

RESOURCE FOR ACTIVISTS, ORGANIZERS, & EVERYDAY LIFE



POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND ACTIVISM

Imagine you want to organize an action against racism in your community, create an information stand about a local policy harming your neighborhood, or engage in other pro-democracy street actions - how are you going to stay safe? Sadly, there are always individuals who attempt to intimidate those who publicly advocate for democracy and a peaceful, diverse societies. You should not be scared by these intimidation tactics, but you should be prepared for them, and make sure that you and those around you are safe.

Or say you are walking out of the grocery store when you hear someone yelling insults and racial epithets at a teenage boy - he looks scared.

WHAT INTERRUPTIONS OR HARASSMENT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Right-wing extremists can try to involve you in the discussion of their propaganda. They may take unwanted pictures of you and your political action, and/or film you without your consent. They may verbally abuse you, harass you, or damage the information display or the equipment used to display the information. At the very worst, they may physically threaten or assault you. The probability of these occurring may be low. Yet, it is always better to prepare for any such situation, rather than be taken off guard by unexpected aggression and harassment.



You want to say something but how should you step in? On the train, at a bar, at work, or in the schoolyard, someone says something like, "There are too many foreigners moving here and taking away our jobs!" The speaker isn't necessarily a devout neo-Nazi - often, they are a neighbor, a colleague, a classmate, someone's aunt. How can you show courage in a moment like this? What are some strategies you could use if you witness an emergency situation? This resource is about the answers to these questions.

Before Your Event:

Safe conditions:

- Register your event with relevant public authorities, and ask them what security measures they recommend. Ensure that they give you a direct police number that is not just 911 for the local police.
- If you are part of a larger organized event, such as a peace festival or large-scale protest, learn about the event's security measures and have the relevant contact information for the main organizer on hand.
- If you are attending or organizing this event with others, make a safety plan amongst each other. If you're attending the event alone, reach out to other participants and discuss safety strategies, such as not engaging counter-protesters or the extremist groups by yourself, making sure people know the marching path for the protest, etc.

Preparation:

- Discuss with all participants the various worst-case scenarios, and what action participants would be comfortable taking. Welcome the discussion of fears and worries. It's okay to be concerned about extremist violence, but it doesn't have to dissuade you from participating in the event.

Division of labor:

- Organize tasks and labor in a manner that no individual is ever alone at the public stand or action.
- Agree who will be in charge of notifying help in case of an emergency, and ensure that they have a working (and charged) cell phone.
- Agree who will be engaging with/responding to provocations by extremists and counter-protestors.

When a Situation Arises:

Calm:

- Remain as calm as possible and stick to the agreed upon distribution of tasks. Your event doesn't need to be refocused on extremists, try to deescalate the situation and move on if possible.

Respect:

- Do not let the provocateurs impose a violent tone, and do not meet them at their level, even if it is very hard. Practice polite discourse and keep a physical distance. Keep a formal tone, such as ma'am or sir. Do not engage in violence yourself - that is exactly what the counter-protestors and extremists are hoping for.

Direct and clear communication:

- State up loudly and clearly, if a behavior is unacceptable to you, such as "Please keep your distance!", "Return the material please!", "Please leave! We will not argue with you." Do not hesitate to repeat yourself like a broken record.

Intuition:

- Listen to your gut and pay attention to body language. Evaluate whether an offensive rather than a defensive response will deescalate the situation.
 - Possible offensive response:
 - Ask for the name of the provocateur. Inform them that you will be calling the police.
 - Possible defensive response:
 - Turn to other people in the vicinity and choose people to ask directly for help. Tell them to call the police. When in doubt, protect yourself and exit the situation.

Safety first!

- When in doubt, always safeguard yourself and whomever else you are with.

