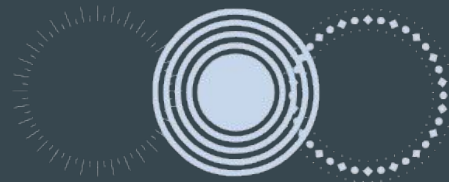


# **Non-Violent Direct Action Marshal & Peacekeeper Training Guide**



**Innovative Organizing**

BUILDING POWERFUL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS  
AND STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS

Caroline Murray  
2020



# A Note about This Moment

We are living in a revolutionary moment, facing both a crisis and an opportunity to bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice. To do that, we must expose the painful systemic injustices that this country is built on by confronting the full power of white supremacy and anti-blackness that is on display at every turn. This work starts with each of us recognizing that none of us are free until all of us are free, and declaring loudly: Black Lives Matter. But we must do more than that. **This is the moment to choose a side and make it public.** Non-Violent Direct Action is one way to do that.

Generations to come will ask, “What did you do during the uprising?” Hopefully this guide will help you answer that question.

There are many roles to play in the movement - from protesting in the streets, to making art, to electoral politics, to engaging in policy, to building community. If being in the streets is how you choose to take action, here are some tools that have been developed by many generations of activists. Take what is useful and leave what is not.

This guide is a compilation of decades of experience organizing, training, and engaging in non-violent direct action. It is offered as a movement service to those who are playing a role as **marshals and peacekeepers** in street protests and other forms of NVDA. It is intended for use with a larger leadership team, but keep in mind that *an uprising is fluid* - actions in this moment are often organic and not coordinated by organizations. This is *not* a comprehensive tool for action planning or a comprehensive NVDA training. Keep in mind, we can not control what happens, but we can be prepared. With preparation comes discipline, intention, and the ability to be nimble and make adjustments in the moment. As the freedom fighters in Hong Kong say, “Be like water”.

We are guided in this moment by the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) - a group of brilliant movement strategists. Respect Black leadership and remain grounded in the [M4BL principles and demands](#).

A final note: Whatever role you play, remember we are also in a global pandemic that is disproportionately killing Black people and marginalized communities - please follow safety and harm reduction protocols.

With love and rage,  
Caroline Murray, Innovative Organizing

# NVDA: THE TRADITION

“Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored ... the purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.”

- **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**  
*Letter from a Birmingham Jail.*  
*April 16, 1963*

**THE WHAT AND  
WHY OF  
NON-VIOLENT  
DIRECT ACTION  
(NVDA)**

**NVDA is a tactic, used in concert with a range of other tactics as part of a larger strategy. When planning your direct action, pay attention to:**

**The What of your action:**

- Calling attention to the problem
- Exposing injustice
- Disrupting the status quo
- Demanding a solution

**The Why of your action:**

- Creating a dilemma
- Forcing a reaction
- Pushing people - both the decision-maker and the public - to make a choice

→ **creating a “Which side are you on” moment**

# HOW TO BE A WHITE OR NON-BLACK ACCOMPLICE

- ✓ Amplify Black voices
- ✓ Don't police Black protesters - ever!
- ✓ Be a physical barrier
  - Use your body and privilege to create distance between Black people and police.
  - Know that the police are less likely to harm you.
  - Always ask for consent before deploying as a barrier
- ✓ Don't provoke or antagonize the police
  - This is not the time for white people to act out their anger against the state apparatus.
  - Be mindful that Black people will face harsher retaliation than you from the police.
- ✓ Stay on message
  - Don't use this protest to push another agenda.

**MARSHALS /  
PEACEKEEPERS  
ARE PART OF A  
LARGER TEAM:**

**PROTEST /  
ACTION ROLES**

**The Leadership Team is often made up of leads of each team below - remember to have arm bands or some way to identify each team:**

- **Public Speakers**
  - Emcee
  - Speakers
  - Press Team / Spokespeople / Social Media
- **Marshals / Peacekeepers**
  - Front, Side, Back
- **Police Liaison**
- **Tactical Team**
  - Scouts
- **Chant / Song Leaders**
- **Art / Prop Team**
- **Street Medics / Care Team / Nurturers**
- **Tech Support / Livestream / Photographers**
- **Jail Support Team**
- **Legal Observers**

# WHAT DO MARSHALS / PEACEKEEPERS DO?

- Use our bodies and privilege to convey power and protect each other
  - Create a barrier or buffer between protesters and counter protesters / police
- Employ conflict management skills, hold boundaries, de-escalate
  - Keep us unified, disciplined, focused
- Hold the march / protest in a container
  - Pace the front and leave no one behind
  - Watch perimeter
  - Block traffic at intersections
- Monitor the pulse of the march / protest
  - Stay alert at all times
  - Keep an eye out for agitators and provocateurs
  - Look for legal observers, medics, counter protesters, police
  - In case of injury - one marshal stay with injured person while another finds street medic
- Carry out instructions from leadership team
  - Convey important information

