

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

This handout offers tips for how to intervene in public instances of racist, anti-Black, anti-Muslim, anti-Trans, and other forms of oppressive interpersonal violence and harassment while considering the safety of all parties. Clearly, this is only a start. We hope it can be one tool on the way towards building strong communities that resist institutionalized racism and state violence.

DO:

Do make your presence as a witness known.

- If possible, make eye contact with the person being harassed and ask them if they want support.
- Move yourself near the person being harassed. If possible and you feel you can risk doing so, create distance or a barrier between the person being harassed and the attacker.
- If it's safe to do so, and the person being harassed consents—film or record the incident.

Do take cues from the individual being harassed.

- Is the person engaging with the harasser or not? You can make suggestions, “Would you like to walk with me over here? Move to another train car? For him to leave you alone?,” and then follow their lead.
- Notice if the person being harassed is resisting in their own way, and honor that. (Especially white folks, don't police the tone of the person being harassed).
- Follow up with the individual being harassed after the incident is over, see if they need anything.

Do keep both of you safe.

- Assess your surroundings - are there others nearby you can pull in to support? Working in a team is a good idea, if it is possible.
- Can you and the person being harassed move to a safer space/place?

DON'T:

Don't call the police.

- For many communities experiencing harassment right now (including Arab and Muslim communities, Black people, queer and trans folks, and immigrants) the police can cause a greater danger for the person being harassed.

Don't escalate the situation.

- The goal is to get the person being harassed to safety, not to incite further violence from the attacker.

Don't do nothing.

- Silence is dangerous--it communicates approval and leaves the victim high and dry. If you find yourself too nervous or afraid to speak out, move closer to the person being harassed to communicate your support with your body.