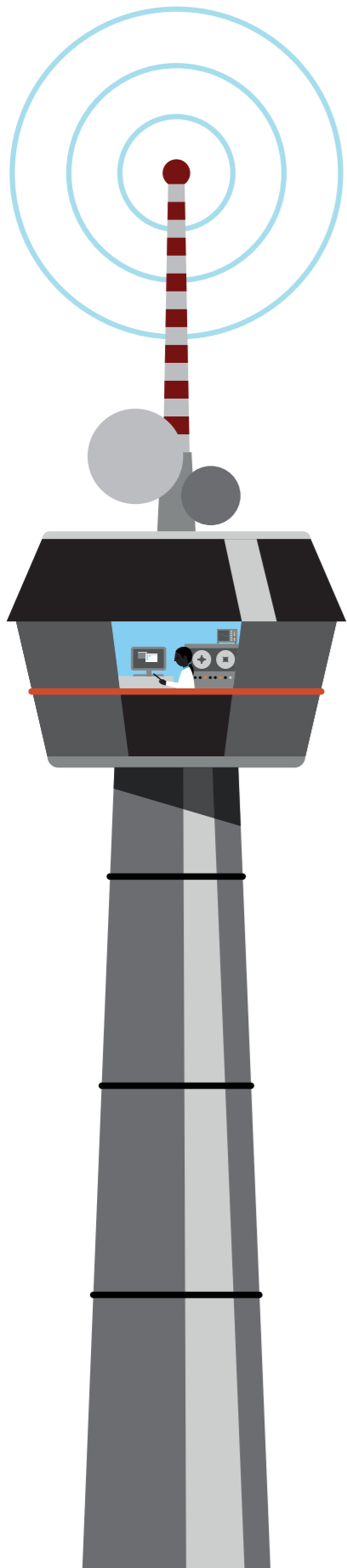
After a Critical Incidence:

Securing proof:

- If possible, document any damage to property or physical injury with photographs or video. Speak to potential witnesses and ask for their contact details.

Write a deposition:

- Write down a timeline of events as best as you can remember. Be specific when referring to place, time, the sequence of events, your thoughts, and what you observed. Make sure to date the deposition and to sign it.



CIVIC COURAGE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

We want to give specific tips on how to demonstrate what we call “civic courage”. By that, we mean standing up for others, getting involved, helping someone you don’t know, and speaking up when others are silent. You may be called on to demonstrate civic courage in a variety of different situations; how you respond to these situations can vary by the time of day, the location you are in, and who is involved. There are verbal arguments and there are physical attacks. There are different dynamics between women and men. The relationship between those involved plays a huge role in how you react - you react differently to strangers on the sidewalk than to family coming over for dinner. Sometimes you know the attacker, sometimes it’s your own uncle making the insulting statement that you don’t want to leave hanging in the air. All these situations have one thing in common – be it a physical attack, an insult in passing, or a comment at a family celebration - that you usually didn’t actively choose the situation yourself, but now suddenly you are in the middle of it. Now, you have to react, but how?

In the following we describe examples, stories and small circumstances that have happened or could happen. We then describe some options for action. There is no silver bullet. There isn’t one right comment or behavior to fix what has been broken. There are a number of different options for reacting that always depend on the specific case. In any case, remaining silent and looking away is the worst solution. Below are some situations that can occur in normal everyday life and have sometimes experienced it ourselves, with a little guide on how to respond to them:

1. “I’m sitting in a crowded subway in the evening, and I’m in the last row. There’s a drunk guy who has something to say to every person who comes near him. No one is sitting to his left or right, but there is a woman sitting on the bench in front of him. He starts teasing her. She doesn’t answer, but now he’s getting louder and no one in the subway car is saying anything.”

Here are a few ways to react: You can walk over and sit next to the woman, or you can sit beside the man and start talking to him. You don’t have to put yourself in danger, but by engaging him in conversation the woman now has an opportunity to escape from an unpleasant situation. Your presence gives her some level of comfort - she can see that she is not alone, that there are others who are witnessing this behavior too. Staying calm and not escalating the situation will help the woman in the subway get through an irritating, potentially scary situation.

2. “I’m in the car with my uncle at a red light. On the sidewalk, a woman with a headscarf walks towards the intersection while holding the hand of her small child. As she stares at the street sign in confusion, she turns around and walks in the opposite direction. My uncle says to me: “Hmmm, she’s probably never been let out of the house before.”

