# **Resisting Oppressive Regimes**

Revolutionary Legitimacy, Radical History, and Tactical Lawbreaking for Collective Liberation





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Revolutionary Legitimacy, Radical History, and Tactical Lawbreaking for Collective Liberation Version 1.5 – April 2025

Not all crimes are immoral. Not all laws are just.

Under authoritarianism, obedience becomes complicity. This field guide offers a detailed framework for when, why, and how trans people and our allies strategically **break the law**, not recklessly, but with radical clarity, ethical grounding, and community defense.

In a world where feeding the hungry is a crime, but building pipelines on stolen land is a business plan, this document challenges the myth of legal neutrality. It teaches how **rebellion becomes a moral obligation** when legality is weaponized against survival.

Inside, you'll find:

- Philosophical foundations of anti-authoritarian lawbreaking
- 4 categories of necessary illegality: defensive, disruptive, symbolic, and liberatory
- Revolutionary case studies: Tubman, ACT UP, Standing Rock, Cop City
- An operational checklist for action teams and protestors
- Myths debunked, tactics outlined, risks named, and moral clarity restored

This isn't about chaos. It's about intelligent defiance in defense of life.



# INTRODUCTION

Every empire frames rebellion as criminality. From plantations to police states, the law has always been used to discipline bodies, erase cultures, and crush resistance. But the truth is simple: *laws are tools of power, not measures of justice*. Under an oppressive regime, legal obedience often equals complicity in harm.

This guide is a deep dive into why and how we resist through *intentional, strategic, collective lawbreaking.* We explore the philosophical foundation, tactical rationale, historical models, and operational practices that make defiance not just a right, but a responsibility.

# WHAT IS LAW? WHAT IS JUSTICE?

# X The Law Is Not Neutral

In the United States, law is often taught as a stable, objective, and universal set of rules. But in practice, **law is a tool of power**, shaped by those who hold it. From its inception, U.S. legal systems have been used to uphold slavery, land dispossession, racial hierarchy, economic exploitation, and gendered control.

- The U.S. Constitution enshrined slavery in its original articles. Even today, the 13th Amendment allows slavery as punishment for crime, giving rise to mass incarceration.
  - o <u>13th Amendment Text and Analysis ACLU</u>
- Land theft and settler colonialism were justified through legal doctrines like the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny.
  - Understanding Settler Colonialism Native Governance Center
- **Capitalism is encoded in law** through corporate protections, property rights, and austerity policies that prioritize profit over people.
  - o Law and Neoliberalism Harvard Law Review

# 🔆 Justice Is Relational

**Justice is not simply about laws. It is about relationships, repair, and redistribution.** It emerges from community needs, harms experienced, and collective imagination, not just paper codes.

- For Black, Indigenous, immigrant, disabled, and trans communities, the law has often been a source of harm rather than protection.
- **Community justice models** center collective accountability, healing, and safety without relying on punishment, surveillance, or incarceration.
  - o <u>Transform Harm</u>: Tools for transformative justice
  - Interrupting Criminalization: Community-led alternatives to policing



#### **Solution** Law Often Criminalizes Survival

- Sleeping in public is illegal in many cities, effectively criminalizing homelessness.
  - o Martin v. City of Boise (2019)
- **Crossing the border without documentation** is a federal offense, used to imprison and deport migrants fleeing violence, poverty, and climate crisis.
  - ACLU on Immigration Law and Abuse
- Abortion bans, anti-trans legislation, and medical neglect are forms of legal violence.
  - o <u>Center for Reproductive Rights</u>
  - Movement Advancement Project: LGBTQ Policy Maps

# **m** Law Legalizes Harm and Protects Power

- Fracking, pipeline construction, and deforestation are legal, even when they destroy ecosystems, poison water, and displace communities.
  - o Center for Biological Diversity Fracking Impacts
- **Police brutality is rarely prosecuted.** Law enforcement enjoys broad immunity under qualified immunity doctrines.
  - Qualified Immunity Explained Cato Institute
- Weapons manufacturers, fossil fuel companies, and real estate moguls are legally protected and subsidized.
  - How the U.S. Funds the Arms Industry Brown University Costs of War

Law in the U.S. functions as a codified architecture of hierarchy. It often enshrines systems of oppression and protects the interests of those already in power, corporations, police, landlords, and militarized governments. It rewards punishment, control, and extraction.

Justice, in contrast, is not written in statutes or enforced in courtrooms, it is lived and practiced in community. Justice looks like collective healing, resource redistribution, and systems of mutual aid and protection. It is proactive, intersectional, and rooted in dignity rather than compliance.

Where law builds cages, justice builds bridges. Where law serves profit, justice serves people. Where law upholds domination, justice plants seeds for liberation.

