

# GAY SHAME

## ‘The COUNTERREVOLUTION of REFORM’

In 2005 we wrote the first version of this zine as a read of nonprofit fuckery. Now, critiques of the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) have been appropriated into nonprofit mission statements and the language hiring managers thirst for on cover letters. Nonprofits devour the very dissent aimed to abolish them: they always have. Nonprofit is a euphemism for losing the world that we want. What do you do with an oppressive system that continuously tries to include your critique of it? How do we get what we need now (often from nonprofits) while not thinking that’s all we can get?

The NPIC is part of the problem, but it’s not the only problem. We must be alert to these signs (and many others!) of being counter-organized.

**COLDLINE BLING aka COLD PHONE CREAMERY** Our zines are in the break room, phones are in the freezer, and someone is Zooming in.

**WATERCOOLER BLUES** That feeling when you realize half of the people at the meeting are on the clock and refuse to meet outside of business hours. Using you to get ahead or using you to go nowhere?

**THEYBOSSIFICATION** Can the group survive the divisions caused by careerist opportunist hustle? Were you disempowered by getting the office copies of *The Purpose of Power* while fetching their raw-milk pumpkin spice lattes?

**ABSENTEE TOTALITARIANISM** The text thread you’re not on, the meeting you weren’t invited to, the self-appointed decision making cadre that decided you are a liability are designed to control information to destroy autonomy, administer your freedom and sap your energy from your disoriented husk.

**FULL-ON SABOTAGE** “We need to establish who we are before we do A-N-Y-T-H-I-N-G.” Yawn.

**GAY SHAME** is a virus in the system. We are committed to a trans/queer extravaganza that brings direct action to spectacular levels of confrontation. We work collectively outside boring and deceptive non-profit models to fight white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, cops, settler-colonialism and all forms of domination. Liberals think we are frivolous decorations and mainstream gays want us gone. Against them and with each other we instigate, irritate, and agitate, to build cultures of devastating resistance.

**Direct Action** utilizes disruptive intervention to directly challenge hierarchies. By using spectacle to expose hypocrisies, direct action terrorizes the status quo and revitalizes public space. In the process, it builds a delicious and defiant culture of resistance. Direct action encourages people to push the boundaries of acceptable behavior in order to create new possibilities otherwise unimaginable.

**Why Non-Hierarchical Organizing?** In the US we are encouraged to think that voting is a participatory act of “democratic” choice, when in reality it means that a majority controls the agenda. Non-hierarchical organizing means that everyone participates in the process. Though there may be other models for non-hierarchical organizing, we have found consensus to be the most effective.

**Consensus Process** Consensus means everyone comes to agreement before any decision can be made. In order for meetings to run as smoothly as possible, at the beginning of each meeting, someone volunteers to facilitate. The facilitator compiles a list of agenda items at the start of the meeting (not done offsite), keeps track of who wants to speak, calls on speakers, makes sure people stay on topic and keeps the agenda moving. After a proposal for action and a discussion of this proposal, the facilitator calls for consensus when a decision seems imminent; this involves asking if people agree, or not. If there are any objections, the group formulates alternate proposals until consensus can be reached. In the case of GAY SHAME, we have found that consensus occurs remarkably easily, since we have worked through our common politics and we discuss issues extensively prior to calling for consensus. If someone believes that a decision close to consensus is contradictory to the goals of the action or group, that person can block consensus. Of course, consensus decisions may always be revisited in the future. Usually, though, it’s all flower power and SSRIs here at GAY SHAME.

There are many different effective models for creating consensus; feel free to share your strategies with us.

**Working It Out** If you know people who share common goals, politics and strategies then contact them to arrange a time/place to meet and brainstorm ideas for a call to plan an action. If you don’t know anyone else who shares your politics, skip to step 2.

Make a call to plan an action, including a purpose/target (for example, GAY SHAME’s call to challenge the rabid consumerist monster that is corporate pride).

Create a regular, free, public, accessible, meeting time and space (for example, GAY SHAME started meeting in a café with a lot of empty meeting space, now we meet in the back room of a sympathetic comics store).

