- Eat and drink, even if you do not feel hungry or are nauseated from the stress.
- Make sure that your buddy, if you have one, also eats and drinks (while respecting their autonomy and any issues they have around eating).
- Check-in - with your affinity group, collective, buddy, working group, or the organizers of the event.
- Make sure no details have changed.
- Alert anyone who needs to know if anything about your personal state (health, work, trauma, triggers, etc.) will likely impact your ability to participate and make a plan for addressing it.

You should have a quick check in with your buddy, if you're partnering with someone. Things to determine in a buddy pairing right before an action:

- Are both of you prepared for the action? What is each person's mood? Are they physically well and prepared for what is to come?

- Are either of you missing anything you need before you head into the action? Do you have time, funds, and ability to acquire it?
- Has anything changed from when you were assigned/agreed to work together? Confirm where you both stand today on arrestability and level of physical activity you are interested in for the action.
- Run down responsibilities a final time to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

Arrival

At the action, check in that you are there and ready with those relevant to do so (organizers, the communications person, etc.) Ask if there are any points of interest that you need to add to your map, such as police cordones, counter-protesters, etc. If check-in times and places have not been determined, do so at this time.

Self-Care Before Action

Meditation & Grounding

There are many different varieties of meditation that work for different people. In this case, the primary purpose would be to ensure that you are in a good, healthy headspace for the upcoming protest. This is both general, in that good mental health going in is important, and specific, in that having a very clear idea of what you are protesting against and why you are protesting against it can be very beneficial.

Grounding

“Grounding” is a word that can mean a lot of different to a lot of different people, depending on their background and personal beliefs. To a person who practices one of many different branches of metaphysics and philosophy, it is an understanding of metaphysical dependence and the connections between less fundamental and more fundamental elements of reality, the hierarchy of being, and the nature of truth. In some other branches of spirituality, it is a means of connecting with the earth. And in some other branches of martial arts, spirituality, and various schools of mental health practice, it can be a means of coping with stress and/or other harmful emotional upheaval.

We recently read in another protest guide that grounding was a way to “detach” from emotional pain, which we emphatically do not recommend. Although yes, grounding could be used as a way to spiritually bypass processing emotional pain, we don’t think that’s healthy.

We recommend grounding as a means of settling when unsettled and reaching for stability when feeling unstable. The aim is to confront the pain and fear, acknowledge it, accept it, and then allow it to pass through you (into the earth, if you like) so that you can feel centered and calm before proceeding.

There are many, many active, conscious mental and bodily techniques that can help someone do this, so we recommend learning a few and determining which works best for you.

There are, in our recommended grounding technique, three different components.

First, in alignment with the first definition, focus on your sense of self. You need to be in alignment with both who you are and the moment that you are in. Who are you, why are you in this place at this moment, and why does it matter that you neither panic, nor escalate to anger? That you don’t break and dissociate, or break and run? Who are you, and what is the truth of you in this moment, at this place? Note that this does not require any sort of absolute self-knowledge, just clarity of self and purpose in the now.

Second, feel yourself in firm contact with the earth. Regardless of whether you believe in the magical, energetic, or spiritual elements of the concept of grounding, standing in a strong, chest high and forward stance has biofeedback effects on your self-perception and level of confidence. Get in superhero pose, and feel your firm contact with the ground. As a bonus, it makes you look less easy to intimidate, and tends to photograph well.

Third, look inward at whatever stimulus induced the need to ground, and assess the emotion that it caused. Acknowledge it, accept it, and allow it to pass through you and away from you so that it cannot control your actions. (Yes, you can think of this as the Bene Gesserit litany against fear if that's what comes to mind for you.)

The first step is to be grounded in the truth of yourself, the second in your body. The third is to become grounded against what is happening internally, not by fighting it, but by accepting and acknowledging it.

Some other things you can do to help yourself cope with the stress is to drink cool water or run some over your hands, play with a fidget or grounding object, do breathing exercises, stretch, or think about things that make you feel safe, secure, and stable (friends, favorite places, activities you enjoy).

Communication

Communication among members of a protest should primarily be focused on the protest itself - its progress, any issues or ideas that individual members may have, etc. It is inevitable that some communications will occur, particularly between members of different affinity groups, that are either of a more personal nature or are related to working together in the future (or both).

However, all communication among members of a protest should remain calm and goal-focused. Although protests are inherently emotionally charged environments, intra-protest communication should

not be. It is the responsibility of each member of a protest to do their best to remain calm and focus on the objective, and to encourage those around them to do the same. Remember that, at least for one day, everyone involved with the protest is on the same side, whether you personally like them or not.

Boundaries

You should know, before the protest starts, what your capacity is for this protest and what boundaries this will require. These boundaries may, and probably will, change from protest to protest. Although it is necessary to maintain firm boundaries with potential other parties at an action, such as counter-protesters, possibly the press, and police forces, it is also necessary to maintain personal boundaries with other protesters and protest organizers.

You will need to determine your physical, emotional, and mental capacities that you can devote to the protest, and be aware of when someone (including yourself) tries to get you to extend beyond them. This may include anything from whether you can be photographed at this protest to whether you are comfortable acting as a medic, or whether you are currently physically capable of moving up and down the protest line handing out water bottles. Know your limits, don't push yourself beyond them, and be prepared to tell other protesters if they ask or invite you to move beyond them.

Healthy boundary setting language is based on "I" statements. These are statements that clearly demonstrate that an action is being declined due to one's own personal needs, rather than because of any issue with the action being proposed or the person who is asking it. Some examples, in the context of a protest, might include the following:

"I do not feel up to dealing with the media today."

"I cannot be too physically active in this weather. I am very prone to heat stroke."

“I am not acting as a medic at this protest. I do not have the bandwidth. The medic tent is over there.”

Compare these to the corresponding alternatives:

“You cannot seriously want to put me in front of reporters.”

“You can’t ask me to carry the water. Fuck off.”

“Oh fine, come over here and let me look.”

The first two alternatives are potentially confrontational, and likely to make the person who is making the request or invitation defensive. The third is violating one’s own boundary and drawing on resources that you don’t actually have, which is overall a bad thing for the protest as a whole.

Personal Needs

HALT

The acronym HALT comes from recovery groups who have found that most relapses are the result of being too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Although a protest might be a trigger for a relapse, we specifically bring this acronym into service as a reminder of the stressors you should be mindful of before, during, and after a protest in order to better maintain your mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

We recommend that people check in with their own body using the HALT system, especially if they notice they are responding to situations in a way that they wouldn’t want to – too much anxiety, fear, anger, etc. In order to maintain momentum at an action, they should check in to see if they are feeling too hungry, too angry, too lonely, or too tired and take steps to address any and all of them, as they will exacerbate the stress of an already stressful environment.

Keeping Track of Your Own Needs

The acronym HALTS helps activists to remember to check in with their body. It is an excellent place to start with a helpful mnemonic, however, it does not cover all the needs a protester

should be checking on to sustain their ability to continue the action.

These include other mental, emotional, physical, and potentially even spiritual needs, as well as social and communal needs beyond just loneliness.

These needs are interconnected with those mentioned in the HALT protocol, but include needs such:

- Remembering to take medication (mental and physical health related)
- Remembering to drink water with the food that you eat
- Remembering to check in on overstimulation and take steps to avoid it (noise reducing ear phones, sunglasses, take breaks)
- Remembering to check on skin for signs of developing sunburn
- Remembering to check feet for hotspots that are signs of developing blisters
- Remembering to check for signs of developing heat exhaustion, chafing, etc. and taking off some layers before they become a problem
- Remembering to seek other emotional support from the community around you that doesn't have to do with just loneliness, but also managing anxiety and fear
- Remembering to check for signs of resentment or emotional conflict with your fellow protesters and managing it before it develops into an altercation or other problem

Basically, keep checking on yourself and take steps to address your needs so that you can keep going and also so you're willing to come to the next action. You're more likely to return for more actions

in the future if actions don't become "that time you got blisters on your feet, sunburn on your face, chafing from your backpack, and got in a fight with a fellow protester because you were overstimulated and anxious."

Whose Side Are You On, Anyway?

Before ever going to a protest, you first have to decide whose side of the issue you are on. Not in a way of saying "Oh, yeah, of course I'm against this! Isn't everybody?" But in a way of having really, deeply thought about what it is that you are protesting, and why you oppose it, and what it is that you are prepared to do because of that.

Protests are more effective when they inconvenience people. Therefore, if you are protesting effectively, you will encounter opposition. These are people who believe in the system, in the issue, in the cause that you are protesting against. These are people who are on the other side of the status quo. And they absolutely believe that their side is the right one.

If you arrive at a protest, and are not firm in the courage of your own conviction, then once you encounter opposition, it will be easy for them to turn you into a weapon against your own cause. They may have agent provocateurs to escalate things and provoke people into violence. They may have counteragents there intending to derail, disrupt, and deflate the action by getting people to leave early. They may have people there who are intending to debate you and cause people to flip to their position. And they will have the police there to exert pressure on the protest to back down, to back off, and to not disrupt anything.

Before you even go to a protest, make sure that you feel strongly enough, with enough conviction, about the rightness of your cause to stay present, active, and engaged in the face of all that. Stay on your side. If you don't think that you will be able to, then you should reconsider your intention to attend.

Don't Get Debated

There are four primary reasons to avoid being drawn into a debate with counter-protesters (or people who are at least theoretically bystanders). The first, and simplest, is that the primary purpose of a protest is almost never to have a debate. Save your energy for what you are there for.

The second is that to have a debate acknowledges that the subject under discussion is debatable. If you are protesting police brutality and begin to be drawn into a debate on the subject, you are acknowledging the potential validity of a pro-police-brutality stance. I am not trying to say that you should never examine your own positions. I am saying that being drawn into a debate at a protest is not the time or the place, and you are probably not being asked to examine your beliefs in good faith.

The third is that many of the people who are attempting to draw you into a conversation are doing so specifically in order to bring you around to their side, and they are often very well trained and quite good at it. We have witnessed many people go from ardent members of a movement to questioning their position to standing in opposition without actually being able to articulate any of the intervening steps. Not only that, but by debating, even if you can handle it, you are giving them a platform to recruit other protesters or onlookers to their position.

The fourth is simple optics. Anyone taking photos can't tell which side you are on if you are standing with the counter-protesters in order to debate with them. They simply see you, and count you, as being with them.

Recognizing Agent Provocateurs

Agent provocateurs are a type of oppositional agent who has intentionally joined in a protest or other operation with the intention of sabotaging it from the inside, generally by sowing discord,

promoting inefficiency, or hijacking the movement altogether. In the specific context of a protest, they are most often going to attempt to convince other protesters to commit violence or to leave.

The majority of agent provocateurs will be white and masc presenting, although this is by no means universal. Within the context of a protest, they will tend to stand apart from the various affinity groups that are present. They tend to not fit in, and also not to know anybody who does fit in. Be on the lookout for any dog whistle tattoos, jewelry, or apparel.

