

This zine represents a lot of experience and it's the best advice we know how to give. Still, this isn't legal advice, and it's your life – trust yourself first.

If you are new, you should know that this information is just a start and everyone is always learning and challenging the biases they've been taught. We can be learn and be imperfect together. So, welcome, and don't stop here!

**Other good zines:**

*What Is Security Culture? a Guide to Staying Safe*  
or the crimethinc article *What Is Security Culture?*  
*Affinity Groups: Building Blocks of Anarchist Organizing*

Popular sources of zines include [sproutdistro.com](http://sproutdistro.com),  
[theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org), and [crimethinc.com](http://crimethinc.com), to name a few -  
More of *our* zines are available at [foothillfire.noblogs.org](http://foothillfire.noblogs.org)

**Books:**

*How Nonviolence Protects the State*, Peter Gelderloos  
Audio version free on YouTube



a Foothill Fire zine  
[foothillfire.noblogs.org](http://foothillfire.noblogs.org)

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Foothill Fire is an organization of anarchists and  
communists fighting for a stateless, classless society.



## EXPERIENCE BASED ADVICE FOR JOINING MASS MOVEMENTS

Welcome · Headed to a protest? · “Wear black”? · Your phone is a snitch · Risking arrest? Prepare to be supported · There is a place for you · Protect your identity · Pepper spray and tear gas · How to signal for a medic · Mental health first aid: Aftercare · Diversity of Tactics · Peace policing · Outside agitators · Mantra for a Witness · Security Culture · Do Not Talk to Cops · Know Your Rights with Law Enforcement · Direct Action · Is your energy going towards your goals? · “Join the [three-letter-acronym-name]!” · Criticism & Conflict · Stay a While

## Welcome!

This zine is full of things we wish we had known when we were getting started. Whether this is your first time or you're coming back from a break, we welcome you to the fight!

## Headed to a protest?

**Come prepared:** Wear clothes you feel comfortable moving in and that are appropriate for the weather, and wear athletic shoes. Bring water and a snack. Protect your identity (see "protect your identity", page 2).

If you get in trouble with the cops they'll go through anything you have on your person, so don't give them anything useful – like instead of a whole wallet, consider just bringing your ID and some cash in case you have to buy something.

If you must bring your phone, make sure it can only be unlocked with a pass code. Codes are safer because the cops can just physically force you to use Face ID or fingerprint unlock. Not using a strong password is just making the cops jobs easier for them – we try not to do that around here.

Speaking of not making the cops jobs easier, don't take or post pictures or videos of events (especially people's faces), even if nobody in the picture is "doing anything". Anything can be useful to the cops. That being said, sometimes the thing everyone needs to see is a burning cop car, and a photo can inspire thousands – if you must take a picture of the car, make sure you do not record the people.

## "Wear black"?

If a flier says to "wear black" then the event is probably using the tactic of a **"black bloc,"** where everyone wears black clothing head to toe and protects their identity, that way if things start happening, it gets really hard for cops to tell who did it. Now, this tactic is great in a crowd, but if only ten people in a big march are in black bloc, then you have to be really careful, because the cops see that and pick them out as targets for arrest. This is just one of the reasons you should consider changing into and out of black bloc as you go to and from an action. It is always a good idea to protect your identity but it is not always a good idea to wear black bloc.

**Your phone is a snitch.** Keep your phone locked with a pass code. Leave it at home if you can and at minimum leave it out of the room when you're talking. It is always tracking location, and all the cops have to do is check the history to know where your phone has been.



## Stay a while!

*"If the company holds out twenty years we'll hold out one day more."*  
- Elaine Purkey, *One Day More*

This is being written during a new wave of action. These things often come in waves, with big marches and stunning new actions that fade out until the next round, with nothing material really changing for the better. Our enemies know this, so they just wait us out. We know it too, so we'd like to invite you to stay a while longer.

Our enemies have a lot of tools for waiting us out and giving fake concessions until we leave. They'll rename streets and build statues to try to get you to forget your *real* demands. They'll promise that if you just surrender, they won't hurt you any more.

