



A Troublemakers' Guide: **Principles for Racial Justice Activists** **In the Face of State Repression**

**CATALYST
PROJECT**

Catalyst Project helps to build powerful multiracial movements that can win collective liberation. In the service of this vision, we organize, train and mentor white activists and majority-white organizations to take action to end racism, war and empire, and to support efforts to build power in working-class communities of color. To learn more and to download this pamphlet, go to www.collectiveliberation.org

Catalyst Project would like to thank Rachel Herzing, Isaac Ontiveros, Lara Kiswani, Rob McBride, and Linda Evans for their many years of organizing against state repression, and for giving feedback on this document. Thank you to Scott Braley for photos, to Justseeds Artist Cooperative for making their graphics available, to Bay Area Committee to Stop Political Repression for providing their assessment tool, and to Terry Bisson for letting us use his poem.

Design by Design Action Collective.

Cover photo: People around the country demonstrate support for the Midwest 23 grand jury resisters, 2010. Photo by Scott Braley. www.scottbraley.com

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

II. Why do the police respond with force to social movements, especially those led by people of color? What does it look like?

III. Principles of Anti-Racist Movement Security

1. Get into an Organization, Organizations are our Best Defense
2. Build Political Unity and Make a Plan in Case You're Targeted
3. Know your Rights & Don't Talk to Any Cops
4. Resist Grand Juries
5. If You or Your Organization Are Targeted, Go Public.
6. Prioritize Support to People and Organizations That Are Targeted
7. Don't Spread Rumors or Amplify Conflict Between Individuals or Organizations
 - Best Practices with Rumors
 - Best Practices with Conflict
8. Follow the Security Protocols That are Being Asked of You by Leaders
9. Respond to People's Actions, Not Your Paranoia
10. Build Authentic Relationships and Be Accountable

IV. Resources

1. Assessment tool to prepare for political repression by the state from Bay Area Committee to Stop Political Repression
2. Resource list

V. RSVP, a poem by Terry Bisson

Introduction

This document offers suggested principles for building stronger movements in the face of repression from our own government.

In the last decade, social movements and the election of Trump have created millions of new activists, most of whom were not alive or politically involved during the violent and widespread state repression of social movements in the 60s and 70s. They are generally unfamiliar with the tactics used by the state to disrupt and undermine grassroots organizing, and how to resist them in ways that strengthen our movements. They may believe that the purpose of the police and military is to protect them, and that any police brutality and murders are caused by a few “bad apples.” In particular, many white people believe that law enforcement officers are positive and necessary forces for our society.

Rising resistance to state violence in communities of color has called these beliefs into question for many people. The Movement for Black Lives,¹ the Palestinian liberation movement, the migrant justice movement, and other longstanding work against policing and imprisonment have clearly exposed how state violence systematically harms indigenous communities and communities of color. Simultaneously, various whistleblowers have revealed widespread government surveillance and have shown that the National Security Agency and others have ongoing, easily searchable access to our email, text, phone, and internet traffic worldwide.

1. Read the Movement for Black Lives Policy Platform at <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>

Yet, many of us and our organizations still lack a coherent analysis of how state repression of social movements and working class communities of color maintains and enforces capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy. **We also lack specific, agreed-upon principles of how to keep our movements as safe as possible from these ongoing attacks while we continue to be big and bold in challenging the current racial, economic, and social order.** If we want our movements to succeed, we must change this. There are many models from around the world of how social movements have survived intense state repression, from Argentina to Palestine, as well as here at home.

We created this document to start important conversations about how and why the state uses violence and coercion to enforce social control. We hope it will contribute to building unity about the need to resist state repression by every means possible—from campaign work to the culture and practices of our organizations.

This document focuses on state repression, though repression from non-state actors such as white supremacists and other far-right forces is also on the rise. These forces often collaborate, and some of the information here will be useful for both. We recommend some more resources on resisting targeting from the far-right in the resource section.

This is a living document that is written primarily for white activists and majority-white organizations in order to speak to the specific ways white supremacy in movements interacts with the white supremacy of the state. We welcome feedback. We also welcome organizers in communities of color to take this document and adjust it for your audience. We hope that if you use it, you'll use it collectively — read it with your crew or organization and talk about it, adjust it,

make agreements, make plans, and make change. All the analysis and principles in this document are drawn from generations of on-the-ground lessons and experiences, and credit is due especially to the hard-won wisdom from the people most targeted by state repression.

While we offer this document to defend social movements, our battle against state repression has to be proactive and not just defensive. We've got to support campaigns led by people of color that defund, dismantle, and shift power away from the repressive arms of the state – away from prisons, cops, ICE, surveillance, and the military.

Fear is one of the state's strongest weapons; if fear prevents us from doing our work, it becomes a victory for the state.

Mass movement support, through strong principles, politics, relationships, and alliances are our best defense against repression.