Most significantly, be on the lookout for a pattern of behavior. Ultimately, within the context of a single protest, if an agent provocateur does not take action to sabotage the protest, then they are simply another protesting individual. There are three primary behaviors to watch out for.

First, look for people who are looking for people who appear to be flagging. If they begin trying to help them, that is excellent. If, instead, they try to persuade them that the protest is too hot, too difficult, too crowded, doesn't really need them anyway, etc? Then you are looking at intentionally disruptive behavior. At this point, you can step in yourself by providing support to your fellow protesters (and if you don't, you should probably arrange for someone else to do so).

Second, they may attempt to persuade protesters to talk to counter-protesters. This is generally an effort to draw people into a debate by proxy (see above for issues with being drawn into a debate). They may claim that they think you can recruit the counter-protesters, that they can be made to change their minds, etc. However, the net result will still be being drawn into a debate. If you see this kind of behavior, you can step in personally and remind fellow protesters that the issue at hand is not debatable, potentially educating them, or not.

Third, look for people who are attempting to incite others to commit violence. This may be against counter-protesters, against police, against bystanders, or against property. Notably, they can be distinguished quite easily from a hothead. A hothead will want to initiate violence, and may need to be talked down.

A provocateur specifically wants to get OTHER PEOPLE to initiate violence. Again, you can intervene personally by pointing out that the intention of the protest is to remain nonviolent or not. In all three cases, the suspected provocateur and specific incident should be reported to a protest organizer.

Recognizing Counter-Agents

A counteragent is anyone who is attending an action with the explicit purpose of opposing it. They may be people from opposing affinity groups or from opposing oppressive governmental agencies (police, ICE, etc.)

Undercover police acting as counteragents at a protest can be identified either by certain physical things to look for or by certain behavioral patterns.

Physical cues:

- Outline of handcuffs in back pocket
- Visible outline of their badge/lanyard underneath their shirt
- A communication wire over one ear
- A concealed firearm
- Clothing that doesn't quite fit in and is also brand new
- Oversized jackets
- The standard, mandated, police haircut and hair-style

Worth noting, in the recent past all undercover officers covering a protest would wear armbands to identify each other. Additionally, although we have seen these claims made in chat groups about recent protests, undercover agents aren't the only ones who

wear tactical boots or N95 masks. We recommend tactical boots to our collective and N95 masks to everyone, at all times, regardless of whether they are protesting, due to the multiple ongoing epidemics of respiratory illnesses.

Behavioral cues:

- There is a default police/military bearing that they can't seem to shake
- Immediately trying to establish trust and rapport
- Asking pointed, interrogation-style questions
- Not being part of any affinity group or collective present
- Meeting up with the same person (their undercover partner) regularly as they circulate through the protest. Generally, they will be a visibly mismatched pair, and neither will know anyone else there.

The primary danger of counter-agents (including police and opposing affinity members) is that you will be identified and doxxed. They are extremely unlikely to take any specific action against you at the protest itself. However, if they can identify you, they will provide that information to others, and the police and their unofficial allies can and will come for you later, whether that be with continual harassment by traffic police, being arrested on trumped up charges, or having your home or place of work vandalized by Proud Boys.

Verbal De-escalation

Verbal de-escalation is a communication method using both word choice, tone of voice, and body language to prevent a potentially dangerous situation from escalating. It is used in an attempt to prevent a person(s) from causing harm to themselves or others.

Activists may need to employ verbal de-escalation techniques to reduce the intensity of a volatile situation that risks devolving into violence. These techniques can be useful in many environments, whether at a collective or affinity group's headquarters or out at an action. Within the context of a protest, there are two primary ways in which verbal de-escalation may be called for. First, within the protest itself, being able to verbally de-escalate may prevent damage (emotional, mental, or physical) being done to a person(s), detainment and arrest, or a situation from devolving into physical conflict that escalates into a riot.

Physical intervention should be used as a last resort. We do not recommend laying hands on anyone at a protest (as distinct from a riot), whether another protester, counter agent, counterprotester, or a police officer.

Most conflicts that are beginning to escalate have signs. These can be verbal (insults, threats), tonal (raised voices, yelling), environmental and social (crowds gathering in an area, knots of tension in a crowd), and physical (body language, gestures, and gesticulations). Ideally, intervention to de-escalate should be done as soon into the gathering tension as possible.

The most important step is to choose to intervene. It can take training for some people to be willing to intervene, while others may find it instinctual. Some people find that they freeze when conflict unfurls around them and they will need additional conflict management training to overcome that. Others immediately gravitate towards a violent response, which also requires training to restrain. But, regardless, the first step is to be willing to intervene and choose to do so.

When choosing to intervene, we recommend an internal risk assessment. You should ask yourself what the risk is to yourself if you intervene, what the risk is to others if you intervene, and what the risk of you not intervening would be.

The next most important step to verbal de-escalation is to remain outwardly calm. Even if internally you are angry, hurt, embarrassed,

frightened, or panicked, it cannot interfere with an outward appearance of calm.

The next step is to gain consent from the most vulnerable party, if possible. It should be noted, however, that the party may not be able to give verbal consent to your interference.

Once consent has been obtained, if possible, the next step is to evaluate the situation. Is the best way to defuse it to evade the coming confrontation (e.g., "Why don't you and I go get some water?"), Or will it be to engage with the primary party that is generating aggression?

If the former, do not wait for permission. Simply declare your intent to break up the escalating situation, then move to do so. The break in the tension caused by your intervention will grant enough of an opportunity to do so, as long as you move quickly.

If the latter, employ active listening skills, acknowledging the experience that they are having and their emotions that are occurring in response to that experience. This is easier in cases of escalation over a misunderstanding, one where you can genuinely empathize and potentially clear up the miscommunication by, for example, mirroring what both parties are saying to all present so that they can understand the root cause.

Unfortunately, most of the standard verbal de-escalation techniques are not useful in the context of a conflict at a protest with a counter agent or counterprotester. The primary objective in most cases is to avoid escalation to a physical altercation. The primary objective in the case of a protest is the objective of the protest, and compromising on the message with a counterprotester flies in the face of that primary objective. It therefore becomes necessary to practice verbal deflection instead, which requires an entirely different skill set.

Verbal deflection attempts to deflate the escalating tension without ceding ground on the point which is causing it. It may involve being absurd or confusing, refusing to engage (e.g. "We don't find human rights debatable."), or restating the other party's position in a way that they refuse to

acknowledge in public, causing them to back down (e.g. “So, you’re saying that you believe that police have the right to shoot you if you are carrying a gun?”). It is also inherently riskier, and should not be practiced except by individuals who are prepared for a possible physical escalation. This is yet another reason why being drawn into debate or discussion with counter protesters is generally unwise.

At the Protest

What to Eat at a Protest

We have seen protests start to fall apart because food wasn’t provided or easily available in the protest area. As people became hungry, thirsty, and tired, they left, sometimes after only protesting for an hour or two. We have revived protests by distributing water bottles and food as people began flagging. At one point, as a protest began to break up due to hunger, we went and got a local pizza place to donate multiple pizzas. At another protest that was experiencing the same thing, we purchased Mexican food from a place across the street and kept the protest going for another few hours.

We recommend that people eat before they get to the protest, and that the meal consists of a healthy balance of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates, as well as hydrating fluids.

We recommend bringing any snacks that you will need to manage any medical conditions, such as blood sugar, as well as shelf-stable energy-dense food such as protein bars, jerky, trail mix, etc. Consider a mix of foods that will provide quick energy, such as Peanut M&Ms and Gatorade, and foods that will provide more sustained energy, like a snack pack of fruit, cheese, and crackers. The amount of food you

need will depend on the time of the protest, how active you are, and your own specific bodily needs.

The most important thing to do is to remain hydrated, so please make sure that you bring at least one to two liters of water, more if the protest organizers have not arranged for any form of hydration station.

How to Pack for a Protest

There is a debate as to whether or not you should bring your ID to a protest. If you're detained, not having your ID might mean that you are detained for longer. However, there are situations where you may not want to show the police your ID.

We do not recommend that a wallet with personal identification be carried in a back pocket. Protests, riots, and civil unrest with large crowds may attract pickpockets. Instead, carry ID and money somewhere such as an inner pocket on a tactical vest, in a pouch on the front of the body, etc.

Consider keeping a password-protected micro SD card on you with copies of important paperwork, like your ID, birth certificate, and prescriptions from doctors. (One of our instructors keeps his in a secret zipper pocket on his belt.)

We recommend people carry cash and avoid using their debit and credit cards if they do not want to be identified. We recommend you separate your cash, with some in a wallet, some in a bag if you carry it, and some stashed somewhere else on your person.

As we covered in the section on Opsec and Infosec, to protect your privacy and prevent surveillance, the best thing to do is leave your phone at home. If you do bring it, follow the steps in that section. If you do bring your phone, consider also bringing a power bank and charging cord.

If you need it, bring an inhaler, epipen, or any other essential medications you can't do without, and personal hygiene accessories. This is all preventative. If you plan to be on the march for a long time, you may need them, but if you wind up getting into trouble with the police or held in an isolated area away from others, you'll want to make sure you have basics like an inhaler or epipen on you in case you need it. If possible, bring several days of prescription medication with you.

If you have any health condition that might pose serious health problems if your medication is interrupted, you should be aware that you may not have access to proper medication while detained or imprisoned. A letter from a doctor may help; in which case, bring three copies of the letter to any well-organized protest and give one to the medic team, one to the legal support team, and keep one with you. The letter should include your name, diagnosis, that you must have access to your medications, and that they must be allowed to be kept on your person so that they can be properly administered, that no substitutions are acceptable, and then a list of all of the medications.

If you need an inhaler, it should be stored in a sealed plastic bag in case of chemical weapons exposure.

For health and hygiene, bring hand sanitizer. Consider bringing an N95 mask, especially if you are an at-risk person or are feeling unwell. Consider bringing compostable wet wipes, especially if you can afford the kinds developed for emergency medical services and firefighters.

Bring a chemical sunscreen, not a lotion or fat-based physical one, because those can cause problems when exposed to chemical weapons. (If you feel there is a high chance of exposure to chemical weapons, skip the sunscreen and wear sun protecting gear instead, including a shade hat, bandana, and full coverage clothing that is ideally UV resistant.) Bring menstrual pads, if needed and avoid using tampons - if you're arrested you may not have a chance to change it (tampons left in for more than six hours increase your risk of developing toxic shock syndrome).

Bring a pen, notebook or paper, and a waterproof, sweat-proof marker, in case you need to document anything like names, organizations at the protest, badge numbers, and so on.

It's up to you if you feel you wish to carry a multitool. Police may or may not choose to count it as a weapon if you are detained, though in court, that would be thrown out as it is perfectly legal to carry it. We do carry multi-tools when protesting, because we have found them to be extremely useful.