**In-Security Culture** Always assume that meetings are being surveilled by law enforcement and concerned citizens and plan separate spaces for organizing covert aspects of actions. There’s no reason to enforce the clique-ish informational boundaries between inside and outside because the state is always already doing it for you. Making secret decisions in secret chats on a secret state department-funded app undermines accessibility and precipitates an antagonistic mistrust that actually makes people less safe. End-to-end encryption is not going to keep you safe when there is a cop in the room. In-security culture creates an inflated sense of grandiosity: is your 501(c)(3) filing its 990 on Signal? Yes, the police infiltrate our movements and we can try to find safer ways to do shit, but the one thing state terror is terrified of is our persistence in the face of the 666 Leviathan.

**Capacity Chauvinism** It’s important to not sacrifice the life and lives of your group to the expediency of an opportunistic stunt. Consensus should not be overthrown just because one person is really pushy.

**Complaining Is Not a Luxury** People are often confused by the name “GAY SHAME.” The more people hate on our name the more we realize it’s working. People think that sarcasm is for people who are too scared to speak truth to power. But Bayard doesn’t know how bad it is now...or maybe he does, since he helped make it this way. No matter how outrageous the messaging for our actions are, it pales in comparison to the genocidal realities that we’re up against. Actually, our jokes are always about 8,000 miles behind how bad things actually are. We don’t feel it’s worth starting a conversation with Power™. We don’t want to work within a shitty system that is already stacked against us. We complain. After all our purpose is to not propose policy; we find community through expressing resistance. ALL ARE WELCOME.

**Fundraising Is No Fun** True, the world is run on money and that does not exclude your direct action, but it is important to figure out

ways to avoid spending money in order to further your critique of capitalism. Many people have boring day jobs that give them access to useful resources, such as: paint, paper, markers, printing, copies, food, etc. Borrowing, stealing and sharing can build relationships that grant writing, silent auctions and walk-a-thons never can. As a last resort, if you must shell out money then try to figure out ways to best distribute the costs.

**Should You Engage With Social Media?** The goal should be to get kicked off Twitter. Use it but know its always using you. Film your enemies, not your friends. Mask up, stay safe, don’t put anything online that you would not mail to the CIA.

**Should You Collaborate with Elected Officials?** Don’t ever hand an elected or aspiring official the mic. Politicians are for blackmailing not inspiring our communities. Their job is always to bring you into the ruse of equal opportunity by extracting your labor and crediting themselves for it to further their careers. They are probably why you had to resort to direct action in the first place.

**Planning the Action** Start with an issue/target/theme, decide upon appropriate tactics to make action as festive as possible. Of course, each of these tactics requires advance planning and a clearly understood logistical structure (see list of suggested roles below). Different types of actions may include: propaganda distribution, redecoration and public demonstration. Tactics include the following:

**WHEATPASTING**—The act of gluing flyers in public spaces, such as street poles, abandoned buildings, billboards, newspaper boxes, etc. This is useful for getting the word out about demonstrations as well as creating media satire and political critique. This could also be useful for participating in boring mass demonstrations where hordes of liberals can serve as useful cover for meaningful dialogue. The recipe for wheatpaste is 2:1 water-to-flour ratio, with a dash of sugar. Stir on low heat until it takes on the texture of glue. When choosing locations to place posters, take into account how well the paste and poster will adhere to the surface, visibility and traffic around the location to get more viewers passing by, and the risk of having the posters quickly cleaned up by public cleaning departments.

**STENCILING**—The act of spray-painting messages through handmade cutouts made of cardboard, folder-paper or plastic. This is useful for longer

term messages in public spaces such as sidewalks, abandoned buildings, trashcans, etc.

RE: redecoration in general, be advised that urban planners are continually devising desperate attempts to eradicate street culture. These are merely two tactics; future resistance will require constant innovation and new ideas to spread dissent.

**TAKING THE STREETS**—This is a confrontational, fun and participatory way to take space and gather attention. Processions are useful for drawing people’s attention to the spectacle, and usually work best when there are large numbers of participants. Emphasis on number of participants: it is always crucial to make sure that your street-taking is as accessible to the largest variety of mobility needs based on age, ability, experience, etc. This means a key component during the planning must involve questions around how accessibility can be collaborative. Whenever possible, we suggest taking the streets and not the sidewalk—in order to energize, excite and aggravate as much as possible.