We need to achieve a balance between being well-informed about potential repression, while not being paranoid or intentionally keeping our movements small. Mass movement support, through strong principles, politics, relationships, and alliances are our best defense against repression. Any movement seeking fundamental transformative change will have to contend with threats from the state, and we have many examples of people finding the courage to resist that we can learn from. More than that, organizing against repression can **build** our movements.

Why do the police respond with force to social movements, especially those led by people of color? What does it look like?

In the U.S., most people are raised to believe that we live in a democracy that runs on “the consent of the governed.” In fact, the constant threat and reality of state violence is used to maintain a vast system of racial and economic oppression. Indeed, we understand that the **purpose of policing is to use force to protect the interests of the state, corporations and rich people from communities who want to redistribute power and resources:** people of color, indigenous people, working class people, immigrants, disabled people, women, queer and trans people, and other social movement activists.

Today as in past generations, FBI, police, and secret grand juries are being used to attack these communities and movements. These incidents are not isolated, and they are not happening because the government wants to “solve crimes.” They are an attempt to divide us, isolate outspoken individuals, create fear and distrust among us, and rewrite our history of resistance, labeling our actions as “criminal” or “terrorist.”

Trump’s administration is already making moves to increase imprisonment, policing, deportation, and political repression. But Trump is building on the massive infrastructure/expansion of state capacity for repression that Obama (and many before him) built for this purpose. This isn’t about a single president, this is about the role of the U.S. government.

From the Occupy Movement to the Movement for Black Lives, one doesn't have to think hard to imagine how the state responds to social movements that challenge the racial and economic status quo. We have seen tear gas, batons, sound cannons, rubber bullets, and water hoses in below-freezing temperature used from Ferguson to Standing Rock. Yet, some of the state's methods are more insidious: spreading false information; creating or intentionally widening divisions and conflict within movements; and using violence and the criminal legal system to harass, harm and intimidate activists and to scare off supporters.

We have seen tear gas, batons, sound cannons, rubber bullets, and water hoses in below-freezing temperature used from Ferguson to Standing Rock. Yet, some of the state's methods are more insidious: spreading false information; creating or intentionally widening divisions and conflict within movements; and using violence and the criminal legal system to harass, harm and intimidate activists and to scare off supporters.

To understand what the state is doing today, it's helpful to remember what it has done in the past. From 1956-1971, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) collaborated with local law enforcement agencies around the country on **COINTELPRO**² to covertly suppress, disrupt, discredit, and destroy political organizations.

2. Acronym for Counter-Intelligence Program. To learn more about COINTELPRO, see our resources section.

COINTELPRO represents the state's strategy to prevent movements and communities from overturning white supremacy and capitalism. COINTELPRO is both a formal program of the FBI and a term frequently used to describe a conspiracy among government agencies—local, state, and federal—to destroy movements for self-determination and liberation for Black, Brown, Asian, and Indigenous struggles, as well as mount an institutionalized attack against allies of these movements and other progressive organizations.

The official program ended in 1971, but its tactics are still used today:

- ★ breaking into or raiding homes and offices to intimidate people, gather information, and build legal cases
- ★ imprisoning people on false charges for political or non-political activity, through faking evidence & testimony (even when people didn't go to prison, large amounts of time and resources were spent in defense)
- ★ arresting people for political activity
- ★ planting false information in the press; spreading misinformation about meetings and events; publishing false documents in the name of organizations
- ★ contacting employers to try to get activists fired or landlords to get people evicted
- ★ “snitch jacketing”, or making people look like police informants, to increase fear and distrust in organizations and isolate individuals
- ★ issuing grand jury subpoenas to intimidate activists, drain resources and scare off support
- ★ sending anonymous letters with death threats, accusing

targeted activists of cheating on their partners, or spreading false information to amplify or create conflict

- ★ Using informants or infiltrators to “raise controversial issues at meetings to take advantage of ideological divisions; promote conflict with other groups; or incite the group to violent acts, even to the point of providing them with weapons.”³

The U.S. government also uses counterinsurgency tactics against Third World nations: funding and training repressive regimes that reign terror on their people; overt and covert war-making, from ground invasions to drone strikes; overthrowing democratically elected progressive and Left governments and installing puppets; disrupting people’s movements, and more. All of these actions take place in the name of protecting our freedom and safety. In reality, all of them protect the current racial, economic, and global regimes of power and violence.

While learning about the tactics the state uses to disrupt our movements can be scary, it’s important to remember that wherever people are working for a liberated future, we gather strength from each other and find ways to resist. Knowing this information empowers us and gives us tools to build strong, creative resistance movements. Most tactics of disruption rely on exploiting our movement’s weaknesses, but we can change those weaknesses. In this spirit, we offer the following “Principles for Racial Justice Activists In the Face of State Repression.”

3. <http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/home/background/cointelpro/>

Principles for Racial Justice Activists In the Face of State Repression

1. Get into an Organization, Organizations are our Best Defense

Organizations are our most effective and powerful way to build the collective power that can make change. They also keep us stronger. Many state repression tactics rely on people being isolated and individualistic. Defense against state repression requires strong relationships and collective thinking.

