

GSA Network

Protest & Community Safety Toolkit

Introduction

Protest is a vital part of organizing and movement, especially for Trans, Queer, and Two-Spirit youth and communities. This toolkit contains train-the-trainer curriculum that you can use to lead workshops on why we protest, how to stay safe, and how to make your mark.

How To Use This Resource

This resource is designed to be flexible and accessible for a variety of audiences. Here are some suggestions for effectively utilizing this resource.

Target Age Range

This workshop is suitable for youth and young adults, ideally ages 13 to 25. It can be adapted for younger participants with modifications to the language and activities to ensure understanding and engagement.

Ability Considerations

Physical Movement: Participants may need to engage in some physical activities, such as small group discussions, role-playing scenarios, or movement exercises related to safety strategies. Ensure that activities can accommodate varying mobility levels. Offer alternatives for those who may not be able to move in specific ways.

Emotional Safety: Be mindful of participants' emotional well-being, as discussions around protests may evoke strong feelings. Create a supportive environment where participants feel comfortable sharing and expressing themselves.

Format Options

In-Person Workshops: The resource is designed to facilitate in-person discussions and activities, allowing for interactive engagement and immediate feedback.

Virtual Adaptation: This resource can also be adapted for virtual use. Utilize online platforms for group discussions and activities, ensuring all materials are accessible digitally. Consider using breakout



A group of young activists gathered outdoors holding a banner, "#GSA Day 4 Racial Justice," with signs promoting intersectionality and liberation.

rooms for smaller discussions and online tools (like polls or collaborative documents) to engage participants actively.

Preparation and Materials

Review the curriculum timeline and objectives beforehand to tailor the content to your specific audience and context. Gather necessary materials, such as worksheets, visual aids, and safety kits, in advance to facilitate a smooth workshop experience.

Facilitator Role

As a facilitator, create an inclusive and engaging environment. Encourage participation from all voices, ensuring that each participant feels valued and heard. Be prepared to adapt activities and discussions based on the needs of your group.

Follow Up

After the workshop, consider providing resources for further learning and opportunities for participants to stay engaged in advocacy and activism. Encourage them to share their experiences and continue the conversation in their communities.

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"History isn't something you look back at and say it was inevitable. It happens because people make decisions that are sometimes very impulsive and of the moment, but those moments are cumulative realities."

Marsha P. Johnson

Module 1

Legacy of Resistance

This 30-minute module will explore examples of protests and build an understanding of why protests matter.

Duration 30 minutes

Objective To understand the historical significance of protests and to contextualize the role of protest as an essential component of a thriving civil society.

Materials

- ☐ Facilitator's Guide
- ☐ Sign-in sheet
- ☐ Printed handouts from Examples section

Accessibility Dedicated space for small group discussions, with breakout rooms or designated areas (for in-person gatherings) to allow everyone to spread out comfortably.

Key Activities

Opening (5 min): Check-in question about personal protest experiences.

Discussion (10 min): Explore notable historical protests and their impacts.

Group Activity (10 min): Small groups discuss resonant movements.

Closing (5 min): Reflect on the importance of protests today.

Agenda

Estimated
Time

Activity and Topic

5 mins

OPENING

~**Ask the Group:** What's one thing you're hoping to learn today? (feel free to use a different check in question that works for your group.)

Review the agenda.

10 mins

EXAMPLES OF PROTESTS

~**Ask the Group:** What are some examples of protest you have seen or been a part of? (take a few responses, and share examples.)

[Facilitator Preparation: Pick three examples below that resonate with you most to briefly discuss with the full group then allow time to share the prompt below in pairs.]

→ **Examples of Protests:**

Stonewall Riots, June 28, 1969, Stonewall Inn, NYC

After repeated police raids on the establishment, patrons had enough and fought back. Popularized as the catalyst for the modern LGBTQIA+ rights movement. Miss Major Griffin Gracy says "The night of Stonewall is how people talk about it, but it was more like a week. We were fighting for our lives.

Further Reading: <https://www.them.us/story/miss-major-speaks-excerpt>

1960s Civil Rights Movement

This movement utilized civil disobedience and mass demonstrations to achieve major legal and societal changes in support of Black Americans and LGBTQIA+ people, often facing violent opposition in the South but gaining widespread public support through media coverage of the protests. Some major actions include the Greensboro sit-ins, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the Freedom Rides. Some key trans and queer organizers during this time include Stormie DeLarverie, Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson, Bayard Rustin, Ernestine Eckstein, James Baldwin, Pauli Murray.

