

# A Short Guide for My White Friends

What should I do?

## RULE OF THUMB

*This moment  
calls for both  
**THOUGHT**  
and **ACTION***

## MESSAGES YOU MIGHT BE SEEING:

- *Get out in the streets.*
- *Do not remain silent.*
- *Talk about racism with other white/  
privileged people.*

## WHAT YOU MIGHT BE THINKING:

- *Is it safe to go to a protest? Which  
ones do I go to?*
- *Should I feel guilty? I'm not racist.*
- *How do I speak out? And what if I  
mess up?*

- **POC** = "People of Color" refers to non-white people (Black, Asian, Latinx, Indigenous)
- **LGBTQ** = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, and Queer/Questioning (sexual/gender identities)
- **Cis** = Cisgendered, a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex
- **Het** = Heterosexual, a person who is sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex
- **Tokenize** = symbolic effort to include minorities to give the appearance of racial or sexual equality and beliefs (Examples - "My best friend is gay"... "My Black friend said...")

# Thoughtfulness Tips

**Do not remain silent!** doesn't always mean post and repost ALL the articles, listicles, statements, and videos you see.

**Be mindful of bombardment.**

Who are you sending this media to? Have they expressed that they're trying to limit their media consumption or screentime? Are you sending these articles to Black, other POC, LGBTQ folks? If so, STOP.

Did you see this article?

Did you see this video?

## RULE OF THUMB

*Do not (re)post videos & photos of the murders*

**If you see a friend doing this, IMMEDIATELY let them know. Sample things to say:**

"It's traumatic for Black folks to watch a member of their community being murdered. Watching 9 minutes of murder reproduces that 9 minutes over and over."

"While you may want to 'spread awareness,' there are other ways of doing this. Let's talk about it. Let's critically examine media together. Let's invite people to do this with us."

**Talk about racism with other white/privileged people!** doesn't always mean launch all-out verbal/written attacks.

Unless you're dealing with something EXTREME, there is no need to launch all-out verbal attacks.

You !@#\$ !@#\$ racist !@#\$ !@#\$ you and your !@#\$ !@#\$

Move the thread to private messages, call, or text the person. Online comment wars can be unproductive, as people tend to perform for an audience, rather than genuinely engaging.

**Do not remain silent!** doesn't always mean use as many hashtags as possible.

Flooding social media network hashtag streams with black squares or personal statements can mess with important tools that organizers use to communicate.

#BlackLivesMatter  
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**How to find out what hashtags to use:**

- Do a search for the hashtags and read carefully for messages from organizers about the hashtag.
- Look carefully at the content. Are there pics and posts by Black folks that you can repost and amplify, rather than posting your own opinion?
- Use any hashtags that Black organizers ask folks to use at events and protests.

**Get in the streets!** doesn't always mean blindly or selfishly go into the streets for protests, marches, and rallies.

**Honestly examine your motives.**

Are you attending to have fun? Are you going to "see & be seen"/take selfies? Are you going to "show off"? Are you going because you're bored? If you go out with these motives, in an emergency, you may not be prepared to respond and may even put Black folks at more risk.



**Evaluate health risks.** Are you immuno-compromised or will you put immuno-compromised folks at home at risk? As much as organizers are calling for "socially distanced protests," after a few minutes of spreading out, the crowds pile up anyway. If you are worried about your health or have vulnerable folks at home, prioritize your/their health and safety.

**Confirm that the protest is organized by Black people and Black-led organizations.** Check flyers and social media for details.

# Protest Tips

## ***Go with your heart & mind in the right place.***

Be respectful of the gravity of this situation.

## ***Center Black folks.***

Quarantine has been difficult for everyone. I've heard, "I'm going to the march because I just have to get out of the house." While this is absolutely true, it is our responsibility to center Black folks. If you just need to get out of the house, consider taking a walk, reaching out to a friend to get a socially distanced coffee instead.

## ***If this is your first protest, be prepared.***

There are a ton of resources with tips (what to bring, general rules of conduct, what to do if tear gassed/arrested/etc.). Seek these out proactively.

## ***Consider very seriously a range of possible scenarios and what you are truly ready, willing, and capable of doing.***

### **SCENARIOS**

- Active gunfire from cops, military, or civilians.
- Crowd dispersal weapons: Tear Gas, Rubber Bullets, Pepper Spray/Mace
- Bodily harm: Nightsticks, beating with body parts or other objects
- Disrespectful behavior: Heckling, inflammatory speech, talking over the speakers/organizers, disobeying organizers' instructions

### **QUESTIONS**

- Would I intervene in any of the above scenarios?
- If so, HOW would I intervene?
- Would I put my body between Black people and weapons?
- Would I physically enter a situation in which someone is being beaten?
- In the past, how have I responded to "Fight or Flight" situations?
- ***It is MOST important that you are honest with yourself and have a plan for what you will do in an emergency, rather than hoping you'll have a "hero" moment.***

## **RULE OF THUMB**

*If you are **not** ready or able to intervene, be prepared to exit the immediate area quickly if white people are called forward.*

## ***Keep your senses about you.***

Don't drink, don't get high, THIS IS NOT A PARTY.

## ***Listen to organizers.***

Don't carry on your own conversations while organizers are speaking/giving instructions. Follow instructions.

## ***Don't let your guard down.***

While at the protest, prioritize keeping eyes on Black folks around you. Police and racist vigilantes can emerge/become violent AT ANY MOMENT. By the time people have to call for help, it may be too late.