If you'll be out for a while, pack some snacks and water. Make sure you're fed and watered before you leave, too. Aside from this, keep as little as possible on your person. If you're detained or have to leave your items behind, you don't want to carry anything with you that you would terribly miss.

First Aid Kit for Self

We recommend that you carry a mini first-aid kit. (If you are serving as a medic, you will likely carry a full kit in a medic bag. Even then, if you carry a personal bag, we recommend you have a small first aid kit in it.

This should contain:

- Pain relievers, such as ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and aspirin. Medics cannot provide these to you, so don't count on anyone else having them.
- Blister bandaids
- Regular bandaids and bandages
- Liquid bandaid
- Lidocaine antiseptic spray
- Petroleum jelly
- (If applicable) A large trash bag to contain any contaminated clothing or other items

Optional, but if you have space:

- Tweezers
- Small scissors
- Wound wrap
- Ace bandage
- Clotting spray or powder

A Bag for Protests and Riots

Not everyone carries a bag, but if you want to pack a bag to be used in cases of a protest, we are including this information here.

We recommend people use a zippered backpack. It can be made of canvas, leather, or reinforced materials designed to be fire-resistant and tear-resistant.

Sling-style bags are good if a person cannot carry a backpack due to weight, back pain, preference, etc.

We prefer motorcycles or armored backpacks for more violent protests.

It is best to carry a lightweight bag with just enough in it than to be weighed down with too much or too heavy equipment.

Additionally, remember that any protest bag may be stolen, lost, taken by the cops, and never returned, or destroyed by the police or counterprotesters. Do not make any financial investment that cannot be made again and that you cannot afford to lose. Do not put anything in your bag that you would be devastated to lose.

For all of our recommendations, links have been removed from this print version of the guide.

The full version, with links included, can be visited by scanning the following QR code:



Recommendations:

For motorcycle backpacks, we like Pando Moto because they are lightweight but still durable. They are rather pricey, though.

Armored backpacks cost anywhere between \$200 and \$800. They are expensive and may not be the best choice if someone is constructing a medic bag.

Medic Bags:

If the Go Bag is also a medic bag, it needs to be structured so that the medic can stay extremely organized and materials stay quickly accessible. They tend to be an investment, but are designed to specifically make finding needed items easy in a high-stress environment. The cheapest one of decent quality we can find is by 5.11 Tactical, and it does appear that it could carry everything a medic would need for most protests and riots.

Alternative to a Medic Bag:

5.11 Tactical sells a bag that looks like a black duffel bag but operates like a doctor's bag and a roll-out tactical tool kit. We highly recommend this for a medic bag, but it isn't great if it needs to be run with. It's also probably overkill for the average protester.

It does have a shoulder strap like a messenger bag, allowing someone to have both hands free. It has a 39-liter capacity and only weighs two pounds. It is also only \$115.

5.11 Tactical also carries a great many strap-on medic pouches or organizational medic pouches that can go in the bag.

Tactical and Medic Pouches:

Tactical pouches for the chest, waist, or thighs are great for anything a person doesn't want to lose if they have to ditch their bag or their bag is stolen.

Recommendation:

5.11 Tactical carries a truly dizzying array of fanny packs, tactical sling pouches, chest packs, etc. Our favorite is the Rush Moab Sling Pack.

Tool Pouch/Belt:

Some protesters in specific roles (like medics) prefer to keep their tools in a belt on the front of their body. Akiima does not, personally, in a protest or riot situation where she is marching. However, if she's working back from the active protest at a base site or medic encampment, she thinks these are great. She prefers a nurse's tool belt. Although we don't like recommending Amazon, generally, they do have a broad range of nurse tool bags available for not too much money.

What to Wear to a Protest

Shoes:

We cannot stress enough that people need to wear comfortable shoes. They will be on their feet for a long time, possibly marching or running.

We recommend good-quality hiking shoes or boots, or a pair of tactical boots designed for long treks. Ideally, people should look for waterproof and tear-resistant materials. Shoes should be broken in before a person intends to walk long periods in them. If that is not possible, then we heavily recommend adding blister bandaids to the first aid kit.

Recommendations:

For hiking shoes, we have found Merrell to be durable and comfortable. They also have an enormous range of styles, for easy to difficult terrain, and different temperature ranges. We've had Merrell boots last for years under extremely heavy use.

We both use field boots or tactical boots, as well.

For tactical boots, having tried multiple brands, we both recommend 5.11 Tactical. Akiima used to heavily recommend Ariat's field boots; however, not only has their quality diminished, but they no longer make the knee-high waterproof field boots rated for riding for AFAB people at all.

A person could also use Dubarry field boots, but they are very expensive.

From 5.11 Tactical, if it can be afforded, we recommend their 8-inch high ATAC line for both bug-out bags and protests.

Clothing:

We recommend that people wear multiple layers that cover their skin to reduce their exposure to the sun, wind, gas, pepper spray, smoke, etc. Layers also help soften the impact of bean bag rounds and rubber bullets.

Undershirts:

We recommend the kind of undershirts that are used by hikers and campers (also useful to put into a Bug Out Bag). The fabrics we recommend are silk and Merino wool, which are moisture-wicking, fire-resistant, antimicrobial, and breathable. These may be prohibitively expensive, so consider checking thrift and resale stores. (Akiima has purchased all of hers from Poshmark.)

Shirts:

We recommend Ripstop nylon, cotton, or canvas. Cheap work and field shirts of ripstop can be found on many work and farm supply stores online, unfortunately, it is harder to find ones that accommodate having breasts. Additionally, Ripstop shirts can be purchased that are treated with a flame-resistant coating, which makes them more useful to people who might be picking up flaming items (for whatever reason).

Non-polyester ripstop is getting extremely hard to find, so durable cotton twill or canvas may be substituted. We do not recommend polyester shirts for protests due to the risk of overheating and flame-related injury (polyester melts to skin).

Cut-Resistant Shirts:

Cut-resistant and tear-resistant shirts are available, some of which look just like regular clothing. Again, these are quite expensive.

Vests:

Vests for protests are primarily intended as protection for one's vital organs. Akiima tends to prefer motorcycle protective equipment, as it is something that can plausibly be explained to authorities should it be required. Spinal protectors can serve a similar, more specialized function.

Pants:

Pants should be ripstop canvas, leather, or aramid reinforced. These are listed in order of ascending level of protection as well as ascending level of encumbrance and possible overheating. Pants that are extremely protective and also extremely breathable tend to unfortunately be quite expensive.

Gloves and Fire-Resistant Gloves:

There are good reasons to wear a number of different types of gloves. If a person is concerned with needing to pick up and throw back actively burning projectiles, they need specialized equipment for that. For inclement weather, they would likely want different ones.

Gas Mask:

If there is a good chance that you will be subject to chemical weapons released by riot police, then please consider purchasing and bringing a gas mask to the protest. We want to note here that it is a myth that a vinegar-soaked bandana protects against tear gas (and also note there are multiple kinds of tear gas. More on all this in the section on chemical weapons.)

Crimethinc has an excellent guide to gas masks and goggles that we highly recommend people read.

Goggles and Shatter-Resistant Glasses:

A protester should wear goggles or shatter-resistant glasses if they plan to be up front. If a person plans to be on the front lines in front of a counter-protest or the police, they need something to protect their eyes in case things get ugly, preferably something with a seal around the eyes. Sure, no one wants pepper spray in their eyes, but they probably don't want spit from someone shouting at them in their eyes either.

Other head protection:

Ear protection is primarily intended for volume control. Wear ear protection to protect your hearing. Noise-damping earplugs intended for concerts can also be used. If there is a significant chance that firearms will be utilized, this is essentially required. Helmets

are useful if concerned with blunt force head trauma from things like bean bag rounds, police batons, gas canisters, or aggressive counter-protesters. Motorcycle helmets are easier to justify and can prevent you from being recognized. Tactical helmets may be more effective in extremely violent situations.

There are now advanced ear protection options intended for people engaging in hunting/shooting that automatically dampen any noises above a certain threshold to protect your hearing from loud noises (such as gunfire or sonic weapons) without impairing your ability to hear what is going on around you. Some of them also come with Bluetooth capability.

Helmets:

Black bloc protesters sometimes wear helmets. They are also a useful tool for anonymity. These helmets DO NOT provide protection against gas, which is why most Black Bloc wear a combination of goggles and a gas mask, instead. However, we have included some options here for thoroughness.

What Not to Wear or Bring

Unless you're a journalist or photographer, leave the delicate and fragile equipment at home. Pack only the absolute minimum you need to take care of yourself and others who depend on you in any situation.

Don't bring anything you don't want to get caught with by the police. Assume arrest is always a possibility at protests.

Don't bring or wear anything irreplaceable that you would be financially or emotionally devastated by losing. Things get lost, stolen, and broken at protests.

Don't wear things that can easily be grabbed (dangling earrings, hoods, loose flowing hair, long necklaces and lanyards, etc.)

DO NOT WEAR CONTACTS. Contact lenses trap chemical weapon particles against the eyes and worsen eye injury.

Do not wear body oil or lotion, as these can trap chemical weapon particles against the skin.

Makeup is debated. If the aim is for the protest to look good to the press, then having well-made-up protesters can help. If the aim is to disrupt surveillance, certain specific styles of makeup can help. But makeup can be a problem if you're exposed to chemical weapons. Some protest guides will say to wear waterproof and sweat-proof makeup, so that it doesn't get in the eyes if you need to rinse off chemical weapon contamination. Some say don't risk it at all, as it will react with the chemical weapons and complicate decontamination. Consider your goals, weigh your risks, and choose accordingly.

Being Detained or Arrested

Preparation, Just In Case

Before any action that could lead to arrest, we recommend that people make some preparations to lessen the inevitable impact. If possible, affinity groups and collectives should find sympathetic, trustworthy legal assistance, at least one, and hopefully a few for larger actions. They should consult about the risks of any action that is being planned and let the people providing legal aid know the dates and times of any planned action. **HOWEVER**, they should not be told anything illegal that the protesters have planned in advance. They may also need to prove they had no foreknowledge of any illegal activities.

As an individual protester, you should have the number of the legal assistance set up by a collective or affinity group written somewhere on your body, beneath your clothing, in water and sweat-resistant

marker. Think under your sleeve, written on your arm, so if your belongings are confiscated, you still have the number. Sometimes, a collective or affinity group will have a member running a jail support phone line whose job is to take these phone calls and pass the information on to the legal professional, so that they are not inundated with constant phone calls.

It should be noted that police will have awareness of and the ability to track any number dialed by an arrested protester. Police have been known to raid the premises where legal aid for protests is being run.

It is our recommendation that you not carry anything at a protest that would be a legal problem if arrested. We do not recommend that people carry drugs, illegal weapons, etc. However, if you disregard this advice, we recommend that you attempt to give those items to someone who won't get arrested.

We've seen some guides that say to hide any items that you don't want the police to find in your underwear, but in our experience, that has been ineffective for arrested protesters.

If you are detained, your bag may be taken from you, so if there are items that are vital to you, such as an inhaler, keep that in a pocket, pocket belt, or pouch on your person.