Further Reading: <https://democracyincolor.com/blog/2023/6/7/7-black-lgbtq-civil-rights-activists-you-should-know>

ACT UP

The

AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was a grassroots, queer-led organization that fought the AIDS epidemic through protest, medical research, and advocacy. The group's first action, in spring 1987, was a march on Wall St. to protest the high cost and lack of availability of HIV treatment drugs. On the morning of Stonewall National Monument's Grand Opening in 2024, where President Biden was set to speak, Queer and Trans New Yorkers dropped banners from the NYC AIDS Memorial, home to epicenter of the AIDS epidemic

in NYC and blocks from the Stonewall Inn reading “Queers to Biden: Stop Arming Israel,” and “From New York to Gaza: Stonewall was an Intifada.”

Further Reading: <https://actupny.com/act-up-chronology-in-brief/>,
<https://actupny.com/stonewall-was-an-intifada/>

Organizing Against Apartheid in South Africa

The institutionalized racial segregation and oppression in South Africa ended on April 27, 1994 when Nelson Mandela became the first democratically elected president. There were a variety of tactics employed by various groups in order to achieve this change, including: sanctions by the UN, domestic protest, international protests in solidarity, economic sanctions, and religious condemnation.

Further Reading: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa>

Standing Rock and #NoDAPL

The controversial construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) gained national and international attention when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers accepted an application from a developer to construct a pipeline on the lands of the Standing Rock Sioux in 2016, threatening their water supply.

Further Reading: <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/dakota-access-pipeline-what-you-need-know#what-is>

George Floyd Uprisings

Following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25th 2020, protests and uprisings in support of Black lives were organized across the country. There was a massive, militarized police retaliation to protests, and just a few years later we see a rise in Cop Cities across the US in response to the call of Black Lives Matter and defunding the police.

Further Reading: <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/dakota-access-pipeline-what-you-need-know#what-is>

Organizing in Solidarity with Palestine

The ancestral home of Palestinians has been occupied for over 75 years. Through a series of aggressions from Israel and Zionist countries, including the 1948 Nakba and 1967 Naksa, we arrive at the current escalation in 2023-2024. Protests across the country and student led encampments on US universities have called for a ceasefire, divestment from Zionism and Israel, and an end to US military aid. There is a global movement to end the occupation of Palestine.

Further Reading: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/whats-the-israel-palestine-conflict-about-a-simple-guide>

Which movement(s) resonated with you most? Why?

These are just a few examples of protests and social justice movements. Throughout history, marginalized communities, and definitely trans and queer

people, have taken to the streets to protest and demand justice.

15 mins

WHY DOES PROTEST MATTER?

~**Ask the Group:** Break into small groups to discuss the following questions.

1. How is the act of protesting portrayed in our society, media, etc.? Why do you think that is?
2. Why are protests important?

Bring everyone back together into a large group. Ask for a few people to share highlights of their discussion in their small group. Then, share the below list of why protest is important.

Examples

1. Protest is a healthy part of an active civic society. It's your right to protest!
2. Connect with and interact with your neighbors and community in a different way.
3. Protests inspire others to join your movement and help create social change!
4. Expressing your emotions. Getting the grief, rage, etc out of our bodies, and showing our care and anger individually and collectively.
5. Protests can directly impact policymakers by demonstrating public support or opposition to specific issues. They can pressure governments and institutions to reconsider policies and make legislative changes.
6. Protests can be a form of cultural expression, incorporating art, music, and performance to convey messages and build community.

Tip: Bring it all together!

To wrap up, the facilitator shares: Protests are one way to build movements and take action. Another essential approach is base-building within our GSAs, where we gather youth to connect, learn, and organize around the issues that matter to us.

5 mins

CLOSING

Ask the Group: What topics related to protest and advocacy would you like to learn more about in the future? How can we support each other in that learning?

Module 2

Show Up, Fight Back

This 30-minute module will explore the different roles you can take in social movement.

Duration 30 minutes

Objective To identify various roles within social movements and explore the different ways to participate in a protest.

Materials

- ☐ Facilitator's Guide
- ☐ Sign-in sheet
- ☐ Prepare a handout or visual aid summarizing key safety tips for the Roles and Make Your Mark sections. **This can be written on whiteboard or chart paper, shown on projector, or on a printed handout.*

Accessibility Dedicated space for small group discussions, with breakout rooms or designated areas for in-person gatherings to allow everyone to spread out comfortably.