## ***Take care with photographs.***

Good practice to get at least verbal permission to post photos of anyone—especially Black/POC/LGBTQ folks. Don't post photos of children without parental consent.

## ***Don't assume that danger ends when the event ends.***

Vulnerable folks are often followed by cops and vigilantes. Cell phones may be tapped to trace locations. If you see cops or suspicious people near folks leaving a protest, DO NOT walk away. Be ready to surround/walk with them. Look out for anyone leaving alone and be sure they have a group to walk with.

# But I have more questions...

**“I’m in a difficult conversation with other white people that is going nowhere!”**

## RULE OF THUMB

*Don’t pull Black/POC/LGBTQ folks into your conversation to “tell it like it is.”*

This undoes important work. It is an example of the exploitation of emotional, social, and intellectual labor that we’re actually fighting against.

This work is more than one conversation. When Black people ask other people to do the work in their own communities, the operative word is WORK.

**WORK is more than one tense chat for five minutes. If WORK was only a text message or email, then there would be no need to keep**

## AFFIRMATION

*I am planting the seeds.*

**asking people to do this and do it better.** Work is continuous applied effort and dealing with setbacks and resistance. Work transforms not only the people and things around you, but YOU. Work is patience. Work requires endurance. Work does not always feel good.

**“Is it OK to include Black/POC/LGBTQ friends, colleagues, family, loved ones in difficult conversations about race and gender right now?”**

If questionable, consider removing Black/POC/LGBTQ folks from group communications with potentially triggering content.

Generally, don’t make unnecessary requests of Black friends and colleagues right now. Get support from other people in your community. Take a pause before sending an email/text/call and be sure you aren’t asking for emotional labor.

## RULE OF THUMB

*Don’t ask Black/POC/LGBTQ folks to analyze news for you.*

**“What about other POC and/or multiracial minorities?”**

This moment does not diminish or deprioritize racism and oppression for Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous communities.

## AFFIRMATION

*An attack on one is an attack on all.*

POC should not be afraid to set boundaries with white friends who want to vent or work through things that you do not have emotional space or time for.

Afro-Indigenous, Afro-Asian, Afro-Latinx people may be dealing with especially complex emotions at this time. Now is not the time for others to qualify who “counts” as Black.

There is trauma that doesn’t easily follow a Black/white binary. Be gentle on your Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous friends. Just because someone isn’t Black doesn’t mean that their lives and mental health are not also affected by racism and white supremacy in ways that white/cis/het folks are not.

## “I understand the outrage, but why are people destroying property and ‘looting’ and ruining it for everyone?”

There are many opinions on this topic within and outside of Black communities. **Please take time to critically read articles on your own and not argue with or bug people of color for their opinions.**



### MY ANALYSIS:

I believe that rebellion is justified and that white people have no right to decide or judge the language of rebellion that is comfortable for them. Destroying symbols and institutions of a racist system (politicians, public services, housing, jobs...), is justified.

Most of the built world and the U.S. economy itself is a system designed to kill and devalue Black people. Much of the wealth and infrastructure (roads, bridges, railroads, flood control, building supplies) of the United States was built through the trade in and work of enslaved African and African American people.

Does it mean that the owners of your favorite mom & pop shop are responsible for killing Black people and deserve to have their store burned? Not necessarily, but it means that products made with sweatshop labor in China and wrapped in packaging created in petrochemical factories that poison Black communities

are not priorities at this time...or ever. Black lives are more important than private property. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, Modesto Reyes, Eric Harris, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin...are more important than curtains and toilet paper.

The identities of the people and their individual motives for breaking a window or lighting a store on fire are not important. Folks who are searching for or judging individual motives are

missing the point of what is taking place. Police and the U.S. military destroy untold amounts of private property during raids and operations. If you

question the motives of a protester destroying a building then you must also question the motives of a government that destroys property and entire countries. You cannot legitimize one and condemn the other.

If people cannot understand this, they are missing a crucial idea at the very core of Black uprising. Then indeed, they may not *actually* “understand the outrage.”

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## “I’m a ‘good white person.’ Do I have to feel guilty?”

Crying, feeling emotionally overwhelmed, experiencing self-hate... All of these feelings and behaviors are normal because whiteness has historically protected folks from dangers—such as scenarios that elicit these emotions. Until Black lives truly matter in action and words, then Black lives are more important than white feelings. You may be an

### RULE OF THUMB

*Do not tokenize Black/POC/LGBTQ folks when sharing information with others*

extraordinary accomplice and/or ally, constantly self-examine, center Black people, POC, and LGBTQ folks. “I don’t have to feel bad, right?”

Black folks bear stigma etched into the very fabric of America. Countless stereotypes of Black people have made the idea of a “good” Black person almost impossible for the majority of Americans to grasp. It’s time to focus on Black life, not “good white people.”

If you are uncomfortable, upset and frustrated that you’re not racist and no one is acknowledging it, then you’re actually on the right path. You’re beginning to understand that equality is not only lifting up an oppressed group, but the privileged group giving things up and being uncomfortable. In a world that exterminates Black people with impunity, white folks can no longer be granted individual exemptions from lifelong accountability.

### AFFIRMATION

*The work is in the struggle.*

As news of the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery sweep the globe and justified rebellion engulfs our nation, this guide was inspired by many conversations with friends, family members, and colleagues.

The content is also informed by my experiences as an activist, public historian, and South Korean adoptee in New Orleans.

I love learning as much as I love the vision of a world free of white supremacist capitalist rule where every being has the means to live life to its fullest.

**This is a living document. Please share with me and teach me new things!**

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