Try to stay calm while being detained. Meditate, talk calmly with other protesters while still being conscientious of security culture, sing, stretch, and plan fun activities for after you are released (don't plan any protest-related activities in detention; assume you are being listened to, because you are.)

Know Your Rights

You do, in fact, have rights if you are being questioned by law enforcement. They are even fairly easy to invoke, but you have to remember to do so. Although the police may be required to make sure that you are aware of them, you still have to put them into effect.

The first question to ask is if you are being detained. If you are not being detained, then you are (by definition) free to go, and should do so.

If you are being detained, clearly state that you are invoking your right to remain silent and your right to an attorney, and then shut up. Just because you have invoked your right to remain silent doesn't mean that they won't take anything that you DO say and use it against you.

Don't let the police convince you that only the guilty invoke these rights, either. The majority of attorneys who are consulted agree that, if detained, they would immediately invoke these rights, regardless of their actual guilt or innocence.

Ideally, invoke these rights as soon as you're arrested, keep invoking them until an attorney is provided or you are permitted to call the legal number you hopefully have written on you somewhere, and do not stop invoking them to have any other discussion with the police. If you start talking to the police about anything other than invoking your right to an attorney, that voids your original invocation of your rights; whatever you say can and will be used against you, and you have to invoke them again.

Resisting Interrogation

We recommend that protesters who are arrested follow a "security culture" methodology, rather than a security protocol designed for after arrest. However, the information on developing one is beyond the scope of this particular class/booklet, and will be included in our information on How to Organize a Protest and How to Build a Collective.

For now, we'll touch on the fact that a security culture is unconscious and instinctive, rather than a set of steps to memorize. It relies on habit and community trust, and collaboration.

During arrest and interrogation, the security culture of activism relies on certain principles. We will reiterate the first principle: Need to know. Not every protester needs to know every name, every location,

every objective, etc., of the affinity groups and collectives involved in the movement. The less they know, the less they can tell.

The second primary principle is “Shut the Fuck Up.” In a security culture, every member already knows the police are NEVER on our side. NEVER, EVER. While in detention, don’t ask and don’t tell. Don’t ask others to share confidential information. Don’t talk about things you or other protesters have done, are doing, or will do in the future.

The third principle is that you don’t turn your friends over to your enemies. Never, ever give the police (or ICE) information that will cause the arrest, detainment, or deportation of your allies.

The fourth principle is not to let suspicion be used against you. The police LOVE to turn members of a community against each other, breeding dissension, mistrust, and resentment to get people to flip on their allies.

The fifth principle is not to believe a word the police or ICE say. It is a common myth that the police and ICE cannot lie to protesters, but yes, they can, and YES, THEY DO.

The sixth principle is not to believe the police are “on your side”. The police can act very friendly, sympathetic, and complimentary to try to make it seem like they are on your side. It’s a common tactic that is far more effective than being threatening.

The seventh principle is not to be intimidated. If conciliatory, friendly tactics don’t work, the police often try threats. Stick to the courage of your convictions and don’t let them frighten you.

The eighth principle is to remember who you are, why you are there, why it matters, and who you’re serving. You are in the position you’re in (detention, arrest, etc) because you loved your community enough to fight for it. Stand firm in that love and let it buoy you through the traumatic experience.

Medical Problems During Detention

If there is a medical problem likely to occur during detention, it is best to tell the police as soon as possible. For example, a person who has asthma and will need their inhaler or a person with seizures who will need seizure medication should inform the police before it becomes a problem. Hopefully, if a person then starts exhibiting symptoms, the police will assist more rapidly.

If you start having a medical problem, tell the police ASAP. If another person with you starts having medical problems, get consent from them and then tell the police (unless they cannot speak or are unconscious). Ask for help as early as the signs and symptoms of needing help appear, as police often take a considerable time providing aid. Then keep asking until help is provided. If help is refused, try to get a chant going demanding help until it is provided. Document any refusal to provide medical support and the consequences of its refusal.

Interrogation Tactics

Numerous techniques exist for police and ICE interrogation. Here we will detail the most common techniques and how they work.

The Reid Technique of Interviewing and Interrogation is the standard for police interviews and interrogations. There are three components. In the factual analysis phase, investigators use evidence and testimony to eliminate subjects, identify suspects, and determine which interrogation technique is the most likely to work. The interview phase involves using behavior analysis to develop a rapport and get a behavioral basis going, then try to provoke a deviation from those behaviors. Once they are reasonably certain a crime has been committed, they suddenly switch tactics to the interrogation phase, during which they make sure to interrupt any attempt to deny guilt.

Instead, they supply various moral justifications for committing the crime, steering the victim to a confession by seeming sympathetic to why they would have committed the crime. This process is called “minimization”, during which they downplay the moral consequences of the crime and avoid mentioning the legal ones. If that is ineffective, they will use the “maximization” tactic, where they lie about how much evidence they have against the subject and the seriousness of the potential punishment.

The Reid technique is the one most likely to cause false confessions.

Like the kinesic model (described in the following paragraphs), it also relies on police being able to interpret body language and facial cues to determine guilt, which they are actually bad at, but believe they are good at. Really, they rely on their own personal biases, which they interpret as being better-than-average ability to determine if someone is being truthful.

The PEACE model of interrogation was developed because high-pressure interrogation isn’t successful in the majority of cases. It consists of five steps with PEACE as the acronym:

Preparation and planning

Engage and explain

Account clarification and challenge

Closure

Evaluation

Interrogators ask open-ended, leading, and repetitive questions, asking over and over and over again, looking for holes, contradictions, and inconsistencies in the account. They disclose evidence to the suspect and then ask them about it constantly, going over the narrative of events over and over until they get the subject to disclose something accidentally that can be used against them. Unlike the REID technique, there is no minimization or maximization. They do not use threats, promises, or intimidation, and they avoid lying. The PEACE technique is just

as effective as the Reid technique at obtaining confessions, but it obtains fewer false confessions.

The cognitive approach resembles the PEACE model. It relies on three psychological processes: 1) memory and cognition, 2) social dynamics, and 3) communication. It guides interviewees through their memories by asking open-ended questions followed by more specific probing inquiries. There are different versions for witnesses and those they suspect of a crime.

For witnesses, there are five steps:

Introduction

Open-ended narration

Follow-up questions

Review

Closing

Witnesses are encouraged to talk and talk, without interruption and without challenges, with open-ended questions only asked to encourage the narrative to keep going. Follow-up questions are held to the end. Questions are meant to the interviewee in invoking the external (environmental details), emotional (e.g., fear, mood), and cognitive (e.g., thoughts) facts about what the witness experienced.

When interrogating a suspect, the cognitive model differs and has eight steps:

Introduction

Narrative

Drawing/sketch

Follow-up with open-ended questions

Reverse-order technique

Challenge

Review

Close

Although the technique is still based on drawing out a long narrative in a non-confrontational manner, it is also designed to increase cognitive load on the brain and decrease the cognitive bandwidth that a person would use to resist the technique. One example is the reverse-order technique, where police ask the subject to walk them through the narrative of the events backwards. This often makes people make mistakes in the narrative, which the police can then exploit.

The cognitive technique is more effective at getting subjects to supply usable evidence, but it doesn't work on all people, is difficult to deploy correctly, and takes a long time.

The kinesic interview technique relies on body language and on cognitive techniques that move the mind and body out of equilibrium and cause a stress reaction that makes it harder for people to disguise deception. It divides behavior into self-initiated statements by suspects, prompted verbal responses after interviewers ask certain questions, and nonverbal body positioning, including physiological changes and gestures or lack thereof. After establishing a norm, the interrogators push to cause deviations from that norm in order to find holes in the subject's narrative of events.

It relies on the interpretation of verbal and nonverbal behaviors classified as deceptive, but humans are actually terrible at interpreting those signals, especially if they think they are good at it.

The police often think that they can tell when someone is lying from their body language and facial cues, but research actually indicates they have about a 50/50 chance of guessing if someone is telling the truth, and numerous surveys have shown that police do no better. In one study, the only difference in the detection of deception between random people on the street and trained law enforcement officers was that police were way more likely to believe that they were good at it.

Rights for Base Camp/ Headquarters

Many, but not all, protests have a “base camp” or a headquarters they are organized out of. For large actions, there may be many. Affinity groups and collectives may meet at their own location and then proceed to the protest from there. Small groups of friends protesting together may go from an apartment or house where they all gathered in advance.

In the case of an affinity group, collective, etc., the headquarters or base camp is often where supplies are stored, volunteers running legal and jail support are located, food and water are provided, or even where medic stations are set up.

Police have been known to raid these support locations, disrupt the support for the protest, and even destroy supplies (including food, water, and medical supplies).

It is for this reason that it is important for every protester who is working in the base camp to know their rights in that space.

You do not have to let the police or ICE agents into the space unless they have a search warrant signed by a judge.

The search warrant should specify in detail the limits of the search, including the areas permitted to be searched and the items allowed to be taken from the space. If the warrant does not state that they can take an item, they cannot take it.

The police and/or agents can slide the warrant under the door, or you can step outside and close the door behind you to read the warrant.

If the police do not have a warrant, NEVER consent to allow them to search the space. Firmly state, “I do not consent to the search of [the space.]”

If the warrant states that it is for a specific portion of the space, do not consent to them searching outside of that area. For example, if it is for the main

building but not the supply warehouse, don't let them into the supply warehouse.

Ask the police if you can watch the search. There is no legal right for you to do so, but sometimes they will permit you stay and observe. If yes, take notes on the names, badge numbers, and departments of those present. Take notes on anything they search, what they photograph, and any items they remove from the space. It is legal for you to record police if you are permitted to be present during the search.

If the police ask you to find an item for them, refuse. If the police take an item and it isn't listed in the warrant, do not consent to them taking it. You should absolutely not try to physically prevent them from leaving with it, but you can repeatedly refuse to consent and state that it is not legal for them to do so.

Everyone present should stay silent unless invoking their rights, such as when stating that you refuse to the police taking an item not listed in the warrant or asking to observe the warrant being executed. Do not hang out chatting. Anything that you say while the police are present can be used against you in court.

Everyone, regardless of citizenship, has the right to remain silent and refuse to answer questions. Each of you should state that you are invoking your right to remain silent and your right to speak with a lawyer. Remain silent, but do not lie to the police.

Do not attempt to resist or physically obstruct an officer, as that is unsafe and likely to lead to your arrest, possible injury, or even death.

(Every state is a little bit different, so it is best to also look up the Know Your Rights materials put out in each individual state.)

When You Are Released

Once released, if there were any violations of rights, try to document them as soon as possible with as much detail as you are able to. If you know the names and/or badge numbers of those responsible, include that in your documentation. At a minimum, document a basic timeline of the events as soon as you can bring yourself to do so.

If possible, talk over your experience with someone before you go to sleep. Recounting what you experienced and how it made you feel may help you process the trauma. Sleeping directly after traumatic events without taking the time to process them can lead to a higher risk of long-term emotional problems.