To fight for justice, we must understand law not as a fixed truth, but as a terrain of struggle. We don't just need new laws, we need new values, new rituals of repair, and new systems of care.



# WHEN LEGALITY BECOMES OPPRESSION

**Just because something is legal doesn't mean it's just.** In the U.S., legality is often weaponized to uphold systemic violence while punishing acts of care, survival, and resistance. When laws serve the interests of capital, police, and white supremacy, they become instruments of oppression rather than tools of protection.

This section examines how the law creates, and conceals harm, and provides sources that expose this legal-political architecture of violence.

# 💥 The Police Are Militarized, but Communities Have No Food

- Since the early 2000s, billions of dollars in military equipment have been transferred to local police departments through the 1033 Program.
  - o ACLU: Militarization of Police
  - o Defense Logistics Agency 1033 Program
- Meanwhile, food deserts persist across the country, disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous, and poor communities.
  - o USDA: Food Access Research Atlas
  - o Feeding America: Food Insecurity Map

#### Protests Are Banned, but Pipelines Are Protected

- Dozens of states have introduced or passed laws criminalizing protest, especially targeting Indigenous and environmental resistance.
  - o ICNL: U.S. Protest Law Tracker
- At the same time, fossil fuel companies receive legal protections, tax breaks, and police enforcement to continue pipeline construction.
  - o Unicorn Riot: Police & Pipeline Ties
  - o Oil and Gas Subsidies Environmental and Energy Study Institute

#### 😰 Gender-Affirming Care Is Outlawed, but Conversion Therapy Is Legal

- Over 20 U.S. states have introduced or passed laws restricting access to gender-affirming care for trans youth and adults.
  - o Movement Advancement Project: Healthcare Laws
- Meanwhile, conversion therapy remains legal in many states and is still practiced in religious and private settings.
  - Trevor Project: Conversion Therapy Laws

# 🧱 Migrants Are Caged, While Billionaires Build Bunkers

- ICE detains hundreds of thousands of migrants annually, many in for-profit detention centers with histories of abuse.
  - Freedom for Immigrants: ICE Detention Map
  - o ACLU: Immigration Detention
- At the same time, the ultra-rich invest in luxury bunkers, private security, and fortified compounds to shield themselves from societal collapse.
  - o The Guardian: Billionaire Bunkers
  - o Douglas Rushkoff on The Survival of the Richest

# **E** Feeding the Hungry Gets You Arrested, While Evicting Families Is a Business Model

- Mutual aid groups and individuals have been cited or arrested for feeding unhoused people in public parks or cities without permits.
  - NPR: Arrests for Feeding the Homeless
- Meanwhile, corporate landlords and private equity firms profit from mass evictions, legal loopholes, and rising rent prices.
  - o ACLU: Eviction Crisis
  - Private Equity Stakeholder Project: Corporate Landlords

#### **When Law Serves Oppression**

When you criminalize survival but protect capital, that's not justice. That's authoritarianism wrapped in legal tape. In the U.S., the state often defines legality through the lens of order, not equity, not care, not community.

# Legal doesn't mean moral. Law isn't liberation. The rules are rigged, and we are rewriting them.



# CATEGORIES OF NECESSARY LAWBREAKING

Not all laws are just, and not all lawbreakers are wrong. Across U.S. history, movements for liberation have had to break laws to survive, resist, and build. These categories of necessary lawbreaking reflect tactical and moral distinctions used by abolitionist, mutual aid, and community defense movements. Each is grounded in lived struggle.

When the legal system criminalizes care, survival, and resistance, breaking the law becomes a moral obligation, not a deviation.

# **IDEFENSIVE — Lawbreaking to Prevent Greater Harm**

When existing laws directly harm communities, or when obeying the law would allow violence or death to continue, **defensive lawbreaking becomes necessary.** These actions prioritize protection, shielding, and harm reduction.

Examples:

- **Providing mutual aid in disaster zones** without permits, especially when state agencies fail to respond.
  - o Mutual Aid Disaster Relief
- **Defending trans youth and families** in states where gender-affirming care is banned or criminalized.
  - o Transgender Law Center
- Sheltering undocumented people in defiance of federal law, through sanctuary churches or safehouses.
  - Sanctuary Not Deportation Campaign UWD

These acts mirror historical precedents like the Underground Railroad and AIDS-era safe drug distribution.

# 🛠 DISRUPTIVE — Intervening in Systems that Perpetuate Harm

**Disruptive actions challenge systems of oppression through direct interference.** These are often confrontational and designed to halt business-as-usual for those in power.

TRANS

Examples:

- Stopping construction of carceral infrastructure, such as the <u>Stop Cop City</u> movement in Atlanta
- Disrupting court hearings or city council meetings when unjust policies are being passed
- **Removing surveillance cameras** illegally placed in working-class or racialized neighborhoods
  - o Digital Defense Fund

These acts reflect the principle that state repression and environmental devastation must not proceed uninterrupted, even if disruption is criminalized.