**WHAT  
MARSHALS /  
PEACEKEEPERS  
DON'T DO**

- Don't panic
- Don't police Black people - ever!
- Don't do the police's job
- Don't do the police liaison's job
- Don't touch the police - ever!
- Don't instigate or escalate tension with the police
- Don't instigate or escalate tension with counter protesters / hecklers



# MARSHAL ROLES

## Front Marshals:

- Establish front perimeter for march
- Set the pace – go **slower** than you think!
- Keep the march moving steadily, lead and watch for obstructions
- Be sure not to obstruct the view of the front line / front banner of the march
- The front marshals also deploy when the leadership team asks for support

## Side Marshals:

- Block traffic at intersections
- Establish and watch perimeters
- Help keep the group intact
- Hold outer perimeter at the rally

## Back Marshals:

- Establish rear perimeter
- Maintain the pace
- Make sure no one gets left behind

## Lead Marshals:

- The captains from each team above coordinate - making game time decisions and responding as needs arise
- Slowing or speeding up the pace
- Coordinate communication with the rest of the leadership team

# WHAT TO DO AT STREET INTERSECTIONS

- Side marshals block traffic by forming a line across intersecting streets, linking arms, and facing cars.
- If the police block traffic, line up between the cops and the marchers.
- Groups of side marshals need to get to the intersection first by leapfrogging other marshal lines to get to the intersection.
- Wait for the red light or opening in traffic and quickly slide out, **FACING THE ONCOMING TRAFFIC.**
- Hold until the march passes in its entirety.
- When you're moving to get to the next intersection, be sure it doesn't appear as if you're panicking. Don't run!

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TOOLS for MARSHALS / PEACEKEEPERS

- ✓ **Emotional grounding** - calm yourself physically and mentally so that you can act from a place of strength.
  - Feel the ground
  - Slow your heart rate: Square Breathing - inhale 4 - hold 4 - exhale 4 - hold 4
  - Count to 5 or 10
  - Self-encouragement: "I can do this" or "I am committed to non-violence"
- ✓ **Boundary-setting** - clearly communicate what you want:
  - Ignore the aggressor: refuse to engage in an interaction when it is clear the other party will not respect your boundaries
  - Shift eye contact over the shoulder and hold - maintaining eye contact can be an aggressive stance. Lowering your eyes can be perceived as passive.
  - Use boundary-setting phrases: "That's not OK" or "Stop bothering her."
  - Use the "invisible wall" stance to set a physical boundary and keep someone at a comfortable distance - keeping hands visible and open at waist, move one foot back forming a triangle.
- ✓ **De-escalation** - helping one or both parties regain emotional control and calm down.
  - Create distance: move marchers quickly past a counter-protester
  - Use non-threatening body language. Keep hands open and at waist level.
  - Active listening: nod, mirror back what they say: "I can tell you're frustrated."
  - Express concern, repeatedly, in different ways.

# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TACTICS for MARSHALS / PEACEKEEPERS

- ✓ **Disruption and Distraction** - taking control of a conflict by rewriting the "script"
  - **Singing / Chanting** - provides emotional grounding and cohesiveness and drowns out violent speech.
    - Chanting "Peaceful Protest" to redirect
    - Chanting "Shame" to call attention to police violence
  - **Talk to the target / shift the environment** - "I can't hear you, can we talk over here?" "Come on, let's go over to ..."  
"This is not what we are here for..."
  
- ✓ **Intervention** - involving yourself in a conflict you were not initially a party to:
  - **Talk to the aggressor** - directly address the violent speech or behavior: "We won't let you hurt him/her." "People are recording you." "This is not the day/place/time for violence."
  - **Step between an aggressor and target.** NOTE THAT THIS CAN BE RISKY.
    - Keep hands visible, open, and below face level. Try not to touch or grab attacker.
  - **Summon** additional help

## **PRACTICE SCENARIOS**

**Form two parallel lines facing each other (called a “hassle line”) and practice:**

1. Counter-protesters attempt to shout marchers down.
2. Counter-protesters threaten/intimidate one member of your group (verbally and escalating to shoving).
3. A group of protesters attempts to provoke confrontation with law enforcement.
4. Law enforcement begins to roughly move/knock down/yell at protesters.

**PREPARE  
MENTALLY  
&  
EMOTIONALLY**

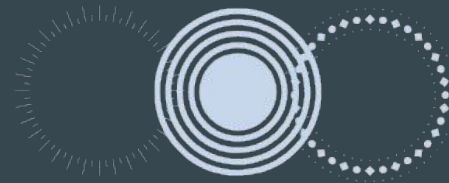
## What is your risk tolerance?

- Think about your own tolerances for risk, injury, and emotional engagement.
- Know that protesting may test some of your tolerances - that this is OK and can help you become stronger and more self aware.
- Remember and center those who are taking greater risks at this protest – Black people, Undocumented people, Trans people, Disabled people, and other marginalized communities.
- As we raise our voices be mindful that the people whose voices most need amplification are those who are most vulnerable to injustice and violence.

# **COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS**

**ASSIGN / CHOOSE ROLES**





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[cmurray@innovativeorganizing.org](mailto:cmurray@innovativeorganizing.org)

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