We can't take these fake victories and we can't surrender. We have to dream of something real so we never fall for something fake. We have to commit to real goals, escalate, and keep the pressure on. Together we can stay and fight for something real.

Those who make half a revolution only dig their own graves. *Commit!*

Find each other. Be cunning and full of tricks.  
We wouldn't be writing this if we didn't think we have a chance.

"Those who make half a revolution only dig their own graves" is a rephrasing of a Louis Antoine de Saint-Just quote. "Be cunning and full of tricks" is a quote from Richard Adam's *Watership Down*.

**Direct action** is the practice of using immediately effective tactics (strikes, shutdowns, sabotage...) for a social or political goal. A peaceful march might try to convince oppressors to do something for us, with direct action we get it for ourselves.

is your energy going towards a tactic that will get you closer to your goals?

### Join the [three-letter acronym name]!

There are lots of organizations that want your energy (and money). Our advice is to be careful what you join. Some of these orgs will burn you out, put you in dangerous situations you didn't ask to be in, or they're straight-up cults. What are these organizations' goals? What is it actually *doing*? Can you trust these people with your information? If someone is asking you to join their club without even getting to know you first... why?

### Criticism & Conflict

Criticism and interpersonal conflict are inevitable. Knowing this, and knowing that **criticism is an incredibly valuable tool**, will help your work improve and continue. We have a zine called *Conflict War Games: How Groups Who Organize Together can Practice Conflict*, which of course we recommend, and we'll put some advice here too.

- We live in a conflict avoidant society. Setting aside time specifically for criticism can be a way to break through this, like having a "what went wrong, what went right" conversation after an action.
- We criticize to improve, and it requires being humble, open and most importantly, (and this is a hard one) not taking criticism as a personal attack. Don't be afraid to take things slow, rephrase and repeat things back to make sure you know what it is that someone is trying to say.
- If you've been criticized and you want time to process it and consider it before responding, then take that time.
- If you're going to bring some criticism to someone, consider starting with a one-on-one conversation instead of in a group setting where they might feel a greater need to defend themselves.
- One of our Foothill Fire "rules" is that if you've talked to two people about a person's behavior, it's time to go to that person directly.
- It is generally a good idea to keep conflict "in the movement". That means instead of posting a tell-all on social media or letting inter-group conflict become a news story, you deal with it in private and within movement spaces, talking to the people who are relevant to the issue instead of giving our enemies something to pick at.

### Risking Arrest? Prepare to Be Supported

If you are arrested, you're going to want to have a phone number to call so that someone can bail you out. This could be the number of a jail support or bail fund organization. You can write it on your skin in marker so that if you're in custody and you don't have any of your clothes or belongings, you still have the phone number. Never say something on a jail phone that you wouldn't want a guard or cop to hear, because they're probably listening.

For someone on the outside to look you up in the system, they'll need your full legal name and your birth date, so consider leaving this information with someone you trust before attending a protest.

Also, if you drove together with someone, share a spare key to the car so if one of you gets arrested the other one can still get home.

### There is a place for you.

For one reason or another, not everyone has the ability to be a front line militant. But there is a role for every one of every ability and every interest.

fighting, providing food, jail support, emotional support, driving, childcare – there is a place for you here, and we will find it together.