# SYMBOLIC — Making Injustice Visible through Civil Disobedience

Symbolic lawbreaking defies unjust laws publicly to awaken mass awareness and mobilize support. These actions are often nonviolent and highly visible, using moral clarity to spark momentum.

Examples:

- Sit-ins, teach-ins, and occupations in restricted areas (e.g., lunch counters during the Civil Rights Movement)
- Burning draft cards or crossing borders without documents to defy militarism or apartheid
- Flag burning or die-ins to protest war, climate inaction, or police killings
  - War Resisters League Civil Disobedience Tools

Symbolic lawbreaking is a cornerstone of mass movements, from the Freedom Riders to ACT UP.



# **T** LIBERATORY — Creating Alternatives Where the Law Denies Life

Liberatory lawbreaking builds parallel systems where legal frameworks actively destroy or **prohibit life.** These efforts construct life-affirming alternatives outside state control.

Examples:

- Underground abortion support and medical care, especially post-Roe
  - o If/When/How Legal Network
- Forming off-grid communities or protest encampments on stolen or threatened land (e.g., Zapatista-inspired autonomous zones, NoDAPL camps)
  - o Indigenous Environmental Network
- Teaching banned history or literature, and publishing radical media under surveillance
  - o Zinn Education Project
  - o Freedom Libraries Project

These are not just acts of resistance, they are acts of imagination.

# $\bigotimes$ Note: Legal $\neq$ Just, Illegal $\neq$ Wrong

Whether it's sheltering a refugee or removing a cop's surveillance camera, **lawbreaking rooted in care**, **survival**, **and justice is not deviance**, **it is dignity**. These categories are not fixed, they evolve. But all are necessary.

# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF REVOLUTIONARY LAWBREAKING

**Revolutionary lawbreaking is not random. It is deliberate, coordinated, and often deeply principled.** Across history, it has played a key role in resisting authoritarianism, challenging colonial legality, and planting seeds for new social systems. These objectives are rooted in both symbolic and material goals: shifting public consciousness, building alternative structures, and destabilizing the perceived legitimacy of state violence.

# 4 1. Delegitimize the Regime by Revealing Contradictions

Exposing hypocrisy is a time-tested tool of disruption. When movements break laws that criminalize care, truth, or survival, they force the public to confront the moral bankruptcy of those laws.

- **Example:** Sanctuary churches refusing to hand over undocumented immigrants highlight the moral contradiction of immigration law.
  - Sanctuary Movement NPR
- **Example:** Protesters arrested for feeding unhoused people reveal how cities criminalize compassion.
  - Food Not Bombs Legal Challenges FNB Worldwide

The goal is to **erode the myth of legitimacy**, showing that the law is neither fair nor just.

# **?** 2. Expose the Violence Behind "Order" and the Hypocrisy of "Peace"

The state frames repression as order and domination as peace. Revolutionary lawbreaking helps **reveal that peace often means pacification**, and order means obedience to violent systems.

- **Example:** The brutal repression of peaceful protestors (e.g., Ferguson 2014, Standing Rock 2016, Atlanta 2023) shows how the state defends capital with force.
  - o ACLU on Protester Rights and Repression
  - Stop Cop City Repression Coverage Unicorn Riot
- **Example:** Drag bans and book bans are enforced in the name of "protecting children," while children are left uninsured and unhoused.
  - Movement Advancement Project: LGBTQ Censorship Laws

When laws expose their own violence in defending injustice, they lose credibility.



# 🔀 3. Build Dual Power by Replacing Legal Infrastructure with Mutual Aid

Revolutionary lawbreaking is not just resistance, it is construction. When people create functioning, liberatory systems in defiance of the state, they lay the groundwork for dual power.

- **Example:** Free food programs, clinics, bail funds, and education systems outside state institutions.
  - o Black Panther Party Survival Programs
  - o Mutual Aid Disaster Relief
- Example: Abortion pill distribution networks and off-grid clinics in post-Roe America.
  - Plan C Abortion Access

These are not just services, they are **proof that communities can govern themselves** better than the state.

# **4.** Create Martyrs and Myths That Galvanize Resistance

While not always intentional, revolutionary lawbreaking often results in state violence that produces martyrs, figures whose sacrifice transforms movements.

- **Example:** George Floyd, killed by police, became a global symbol of racial justice struggles.
  - The Movement for Black Lives
- **Example:** Assata Shakur, forced into exile, became an enduring symbol of Black radical resistance.
  - Assata Shakur Biography PBS

These figures become part of the movement's shared memory, tools for education, motivation, and mythmaking.