Collective leadership also makes us stronger. Organizations that prioritize leadership development and building lots of people's skills and leadership are harder to take down than projects that can be undermined by picking off a single leader.

For example, a person who isn't practiced at thinking collectively will have less understanding of how talking to the police can put other people at risk. A "solo flyer" who is targeted by a grand jury subpoena won't have the community resources necessary to resist. **People in an organization are more likely to share a political analysis and a commitment to each other that will protect the movement, rather than just protect themselves.** People in organizations can also be held accountable or better supported to change if their behavior is problematic. Collective leadership

also makes us stronger. Organizations that prioritize leadership development and building lots of people’s skills and leadership are harder to take down than projects that can be undermined by picking off a single leader who holds most of the skills, experiences, networks and clout.

2. Build Political Unity and Make a Plan in Case You’re Targeted



CULTIVATE RESISTANCE

Courtesy of Luke Thomas: www.lukethomasart.com

Notably, during COINTELPRO the police and FBI relied on targeting people who were isolated or peripheral to become informants or comply with their legal inquiries. People who don’t understand the role of the state are more vulnerable to its manipulation, and can make our movements more vulnerable to its violence. For white activists and organizations who are supporting organizing in communities of color, the FBI might say something like, “we know you’re not a threat,

we're concerned about the people you're supporting.” Defense against this kind of manipulation is one of the many reasons political education is important.

Without political unity and a plan, members of a targeted organization may keep law enforcement contact to themselves or comply with the police, putting organizations and movements at risk. Intimidation is a core policing tactic, and many people crack under the pressure if they don't have strong political foundations and support. **It's crucial that we understand that attacks on individuals are attacks on our organizations and movements, and act accordingly.**

Even when targeting activists, the state often treats white people differently than people of color. As anti-imperialist political prisoner Marilyn Buck put it “in terms of dealing with white people, the state thinks we can always come home to them again.”

It's crucial that we understand that attacks on individuals are attacks on our organizations and movements, and act accordingly.

In situations of groups rather than individuals being prosecuted, people can choose to make collective decisions to protect the entire group, which helps protect its most vulnerable members and can also expose the political motivations of such attacks. The January 20th Washington D.C. Inauguration Day protestors are going to trial as we write this, and 135 of 200 defendants facing unprecedented charges have released a unity statement.⁴ They pledged:

4. The full unity statement can be found at <http://defendj20resistance.org/defendants>

“We will not cooperate against any of our co-defendants, nor accept any plea deals that cooperate with prosecutors at the expense of other co-defendants...[and] will refuse to accept that any of the charges or actions of law enforcement were necessary or justified. ... We will not say anything publicly or privately that has the possibility of harming individual defendants or defendants as a group.”

Does your organization or group have agreements about how you deal with the police, ICE, grand juries or the FBI that all of your members would follow? About digital security? Do you have a commitment to financially, emotionally and legally support anyone who is targeted? Do you have a plan for those resources, such as a defense fund and a lawyer? Do you have agreements on who has access to non-public organizational info? For more information about what you could prepare for, check out Bay Area Committee to Stop Police Repression’s “How prepared are you?” checklist at the end of this pamphlet.

3. Know your Rights & Don’t Talk to Any Cops

Most people do not know their rights with a beat cop, let alone with ICE, the FBI, the NSA, or with a grand jury summons. The state relies on this lack of knowledge to harass, coerce, arrest, and imprison people. For those of us who are white and/or class privileged, we were likely taught to believe “if we aren’t doing anything illegal, we don’t have anything to hide or fear.” We never know how the police will use information they get from us, but we can be sure it will be used to harm our movement or other people.

While there are some differences between agencies and state-by-state, this always applies: if an officer approaches you, ask “Am I free to go?” If the answer

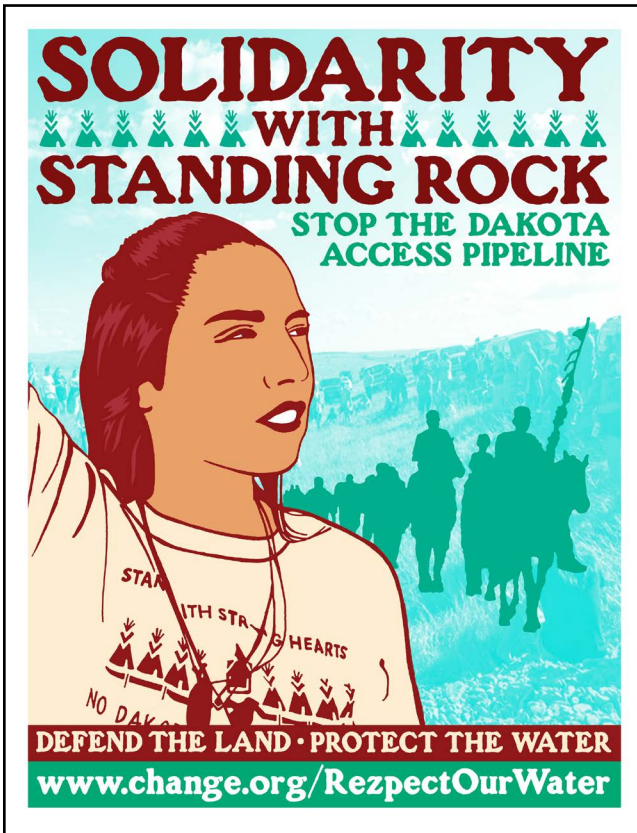
is yes, walk away. If it's no, you should not answer any questions other than "What is your name?" You should say "I am going to remain silent." If you are searched, say "I do not consent to this search."