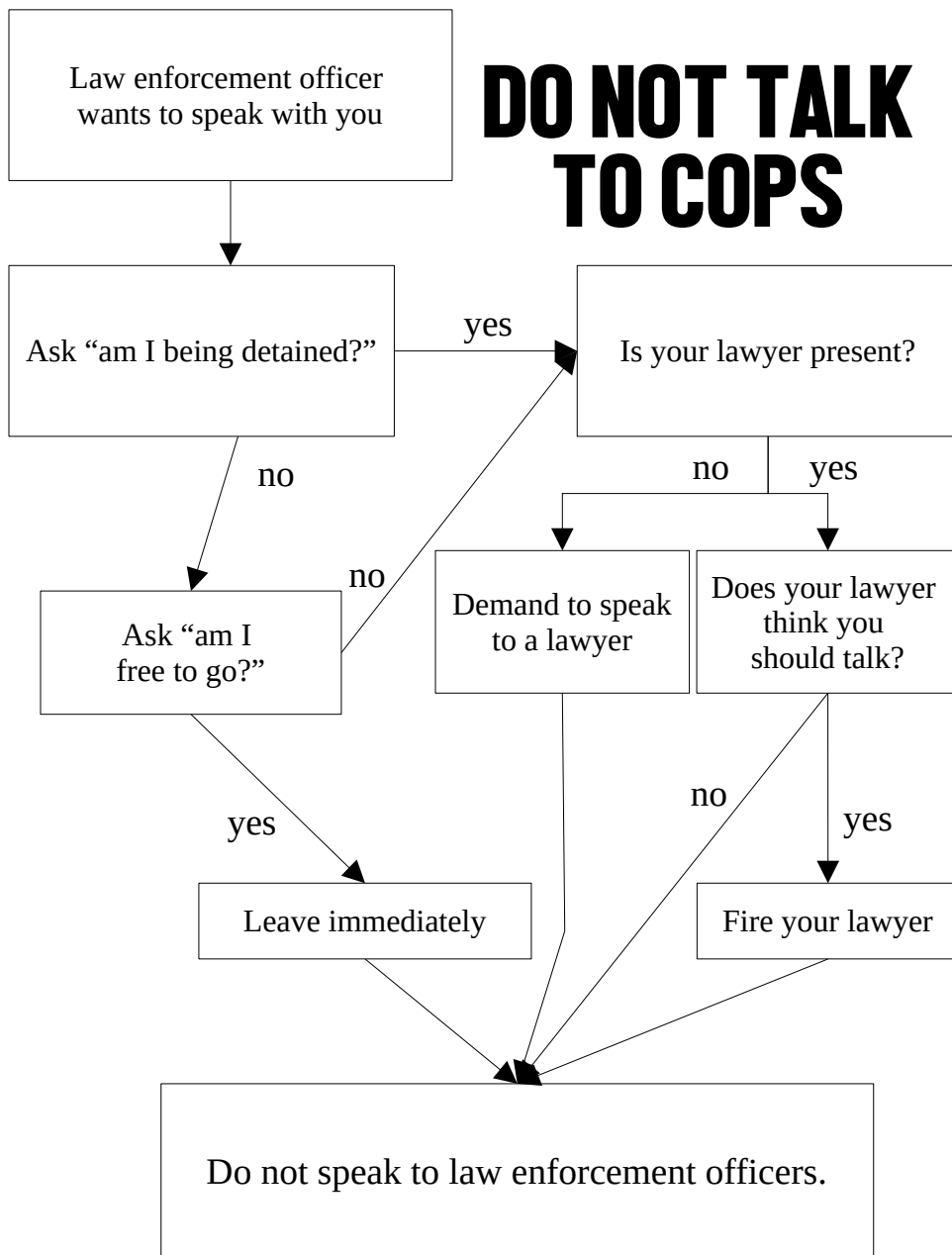


### PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY

If the cops or fascists find out who you are, you could find yourself in a lot of trouble, even if you aren't doing anything sketchy. Protecting your identity is *essential*.

The old saying "no face, no case" is a great start. Cover your face (including your eyebrows!). Cover anything that could identify you, like tattoos or scars (coban medical wrap is good for this). Come up with a nickname so people can refer to you without using your legal name. Be very careful what you post online.

# DO NOT TALK TO COPS



*Cops lie all the time. The only time you should believe a cop is when they say that "anything you say can and will be used against you." Don't give them anything to use against you or against your friends. They have a lot of tricks to get you to say things you didn't want to.*

*So seriously, we say this with love: shut the fuck up!*



Holding up crossed arms is a signal meaning you or someone near you needs medical attention.

You might see other people holding this up and join them, but if you hold up the signal, make sure that you know where the medics need to go - they might ask you!

## Mental Health First Aid: AFTERCARE

People who have just done something stressful should get together afterward and talk about it. Eat, talk about what went well or didn't, massage the tension out of shoulders... this kind of after-action care won't just make you better fighters, it will keep you alive.