# 5. Expand the Field of What's Possible for Future Movements

When people witness laws being broken in creative, principled, or community-rooted ways, and when those acts go unpunished or are widely supported, it expands their sense of political possibility.

- **Example:** The Stonewall Riots opened doors for radical queer organizing.
  - <u>Stonewall Uprising Library of Congress</u>
- **Example:** ACT UP's disruptive tactics reshaped global public health responses to HIV/AIDS.
  - o ACT UP Oral History Project
- **Example:** Dreamers defying immigration law helped reshape national conversations about belonging.
  - o United We Dream

When a movement breaks the law and survives, or thrives, it lights the way for others.

# Strategy is Everything

Revolutionary lawbreaking is not a chaotic outburst. It's a deliberate act of **political clarity and cultural imagination.** Its strategic objectives stretch far beyond the moment, they ripple outward into generations.



# ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR LAWBREAKERS

Breaking the law in service of justice comes with ethical responsibilities, and a profound commitment to values deeper than legality. In an era where dissent is criminalized and survival is surveilled, it is not enough to resist; we must do so with integrity. Our movements must hold themselves to a higher moral code than the institutions we oppose. That means anchoring our actions in harm reduction, trauma awareness, collective safety, and anti-authoritarian principles. It means resisting not only domination, but domination's logic: ego, hierarchy, and cruelty. These ethics aren't side notes, they are strategic foundations. They guide direct action organizers, mutual aid builders, digital disruptors, and everyday revolutionaries as we navigate the moral terrain of rebellion. They remind us that liberation isn't built through recklessness, but through care, courage, and coordination.

# 1. Prioritize Harm Reduction Over Symbolic Escalation

- Every action carries risks, not just to yourself, but to the broader community. Prioritize tactics that **minimize potential harm** to bystanders, vulnerable people, and fellow organizers.
- Don't escalate for spectacle. Escalate strategically and collectively.
- Use frameworks like the <u>Staying Safe During Direct Action Guide Ruckus Society</u> and <u>Mutual</u> Aid Medics Training

#### Ask before acting:

- Does this action build safety or destabilize it?
- Are people relying on us to stay grounded?

# 2. Target Systems, Property, and Symbols—Not People

- Revolutionary ethics demand that we distinguish between **property destruction and personal harm.**
- Destroying tools of oppression, such as surveillance equipment, border fences, or propaganda infrastructure, is vastly different from targeting individuals.
- Actions should aim to **disarm power**, not punish people.

#### Examples:

- Disabling ICE surveillance vans or removing illegal facial recognition systems
- Sabotaging bulldozers at development sites on Indigenous land (e.g., NoDAPL)
  - o Protect the Sacred Campaign



# 3. Act with Community—Not Alone or for Ego

- Lone wolf actions may feel righteous but often endanger others and fail to build power.
- Work within affinity groups or care pods that share values, skills, and debrief structures.
- Reject hero narratives. Collective action protects everyone and ensures accountability.

#### **Resources:**

- Beautiful Trouble Affinity Group Structures
- Building Care Pods Strong Feelings

**Remember:** If you're acting for recognition, pause. The movement doesn't need martyrs with no strategy.

#### **9** 4. Understand Your Privilege, Risks, and Role

- Risk is not evenly distributed. White, documented, able-bodied participants may face less danger than BIPOC, trans, or undocumented comrades.
- Before taking direct action, assess:
  - Who might bear the fallout?
  - Am I deflecting attention from frontline voices?
  - Do I have the capacity to navigate consequences?

Study positionality and legal risk through:

- Movement Lawyering Basics Just Roots Law
- Digital Security Tools Equality Labs



# **11** 5. Develop Exit Plans, Support Networks, and Fallback Options

- Never enter an action without knowing how to exit, and who has your back.
- Build tactical and post-action support infrastructure:
  - Legal observers (National Lawyers Guild)
  - Jail support crews
  - Emergency mutual aid fund links (e.g., <u>ActBlue Bail Funds</u>)
- Encrypt your phone, pack a go-bag, and coordinate emergency contacts in advance.

**Resources:** 

- Civil Liberties Defense Center Know Your Rights
- EFF's Security Starter Guide

# 🛞 Break the Law Like a Movement, Not Like a Lone Flame

Ethical lawbreaking does not replicate the chaos or violence of the state, it intentionally subverts it. It operates through discipline, forethought, and collective care. Where the state uses confusion to control, ethical resistance uses clarity to liberate. It doesn't seek destruction for its own sake, but rather interruption of systems that perpetuate harm. It is a craft of precision, not spectacle. It doesn't just disrupt, it protects the vulnerable. It doesn't just resist, it constructs parallel systems of survival, dignity, and hope. It is not reactive rage, but transformative will.