Consider playing Tetris (yes, really) or another simple puzzle game on your phone or other device. Research has shown that Tetris may be useful as an adjunct therapeutic intervention for preventing PTSD.

Take time for self-care. Eat something comforting, hydrate, watch your favorite show, or listen to your favorite music, take a long shower or bath, and decompress before sleeping. Let your nervous system come down from its heightened state with soothing activities.

If your affinity group, collective, or protesting group has a support circle, mental health provider who provides assistance, counselors on call, etc., consider reaching out for help as soon as you can.

Jail Solidarity

There is a kind of “action within an action” that can be planned for called “jail solidarity”, where all people arrested for an action purposefully stymie and frustrate the penal processing system and agitate for release. It is designed to protect all of the activists arrested, including those who cannot pay bail, and

to prevent the justice system from being used to shut down protest movements. Those within the jail withhold names and other forms of identification, collectively refuse any deal unless it includes the dismissal or reduction of the charges against everyone, and maintain a collective bargaining stance rather than an individualistic one. To keep the communal spirit going, people performing jail solidarity inside the jail sing and chant.

When they call the legal support number, they would only give their code name, enabling the legal support person to pass on who has been arrested to the assisting legal professional (as well as collective/affinity group, emergency contacts, etc).

However, jail solidarity only works with very large groups, generally of a few hundred, who have planned to do this in advance. It doesn't scale down well. It also doesn't work if authorities are expecting to detain hundreds of people, in which case they can do so for long periods without difficulty, whether or not they can identify those they've detained.

Outside the jail, jail solidarity participants put on another protest in the form of a jail vigil, singing, chanting, and demanding the release of the prisoners.

Those selected by affinity groups and collectives contact political allies for support (unions, NGOs, sympathetic politicians, etc) who can pressure authorities to provide decent treatment. Press-trained people give interviews and hold press conferences.

During visitor hours, protesters flood the jail with visitors with care packages of food and water for the activists. The aim is to show the arrested that they have community support behind them and show the system that arrests won't break the movement.

It is possible for a protest where there were a large number of protesters arrested to be followed immediately by jail support protests. Remember to take these long, sustained movements in shifts. Don't try to attend every single day unless you know you have the bandwidth and endurance for it, instead, remember that this is a community effort and be there when you can be.

Jail Support

If you weren't arrested, but someone else was, you may be able to provide jail support for them. If they are not attempting to keep their identity from the police, you can call the police precinct to inquire about their arrest. You can ask if they have been arrested, whether they are at that precinct, what the charges are, what their arrest number is, and if they will be released or taken to central booking or holding.

If the police refuse this information, you may need to show up in person and refuse to leave without it.

The protester may be released with no charges or charged but still released on their own recognizance if the charges against them are minor. If they are charged with something more severe, they may be held until trial or released if people can provide bail.

If bail is set at a low enough number that a protest bail fund or you, yourself, can cover it, then you can give the amount of bail to the court system. This money will be refunded when the legal process is concluded, so long as the person shows up for their court date.

If not, you may need to go to a bail bonds place and pay ten to twenty percent of the bail to get them out. This money is not refundable.

If no one can make bail for the person, they may wait in jail until their court case is concluded, either to their release or imprisonment. This may, however, be part of the movement itself, as during the Civil Rights Movement, there was a strategy employed called "Jail, No Bail", because paying bail acknowledged and validated a system that was in violation of human rights.

If someone is being held without a court date or bail, they will need legal support to make sure they get a court date and bail set.

If the person is released on their own recognizance or on bail, they will likely need support from their community to get them an attorney, prepare for their court date, and get through the stress of navigating the court system.

Jail support may also include finding people who can provide testimony or evidence, including cell phone recordings or notes they took of the incident. You may also be called upon to testify or provide evidence.

Medic collectives also provide support for people released from jail, providing support to the jail support and legal support team by setting up aid for those being released. Protesters with no medic training can also come to assist the medic team in this, helping with things like photography of injuries, emotional support, distributing food, etc. An untrained protester can focus on meeting immediate needs, like giving hugs, a shoulder to cry on, handing out legal support cards, helping people find rides, etc.

Medic support may be located at the base camp or headquarters of a collective or affinity group, at someone's house or apartment, or even in a makeshift area like a parking lot near the courthouse.

Awaiting Trial

Protesters are often charged with a litany of crimes, even when the police know the charges are unlikely to hold up in court.

This is an intimidation tactic designed to cause stress and panic among the arrestees, so they are more likely to take a bargain or take a plea deal.

If the arrestee didn't fall for the tactic and take the plea deal, awaiting trial can be extremely anxiety-inducing. Trials are often postponed over and over, another tactic that makes it more likely that the arrestee will accept a plea deal rather than pursue their day in court.

One of the ways to provide jail support is to assist that community member during this difficult

time. The community should raise money to help pay their legal costs and offset their lost work hours from court appearances, go with them for their appearances in court, and support them and their family with meals, visits, and a person to listen.

Common Injuries At a Protest

Dehydration

Dehydration is one of the most common ailments at a protest (or really, in general, all the time). In our experience, many of our volunteers have shown up to assist us with community actions already dehydrated.

Dehydration is a deficiency in the total amount of water in the body. It can be caused by not drinking enough hydrating fluids, but can also be caused by sweating, vomiting, diarrhea, ingestion of diuretics, illness, heat, and alcohol consumption.

The first symptom of dehydration is thirst. If a person is thirsty, they are already dehydrated. The next is a dry or sticky mouth. However, it should be noted that a person can be dehydrated without experiencing thirst. Other symptoms include dark yellow urine (brown is severe dehydration), headache, dizziness, whiteouts or presyncope, dry skin, flushed skin, and feeling cool or cold to the touch. More severe dehydration may cause decreased or absent urine, very dark urine, tachycardia, tachypnea, shrunken eyes, lethargy, and syncope. Severe dehydration can cause

hypovolemic shock. An electrolyte imbalance from dehydration can cause seizures.

The treatment is rehydration. If a person can drink on their own, they should. If the dehydration isn't bad, then plain water should be fine. Small sips of water over a few minutes are better than trying to chug water all at once.

If dehydration is more severe, then a sports drink with electrolytes, an electrolyte packet added to the water, or an oral rehydration solution may be necessary.

A simple rehydration solution is water mixed 50/50 with fruit juice, with a pinch of salt. Water can also be mixed with honey or sugar, still with a pinch of salt. A simplified version of the most common solution is one liter of water, 25 grams of sugar (about a handful), and three grams of salt (a decent pinch).

The person should rehydrate for at least two hours at a rate of half to one liter of water per hour.

Dehydration often comes along with heat-related injury, so the person should be monitored for signs of that. They should also try to keep cool using the techniques covered in that section and avoid further strenuous activity.

Heat-Related Injuries

Heat stress or heat exhaustion is a syndrome of symptoms caused by heat exposure.

It may worsen into heat stroke if left untreated.

The symptoms include signs of dehydration, heat malaise (feeling of general discomfort, uneasiness or lack of well-being), nausea, headaches, dizziness, flushed or pale skin, cool and clammy skin, cramps, presyncope and syncope, orthostatic hypotension, and tachycardia. The core temperature of the person may be normal or elevated. It generally stays below 105° Fahrenheit, unlike in heat stroke.

The care is the same for rehydration, but also requires cooling the body. The person should rest in

a cool, shady spot with circulating air. Cool packs can be placed on major arteries in the armpit, on the inner thigh, or on the neck and on the palms, the soles of the feet, and the cheeks (the advantage of the palms, soles, and cheeks is that they don't contract with the cold). They should be monitored for heat stroke until the symptoms pass. They should not return to vigorous activity.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke occurs when the body is no longer able to cool itself down. It is caused by extreme heat injury, too much exertion in the heat, or complicating medical conditions.

Symptoms include all of those for heat exhaustion, but additionally uncoordinated movements and impaired voluntary movement, stumbling, disorientation, abnormal posturing, confusion and difficulty communicating with words, hallucinations, deliriums, seizures, and coma. Seizures may occur while cooling the person. The skin is red and hot to the touch (in rare cases, the skin will be very pale instead. It may be either dry or moist. It is a myth that people with heat stroke all stop sweating; this occurs in less than 50 percent of cases. The person's temperature is often approaching or above 105° Fahrenheit.

Heat stroke has a high mortality rate and is fatal if left untreated. It is very serious.

Treatment of heat stroke cannot always be left until the arrival of EMS or they reach the emergency room, because neurological damage from hyperthermia is caused not only by the maximum temperature reached, but by the duration of that maximum temperature. People should be cooled down as rapidly as possible, ideally at the first sign of heat stress.

The person needs to be removed from the source of heat. They should be taken to a cooler area (at minimum, the shade. Shady grass is better than shady pavement.) Excess clothing should be loosened or removed to facilitate evaporative cooling. They should then be doused with cool water and fanned. Cool packs can be pressed to the arteries in the underarm, the inner thigh, and the neck, and on the

palms, the bottom of the feet, and the cheeks. They should be rehydrated if conscious using a rehydration solution.

If they are hallucinating, delirious, unconscious, seizing, etc., 911 should be called while treatment for heat stroke is ongoing. Do not stop cooling the person off while waiting for EMTs. The EMTs will evacuate the person for advanced medical care.

(Further information on treating heat exhaustion and heat stroke injuries, such as heat edema and heat rash, can be found in our street medic training materials.)

Sunburn

An extremely common injury at protests is sunburn. Sunburn is a radiation burn caused by sun exposure.

Most sunburns are first-degree and damage the skin's outer layer, causing pain. Some are second-degree and damage the middle section of the skin (dermis) and cause blisters, as well. (Third-degree sunburns can occur, but are extremely rare and unlikely at a protest.) First-degree sunburns heal in a few days to a week. Second-degree sunburns can take weeks to heal and may require medical intervention.

Symptoms of first-degree sunburn are redness (on lighter skin tones), pain, the skin feeling hot or tight, tenderness, swelling, headache, fatigue, fever, nausea, and peeling skin (after a few days). Symptoms of a second-degree sunburn are extremely red skin (on lighter skin tones), pain, skin feeling hot and tight, tenderness, more severe swelling, blisters, wet-looking skin, white discoloration, fatigue, dizziness, exhaustion, confusion, fast breathing, fever, muscle cramps, headache or migraine, nausea, and shivers.

It is a myth that after the burn has already appeared, it is useless to apply sunscreen. Burnt skin can keep burning. Ideally, wear sunscreen throughout the entire protest and apply more throughout it. However, there is a complication between sunscreen and chemical weapons deployed by police. There is no one-hundred percent safe sunscreen to use in situations when chemical weapons will be deployed,

which is why some protesters wear UV protective clothing and cover their faces, instead. Oil-based or lotion-style sunscreens can open the pores and cause chemical ingredients to bind to the skin. If you wear a sunscreen (because you are confident there will be no chemical weapons deployed or because you choose to take the risk), use a chemical sunscreen that is at least SPF 30. Avoid anything that says “oil” or “moisturizing” and instead look for sport-oriented brands that are water resistant and sweat resistant.