From the Center for Constitutional Rights' "If An Agent Knocks"⁵:

The Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution protects you from being forced to reveal self-incriminating information to law enforcement. This is easier to say than to do. Agents are trained investigators: they have learned the power of persuasion and the ability to make a person feel scared, guilty or impolite for refusing their requests for information. An agent may suggest that any unwillingness to speak with her/him means you must have something to hide. S/he may suggest s/he only wants you to answer a few questions and then s/he will leave you alone. The agent may threaten to get a warrant. Don't be intimidated or manipulated by an agent's threats or assurances. It is always best to not talk without an attorney present...Clearly convey your intention to remain silent. Say "I'm not talking to you," or "I'd like to talk to my lawyer before I say anything to you."

In addition to not talking to cops, don't let cops in your home or office, no matter what they say, unless they have a valid warrant. A valid warrant must have the correct address, describe the area to be searched and what they're looking for or the name and description of the person to be arrested, be signed by a judge, and not be out-of-date. You can ask police to slip the warrant under the door, and if any of these things are incorrect, tell them it's invalid. Talk to anyone you live with about this, as they may try to come when you're not home.

5. <https://ccrjustice.org/if-agent-knocks-booklet>



Nearly 800 people were arrested at Standing Rock for supporting indigenous sovereignty and resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline. Many water protectors also resisted participation in a federal grand jury that targeted the movement. Courtesy of Jesus Barraza & Melanie Cervantes: www.dignidadrebelde.com

4. Resist Grand Juries

Grand juries have historically been used to harass, intimidate and destabilize resistant movements, most often Black, Indigenous, Arab, Muslim, Latinx, and other anti-imperialist movements.

Grand juries are secret panels of U.S. citizens called together by a prosecutor to investigate crimes and issue indictments. They issue subpoenas – documents that require the person targeted to testify and/or present

documents to the grand jury. The usual rules of evidence do not apply in grand jury proceedings: there is no judge; no defense attorneys are allowed; and anything a witness says may be used against them and their movement. **Grand juries are witch hunts or “fishing expeditions” to learn about movement connections and alliances, build criminal cases or bring false charges, understand political positions, and to make use of political differences. The goal is to sow dissension and distrust.** Even information that seems innocent can be harmful when combined with other information gathered by the grand jury investigation.

We believe it is important for people to refuse to co-operate, in a long tradition of grand jury resisters. Just as with FBI visits, being public and transparent about grand jury subpoenas will help build a public wall of resistance and minimize distrust and fear in our communities.

Refusal to co-operate with a grand jury can result in being jailed for contempt for the life of the grand jury, up to 18 months. Not everyone who takes a non-collaboration stands goes to jail, but this is a real risk. In the case of grand juries, the jail time is meant to coerce you into testifying. If you make it very clear that you will never testify at a grand jury, this could help you avoid or reduce jail time. It is precisely because of the secrecy and potentially dangerous nature of the grand jury that we believe it is important for people to refuse to co-operate, in a long tradition of grand jury resisters. Just as with FBI visits, being public and transparent about grand jury subpoenas will help build a public wall of resistance and minimize distrust and fear in our communities.

If you are targeted by a grand jury, seek out a movement lawyer immediately to make a plan. It's important to have representation that understands grand juries as political, and that you have movement interests, and not just personal ones. If you don't already have a lawyer in mind, try contacting the National Lawyers Guild.⁶ Once you understand your legal situation, make a plan to inform organizations in your network, and consider going completely public.

5. If You or Your Organization Are Targeted, Go Public

If you are approached or targeted by law enforcement about the political activity of yourself or someone else, the first step should be to talk to your organization and get legal counsel from a movement lawyer (see above.) The second step should be to make a plan to communicate with allied organizations and the public about how you were approached and your commitment to resist cooperation. Political repression relies on secrecy, fear, and isolation. Keeping information about being approached or targeted to yourself will mean you have a much smaller support base. It can also cause distrust and ruptures between organizations, as it deprives other activists and organizations from the ability to prepare to defend themselves.