# CASE STUDIES OF NECESSARY ILLEGALITY

Throughout U.S. history, movements have been forced to break the law in order to serve justice, protect life, and build liberation. These are not anomalies, they are precedents. When legality defends systems of violence, illegality becomes a moral strategy. Below are examples where unlawful action was necessary, strategic, and often life-saving.

# B Harriet Tubman & The Underground Railroad

- Harriet Tubman, formerly enslaved, became a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a covert network of safehouses and escape routes used to free enslaved Black people in defiance of federal law.
- Tubman returned to the South repeatedly, armed and trained in **evasion**, survival, sabotage, and intelligence gathering. She freed an estimated 70–300 people.
- The Fugitive Slave Act made her work illegal. Still, it was righteous.

# Sources:

- National Park Service: Harriet Tubman
- Zinn Education Project: Teaching the Underground Railroad

# ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power)

- In the 1980s and 90s, during the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis, government inaction and pharmaceutical profiteering were killing thousands.
- ACT UP staged **illegal occupations** of Wall Street, the FDA, and St. Patrick's Cathedral to force public action, demand treatment access, and expose institutional abandonment.
- Their disruption saved lives by accelerating access to HIV medication and creating public pressure on negligent institutions.

#### Sources:

- ACT UP Oral History Project
- How to Survive a Plague Documentary (PBS)

# Standing Rock Water Protectors (2016–2017)

- Thousands of Indigenous people and allies mobilized to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), which threatened sacred lands and water sources.
- Protestors blocked roads, set up camps, built barricades, and engaged in direct sabotage of construction equipment.
- They were surveilled, brutalized, and arrested under militarized conditions. Yet their actions reignited global Indigenous solidarity.

#### Sources:

- Indian Country Today: Timeline of the Standing Rock Movement
- Unicorn Riot: Standing Rock Archives

# **Cop City Resistance (Atlanta, 2021–present)**

- Community members, forest defenders, and abolitionists in Atlanta mobilized to stop the construction of "Cop City," a \$90M police training compound built on stolen Indigenous land.
- Protesters occupied forest encampments, **sabotaged construction sites**, and created alternate care systems.
- Dozens were charged with "domestic terrorism", a chilling precedent that criminalizes environmental defense.

#### Sources:

- Stop Cop City Solidarity
- Atlanta Community Press Collective

#### Puerto Rico Uprising (2019)

- In summer 2019, Puerto Ricans launched a massive uprising in response to government corruption, austerity, and leaked chats showing misogyny and homophobia.
- With no central leadership or permits, residents **shut down highways, airports, and power** grids.
- Their decentralized, illegal uprising forced Governor Ricardo Rosselló to resign.

#### Sources:

- Center for Economic and Policy Research: Puerto Rico's People Power
- The Intercept: Inside Puerto Rico's Revolution

#### Illegality Is a Tactic—Not a Sin

These case studies prove that **civil disobedience, sabotage, and unlawful organizing** are not just tactics of desperation, they are often the only means left to uphold dignity and defend life. Legality alone is not a measure of righteousness.



# **MYTHS & STATE PROPAGANDA**

#### Oppressive systems aren't just upheld by police and courts, they're reinforced by stories.

From schoolbooks to press conferences, the state relies on propaganda to frame resistance as dangerous and law as moral. To organize effectively, we must **understand**, **name**, **and dismantle** these myths.

Below are some of the most common state-sanctioned narratives, and the truths that expose their function.

#### MYTH: "If you just voted/lobbied/petitioned harder, change would come."

**REALITY:** Authoritarian and capitalist regimes don't yield to logic, they respond to organized disruption and collective risk.

- Voting can be one tactic, but it cannot dismantle entrenched hierarchies designed to exclude and neutralize dissent.
- Voter suppression, gerrymandering, and corporate lobbying ensure that electoral outcomes often preserve the status quo.

#### Sources:

- Brennan Center for Justice Voter Suppression
- Prison Gerrymandering and Disenfranchisement The Marshall Project

Disruption, not requests, has historically forced change. From the Civil Rights Movement to the George Floyd uprisings, **mass pressure, not polite appeals, have shifted power.** 

# **MYTH: "Violence makes us look bad."**

**REALITY:** The state defines violence not by harm, but by optics. A broken window is called terrorism. A broken spine (by police) is called protocol.

- State and media often label property destruction as more violent than killings by law enforcement.
- "Violence" becomes a rhetorical weapon to discredit the oppressed while legitimizing state power.

#### Sources:

- The Violence of Nonviolence Boston Review
- Mapping Police Violence

Resistance is not violence. Eviction is violence. Medical neglect is violence. Extraction is violence. When the state calls your self-defense "aggression," it's because your courage disrupts its illusion of control.

