

5 WAYS YOU CAN INTERRUPT HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION

With concerns about hate crimes, harassment, and intimidation on the rise, many people have been asking for resources about what to do if you see harassment or intimidation occurring. These suggestions come from Meta Peace Team and are used during street actions as a handout.

Some things you can do if you witness someone being harassed or intimidated . . .

1. Move close to the person being harassed, introduce yourself, and begin a discussion - this will create a zone of safety. Continue the conversation until the harasser leaves. Stay with your new friend or offer to provide accompaniment to the point that the person feels safe.
2. Rally others in the vicinity to form a protective circle around the person being harassed, or encourage others in the area to join you in loudly shouting, "Stop it now."
3. Interrupt the behavior by asking the aggressor a question to throw him/her off balance ("Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to . . ." or "Hey, didn't we go to high school together?" . . .) Try to redirect the person's energy by creatively engaging the person. Don't debate. Look for common ground or an entry point into a conversation that takes the focus off the person being harassed. The point is to stop the person's behavior, not win a political argument.
4. If you cannot directly intervene, document what you are witnessing. Observe details. Use your phone to take pictures or videotape. Discern whether or not it is a good strategy to let it be known that you are documenting. Sometimes this works as a deterrent; sometimes it escalates situations.
5. Do not take away people's agency to defend themselves. Sometimes the best approach is to remain physically close, using body language to convey solidarity and support, especially if the person being harassed is verbally engaged with the harasser. Jumping into action too quickly can have the effect of disempowering others and actually escalating the situation.

Meta Peace Team is a group of individuals creating a nonviolent alternative to militarism through empowered peacemaking. MPT understands that the primary violence in our world is structural and embedded in systems of oppression and domination. MPT seeks a just world grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life. MPT trains individuals in nonviolence and places violence reduction peace teams (when invited) in war zones and places of conflict where there is a likelihood of violence. MPT has (and is recruiting for) teams in Palestine as well as domestic teams within the U.S. Learn more! See www.metapeaceteam.org for more information.

Pace e Bene encourages everyone to explore the work of Meta Peace Team and consider building a peace team in your area. This builds the skills and knowledge of your community and serves the broad goals of building a culture of peace and active nonviolence. One way to embark on this idea is to book a MPT training in your community. Visit MPT's website to connect with them or email us at info@paceebene.org