While it has the potential to cause serious harm, political repression can also be used to build support for our movements. Many campaigns to resist grand juries or defend political prisoners have been successful at building mass resistance, and there are many lessons we can learn from them. Here are a few:

6. <https://www.nlg.org/>

- ★ A federal grand jury was convened in Alexandria, Virginia, in November 2010, ostensibly to investigate any connections between WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Julian Assange and U.S. Army Private Chelsea Manning, who was arrested 6 months earlier. Grand jury subpoenas were issued to members of her support network and others in the Boston area. In a highly-publicized effort to draw attention to a politically-motivated grand jury and harassment of Manning’s friends and supporters, one of her supporters, David House, refused to answer questions when called before the grand jury. Strong support for Manning led to a commutation of her sentence after 7 years.



Community rallies to demand the freedom of the San Francisco 8, 2011. Photo by Scott Braley. www.scottbraley.com

- ★ In 2007, the government brought charges against eight former members and associates of the Black Panther Party for the death of a policeman 36 years earlier.⁷ Four and a half years of mass support for the San Francisco 8 broke the back of a vindictive prosecution organized by Homeland Security, the FBI, and the state of California.

7. To learn more about the San Francisco 8: <http://freethesf8.org/>

Two defendants pled to lesser charges and the others had their charges dropped.

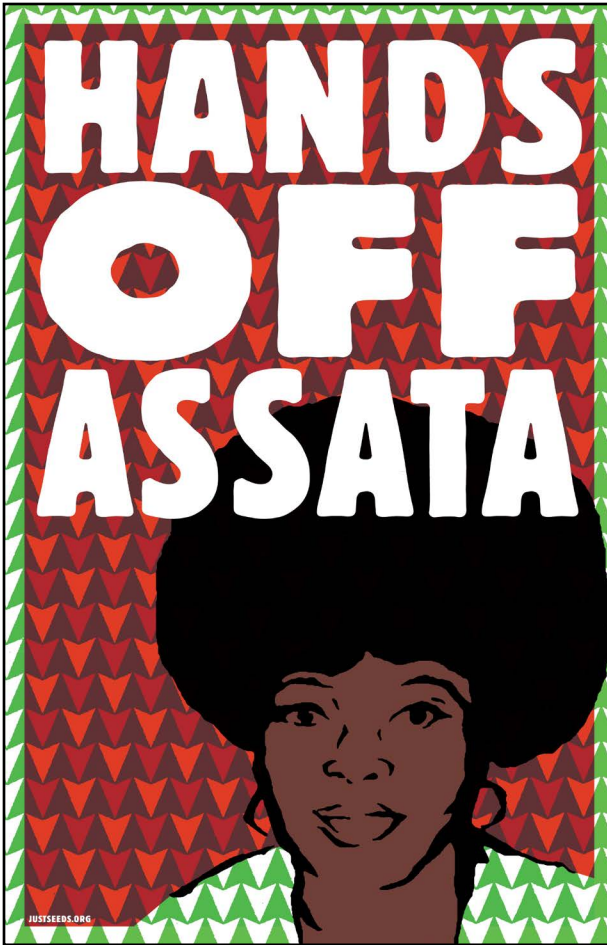
- ★ In the early hours of Sept. 24, 2010, gun-toting federal agents in Chicago and Minneapolis burst into the homes of anti-war and international solidarity activists. Eventually 23 people were called before a grand jury — and subsequently refused to cooperate with the government’s witchhunt. Their case gained national support because of their resistant stance.

6. Prioritize Support to People and Organizations That Are Targeted

Some of our most important leaders of color from the 50s, 60s, and 70s were imprisoned or killed for their political activity. Several, like Leonard Peltier and many former members of the Black Panther Party, remain in prison more than 40 years later. To learn more about political prisoners in the U.S., check out The Jericho Movement⁸ which raises up the voices of political prisoners and fights for their release. From Palestine to Colombia, political imprisonment with very harsh conditions such as solitary confinement is common, often with U.S. political, economic, and military support. Guaranteeing strong support and defense for those who are politically persecuted empowers people to take the risks necessary to build our collective resistance.

Guaranteeing strong support and defense for those who are politically persecuted empowers people to take the risks necessary to build our collective resistance.

8. <http://thejerichomovement.com/>



Courtesy of Josh MacPhee: www.justseeds.com. This image was part of communities rallying to protect Black freedom fighter Assata Shakur from attempts to extradite her from political asylum in Cuba.

People who are being targeted by the state will often be smeared, called terrorists, and otherwise have their character assassinated. **The state creates and relies on racist narratives about Black, Indigenous, Latino, Arab and Muslim people being dangerous in order to condemn and criminalize political activists and their communities generally.**

It's important to use any access we have to the media or the public to publicly defend targeted individuals and groups, to question the dominant narrative, and to explicitly name the racism of the attacks and the media coverage. Exposing the tactics of state repression can build more support and help make our movements stronger.