#### MYTH: "Civil disobedience only counts if you get arrested peacefully."



**REALITY: Being arrested should be a tactical choice, not a moral ritual.** There is no virtue in sacrificing your body to a system designed to break you.

- Peaceful arrest may generate media attention, but so can tactical escape, strategic evasion, or masked collectivity.
- The obsession with being arrested as proof of legitimacy comes from white liberal frameworks that equate legality with morality.

#### Sources:

- Critical Resistance: Abolition and Civil Disobedience
- Abolition Journal: Anti-Carceral Civil Disobedience

Civil disobedience should challenge power, not validate carceral spectacle. Sometimes the most radical act is to evade, to protect, to return stronger.

# Propaganda Is Not Just Lies—It's a Strategy

Myths are how empires make obedience feel like virtue and resistance feel like sin. By rejecting their frames, we reclaim our own.



# **OPERATIONS CHECKLIST FOR ACTION TEAMS**

When you move against the empire, move with care. Whether you're blockading infrastructure, disrupting state propaganda, or defending a vulnerable community, preparation and discipline are the difference between disruption and disaster. This checklist is designed for trans-led or allied direct action teams operating in hostile conditions in the United States. It includes tactical preparation, legal support, comms discipline, and post-action narrative management.

# **© MISSION TYPE**

Before any action, clearly define the objective. Every move should serve strategy, not ego.

- **Defensive**: Protecting a person, group, or space from state or fascist harm (e.g., queer bar patrols, clinic defense)
- **Disruptive**: Obstructing harm or delay (e.g., infrastructure blockades, court shutdowns)
- **Symbolic**: Messaging-focused, designed to shift public narrative (e.g., projection bombing, street art interventions)
- **Liberatory**: Building or liberating space for autonomy (e.g., squatting, community gardens, liberated zones)

🛞 Resource: <u>Beautiful Trouble – Tactic Star</u>

# **K PREPARATION**

# **Legal Prep:**

- Identify local <u>National Lawyers Guild</u> chapter
- Connect with <u>Bail Fund Directory</u>
- Write legal numbers on your body in permanent marker

#### Seam Structure:

- Use affinity groups: 3–7 people who know and trust each other
- Assign clear roles:
  - **Scout**: Advanced recon + monitoring for threats
  - **Medic**: Trained in protest first aid (get trained via <u>Street Medic Manual</u>)
  - **Comms**: Manages internal signal, lookout, and updates
  - o Marshal/De-escalator: Nonviolent presence to manage crowd tensions
  - o Media/Narrative: Films from safe positions, prepped with messaging
- 🌾 Bring:
  - Water, snacks, gloves, masks, ID (optional), basic med kit, cash, burner phone, duct tape, Sharpies



# •• OPERATIONAL SECURITY (OpSec)

- Wear **masks** at all times (for health and anonymity)
- Use **burner phones** or devices wiped of personal data (apps: <u>Signal</u>, <u>Briar</u>)
- No live posting. No tags. No faces. Secure footage off-site before uploading
- Gloves: Prevent fingerprints
- Restrict access to detailed plans. Share only what people need to know
- Use offline maps or pre-downloaded GPS
- Don't bring devices with fingerprint/face unlock activated

前 Digital Hygiene Toolkit:

- Surveillance Self-Defense (EFF)
- <u>Tails OS</u>: Live OS for anonymous planning + comms
- **OnionShare:** Share files securely

# **+** ACTION EXECUTION

- Move quickly and with purpose
- Film only from safe vantage points and only with consent, ensure video helps the narrative, not the prosecution
- Avoid escalation unless absolutely necessary and planned
- Use waves: Team 1 executes, Team 2 covers, Team 3 retreats
- Keep an **exit plan**, pre-scouted, accessible, flexible

Tips: Use body cams only with kill switches. Keep batteries out until needed. Avoid GoPro helmet cams except for symbolic actions.



# **POST-ACTION PROTOCOL**

- Regroup at a secure location or safehouse within 20–30 minutes of dispersal
- Debrief within 24 hours: What went well? What was compromised? What needs adjusting?
- Conduct digital hygiene:
  - Wipe burner devices
  - Change passwords used in prep
  - Back up footage offline, then encrypt
- Publish **narrative first**, before the state or media distorts it:
  - Use zines, anonymous blogs, encrypted podcasts, graffiti, or projection mapping
  - o Coordinate with trusted platforms like <u>It's Going Down</u> or <u>Unicorn Riot</u>
- I use alt accounts, ghost writers, or community press collectives. Protect your team's voice.

#### 🖐 Note

We do not do this for fame. We do not do this for viral content. We do this to interrupt the empire, defend our people, and build something they cannot destroy.

Move with intention. Move with love. Move like you have something worth protecting, because you do.