Some treatments for sunburn, such as calendula salve, are not recommended if there is a risk of chemical weapons exposure. Aloe vera gel and peppermint essential oil are also used to treat sunburns and are unsafe if there is a risk of chemical weapons exposure (aloe vera gel will actually seal the chemical weapon into the pores, causing more severe irritation).

Lidocaine spray is what we recommend for sunburn at a protest, as it does not exacerbate chemical weapons exposure (although it sadly hasn't been found to be effective at treating pain from pepper spray exposure).

Once home and safe from the risk of chemical weapon exposure, we recommend a cool shower of at least 20 minutes duration, followed by application of preferred topical treatment (calendula salve, aloe vera gel, lidocaine spray, colloidal silver cream, of our preferred over-the-counter cream by First Aid Beauty, their Ultra Repair Cream, which contains colloidal oatmeal.)

Chemical Weapons

During protests, it is not uncommon for the police to use chemical weapons (also called riot control agents or RCAs). It is difficult to know which protests might be targeted, so our recommendation is to always assume that any protest might be and to prepare accordingly.

Tear gas (also known as lachrymatory agent or lachrymator, from Latin “lacrima” for tear) is a chemical weapon that stimulates the nerves of the lacrimal gland in the eye to cause tears. But tear gases cause other symptoms as well, depending on which formulation is being deployed. Many types of tear gas and other riot control agents have been produced with effects ranging from mild tearing of the eyes to excruciating pain, vomiting, respiratory distress, and collapse. These include, but are not limited to, Mace (a branded mixture), pepper spray (OC gas), PAVA spray (nonivamide), CS gas, CR gas, and CN gas (phenacyl chloride). CN and CS are the most widely used and known, but around 15 different types of tear gas have been developed and employed worldwide.

CN gas is phenacyl chloride (also commonly known as chloroacetophenone). It was first investigated, but not used, during the First and Second World Wars. It is extremely dangerous, so is not generally deployed at large scale by the military. However, it is still used by police forces (as well as by paramilitary groups) as Mace in some formulas, though less and less commonly. Its use is being supplanted by pepper spray and CS gas.

CN gas causes tearing, irritates the mucous membrane (oral, nasal, conjunctival, and tracheobronchial), respiratory distress, pain, loss of balance, disorientation, syncope, cutaneous irritation, allergic contact dermatitis, and (at high concentrations) corneal epithelial damage and chemosis. It can cause death from pulmonary injury and/or asphyxia.

MACE is a variant of CN gas, which originally consisted of one percent chloroacetophenone (CN) in a solvent of 2-butanol, propylene glycol, cyclohexene, and dipropylene glycol methyl ether. It was developed as a personal self-defense item, then sold to Smith & Wesson, then to a company which is now called Mace Security International, which owns the trademark on "mace." "Chemical mace" may refer to any irritant with the active ingredient called phenacyl chloride (CN), but "Mace" is a trademarked term.

Due to how dangerous CN gas is, most of the sprays sold as MACE don't use a formula primarily consisting of CN and instead use pepper spray as the primary ingredient. The "Triple Action" formula still uses CN, pepper spray, and ultraviolet dye.

MACE is carried by counteragents other than police, in most cases. Most of the time, it will look like a black spray can with a large trigger. This can sometimes be seen in a belt pouch on counterprotesters.

Some cities and states explicitly ban CN gas. I've seen some protest guides claim the police in the United States do not use CN gas, but some US police departments stock CN munitions. According to one researcher, the following metropolitan police departments authorized the use of CN gas as of 2020: Columbus, OH; Newark, NJ; Baltimore, MD; Iowa City, IA; Atlanta, GA; Denver, CO; Santa Rosa, CA; Phoenix, AZ; and Mobile, AL. Additionally, CN munitions are employed by the New Mexico State Police.

This would be deployed both as a spray in a handheld spray can with a large trigger that sprays a stream and propelled from a grenade or canister by a small pyrotechnic explosion.

Pepper spray (also called OC spray, capsaicin spray, or bear spray) is oleoresin capsicum spray. It was originally engineered for defense against bears, mountain lions, and wolves. It contains capsaicin as an irritant to cause burning, pain, and blindness. It is very inflammatory and causes the eyes to close. It also causes burning of the lungs, shortness of breath, and respiratory distress. When "oversprayed," it can cause extreme respiratory distress and cardiac difficulties.

The police do still carry pepper spray. It is generally deployed as a handheld spray can with a large trigger that shoots a stream. Police are known to spray protesters with long, sustained sprays directly in the eyes, nose, and mouth.

PAVA spray is an incapacitant spray similar to pepper spray, but dispersed in a liquid stream. It contains a 0.3% solution of pelargonic acid vanillylamide (PAVA), also called nonivamide, a synthetic capsaicinoid (analogue of capsaicin), in a solvent of aqueous ethanol, with a nitrogen propellant. It is significantly more potent than CS gas, but also has a narrow stream of application, which was designed to use the minimum amount to incapacitate a person without prolonging their discomfort or exposure.

PAVA is not common in the United States, but is used in the United Kingdom, India, and Switzerland. There has been discussion about using it in the United States, hence its inclusion here.

CS gas consists primarily of the compound 2-chlorobenzalmalononitrile (also called o-chlorobenzylidene malononitrile). Its use is banned in warfare due to the 1925 Geneva Protocol. It is in use in the United States as a riot control agent.

CS gas is the most popular riot control in the United States because of its very strong effects. The effects CS gas will have on a person will depend on whether it is packaged as a solution or as an aerosol. The size of the dispersed particles, the concentration of the solution, and the amount of the solution that contacts a person are all factors that influence their effects.

CS gas reacts with the moisture on the skin and in the eyes, causing burning sensations, tears streaming from the eyes, profuse coughing, nasal discharge of large amounts of mucus, burning eyes, eyelids, nose, and throat, disorientation, dizziness, restricted breathing, coughing, vomiting, syncope, and respiratory distress. It will also burn anywhere the skin is damp or sunburned. High exposure can cause chemical burns that result in permanent scars.

The immediate effects wear off within a few hours, with the exception of nasal discharge and coughing, which can last for days. Respiratory, gastrointestinal, and oral symptoms can persist for months.

Protesters exposed to tear gas during the 2020 protests in Portland, Oregon, US, also reported menstrual changes (54.5% of 1650 AFAB respondents). Repeated exposure may cause sensitisation.

It should be noted that CS gas is the most commonly used by police forces within the United States against modern protests. It was deployed in at least 100 cities during the 2020 BLM protests. In Portland, Oregon, it was used more than 100 times in a two-week period, and there were at least two nights in which it was used more than twenty times. When deployed, it can cause mass panic, with other injuries occurring due to that, including trampling injuries.

CS gas is generally propelled from a grenade or canister by a small pyrotechnic explosion.

CR gas is dibenzoxazepine, a lachrymatory agent and incapacitating agent. It was developed by the British Ministry of Defense as a riot control agent in the 1950s and 1960s and is nicknamed firegas, because one report from the development labs said it was “like being thrown blindfolded into a bed of stinging nettles.”

It is very similar to CS gas, though structurally dissimilar, but twice as potent. CR can be delivered as an aerosol or solution, so it is used in water cannons, smoke grenades, or canisters (LACR) that heat up, producing an aerosol cloud.

CR gas is not currently used by the US police forces; however, Turkiye suddenly and unexpectedly deployed it on protesters in 2013, so it is included here due to that possibility occurring during upcoming protests in the United States.

CR gas is generally deployed as a grenade or canister that sprays a cloud through a crowd.

All forms of tear gas may worsen the spread of respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19, due to people coughing more. If people are already sick with a respiratory illness, it will make it worse.

Long-term health problems caused by chemical weapons exposure include chronic bronchitis, recurring lung infections, walking pneumonia, and increased asthma attacks.

If Tear Gas is Deployed

Firstly, do not panic and run. Mass panic leads to more injuries, not less. Additionally, rapid breathing and increased heart rate can worsen the symptoms of exposure.

If you have a respirator mask, put it on immediately. If you have chemical goggles, put them on as well.

If you have no protection, cover your mouth and nose with a cloth, but know that the cloth can rapidly become contaminated with the chemical attack. It will provide very limited and very brief protection. DO NOT use a damp cloth, as several tear gas formulations are activated and worsened by moisture, so placing a damp cloth over your nose and mouth will worsen, not protect against, their effects. Acidified cloth (soaked in vinegar, lemon juice, etc.) is NOT effective against tear gas; it does not deactivate it, and because it is damp, it can cause the same problem as if it were just wet with water.

Breathe slowly, but avoid deep breaths, just focusing on long and strong exhalation. DO NOT RUN, but exit the area at a brisk walk or calm jog, with clarity, avoiding falls, collisions, and possible trampling. Do not crouch, as tear gas is heavier than air, and so the highest concentrations tend to be near the ground. Either move where directed by the forces dispersing crowds or travel upwind of the gas.

Some protesters use the model developed during the 2019 Hong Kong protests, where frontline protesters formed special teams wearing protective clothing, including heat-proof gloves, or covered their

arms and legs with cling film to prevent painful skin irritation. They picked up canisters that were releasing gas and hurled them back at police, poured water over them to extinguish them, or put traffic cones over them to contain the gas, and then poured water over them to extinguish them. **DO NOT DO THIS WITHOUT PROTECTIVE GEAR.**

If you are wearing sturdy footwear, Canisters can be kicked away from you and other people. Do not pick up an unexploded canister as it may explode and cause serious injury. Only pick up a canister if it is already emitting chemical agents and only if you are wearing heat-resistant gloves and safety goggles **AT A MINIMUM.**

Treatment and Decontamination

Do not touch or rub your eyes or face. Touch exposed clothing as little as possible. Shake out hair and clothing as much as possible, then get it off, so that clothing that was contaminated can be discarded. Blow your nose, cough (into your elbow, rather than at others), and spit.

Protesters and their gear can pass on contamination to others. If someone helps take off your gear for you during decontamination, they also need to be treated for exposure.

Beyond that, treatment varies based on what kind of tear gas and what concentration of it the person was exposed to. People react differently to different remedies. There is also a lot of misinformation online that conflates various kinds of tear gas with each other. The truth is, there is no one specific antidote.

Water will temporarily exacerbate the pain caused by CS gas and pepper spray, but it is still the best solution found so far. People should run cool, clean water, and plenty of it, so that it flushes the eyes, nose, and mouth, but away from further contamination. They should lean their head back so

that the water can be poured, so that it washes the contaminants away from further exposure onto the ground. Always irrigate from the inside corner of the eye towards the outside, with the head tilted back and slightly to the side in the direction you want the water flowing towards the outside of the eye.