Still, when talking, remember not to snitch on yourself. Keep phones out of the room and don't tell anyone things that they shouldn't know.

## Diversity of Tactics

Different tactics being used together can work, and work well, even if the tactics are very different. A diversity of tactics shouldn't just be allowed, it should be *encouraged*. Each person will be moved to act differently, and diversity is our *strength*. Maybe you're trying to shut down a fascist speaker on campus – some people might do a call-in or letter writing campaign to pressure the university into dropping the event, some put up posters and graffiti against the event or its ideas, and others might try to physically stop the event from being set up day-of.

Accepting many tactics keeps a movement alive, energized, and always ready with a new option to play. When the people throwing rocks are supported by the people *not* throwing rocks, the state will have a real problem on their hands.

"No one way works,  
it will take all of us  
shoving at the thing from all sides  
to bring it down."

- Diane di Prima, Revolutionary Letter #8



### Chemical Irritants

**Pepper spray and tear gas** irritate your *mucus membranes* – that's your eyes, nose, mouth, and lungs. Pepper spray is capsaicin in an emulsifier and tear gas is a irritant powder dispersed by being burned (which makes the canisters really hot). For as long as these irritants affect you (usually less than 15 minutes), they make it hard to see or breathe.

You need to protect yourself, and **prevention** is the most important step. Protect your eyes with goggles, and if not goggles, any glasses covering your eyes will help keep some pepper spray out. A half-face respirator does great, an N95 mask does good, and things like bandannas can help a little in a pinch. Protect your hair and skin with a hat, raincoat, long sleeves, and long pants. Prepare a baggie of baby wipes in water with a little baby shampoo to break up oils.

Got sprayed? First, **leave the area** to stop being exposed. Then:

1. Your body has ways of expelling contaminants. Use them: spit, cry, blow your nose, BLINK!
2. Use a baby wipe to wipe from the tear duct (the side of the eye closest to the nose) out, and then that wipe is garbage, get a new one.
3. Irrigate by pouring clean water or saline over the area.

Water or saline are your two options. Don't follow rumors about using milk, antacid, or anything else that will irritate your eyes and won't help. Repeat 1, 2, 3 until you're okay again. It gets easier every time.

*Make sure you use water-based wipes only! Do not use wipes that have cleaning chemicals. If you have asthma or breathing problems, let the medics know before something happens, carry your inhaler if you have one, and tell someone else where you have it stored. Do not wear contacts – the irritant will get trapped between your contact and your eye. If this happens, remove the contacts and flush your eyes. Bring spare N95 masks so that when you fill one with snot and spit you can put on a new one.*

### **Know your rights** with law enforcement

3 Key Phrases:

- Am I being detained or am I free to go?
- I do not consent to a search.
- I'm going to remain silent and I want a lawyer.

### **Cops lie and break laws.**

#### **The law is not built to help or protect you.**

It's good to know the rights that you legally have, but cops are almost never punished for violating them.

**On the street...** Cops can stop anyone for a conversation, but you can walk away whenever – unless you're being detained. Detention: You are not free to go. They suspect (or claim to suspect) criminal activity. They can't detain you indefinitely. Arrest: They have probable cause to believe you were involved in something illegal.

**Outside your vehicle...** Only the driver should talk to the cop. You do have to show your license, proof of insurance, and registration. They may ask for consent to search the vehicle – do not consent to a search. If there is something in *plain view*, the cop can use that as justification for searching the vehicle whether you consented to search or not, so keep things stowed away.

**At your door...** If they have a warrant, they're not going to knock, they're going to break in. Legally, only a signed judicial warrant can overcome your right to refuse a search. You don't have to answer the door for the cops or talk to them. If for some reason you *want* to talk, step outside and shut the door behind you. Make sure everyone knows the rule: don't let the cats out or the cops in!

**Nothing to hide?** You still shouldn't consent to a search or let cops in. Even if they don't find or plant something, it's a bad practice, and if only one person denies a search it puts a target on their back. Cops are collecting all kinds of information from all kinds of sources, including things you wouldn't think of as helpful or relevant.

