

**PLEDGE OF  
LIBERATION** 

**– MAY 8, 2017 –**

**PLEDGE OF LIBERATION:  
DAY OF ACTION TOOLKIT**

**[womensmarch.com/pledge](https://womensmarch.com/pledge)**

# PLEDGE OF LIBERATION DAY OF ACTION TOOLKIT

---

Welcome to our Pledge of Liberation Day of Action toolkit. We've created this document to help you decide on and prepare for the type of action you plan to have on May 8th. It includes links to commonly-used chants, information about civil disobedience, what to do in case of arrest, and FAQs of what to expect if arrested.

This action is not convenient—and it shouldn't be. Resistance is not convenient; it requires sacrifice. We ask you to consider what you are prepared to sacrifice. We ask you to consider what you are prepared to do to, what you are prepared to give, in order to fight for justice and equity. We also acknowledge that not everyone who wants to participate in civil disobedience can. Members of Black, Indigenous, trans, disabled, and undocumented communities have always been the most targeted by state violence.

Visit [www.womensmarch.com/pledge](http://www.womensmarch.com/pledge) for more information.

## THE BASICS

---

### **What is Civil Disobedience?**

Civil disobedience is the refusal to comply with certain laws as a form of protest.

### **What is Picketing?**

Picketing involves standing or parading near a business or government office usually with signs of protest. Picketing is constitutionally guaranteed as free speech, but in some cases it may be limited to prevent physical combat, blocking of entrances, or threats to the public safety.

### **What is a Sit-In?**

A sit-in is defined as “any organized protest in which a group of people peacefully occupy and refuse to leave a premises.” Sit-ins gained prominence and momentum during the Civil Rights Movement when Black Americans and their allies peacefully occupied segregated spaces across the country. Since the early 20th century, sit-ins have been organized by a variety of different groups to promote civil, political, and socio-economic rights of marginalized communities. In the 1970s, Judith Heumann and Kitty Cone led over 150 people in a 25-day sit-in of the San Francisco Office of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare protesting the inadequate protection of disabled people. The 504-Sit-In remains the longest sit-in of a federal building in history and was very successful.

## Can I Hold my Action at a Local Elected Official's Office?

We encourage you to hold your action at a place that feels most impactful to you and your community. We believe that local legislators and elected officials, in addition to members of Congress, should pledge to uphold the principles we marched for on January 21. You can find more information about state-specific legislation you may wish to organize around at [Our States](#).

## What are the Kingian Principles for Nonviolence?

- **Principle 1:** Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people. It is a positive force confronting the forces of injustice and utilizes the righteous indignation and spiritual, emotional, and intellectual capabilities of people as the vital force for change and reconciliation.
- **Principle 2:** The Beloved Community is the framework for the future. The nonviolent concept is an overall effort to achieve a reconciled world by raising the level of relationships among people to a height where justice prevails and persons attain their full human potential.
- **Principle 3:** Attack forces of evil, not persons doing evil. The nonviolent approach helps one analyze the fundamental conditions, policies and practices of the conflict rather than reacting to one's opponents or their personalities.
- **Principle 4:** Accept suffering without retaliation for the sake of the cause to achieve our goal. Self-chosen suffering is redemptive and helps the movement grow in a spiritual as well as a humanitarian dimension. The moral authority of voluntary suffering for a goal communicates the concern to one's own friends and community as well as to the opponent.
- **Principle 5:** Avoid internal violence of the spirit as well as external physical violence. The nonviolent attitude permeates all aspects of the campaign. It provides a mirror type reflection of the reality of the condition to one's opponent and the community at large. Specific activities must be designed to maintain a high level of spirit and morale during a nonviolent campaign.

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A DEMONSTRATION

---

If you are planning a sit-in, it is essential that you come to a consensus with everyone in your group about what your sit-in will look like. Decide in advance—as a group—if your action will or will not involve a sit-in or any form of civil disobedience. Regardless of your decision, be sure to contact your local chapter of the [National Lawyers Guild](#) in advance to seek guidance on the protest laws of your jurisdiction and to request the presence of legal observers.

You may decide that you feel more comfortable organizing a picket demonstration rather than a sit-in. Choose what you think will work best for you and your group.

Educate yourselves on your rights as protestors. See [here](#) for guidance from the ACLU. Please note in particular the following:

- *Owners of private property have the right to order you off their property.* If you do not comply, they are legally allowed to have you arrested for trespassing.

- *If you are staging your sit-in on the sidewalk, leave an opening for pedestrian traffic, unless you plan and are prepared to partake in civil disobedience.*
- *Do not stage your sit-in in the middle of the street unless you are planning and are prepared to partake in civil disobedience*
- *Do not block the entrance to a building unless you are planning and are prepared to partake in civil disobedience*
- *Do not use any sound amplifying devices without a permit to do so.*

### **Choosing a Location to Have Your Demonstration.**

Meet with your team and go through the open letter together. Who are the members of Congress or local elected officials in your community who actively fail to uphold these principles? You can find all of your members of Congress [here](#). If you are the member of an American Indian tribe, you can find your Tribal Leader using [this interactive map](#) from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. If you want to hold your demonstration at the office of an elected other than one of your members of Congress, search [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

### **Deciding on Preferred Tactics.**

It is essential that you come to a consensus with your fellow organizers about what your demonstration will look like. Decide in advance—as a group—what you will do when instructed to remove yourselves from your location. Will you comply? If you decide you will not, see the below sections on civil disobedience. As you plan the logistics of your sit-in, consider the ways that different bodies are treated and viewed by law enforcement and the public at large. Discuss in advance the way that white bodies and Black and brown bodies will be perceived and treated differently, and the way citizenship and immigration status will impact the treatment of the members of your sit-in.