Key Activities

Opening (5 min): Review agenda and check in.

Discussion (10 min): Outline ways to engage in protests.

Small Group Brainstorm (10 min): Share interests in specific roles.

Closing (5 min): Reflect on community action.

Agenda

Estimated Time

Activity and Topic

5 mins

OPENING

~**Ask the Group:** What's one thing you're hoping to learn today?

Review the agenda.

20 mins

HOW TO PROTEST

[Facilitator Preparation: Research the roles, opportunities, and resources available in your community and tell the group about them as you review this section.]

There are many ways to participate in social movements. You can always show up to a protest and add your body to the crowd, which is important. Some additional ways you can contribute are:

Roles

1. Care & Accessibility: Offering care and support to help folks meet their basic needs during the action. Coordinate a location to share food, water, check in with each other and ground. Consider access needs of participants.
2. Operations: Be the planner! Identify what support roles are needed, and help find folks to fill them. Promote the event, plan a carpool, sort out other logistics. This can look like handing out water, helping keep folks going in the right direction, and other things.
3. Communications: Use your voice! Sharing through word of mouth, social media posts, email lists, bulletin boards and community forums is an important way to get both information and narrative out there.
4. Legal & Jail Support: People don't always get arrested, but sometimes that happens. In those situations, it's important to be able to bring our people home. Bail support includes raising money to bail people out of jail, connecting them with legal representation, and showing up when they are released with warmth, snacks, and water. You can get involved and support your local bail fund before, during and after protests.

Make Your Mark... and make your message clear!!

SOCIAL MEDIA: Are you into creating social media posts? Help make a compilation video based on photos/video from others, or other types of documentation. This helps get the message out even further.

GET VISUAL: Take time to get creative - make a poster, banner, etc. Get theatrical! You can make puppets or other large characters to represent people or the issue you're protesting

GET LOUD: Do you have a chant you want to try? Write it down and bring it! Bring a drum, instrument, or make a drum out of a bucket.

MOVE AROUND: Do you want to bring a dance or other sort of movement?

WHAT'S THE LOOK: What's your outfit? Do you have a dope shirt you want to wear? Or clothing or accessories you can make with friends?

What's in Your Go-Bag?

~**Ask the Group:** In small groups, discuss -what kind of role(s) interest you? Afterwards, get back into a large group to share some responses from each small group breakout.

Tip: If the conversation wraps up quickly, you can also ask folks, “What kind of role(s) do not interest you?”

5 mins

Closing

What is one thing you want to remember from this training?

Module 3

Who Keeps Us Safe? We Keep Us Safe!

This 30-minute module will explore different options and practices for individual and collective safety.

Duration 30 minutes

Objective To learn collective safety practices and strategies for protests and to understand the personal choices you can make to ensure your safety before, during, and after a protest.

Materials

- ☐ Facilitator's Guide
- ☐ Sign-in sheet
- ☐ Prepare a handout or visual aid summarizing key safety tips for both physical and digital environments. (This can be written on whiteboard or chart paper, shown on projector, or on a printed handout.)
- ☐ Print worksheet with a tote bag image and a notebook page image, with space to take notes inside each one. Or, use a blank piece of paper and ask folks to draw the tote bag and a notepad.

Accessibility Dedicated space for small group discussions, with breakout rooms or designated areas for in-person gatherings to allow everyone to spread out comfortably.

Key Activities

Opening (5 min): Introduce safety importance.

Safety Review (10 min): Discuss physical and digital safety tips.

Discussion (10 min): Share relevant safety practices.

Closing (5 min): "What's in your bag" moment to list essential items.

Agenda

Est Time

Activity and Topic

5 mins

OPENING

~**Ask the Group** What's one thing you're hoping to learn today?

Review the agenda.

15 mins

STAYING SAFE

There are two types of safety to consider while protesting:

- Physical safety, which involves events and risks occurring in person, directly affecting you.
- Digital safety, which relates to risks and concerns in online spaces.

Below are important points to keep in mind for both types.