In the same vein, we must offer support to current and future political prisoners. In addition to fighting for their freedom, there are many ways to support people—raising bail, attending court hearings, writing support letters, visiting, corresponding with them, and sending commissary money while they are in jail or prison. Supporting their loved ones is also a critical piece of community support for targeted activists. This includes financial assistance, help with childcare, assisting with prison visiting, offering emotional support, and helping children and partners deal with the stigma of having an incarcerated parent.

7. Don't Spread Rumors or Amplify Conflict Between Individuals or Organizations

One of COINTELPRO's key strategies was to create and exacerbate conflict and distrust between individuals and organizations. They used many tactics to do this: infiltrators who were sent to stir things up, spread rumors and incite conflict; fake communications that sparked distrust; “snitch jacketing” or making people look like informants. The real results of this interference was that organizations broke up, coalitions collapsed, and people were left more vulnerable to arrest and violence. Creating a strong, principled movement culture is our best defense against this.

One of COINTELPRO's key strategies was to create and exacerbate conflict and distrust between individuals and organizations.

Anyone involved in organizing knows that it's messy. Mistakes are made, harm is caused, real political differences exist. We organize in a context where we urgently need structural change, and grassroots racial and economic justice forces have far less power than we need to create what we dream. Many people in movements have survived a lot of trauma, which can inform our work in positive ways, and also can impact our behavior in ways that make working together harder. And many people in movements act out privilege based on their experiences of class, race, gender and/or ability that creates toxic culture. All of our organizations are imperfect. All of our organizations act out the dynamics of oppression and privilege that we are steeped in, though some do better than others at creating the transformative culture we yearn for.

Creating a strong, principled movement culture is our best defense against this.

White anti-racist culture can often foster a belief that the best way to be anti-racist is to critique, ostracize and tear down other people and organizations. This is amplified in people who have been through formal higher education, which often values criticism over all else. When you combine these tendencies with the sense of entitlement that comes with white privilege, it can often produce white activists who are very skilled at criticizing people and organizations, and less skilled at navigating conflict, finding positive value and working toward personal and organizational change.

How do we stay in relationship and accountable to each other through all this?

Best Practices with Rumors about People or Organizations, especially around conflict:

- ★ When hearing about or asking after information, ask yourself if you really need to know or if you're just curious.
- ★ Don't give any information about conflict or internal dynamics of organizations to people who don't need to know.
- ★ Verify information from multiple primary sources before believing it or acting on it.
- ★ When other people are spreading rumors or information, talk to them about why it's important not to spread this type of information.

Best Practices with Conflict Between Individuals and Organizations:

- ★ Within our organizations and our movements, it's important to bring and receive critiques in principled ways. If you have conflict with something that someone or an organization is doing, talk to them directly and privately with an aim to address the problem and an assumption of good intentions. Bring in trusted outside support if you need it—conflict mediation works.
- ★ If conflict or violence is happening within your organization, seek trusted support to address it as soon as possible. Many majority-white organizations let things simmer until they explode, either because people with race and/or class privilege tend to be scared of conflict, or because the rest of our work feels urgent. Take the time

to address things before they get bigger than they need to. It's also useful to have some internal agreements about addressing harm/internal violence without relying on the police.



Courtesy of Melanie Cervantes: www.dignidadrebelde.com

- ★ Remember that political disagreement is healthy and can be generative if you approach it with a spirit of humility. None of us knows all the right answers. White people, class-privileged people, and non-trans men are usually socialized to believe that everything we think is right and

smart and good. When in political disagreement, make sure to notice, name, and adjust where these dynamics might be surfacing.

- ★ People who bring up internal dynamics around racism, classism, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia or ableism are sometimes called or treated as if they are being “divisive.” Addressing the ways our organizations play out greater societal dynamics around power, privilege and oppression is a crucial part of our movement defense. Seek trusted outside support early and often.
- ★ White activists—if there is a conflict between organizers or organizations of color, it is usually best not to get involved. If you’re considering involvement, ask yourself: Do I have relationships with the people involved such that it would make sense for me to play a role? Am I being asked to play a role? Do I have specific skills to navigate conflict that I am being asked to offer? Or, alternatively, am I getting involved because I am curious or want to feel included? Am I putting myself between organizers of color in a way that will exacerbate conflict and possibly have long term consequences? Am I aligning myself with one side of a conflict without having all the information? (hint: no one ever has all the information). Remember that these conflicts leave organizations vulnerable, and treat any information you have about them carefully and confidentially.

8. Follow the Security Approach/ Protocols that are Being Asked of You by the Leaders of Projects, Organizations, Events, or Actions that You’re a Part of

Organizations whose members are frequently targeted by the state, or those who participate in a lot of direct action, often have methods of keeping information and plans secure. Sometimes, white activists and organizations do not take these protocols seriously because our privilege has shielded us from the most vicious and stealthy tactics of the state. It's very important that white activists and organizations are not a "weak link" in security practices, especially when doing something that could be criminalized. If you're not clear about what information is okay to share with whom, or which method of communications should be used, ask for clarification. Once you are clear, make sure you follow all aspects of security that are being asked. Here are a few examples:

- ★ If you go to a meeting and people are talking about something without phones, don't leave the meeting and then talk about that thing in proximity to a phone.
- ★ Don't tell private information about an action to anyone who doesn't need to know.
- ★ If people are communicating about something over Signal (encrypted phone and text messaging program) or another secure method, only use that form.
- ★ If someone doesn't talk publicly about being undocumented, trans, on parole or probation, or any other piece of their experience that can increase vulnerability to state violence, don't tell other people their status.