Do not wipe the skin with a damp cloth, as this will reactivate the chemical agent without removing it. Instead, use a shower (not a bath!). For CS gas, wash the body with mild alkaline soap, such as Dawn dish soap. In the case of pepper spray, fat-containing oils or soaps may be most effective, as they dilute the capsaicin. Use only cool or cold water to keep the pores closed.

For CS gas, management of ocular exposures involves copious irrigation with water or saline for at least 10 to 20 minutes, but can continue longer if the person continues to have ocular symptoms.

Some studies suggest that Diphoterine, a hypertonic amphoteric salt solution, a first aid product for chemical splashes used by chemists, may help with ocular burns or chemicals in the eye, and specifically with exposure to CS gas. It is a bit expensive, so we'd recommend it only to those who want to keep an extremely well-stocked emergency kit (for example, if possible, every medic collective should have a bottle for extreme cases of exposure, which the collective can all chip in to buy. The bottle should be reserved for those who got extreme and direct exposure, if, for example, they picked up a canister to throw it away from protesters without wearing goggles and cannot seek medical treatment from an ER.)

Anticholinergics (Benadryl is one example) may help treat the respiratory symptoms as well as the itchy, runny nose. Oral analgesics may help with the pain (like that acetaminophen or ibuprofen in your first aid kit).

People who've been exposed should be watched for about four hours to make sure their symptoms do not worsen.

We do not recommend Milk of Maalox, vinegar, petroleum jelly, or baby shampoo to wash out the eyes,

as you may have seen recommended in other places. Studies have found them to be ineffective.

If you must keep your clothing that has been contaminated, wash it alone in plenty of cold water multiple times and then run multiple empty loads in the washer to flush it before putting any other clothing into it to be washed. Shoes, accessories, and equipment that come in contact with chemical agents must be washed with water or saline (while wearing gloves!). Untreated particles will remain active and continue outgassing for up to a week. Some advocate for using fans or hair dryers to evaporate the contaminant, but I feel this will spread contamination and isn't as effective as water or saline.

For CS gas, an enzyme cleaner is effective at breaking down the contamination on the gear.

A special note on CR gas:

Water usually amplifies the pain effect of CR. Although it can be decontaminated by large amounts of water, water causes extreme pain for up to 48 hours after contamination. Medical treatment is usually just removing the contaminating clothing, washing the eyes out, and then treating the pain with palliative medications. This is not currently deployed against US protesters, but in case that changes under the current political environment, we've included this information.

Restraint Injuries

Restraint injuries are common at protests where people are arrested. As many as one in eight people who are handcuffed experience some kind of wrist injury. Flex-cuffs, deployed in mass arrests like the kinds that occur at protests, are more likely to cause injury than the hard, steel cuffs, especially when the cops are hurrying through arresting many people.

When cuffs are applied too tightly, they cut off circulation to the hands. They may also press on the superficial radial nerve and cause damage. If the hands swell from being too tightly restrained, that may also compress the same nerve.

While you are being put into cuffs, metal or plastic, clench your fists, which widens the wrist a little so that they don't go on quite as tight. If you can, ask to be cuffed in front - they may ignore you; they may not. If you are flexible, you may be able to bring your cuffed hands in front of you, which reduces rotator cuff strain.

If you have pain, numbness, or tingling at any time, request that the cuffs be loosened. If an officer refuses, keep asking other officers.

Massage your own hands to keep blood flow and limit damage from restricted blood.

The most common injuries are bruising, lacerations, rotator cuff strain, and radial nerve injury.

If a person experiences a superficial radial nerve injury, they will normally experience pain around the thumb, which extends to the back of the hand below the first two fingers, and/or the back of the thumb and the backs of those fingers.

It may decrease when the handcuffs are removed, but return to ache later or have decreased sensation. This generally clears up after a few days to a month.

Arnica and hypericum are common treatments for bruising and nerve injury. Lacerations can be treated with a lidocaine antiseptic spray and petroleum jelly.

Kinetic Energy Weapons

Kinetic energy weapons launch impact projectiles that are less lethal than bullets, but this does not mean they are entirely non-lethal. This might include beanbag rounds, foam bullets, plastic pellets, sponge bullets, fully rubber bullets, rubber-coated metal bullets, and metal balls.

It is a myth that the weapons used to launch these always have a neon-orange tip to differentiate them from lethal weapons. That is not the case. These can be fired from special guns, modified guns, specialized launchers, grenade launchers, etc., which may or may not have a neon-orange tip.

Injuries include welts, bruising, broken skin, eye damage, blindness, and permanent damage to soft tissues and organs such as the testicles.

For welts, they can use cool compresses, topical ibuprofen, and anti-itch lotions such as an antihistamine cream. For minor broken skin, they can use lidocaine antiseptic spray, petroleum jelly, and bandages. For bruises, they can use arnica gel or topical ibuprofen, as well as pain relievers and internal anti-inflammatories.

For severe injuries, a protester may need to go to a free clinic, ER, or a trusted physician.

Blunt Force Trauma

Blunt force trauma is caused by impact, such as being hit by a counter-protester, struck by a police baton, or slammed into an object during arrest. The wounds may be open or closed, but are caused by impact rather than by laceration (cutting).

Depending on the severity of the blunt force trauma, a person may need to get X-rays, ultrasounds, and MRIs performed in the emergency room. For less severe blunt trauma, they should seek out a medic at the protest and get assessed.

For minor blunt trauma, such as bruises and aches (rather than deep tissue bruising, broken bones, or internal bleeding!), a person can treat with internal use of anti-inflammatories and pain relievers, topical application of ibuprofen and arnica, alternating ice and heat packs, hot Epsom salt baths, and muscle relaxants.

Disorientation Weapons

Disorientation weapons are a category of non-lethal weapons designed to temporarily disorient, stun, or incapacitate a target without causing serious injury or death. These weapons utilize a variety of technologies, including sound waves, intense light flashes, and directed energy, to create disorientation and panic.

Flashbang Grenades

Flashbang grenades are a type of acoustic and optical disorientation weapon. When they detonate, they create a bright flash and a very loud noise. They are used to panic and disorient protesters by causing temporary blindness, loss of hearing, and loss of balance. People can also have shrapnel injuries and burns from the grenade exploding near them. They may also cause blast injuries.

People can also be injured in the crowd if people panic and run, including bruises, collision injuries, and trample injuries.

Hearing and vision generally recover pretty quickly, but some people may have more permanent injury and need to seek a physician to treat it.

Long-Range Acoustic Devices

Long-range acoustic devices may be used as a communications device that sends a voice over a long distance, such as when police use them to order a protest to disperse, or they may be used as a disorientation weapon. They output sound at a threshold that causes pain, loss of balance, and temporary loss of hearing, although they can be deployed at too close of range and cause permanent hearing loss.

If there is reason to believe that long-range acoustic devices may be employed, protesters can carry noise-cancelling headphones and put them on to reduce the impact. Hearing generally recovers in a few

minutes to an hour; however, if more long-term injury occurs, it will need to be treated by a professional.

Dazzlers and Illuminators

Dazzlers and illuminators are non-lethal weapons that use intense, directed lasers or exceptionally bright lights to temporarily disorient targets. They were initially developed for military use; non-military versions are becoming available for law enforcement applications.

At a distance, they generally cause protesters to have to avert their eyes and take different routes. They can trigger seizures in epileptic people.

The main danger is that they may be used to herd protesters into kettles or disorient them for easier arrest.

On the bright side, cheap dazzlers and other lasers have been used by protesters against the police as well, disorienting drones, riot police, helicopters, etc., as observed in the tactics of the protesters in Egypt, Hong Kong, and Chile.

Millimeter Wave Devices

Millimeter wave devices are a disorienting weapon that uses directed energy. They emit extremely high frequency radio waves that excite the water molecules of protesters the same way that a microwave excites water molecules of a chicken breast.

These weapons cause burning pain, thermal burns, and blisters. They have not yet been turned against protesters, but it is a theoretical possibility that we should be forewarned.

Pulsed Energy Projectile

Pulsed energy projectile (PEP) is a weapon designed by the U.S. military. It uses an invisible laser pulse which ablates the target's surface and creates a small amount of exploding plasma, which produces a pressure wave that stuns the target and electromagnetic radiation that affects nerve cells, causing pain. The technology can be used as a lethal weapon.

The PEP projectile is intended for riot control, but has yet to be deployed in protests in the United States. There have been concerns expressed that it would be a form of torture.

Disorientation Weapon Treatment

If a person is exposed to any of these weapons, the first step is to get them away from the weapon. If the disorientation doesn't fade and they cannot hear or see shortly after exposure, a medic should be sought out.

All people exposed who have symptoms that persist past an hour should see an ear, nose, and throat doctor and/or an ear doctor as soon as possible.

People who have been exposed may suffer from vertigo, which can lead to fall injuries, which may require anything from bruise treatment (hot and cold compresses, arnica gel, topical ibuprofen, pain relievers, and anti-inflammatories) to assessment by a medic or EMT, depending on severity.

Electrical Shock Weapons

An electroshock weapon is an incapacitating weapon that delivers an electric shock aimed at temporarily disrupting muscle functions and/or inflicting pain. Stun guns, batons, cattle prods, shock collars, and shock belts all administer an electric shock with direct contact.

There is a myth we are seeing in protest guides online that Tasers are the same thing as stun guns, but are the projectile version. This is dangerously false. Stun guns are direct contact weapons that work mainly through pain compliance by affecting the sensory nerves. It can cause some muscle cramps and disruption, but generally, that requires three to five seconds of sustained direct contact.

TASER energy weapons deploy probes on the end of wires from a distance to induce neuromuscular incapacitation (NMI). One probe has negative polarity and the other has positive polarity; they form a connection through the target's body and induce NMI. The connection causes the target to flex involuntarily as the current passes through the body. Some models are capable of delivering a "drive stun", as well, using

pain compliance like a stun gun, but they can also do the connection through the target's body.

This is what makes Tasers such a danger to the heart.

Stun guns primarily cause burns, which can be treated like any other electrical burn, with lidocaine antiseptic spray and petroleum jelly.

Tasers can cause cardiac and respiratory arrest. The barbs can also remain embedded in the skin.

The barb can be firmly gripped and pulled out, and then the barb injury needs to be treated like any puncture, with antiseptic and petroleum jelly until it has healed.

Respiratory distress and cardiac arrest should be treated by someone with first aid experience, like a trained medic or EMT.

Documenting Injuries

It is an unfortunate fact of our world that police brutality is escalating. An estimated 250,000 civilian injuries are caused by law enforcement officers annually. People who are protesting are often those who are already more likely to suffer injury at the hands of the police, belonging to marginalized and oppressed communities (people of color, LGBTQIA people, disabled people, the poor). Unfortunately, this also means that those the police target don't have the resources to fight them in the legal system.

Documenting police brutality while it is occurring may be dangerous. Police may attack people who are filming. Each protester needs to decide for themselves if they are willing to take the risk.