Physical Safety (5 minutes)

- Trust Yourself and Your Group
 - Trust your gut. If someone or something seems shady, it might be.
 - Arrive together, leave together. Travel in groups. Know the protest route and emergency exits.
- Agency and Risk
 - Individual: Acknowledge the level of risk you want to take, such as using your body to create a barrier, and/or avoiding certain areas, etc.
 - Collective: Deciding for yourself when you leave/asking the group, do we want to stay, getting home
 - Escalation: Respect the choices of others to escalate or not escalate (meaning taking more risky actions) if they want to, and recognize your own agency and personal choice in doing so or not doing so. Consider the identities and privileges of those around you as you make these decisions.
- Your Rights
 - Look up Know Your Rights information in case of interaction with the police. Here's one place to start: <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights>. It could also be helpful to look up rights specific to your state!
 - Write down the number to your local National Lawyer's Guild chapter: <https://www.nlg.org/chapters/>
- Police Violence
 - Avoid engaging with police. Plan for how you will deal with potential police barricades, and violence such as pepper spray.
- Antagonists
 - Avoid engaging community members who do not support the protest.
 - Know how to recognize dog whistles/white supremacist imagery.

[Facilitator Preparation: Think about the specific risks in your community. For example, you can look up local white supremacist symbols.]

Digital Security (5 minutes)

- Phone Settings
 - Turn off facial recognition to unlock your phone and use passcode instead
 - Turn off your location settings on your phone
- Social Media
 - Avoid posting photos of people's faces without their permission.
 - For large crowd photos, try to capture them from behind.
 - Be cautious about sharing your location before or during the protest — posting afterward is always an option!
 - Refrain from tagging accounts when sharing content you'd prefer to keep private.
- Other Media
 - You have the right to say no to video recording, photos, and interviews.
 - If someone else is filming and you prefer not to be recorded, you can avoid them.
 - You can also request that any non-consensual photo of you be deleted.

Discussion (5 minutes)

~**Ask the Group:** Think about what is most relevant for you and what's happening in your community. Reflect for a few minutes. In partners, what are 2-4 things you want to do next time you go to a protest to help stay safe.

5 mins

TAKEAWAYS

[Facilitator Preparation: Print worksheet with a tote bag image and a notebook page image, with space to take notes inside each one. Or, use a blank piece of paper and ask folks to draw the tote bag and a notepad.]

What's in Your Go-Bag?

While you're bringing your wits and safety tips, it's also helpful to bring physical items too. Here is a list of things you could bring to a protest:

- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes
- ☐ Snack
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Any medications
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Pen to write contact info on yourself (local bail fund, local National Lawyers Guild chapter, emergency contact)
- ☐ Extra phone charger if you have one
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Mask(s), depending on laws in your area

- ☐ Goggles in case of pepper spray. If you wear them, opt for glasses instead of contacts - this will also help in the case of pepper spray

Completing Worksheet

Take a moment to consider your worksheet.

In the tote bag, note down 3-5 things you want to bring.

On a notepad, write down 3-5 safety practices you want to keep in mind.

5 mins

CLOSING

What is one thing you want to remember from this training?

What's in a first aid kit?

Here are some potential items that are important:
adhesive bandages, sterile gauze pads, scissors,
disposable gloves, masks, wipes or solution, instant cold
packs, pain relievers, CPR face shields, space blanket

Ten Terms

1. **Protest:** A public demonstration or gathering of individuals expressing their collective opinion on an issue, often advocating for social or political change.
2. **Advocacy:** The act of supporting or recommending a cause or policy, typically aimed at influencing public opinion or policy.
3. **Collective Action:** Joint efforts by a group of individuals to achieve a common goal, often in the context of social movements or protests.
4. **Know Your Rights (KYR):** An educational principle emphasizing the importance of individuals understanding their legal rights, especially during interactions with law enforcement or in advocacy contexts.
5. **Informed Consent:** The principle of ensuring that participants understand the nature of activities they are engaging in and have voluntarily agreed to participate.
6. **Civic Engagement:** Participation in activities that promote the improvement of community and society, including voting, volunteering, and advocacy.
7. **De-escalation:** Techniques used to calm a potentially volatile situation, particularly during protests, to prevent conflict or violence.
8. **Solidarity:** Unity or agreement among individuals or groups to support a common cause, particularly in the context of social justice movements.
9. **Resource Mobilization:** The process of gathering and organizing resources (e.g., people, funding, materials) to support collective action or social movements.
10. **Intersectionality:** The understanding that individuals may face multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination or disadvantage based on their social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality), influencing their experiences and perspectives.

Contact

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