
PUBLIC WITNESS CHECKLIST

"A good nonviolent action is like a great work of art."

- Gene Stoltzfus

Roles:

- ❑ **Tactical Leadership:** 2-3 person team designated to make quick decisions if necessary during the course of an action; all participants or AG liaisons should know who the tactical leaders are.
- ❑ **"Choreographer":** person(s) responsible to help things flow; checks placement of speakers, participants, signs, banners, actors, etc. for visibility and coordination; directs the "dance".
- ❑ **Press Spokesperson:** person(s) assigned to interpret the group's action to the press. Every participant should have their "sound byte" ready.
- ❑ **Press Hustlers:** 1 or 2 folks who approach press people, offer them press packets, and direct them to the press spokesperson(s).
- ❑ **Police Liaison:** person designated to speak with police at the action; communicate police message to the tactical leadership and, whenever possible, to the entire group.
- ❑ **Leafleters:** persons who distribute leaflets to inform or educate the public about the group's action; should spread out to cover area adequately; an effective leafleter makes eye contact and a friendly positive comment with every leaflet (e.g. "This should interest you"); should practice ways of handling indifference, hostility, and open interest.
- ❑ **Emcee:** person who welcomes everyone, introduces speakers, and wraps things up at the end.
- ❑ **Song & Chant Leaders:** a couple of people to lead the group in chants and/or songs.
- ❑ **Speaker(s):** person(s) knowledgeable about the issues who can articulate the group's message; should make short, concise points about the topic, use concrete, vivid details to illustrate, be personal, keep a sense of humor, and repeat important points for newcomers.
- ❑ **CDers:** participants planning to engage in civil disobedience actions that may lead to arrest.
- ❑ **Support:** persons in the group who carry out specific support roles for those risking arrest; support persons should:
 - ✓ have a list of names, addresses & phone #'s of everyone in the group, people to be contacted about their arrest if they are held for any period of time, and all important medical information;
 - ✓ know the group's jail strategy, e.g. is anyone planning to refuse to bail out or give a false name? has the group decided to do jail solidarity? will anyone need a lawyer?;
 - ✓ hold ID's, bail money, keys and other belongings for those anticipating arrest;
 - ✓ bring pen and paper; try to note as many details of the arrest as possible, e.g. time and nature of the arrest, treatment of arresting officer and activity of person arrested, name or badge number of arresting officer and from what police force (city, state, federal);
 - ✓ go to where those arrested are being taken; at the police station, be prepared to stay to provide bail, find out charges, how long they will be held, etc. and to welcome them upon their release;
 - ✓ follow up on any special needs for those in jail such as medication, child care, pet care, calls to family, friends, job, etc.;
 - ✓ find out date, time and place of trial;
 - ✓ communicate all relevant details to central office or action coordinators.
- ❑ **Photographer/Video:** records action on film and/or video; helpful for follow-up with press.
- ❑ **Guides:** sometimes called "peacekeepers", these are people (number depends on size of crowd) who know the action scenario (including contingency plans) and can help direct people in the appropriate activities (form picket line, stay on march route, etc.); should be prepared to deal with confusing or disruptive situations; should wear something distinctive for identification (arm bands, hats, etc.)
- ❑ **Communicators:** one person from each AG who communicates their group's plans for participation to the tactical leadership and takes information back to their group from tactical leadership.
- ❑ **Medical Aid:** person(s) with first aid or medical training to deal with any medical emergencies that may

occur during the action.

Materials:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Leaflets | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs & Banners | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Song & Chant Sheets | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Packets | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sound System | <input type="checkbox"/> Props (make action-specific list) | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Action Preparation Tips:

In preparing for an action, think through how to respond to police, arrest, and possible violent confrontation.

- ◆ **Pray.** Spend some time before the action reflecting on your reasons for participating and centering your spirit (individually and as an affinity group).
- ◆ **Stay Calm.** Shouting, running and angry words escalate tension. Panic increases the possibility of injury.
- ◆ **Be Determined.** If it appears difficult to carry out your plan because police are treating people very roughly, your group needs to have a quick caucus to think of options. Do we move our action to a different place (e.g. block a different door, gate, etc.)? Do we continue as planned even though some of us might get bruised?
- ◆ **Be Prepared.**
 - ▶ Wear clothing that is protective and appropriate for the situation (e.g. will you be sitting on the ground?). Avoid wearing clothing with hoods. You could be dragged by your hood and hurt your neck.
 - ▶ Don't wear open or loose shoes or jewelry.
 - ▶ You may want to remove your glasses so they won't get broken.
 - ▶ Don't carry sharp objects in your pockets.
 - ▶ Avoid drinking a lot of liquids before an action -- you may not have access to a bathroom.
- ◆ **Be Alert.** If the police seem to be hurting someone, urge them to stop. It is important for all of us to be advocates for each other.

Information From: "Organizing for Resistance: Historical and Theological Reflections" by the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, 1985, and "Resource Manual for a Living Revolution" by Virginia Cooper, et.al., New Society Publishers, 1985.