It is also important to document the injuries the police cause during arrest and during detainment. These injuries may include bruises, cuts, burns from tasers, torn muscles, ligaments, and tendons, concussions, and more. Not all can be photographed, but a physician at a low-cost, sliding scale, or free clinic can document the ones that cannot.

If a medical professional is involved, have them write down the injuries in detail. If the physician recommends follow-up treatments, it's important to go and have the physician keep documenting the recovery.

Keep all evidence of police brutality, including bloody or torn clothing, rubber bullets, tear gas canisters, etc., in sealed bags. Hold onto all paperwork given by the cops, court, and any physician together in the same place, including arrest reports, property receipts, booking photos, and documentation of injuries.

When photographing injuries, it is best to use a film camera if possible. Attorneys can argue that digital photos were altered. However, if that's all you have, then make do. Email them to yourself or to others in your community, or post them online when you take them, which will put a timestamp on the photos, making it harder to argue that they've been altered.

The photographs should be taken in a clean, uncluttered space, ideally against a blank wall.

The first picture should be of a person's full body, so that the law enforcement agencies' attorneys cannot claim that the photographs are of someone else. More photos should be taken, slowly getting closer to the injury, again, so that it cannot be claimed that the injuries were on someone else. The injury should be photographed from multiple angles, in clear, strong light that shows detail. Ideally, the injury should be photographed both with and without a ruler. At the end of this, you should have at least six photos of any injury.

The photos should be taken right after the injury is given and at least every other day, if not every day, until it is healed. Keep a journal documenting when each photograph was taken, so "Pictures one through six taken day of a police incident at this time by this person." In the same journal where the photographs are recorded, keep a log of how the injuries develop over time and any new problems that crop up. Record any missed days of work and financial costs incurred due to the injury. Keep all of this organized and together with the rest of the evidence.

Also, photograph the scene of the brutality, starting by taking a wide photo, then taking photos as you get closer and closer to where the incident happened. Photograph street signs, building numbers, and other landmarks to establish where the location is. Take photos of any bloodstains, broken glass, tear gas canisters, etc., to support your case. Again, store this together with the rest of the evidence and keep notes as to what photographs were taken and what they showed.

Risk of Arrest During Treatment

If a protester is at risk of arrest, going to a clinic, emergency room, or physician's office may lead to being arrested while seeking medical care. It is best to go to an emergency room or clinic across town, away from the protest, dressed up in business casual clothing. The protester needs to weigh the risks and benefits themselves - they may need emergency care as quickly as possible and have to risk the nearby emergency room.

After Action

Your day as a protester is not done when you leave an action or even when you get home. You are not done until your gear is checked, cleaned, and put away, until the debrief is done, and until you've taken time for some self-care.

Stress and Trauma Debrief

The debriefing may be as a group with the affinity group, collective, or working group capsule. Or it may just be with the other buddy in a buddy pair.

Debriefing prevents long-term traumatic stress. Some reasons to debrief:

- Builds a stronger team
- Talk therapy has been proven to be effective for PTSD (but not for CPTSD) and works best when done as shortly after as possible.
- Exposes and brings up sources of trauma and stress, so that they can be addressed.
- Make notes of high points, so that the focus is not only on things that went wrong.

Collective Debriefing and Retrospective

Shortly after the action, in the days following but not the night of, a collective or working group should meet, do a debrief, and hold a retrospective. Retrospectives help the participants identify what worked and what didn't, to adjust plans of action and SOPs for actions in the future.

If the action is multi-day, such as when dealing with a climate crisis or providing support for a long-term sit-in (DAPL), then the collective should hold short daily debriefs after each day.

Questions to ask during the debrief:

- What went wrong?
- What went right?
- Were there places/times where communication broke down?
- Was there equipment that didn't work as intended, or that wasn't worth the haul in/set up/tear down, or manpower?
- What should be done the same again?
- What should change?

Things to avoid during debriefing:

- Assigning individual blame in front of the group
- Refusing to address the root of the matter
- Only focusing on the positive and refusing to take time to address the negative
- Only focusing on the negative and refusing to take time to address the positive
- Continuing to work with someone who cannot be worked with. Not everyone can be welcome.
- Not bringing up issues because you wish not to cause “drama”
- Bringing up issues only for the drama
- Fostering cliques and factions

Buddy Debriefing

At the end of the action, check in with your buddy, if you have one. Don't force this, again, respect autonomy. If you cannot get support from your buddy, find a supportive person for your own needs.

Questions to ask:

- How are you feeling?
- Is there anything you need to get off your chest?
- What went well for you today?
- What went poorly?
- Was there anything about the support I gave you that didn't work?
- What worked?

Community Coordination

After an action, check in with your local community. If you were supporting them, find out how they feel about what you did and whether or not they need changes made. If you were working with legal support and have documentation for them, make sure to get it to them. If you were working with a press person, make sure they get the documentation (that doesn't expose anyone) that they need.

Emergency Contacts

If there was an emergency contact waiting for news of your well-being, make sure to reach out to them to let them know your status and that they can stand down.

If you were acting as another person's emergency contact, wait the amount of time set up in advance and then reach out if they go past it. Keep reaching out at preset intervals until you hear back from them. If you do not hear back, take the agreed-upon steps.

Decontamination

We will be covering the full decontamination procedure in a different class on chemical agent contamination and decontamination. Please note, however, that part of the post-action is decontamination of all equipment, gear, and clothing if exposed to chemical agents.

Equipment Check

After an action, at minimum, make a list of all supplies and equipment that need to be restocked before the next action. If possible, financially, replace these as soon as possible, so that you are not prevented from joining the next action if it comes up quickly. Equipment checks don't just include your large pieces, but also your single-use items, like bandages and sterile wipes. It also includes your clothing - do your socks, boots, etc., need replacing?

Things to Check:

- Your bag – are straps giving, is thread pulling, etc
- Your single-use items – salty snacks, energy bars, bandages, sterile wipes, etc.
- Your large equipment – was anything confiscated, broken, or left behind?
- Your helmet, if you wore one. If it was struck or dropped, it must be replaced.
- Your clothing – did your boots hold up to the action? Do you need a bigger or smaller pair? Are your socks okay? Did they form holes? Is your vest still fully intact? Etc.
- Your goggles, if you wore them – do they have cracks? Did they work as intended, or do they need to be replaced? Is the strap still functional?
- Your full-face respirator, if you wore one. Check the visor for cracks and other damage. Check filters.
- Your eyewash bottles and water bottles – these should be emptied, cleaned, and left to dry and be sterilized before the next action.
- Any equipment exposed to bodily effluvia needs to be sterilized, left to dry, and sterilized again before the next action.

Decompression

We will cover more on decompression in the class on PTSD and Trauma, but for now, make sure that decompression is part of the post-action plan.

Things to do to decompress:

- Eat, hydrate, and rest.
- Stretch or exercise – burn off excess energy and relieve muscle tension

- Perform whatever version of meditation or mental exercises you do to address stress and sort through memory, so it doesn't sneak up as much later
- Do a distracting and relaxing activity
- Do not immediately re-engage in the action, if possible (THIS INCLUDES ONLINE ACTIVISM)

Asking for Support

Protests are a community effort, and participating in one makes you part of a community. Communities may be made up of individuals, but they function when those individuals all support each other. Different people will need different levels of support after any given protest, depending on everything from the subject of the protest to their personal life circumstances. Not only is there no shame in asking for support when you need it, but it is essential that you do so.

Eventually, no matter who you are, if you try to provide for others in the movement continuously but don't ask for support when you need it, there will come a point when someone reaches out to you for support, and you are unable to provide it. Asking for support doesn't make you weak, a problem, or a burden to the community. It actually keeps you active and able to participate in other actions in the future. Therefore, if you need support after a protest (or any other action), ask for it, even if it seems ridiculous immediately afterwards.

Check-In System

A good way of ensuring that everyone has the support that they need is to establish a post-action check-in system. This can be an extension of the protest buddy system or something that looks more like a phone tree. Regardless of the actual structure, this helps to ensure that everyone has the support that they need.

It is often easier to accept help that is offered by someone who is reaching out, rather than to reach

out and ask for help in the first place. Therefore, in order to ensure that everyone has the support that they need, active check-ins are a good idea. They also, critically, ensure that people who are having a sufficiently negative reaction to not be able to reach out will still be able to get help.

Consider setting up your check-in system so that members of the community who did not directly participate in an action are checking in on members of the community who did, so that the ones who did do not feel guilty or as though they are exploiting someone else who had just as hard (or harder) a time as they did at the protest.

Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries are not just a thing for during protests. Unfortunately, the need for members in the community is omnipresent, and it seems to be never-ending. But no individual one of us is in a position to single-handedly meet those needs. Make sure that you are not giving more than you have available, be that physically, emotionally, financially, or your time or your energy.

Make sure that you continue to sustain yourself, too. Set your boundaries healthily and without malice, but make sure that you set them. Because the suffering of your community, much less the world, is enough to drain any single one of us dry. Trust that the community has more people than you in it, and that they are also helping.

There's a lot of work to be done, and some days it feels like there's too much to do to take a break. We are in this class to build skills, so we are going to give you a lot of new information. But also, you need to eat, sleep, and be a whole person as well as fight the fascists and build your protesting skills. If we look at the history of resistance movements, they are marathons, not sprints. We have to pace ourselves to be able to keep going.

Care for Others After Action

Building Healthy Relationships

Activism is a group activity, and one that takes place within the context of a community. It is not any one person's job to rectify all of society's ills; nobody should be trying to do this work alone. It is necessary to have healthy relationships within the movement, to provide mutual support and planning, and community in the struggle.

It is also necessary to have relationships that encompass sections of life outside of the social justice movement. They can be with people who are also members of it, but it is necessary to occasionally sit down and discuss basketball, or movies, or nineteenth-century philosophy, or whatever else you are interested in. Being a fully realized person and having interests and activities outside of the social justice sphere is a good thing. It means that you are able to come to the movement with your passion and your drive and your energy intact, ready to go.

Having a healthy community and bonds with others reminds you of the reason you're engaging in the movement in the first place. The purpose of protesting is to achieve justice for your community. The stronger your community, the stronger your reason to participate, and the more you participate, the more you become part of the community.

Providing Support

If you love your community enough to protest for it, love it enough to support it in other ways. Love it enough to support the members of it after this protest, and before the next one. Because the bonds that are formed during those times are what can be used to resist the other ways that they try to break communities and protest movements.

The system breaks down movements outside the context of the protest. They make sure that people are too hungry, tired, broke, and beaten down to fight back against the systems that are oppressing

them. You need to build community support outside of the protest that helps with things like feeding kids, keeping people housed, distributing medical resources, and providing education.

As an individual protester, you may not be able to do a lot to support the community in those ways, but you can do something. And in the aggregate, those connections to the community help everyone else be able to show up at the protests, and help everyone have the support that they need to survive the oppression that they are facing.

Bibliography

The bibliography for this booklet is provided in the same document as our recommendations for gear and equipment.



Here we will give major credits to:

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