It's very important that white activists and organizations are not a "weak link" in security practices.

9. Respond to People's Actions, Not Your Paranoia

“Snitch jacketing” is a widely-used FBI tactic of planting evidence, spreading rumors, or cutting plea deals that made certain people look like informants, in order to sow distrust and isolation. **While we strongly believe in the power of intuition, it's important that within our movements we only respond to people's actions, since we can't ever know someone's true intentions.** If someone is acting disruptive, being unaccountable, provoking conflict, spreading rumors, or repeatedly trying to get us to escalate tactics in a way that you haven't agreed on, confront the behavior and hold the person accountable to changing. If after repeated feedback someone is unable or unwilling to change, consider asking them to leave the group. If you're just feeling a weird vibe, remember that some people are just awkward.

10. Build Authentic Relationships and Be Accountable

Many of COINTELPRO's tactics created and exploited distrust between people and organizations. We have to extend trust and be worthy of trust by being accountable to each other, our politics, and our best selves.

What if we treated our fragile, messy alliances as if our lives depended on them? What if we understood that working through political differences is a core part of our struggle, and that the way to do that is by actively working together and figuring it out in practice? What if we prioritized building relationships as much as our task list? What if our organizations were more proactively addressing internal dynamics of racism, classism, patriarchy, heterosexism, transphobia, and ableism? What if we assumed that people who have acted

against their own values are capable of change when they receive direct feedback and support? What if we assumed there was truth in the feedback we receive, and made active efforts to repair and rebuild? What if we all worked hard every day, as Alicia Garza, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter put it, to be “high impact, low ego?”



San Francisco 8 victory celebration, November 2011, as six of the eight defendants' charges are dropped Photo by Scott Braley. www.scottbraley.com

While these are movement-wide questions, some particular issues come up for white organizers and majority-white organizations. White socialization, especially when it's combined with class and/or male privilege, can lead to arrogance, self-righteousness, individualism, and a propensity to bow out when the going gets tough (or when we get critical feedback). We often value our own ideas and leadership above the visions, strategies, and tactics used by communities of color. In practice, this can mean pursuing short-term reforms while betraying a long-term vision for liberation. It can mean duplicating or co-opting organizing that already exists in order to gain funding or legitimacy. (For more,

see “White Privilege in Social Justice Movements” in the resources section below.) It can take many years to change these behaviors, but we must change them. White activists and majority-white organizations must become trustworthy.

Seek feedback regularly, especially where privilege might prevent you from seeing the whole picture. Do what you say you’ll do when you say you’ll do it, and communicate when you can’t. Be honest and generous. And when you mess up, own it, repair it, and get back on the horse. If you haven’t screwed up, you’re not risking enough. The stakes are high and we need to support each other to grow braver and more effective so we can build the kind of strong, broad movements that can open up a future with safety, dignity, and justice for everyone.



Courtesy of the Amor y Resistencia Collective

Assessment tool to prepare for political repression by the state, from Bay Area Committee to Stop Political Repression

How prepared are you?

A short needs assessment for individuals and organizations on preparation for political repression by the state

Answer each question on a scale of 1-4:

1 = not prepared (e.g., haven't ever discussed such a situation)

2 = a little prepared (e.g., have heard some good suggestions about how to respond or had a discussion but not started to develop a concrete plan)

3 = moderately prepared (e.g., have thought concretely about such a situation and/or sketched some ideas for a plan but haven't fully developed a plan)

4 = completely prepared (e.g., have a concrete plan in place)

	Not Prepared	Prepared		
You as an individual				
An FBI agent knocks on your door looking for you	1	2	3	4

	Not Prepared		Prepared	
You have been detained by the FBI and need to decide what to do next (what to say, who to contact)	1	2	3	4
Your partner/spouse/loved one/relative/housemate				
An FBI agent knocks on your door looking for you and you are not home	1	2	3	4
An FBI agent or police officer comes to your house and detains you	1	2	3	4
Your organization				
Integrate a new member into your organization	1	2	3	4
Handle political disagreement in your organization (e.g., wording on a statement, endorsement of an event external to your organization)	1	2	3	4
A member proposes a tactic that is outside of the scope of your regular tactics (e.g., property destruction)	1	2	3	4
A major interpersonal conflict arises (e.g., accusations of theft, assault, racism, sexism, etc...)	1	2	3	4



