

## **Bodily Autonomy in the Streets!**

**Bodily autonomy is not just about abortion. It also includes things like expressing your chosen gender identity however you want, being free from non-consensual touching or sexual remarks, and deciding how to use your body at a protest.**

Some people see it as their job to control the protest and have already decided for you how to best use your body. They might tell you to stay on the sidewalk, or to stop doing anything beyond holding a sign and chanting ineffectively. Sometimes they have uniforms, badges, and guns—appointed by the State to inflict violence on you if they don't like how you've chosen to use your body. Other times, it's the self-appointed "protest marshals"—instead of badges and guns they might have colorful vests and walkie-talkies. But they are still there to police you and control your body.

The marshals turn OUR protests into a perfectly managed parade. If you violate their rules, they might try to pacify ("de-escalate"), fight, or snitch on you. It doesn't matter if they are explicitly working with the cops or imagining themselves as "protecting" protesters from the police, they are doing the cops' jobs for them.

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Obviously, we should all be considerate of how our actions impact others. But we should not blame victims of police violence for "deserving" or "inviting" that violence. As with all abusive relationships, walking politely on eggshells won't stop police violence; we can only break up with them completely and be ready to protect ourselves.

**Make your own decisions about how to use your body to resist.** Don't let someone pressure you into actions you're not ready or willing to take, or stop you from using the tactics that feel right for you. Most importantly, don't restrict someone else's autonomy—directly or indirectly by getting others to intervene. If you see someone taking an action that you don't like, but they are not violating anyone else's autonomy in doing so, you can just walk away and do your own thing.

Every protest is a diverse collection of people with different backgrounds, ideas, tactics, and identities. This is where our power comes from! Solidarity across these differences is the collective glue that holds it all together while allowing us to respect and honor the individual autonomy of each person. We don't have to agree with everyone's choices, but we have to respect and support each other in these struggles for freedom.

## **Your Body, Your Choice!**

For more, go to [ItsGoingDown.org/field-guide-protests-protest-marshall/](https://ItsGoingDown.org/field-guide-protests-protest-marshall/)

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