# **POLICE STATE**

#### Getting arrested is not the end of your power, it's the start of a new phase of resistance.

Whether you're the one inside the cage or outside doing jail support, coordinated response is crucial. This guide breaks down what to do during and after an arrest, how to stay legally protected, and how to use your arrest to amplify movement goals without sacrificing anyone's safety.

# 📥 IF YOU'RE ARRESTED

# SAY NOTHING

- The only things you are legally required to say are your **name** and **"I want a lawyer."**
- Do not answer questions, even seemingly casual ones like "Where are you from?"
- Say "I am invoking my right to remain silent" and repeat as needed.

#### Resource: National Lawyers Guild – Know Your Rights

# **DEVICE & SEARCH SAFETY**

- Never consent to a search, say clearly: "I do not consent to a search."
- Do not unlock your phone. Even if coerced, you are not required to give passcodes.
- **Turn off biometric unlock** (Face ID, fingerprint) before actions. Better yet, leave personal devices at home.
- Digital guide: EFF's Surveillance Self-Defense Phone Search Guide

#### MEDICAL ACCESS

- If injured, request medical attention immediately.
- Say: "I am in pain. I need to see a doctor."
- If you have chronic conditions, medications, or disabilities, insist firmly on your access needs.

ADA Guide: ACLU – Disability Rights in Custody

#### BADGE NUMBERS & DETAILS

- If you can see or hear badge numbers, memorize or discreetly document them.
- Share details with jail support when safe: What time? Which officer? Which precinct?
- If you're unable to document, don't stress, focus on your safety and legal support.

# <u>é</u> PREP A "JAIL LETTER"

Before the action, write a jail support letter with:

- Legal name, emergency contacts, medical info, preferred pronouns
- Any relevant mental health alerts or medication requirements
- Instructions for your comms, family, pets, social media, etc.

Share this only with your **affinity group**, a trusted jail support person, or encrypted platforms like CryptPad.



# **%** IF YOU'RE NOT ARRESTED

You are now part of the **rescue and recovery crew**. Your job is to take care of those who were arrested and protect the integrity of the action.

# **BECOME JAIL SUPPORT**

- Stay at the jail or courthouse to greet released comrades
- Bring water, snacks, clothes, cash, cigarettes, and emotional support
- Track everyone who was arrested (full name, DOB if possible, location of holding)
- Coordinate with your local <u>NLG legal observer</u> or <u>Bail Fund</u>

# **GATHER FOOTAGE**

- Save and encrypt all photos/videos. Do **not** post raw footage online.
- Use tools like ObscuraCam or Signal to transmit safely.
- Document abuses: excessive force, denied medical care, verbal abuse, racial/gender targeting

# $\bigcirc$ CONTROL THE NARRATIVE

- Publish movement-framed accounts before the police or press distort the story
- Create rapid-response graphics, press releases, zines, and tweets
- Work with trusted platforms: Unicorn Riot, It's Going Down, Prism Reports

# MOBILIZE POLITICAL PRESSURE

- Call in press, electeds, legal advocacy orgs, and civil rights watchdogs
- Use email + phone zaps, digital actions, or <u>Action Network</u> blasts to amplify support
- Launch fundraisers for bail, legal costs, housing, and recovery

# 🛞 What to Remember

- Don't panic. Panic spreads faster than clarity.
- No one should go through arrest alone. Assign a jail buddy or comms runner.
- Jail is designed to disorient, isolate, and punish. We counter that with coordination, care, and memory.

#### We don't just resist repression, we out-organize it.



# THE MORAL CLARITY OF REBELLION

# We don't break the law to cause chaos. We break it because obedience becomes a form of violence.

In a society where the law is used as a weapon to suppress autonomy, enforce racial capitalism, and criminalize entire communities, rebellion is not an accident, it's a necessity. This isn't about glorifying illegality for its own sake. It's about recognizing that when the law upholds injustice, defying it becomes a moral imperative.

When the state criminalizes being poor, trans, Indigenous, undocumented, disabled, or black, then **every act of survival becomes a revolutionary act**.

This guide honors the lineage of resistance. It lifts the legacy of fugitives, freedom fighters, and frontline visionaries who dared to act when the law demanded their silence. Rebellion is not vandalism. It is vision made urgent.

# 📜 OBEDIENCE IS NOT NEUTRAL

Obedience in the face of injustice is complicity. U.S. history is full of laws that were legal but immoral:

- Slavery was legal.
- Jim Crow segregation was legal.
- Criminalizing Indigenous languages, ceremonies, and land defense was legal.
- Internment of Japanese Americans was legal.
- Anti-trans legislation is legal in dozens of states.

Law reflects power, not ethics. When obedience upholds systems of harm, rebellion becomes moral clarity in motion.