	Not Prepared		Prepared	
Some member(s) suspects (openly or in private) another member of being an FBI informant	1	2	3	4
A member feels like they are being watched but can't really tell	1	2	3	4
A member is visited/raided/detained by the FBI	1	2	3	4
Your organization's office is raided by the FBI and your computers are taken	1	2	3	4
Is invited to join a coalition of or plan an action with other organizations some of whom have different politics and different tactics	1	2	3	4
Your members				
An FBI agent knocks on their door looking for them	1	2	3	4
Are arrested or detained	1	2	3	4
Related organizations				
How to respond if they are raided or targeted by the FBI	1	2	3	4
How to support you if they find out you have been raided	1	2	3	4

Resources to learn more:

COMMUNITY DEFENSE IN THE TRUMP ERA

A roadmap for setting up **Community Defense Zone** campaigns in local communities:

<http://mijente.net/2017/02/10/community-defense-zone-guide/>

Resources on legal rights, **movement security**, and interactions with law enforcement:

<https://freshetcollective.org/resources>

Toolkit on **preparing your organization for politically motivated opposition attacks**

<https://roadmapconsulting.org/resource/weathering-the-storm/>

INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT IN GENERAL: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

What to do if you or your organization are targeted by law enforcement: **If An Agent Knocks**

<https://ccrjustice.org/if-agent-knocks-booklet>

This primer advises people of their rights when confronted by FBI agents or the Department of Homeland Security. Includes information for noncitizens and minors: **Know Your Rights:** <https://www.nlg.org/know-your-rights/>

A Tilted Guide to Being a Defendant by the Tilted Scales Collective <https://tiltedscalescollective.org/> *“We wrote this book...to provide radicals with the best tools and insights for fighting criminal charges while continuing their struggles.”*

LEGAL INFORMATION, EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR MIGRANTS

Know your rights and emergency planning information **for people at risk for deportation:**

<https://cliniclegal.org/sites/default/files/resources/presidential-transition/Know-Your-Rights-Law-Enforcement.pdf>

GRAND JURY RESISTANCE

Essential reading about **how to resist grand juries**, including how they work, how they have been used against liberation movements and how people have resisted them:

<http://grandjuryresistance.org>

DIGITAL SECURITY

Electronic Frontier Foundation's **Surveillance Self-Defense Kit** against digital surveillance, including lots of tips, tools and how-to's: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/index>

HISTORY OF COINTELPRO/GOVERNMENT REPRESSION

Freedom Archives has valuable **resources on COINTELPRO:**

https://www.freedomarchives.org/Cointel_Resources.html, including a film, COINTELPRO 101:

<https://www.freedomarchives.org/Cointelpro.html>

FOR WHITE ACTIVISTS ON WHITE SUPREMACY & WHITE PRIVILEGE

Protocol and Principles for White People Working to Support the Black Liberation Movement

<https://baysolidarity.wordpress.com/2014/12/19/protocolandprinciples/>

RSVP
by Terry Bisson

RSVP TO THE FBI
(On being subpoenaed to give information
to a Federal Grand Jury
investigating revolutionary movements
inside the USA)

Thank you for handing me this invitation
to talk to you

But I am otherwise engaged

Thank you for offering this opportunity
to have a heart to heart
with the murderers of Martin Luther King
and Fred Hampton,
not to mention Crazy Horse
Michael Stewart and Eleanor Bumpurs
and the nameless millions
who do have and will have names

But I am otherwise engaged.

Thank you for inviting me
to sit down with the brothers
of the somocistas
(as you describe yourselves)
their long knives eager
for the blood of teachers
the blood of nuns
the blood of Sandino
which is right now running
bright like a river in the veins of young
Nicaragua

But I am otherwise engaged.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity
to spit on the graves of Sacco and Vanzetti
to dishonor the memory of the Rosenbergs
or of my ex father in law
who spent 10 years not being an actor
rather than 10 minutes of being a collaborator

But I am otherwise engaged.

Thank you for inviting me to run with the hounds
howling through the ruined cities
trying to hunt down the
FALN, the BLA
the ten or the hundred most wanted
most ready and willing and able
to resist with arms
and heart and ideology
your world
wide crimes

But I am otherwise engaged.

And seriously, thanks
for giving me this chance
to stand fast with the Puerto Ricans
who have gone to jail silent since 1936
rather than drink from your bootprints
To stand fast with the New Afrikans
who like Nat Turner “never said a mumbling word”
To stand fast with the Palestinians
steadfast in Israeli prisons
the Irish deep and defiant in Long Kesh,
the Africans on Robben Island
scorning your offers with songs

To stand fast with the children on Lumumba
and Che and Malcolm X
not to mention my own children
and your own as well

Thank you for this chance to stand
not with the defeated but the defiant
who pick up the gun
who pick up the pen
who pick up the baby and the struggle
Thank you for this chance
to stand with humanity against you

Don't mind if I do
April, 1985

CATALYST PROJECT

www.collectiveliberation.org



ANTI-RACISM FOR
COLLECTIVE LIBERATION