**You're In Jail:** Don't panic. Make sure a trusted comrade has your info so we can locate you and post bail. Continue to remain silent. Cops lie! They may lie and tell you that someone else signed a confession, someone identified you, anything. *Stay silent.* Remember, anyone could be listening, even your cellmate.

**You've been arrested (avoid this). What's next?** You have a right to a public defender, and that's usually the best way to go, but if that's not a good fit check with local legal/bail folks for pro bono or low cost private legal defense. Your arraignment will be the first court appointment. Most charges settle out of court or are dropped, but some people go to trial. Working closely with your attorney is important.

*These rights apply to citizens and noncitizens alike.*

*All cops are bastards. Don't make their jobs easier!*

**Peace policing** happens when a protester decides to take the state's role, criticizing other protesters for militant actions, attempting to stop them, ostracize them, record them, or even report them to the cops. Please do not do this - either help them or do your own thing.

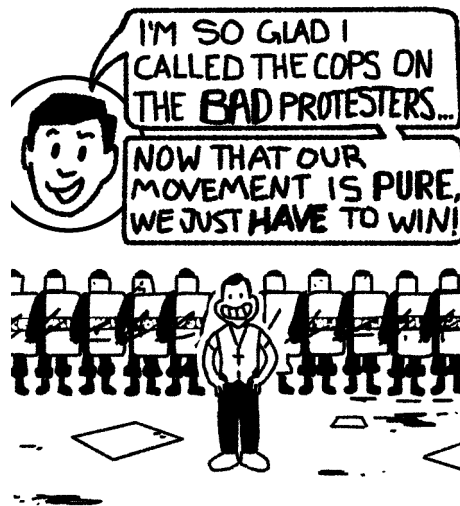
"The peace policing protester is a two-in-one deal; you get a protester *and* a cop!"

If you're thinking of calling the cops remember that police violence is still violence: If you want to "stop violence" then why would you call people with guns to come out and kidnap someone?

When a member of the peace police sees militant action, they almost always say the same thing: "*They're making us look bad!*"

Your oppressor will not give up and set you free because your movement became "pure" enough to deserve it and attempting to achieve this myth of purity will destroy you.

History is not shaped by great men and their great ideas that were so great they just had to win. History is shaped by material realities and the people who change them.



**No good cops, no bad protesters.**

#### Outside Agitators

You might hear the term "**outside agitators**" used to discredit militant action as coming from "outside". The truth is we are all "outside" their system – and we better start agitating.

#### Mantra for a Witness

Did you see some righteous crime? Thinking about reporting it?

Repeat this calming mantra: "*I ain't see shit.*"

## Security Culture

**Security culture** is a set of habits we can all practice that help protect ourselves. Information is powerful, and making sure we know where it's going is important. There are some great zines about it that you should check out, but for now here are some of the most essential bits:

- If you don't need to know about something then you shouldn't know about it.
- Be careful with your information – it really doesn't matter who you're talking to, loose talk gets people arrested or worse.
- Don't be a snitch (that includes not snitching on yourself!).
- Don't talk to cops.
- You can say no to anyone and about anything. Mainly meaning that if somebody wants to know about something, you have every right to tell them no.
- Be really careful with electronics and avoid using phones for this work. Apps, phones, computers, the internet – it's all taking down your information and even careful people end up leaving trails of evidence. Lots of people use the messaging app Signal, which is much safer than normal texting, but you should still never send a message that you wouldn't want read out in court. Every picture taken at a protest has risks (and some rewards), but you should *never* take pictures or videos of someone doing something criminal or that could come up later in court.
- Security culture is great for building trust and easing anxiety. You can trust that your friend isn't going to get you arrested because you didn't tell them anything the cops would want to know. You don't have to be anxious that people know your secrets if nobody is telling secrets. Strong security practices will make infiltrators jobs much harder.
- An important part of security culture is not taking it personally. Sometimes for everyone's safety, you just don't get to know something.
- When someone breaks security culture, even in the form of a sketchy joke or passing comment, you should talk to them about it, and you have to be willing to hear the same criticism if it comes your way.
- Talk to people about their security needs and tell them about yours. This will inform how you work together and prevent conflict around the issue.