Learn more: Howard Zinn – "Disobedience and Democracy"

# SURVIVAL IS CRIMINALIZED

State systems increasingly criminalize the most basic acts of survival:

- Sleeping outside is criminalized in dozens of cities through anti-homeless ordinances
- Mutual aid is targeted with anti-protest laws
- Gender-affirming care is banned in multiple states under felony statutes (MAP Tracker)
- **Asylum-seeking** is punishable with imprisonment, family separation, and deportation (Human Rights Watch)
- Protesting pipelines or defending sacred land is treated as domestic terrorism (International Indigenous Youth Council)

In this climate, rebellion isn't provocation, it's protection.



# A LEGACY OF RADICAL RESISTANCE

We do not resist in isolation. Our rebellion is part of a long tradition:

- Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad
- Sylvia Rivera and the STAR House
- Fred Hampton and the Black Panther Party survival programs
- Leonard Peltier, whose incarceration continues for resisting settler violence
- ACT UP, who fought for queer survival amid a government-led HIV genocide
- Mutual aid groups post-2020, who fed millions when the state failed

They broke laws, burned boundaries, and remade worlds. They didn't wait for permission.

Explore: Prison Culture's Abolition Reading List

# **#** THIS IS NOT VANDALISM. THIS IS VISION.

Graffiti that names the dead is not defacement, it's testimony. A blockade is not obstruction, it's protection. A leak is not treason, it's a revelation. A riot is not chaos, it's the language of the unheard.

We honor those who take risks, not out of recklessness but **because the alternative is erasure**. Resistance isn't pretty. It's often messy, contradictory, and painful. But it is also necessary, sacred, and generative.

Paper Co-op Art + resistance toolkit: Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, Amplifier Art, The People's Paper Co-op

# **WHAT WE FIGHT FOR**

We don't fight just to survive another day; we fight to make another world possible.

- Abolitionist futures where prisons, borders, and police are obsolete
- Gender liberation beyond binary recognition
- **Collective care** that replaces punishment with repair
- **Ecological stewardship** instead of corporate extraction
- Radical joy and pleasure, not just endurance

Uisionary frameworks: Critical Resistance, Dream Defenders, Survived & Punished

Rebellion is not about rage alone, it's about clarity. It's about seeing what's been denied and knowing it's still yours.

You don't owe obedience to a system trying to erase you. You owe it to yourself and your people to stay alive, and to fight for more than just survival.



# CONCLUSION

#### You weren't born to be a threat. They built a world where your existence became defiance.

From the moment we assert our worth, whether as trans people, undocumented migrants, poor folks, disabled survivors, abolitionists, or anyone outside the state's binary order, we are told we are deviant. Criminal. Dangerous.

But we were never the danger.

#### They made survival a crime.

The systems that define legality in this country have always been forged in conquest, extraction, and control. They criminalized the sacred. They outlawed kinship. They licensed greed and enshrined suffering into statutes. If you feel out of place, it's not because you're broken. It's because the architecture of this place was never meant to hold you safely.

We don't break the law because we want chaos. We break it because that's how we breathe. Because the law won't let us live, much less thrive. Because when they build prisons instead of clinics, send ICE instead of aid, and fund cops instead of care, **disobedience becomes the most honest form of allegiance we can offer to life itself.** 

# **OVER USE A MAP BACK TO YOURSELF**

This isn't just a field manual for navigating repression. This is a toolkit for reclamation:

- Your dignity stolen by systems that profit from your pain.
- Your power silenced by institutions that fear your voice.
- Your right to rebel erased by narratives that paint resistance as chaos instead of clarity.

You don't owe anyone your obedience. Not the state. Not capital. Not respectability. What you owe, to yourself, to your ancestors, to those yet to come, is courage.

Courage doesn't always look like Molotov's and megaphones. Sometimes it looks like it is protecting someone's pronouns in a courtroom. Sometimes it looks like driving four hours to drop off meds. Sometimes it's staying alive one more day just to spit in the empire's face again tomorrow.

🛞 Learn more:

- Survived and Punished
- Critical Resistance
- Interrupting Criminalization
- Just Practice Transformative Justice



# **% YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

This guide is one piece in a tapestry woven by those who refuse to vanish. Every act of rebellion, big or small, is another stitch that holds us together. We are not isolated incidents; we are a pattern. A movement. A lineage.

#### You are not reckless. You are not mistaken. You are not wrong.

You are one link in a long, unbroken chain of people who choose to fight instead of folding. People who refused to believe that legality equals justice. People who dare to dream of something freer.

If you've made it this far, through the lies, the handcuffs, the headlines, the heartbreak, you are already part of the resistance.

You don't have to win every fight. You just must survive long enough to pass the torch.

And you will.

#### Legal Disclaimer

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