Regardless of your decision, be sure to contact your local chapter of the [National Lawyers Guild](#) to request the presence of legal observers. We suggest that you write the number of your lawyer or a local legal services organization, or the local chapter of the National Lawyers Guild on your arm or hand in permanent marker.

### **What is a “Mic Check”?**

A “mic check”, also known as “the people’s microphone”, is a means for delivering a speech to a large group of people, wherein persons gathered around the speaker repeat what the speaker says, thus amplifying the voice of the speaker without the need for amplification equipment. The speaker begins by saying “mic check.” When the people near the speaker respond “mic check”, the speaker knows they have the group’s attention. The speaker says a short phrase, part of a speech, and then pauses. Those that can hear what the speaker has said repeat the phrase in unison, and when finished, the speaker says another phrase, then pauses again waiting for a response, etc., until the speaker’s speech is complete.

Consider whose voice is being listened to most: Is it the voice of someone directly impacted by the issue at hand? Is it the voice of a person with significant privilege? It is important to elevate the voices of those most affected by the issues you are focusing on.

### **What are Some Popular Protest Chants/Songs that We Can Use?**

Protest chants and songs can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

# IN CASE OF ARREST

---

## What Will Lead to Arrest?

Blocking an entrance or traffic (pedestrian or street) or occupying private property and refusing to leave is cause for arrest. When a crowd of protesters is in a place that police believe the crowd cannot lawfully be, the police must carefully distinguish between those protesters who intend to be arrested for civil disobedience, and those protesters who do not know their presence is unlawful. The best police practice is individualized commands to leave on threat of arrest, followed by a realistic opportunity to leave. However, we cannot count on police to always maintain these practices. Police behavior will vary state-to-state, city-to-city, officer-to-officer, and will likely be influenced by the demographic makeup of your group.

## What To Do In Case of Arrest?

Have the number of your lawyer (if you have one), the local [National Lawyer's Guild](#) or [American Civil Liberties Union](#) affiliate written on your body in permanent marker so that even if your belongings are not with you, you can still receive legal assistance. Have a number of a personal contact (family member or friend) so you can let them know where you are being detained and processed. If you have prescription medication which you need within 24 to 48 hours after arrest, you should bring your medication with you, in the original Rx bottle (and preferably with a doctor's note).

*In a moment of arrest*, it is important **not to resist**. Even if your arrest seems unlawful or more aggressive than normal, do not resist arrest. Get the attention of one of your observers and have them document everything. Download the ACLU's mobile justice app by state [here](#).

## What Can You Expect if Arrested at a Protest?

Criminal systems, laws, and police practices vary depending on your specific location. Please refer to [this legal briefing](#) from the Center for Constitutional Rights on what to expect if arrested for civil disobedience, as well as these helpful how-to pieces from [Colorlines](#) and [Mic](#). You can also find more information about protesting in the [Resistance Manual](#). Be especially aware that your specific interaction with law enforcement will likely be influenced by the demographic makeup of your group. White people, cis people and gender-conforming people may experience gentler treatment than people of color, trans and gender-nonconforming people.

# CITIZENSHIP

---

## **IF YOU ARE A UNITED STATES CITIZEN**

You should absolutely **have your government-issued ID on your person**; the absence of identification will complicate the arrest proceedings.

## **IF YOU ARE NOT A UNITED STATES CITIZEN**

The right to peacefully protest is an important and fundamental right of every person in the United States, regardless of citizenship status. However, protesting as a non-citizen puts you at risk for arrest and contact with immigration enforcement. It is strongly recommended that you get some legal advice or work with legal advocates to understand the risks of participating in a demonstration, especially if you have a final deportation order or a criminal record. Please contact the [National Immigration Project](#) and the [Immigrant Defense Project Hotline](#) (212.725.6422) for technical assistance.

**If you are a non-citizen of the United States, carefully consider what identity documents you have.**

IDs with your home addresses could be shared with ICE, which could lead to a greater risk of contact with immigration officials. Reach out to the National Immigration Project and the Immigrant Defense Project to speak to an immigration specialist.

**Can I wear clothing that says I am an immigrant? What if I wear a shirt that says I am deportable?**

You cannot be arrested or targeted for wearing clothing or holding signs that advertise your status as a non-citizen. Your right to free speech extends to words written on your clothing. You will not be targeted by police based on signs that you hold or shirts that you wear, regardless of the message written on them, if you are otherwise taking place in lawful activity.