Maybe the uncle meant well, maybe he was just trying to be funny. At first, the statement comes off as relatively harmless. However, as you start to think about it, it starts rubbing you the wrong way. What is he implying about her? Would he say that about a woman who wasn’t wearing a headscarf? You want to express yourself and make sure to straighten it out with him - you don’t want to just let an awkward, potentially insulting statement just float out in the air like that. First you can ask, “What do you mean by that?” See how he responds. Maybe he’ll backtrack, maybe he’ll apologize, or maybe he’ll start explaining why he thinks women in headscarves aren’t allowed out of the house. After that, however, it is important to take a stand and speak your mind. You don’t have to be insulting, you don’t have to give him a 40 minute lecture about Islam, you just have to let him know that you don’t like that statement, you don’t agree, and it’s not appreciated in your company. Without fighting or getting hostile, you can still let him know how his actions are impacting you and how you see him.



RED FLAGS FOR EXTREMIST THINKING

1. “MOST OF THE UNEMPLOYED ARE LAZY, IF YOU REALLY WANT TO YOU CAN FIND WORK.”

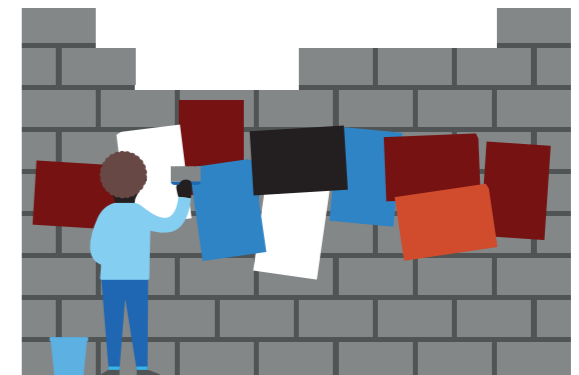
2. “WE’RE TOO SOFT ON CRIME.”

3. “MOST IMMIGRANTS HERE ONLY WANT TO COLLECT WELFARE.”

4. “THINGS USED TO BE BETTER WHEN WOMEN KNEW THEIR PLACE.”

5. “THE FOREIGNERS ARE TAKING OUR JOBS AWAY FROM US.”

6. “GAYS ARE NOT NORMAL.”



- Find allies.** Pay attention to the environment, look at the people around you and make eye contact. Figure out if there is someone else who heard the statement who also seems to disagree - together it is easier to isolate the speaker.
 - Ask questions.** Distill the offensive statement down to one idea, and then pick out individual aspects of the idea and ask for details:
 - “How do you know that?”
 - “Have you ever experienced that?”
 - “Do you know a specific case?”

By questioning their sources of information and how they came to their conclusion, you can underscore how flimsy their reasoning is, and how much of it is actually based on hateful ideologies and not strong reasoning.
 - Using humor.** If engaging with them or asking questions isn't going to work (and often it won't because they are not looking to have their mind changed), you can also try humor. Mocking these backwards, racist, and ignorant ideas with humor will give others permission to also laugh at and dismiss these provocateurs.
 - Stay calm.** Calmly asking questions signals that the person you are talking to is serious. Do not allow yourself to be provoked or become loud. It's important to show that you can not be intimidated.
 - Body language.** Don't lean too far over the table, don't talk down, don't roll your eyes. Stay calm internally, signal calm externally, and stay even-keeled. Only those who are convincing themselves can also convince others.
 - Note the undecideds.** Get support from the crowd, from those on the fence, and/or those who are witnessing the interaction, and make them allies. Extremist arguments count on alienating most people in our society, so find the women, the people of color, the religious and LGBTQ minorities that are witness to the interaction.
 - Make yourself available as a witness.** If police are called, make yourself available to the police as a witness. Remember the perpetrator - what are they wearing? What is striking about them? Write down license plate numbers, or take a picture if you have a camera with you or your mobile phone can take pictures. But be careful: don't put yourself in danger! It is helpful to prepare a memory log as soon as possible. Notes help to reflect the situation as accurately as possible.
- Here are possible questions for jogging your memory:**

When, where, who, and how many?	Perpetrators: Who were they? What did they look like?	Violence? Property damage?
How did the attack come about?	Victim: What happened to the victim? Insults? How did they react?	Witnesses: Were there any? How did they behave?
What exactly happened? Start from the beginning	Start from the beginning: Special characteristics, e.g. clothing, language, tattoos?	Contact details, statements from other witnesses that you heard while waiting for the police to arrive.

Conclusion:

This resource is for anyone who has ever kept their mouths shut and didn't feel good about it. For those who think they have no arguments against hate speech, and maybe for those who lack the courage to get involved. We want to make it clear that it's always worth being brave, if not for yourself then for the people around you.

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