**BLOCKING TRAFFIC/PREVENTING ENTRANCE INTO BUILDINGS**—We love cars and corporations! Blocking the flow of traffic (human and vehicle) increases the disruptive potential of an action, and makes that dreary commute so much more enticing. Of course, this requires advance planning and a clearly understood logistical structure (see list of suggested roles below).

**NOISE**—Pump up the volume! Noise amplifies the mood and tone of a protest. Some tools for noise may include: bullhorns, sound systems, whistles, air horns, handmade drums, screaming, musical instruments or whatever you have at your disposal.

**PROPERTY REDECORATION**—This usually works best to brighten up dreary storefronts, billboards, police cars and other capitalist enterprises by cover of night. Liberating glass from the confines of selected window frames often facilitates transparency and free speech. Use your imagination!

**BUILDING OR OFFICE TAKE-OVER OR SQUATTING**—Office take-over involves occupying a hostile work environment in order to disrupt business as usual. An office take-over requires an outside action/media plan that directs attention to the spectacle. Building take-over or squatting involves a prolonged stay in an unoccupied edifice, for housing or to make the space an accessible resource for free community building activities, such as sex, gardening, cooking, art, frolicking, shitting, sleeping, or hiding from parents or other abusers.

**HARASSING PUBLIC FIGURES**—Is something we would never do. Just kidding—this is a fun way to scare and impair the people in power. Try your local Hall of Records for updating your bridal registry.

**GETTING ARRESTED TO MAKE A POLITICAL POINT**—This must be planned well ahead of time, with all support roles listed below.

After the discussion of tactics is completed, it is time to make some gorgeous propaganda.

**Creating Propaganda** When we say propaganda, we mean written materials that represent the group’s consensed agenda. Propaganda distribution can be its own action, as with a wheatpasted flier or a stencil addressing a particular issue. Propaganda is also useful for getting people to a public demonstration or disseminating information (don’t think Social Media alone will do it!). Propaganda may include:

**FLIERS** | Put as much information as you have on them in as interesting and concise and glamorous way as possible.

**ZINES** | Derived from “magazine,” these are a form of handmade self-publishing and are often photocopied, but can be silkscreened, printed, painted, handwritten, etc., and may involve mixed media. This information made its first debut in a zine!

**STICKERS** | Fun to hand out at demos or stick them in places where wheatpasting or stenciling are not viable options.

**PATCHES** | People love free art.

**WEBSITE** | Great for disseminating information, but never rely on it.

**PRESS RELEASE** | To get those horrible media monsters to cover your brilliant, courageous action or intervention. A press release should always be succinct and inflammatory. Send out before deadline (call each outlet for specifics) and always include phone number for the designated media liaison.

**Strategy/Logistics** Start planning as far ahead as possible. Discuss how best to confront the planned issue/target/theme. Figure out how to make the action as direct and confrontational as possible. Create a plan of action, including: meeting place/destination, route (if necessary), itinerary, theatrics, timing specifics and plans for alternate options. It is important to walk/wheel the route and assess the conditions ahead of time (take note of traffic, pedestrians, visibility, police presence, nearby events, the latest greatest Harry Potter pajama party, etc.). Decide how to effectively communicate the plan and objectives of the action to the crowd. Figure out what to do in case participants depart from the plan or unnecessarily endanger other protesters or bystanders (like if they start working with the cops). Review the entire strategy multiple times, devising pre-scouted

alternate plans in case the original plan becomes too difficult or dangerous to pull off.

GAY SHAME plans each action as if we will get arrested, because cops can do whatever they want. Therefore, depending on the size and nature of the action, we may include the following roles:

**CROWD SUPPORT** we want contamination, not containment. Don’t become the self-deputized “peace police,” but do support the crowd’s expansion to promote accessibility. Make sure no one is left behind, check for people being snatched by the cops or that the crowd is being broken up by traffic. Encourage de-arresting and burn the hi-vis orange vest.

**POLICE NEGOTIATORS** lie to the police and distract them. Everything that they say is intended to cause rupture, confusion and conflict. Don’t forget to remind others that cops are not your friends—don’t talk to them, don’t Sam Smith.

**LAWYERS** can help you break the law. Before your action, it is good to find an attorney who is ready and willing to represent you in case of arrest. Make sure to distribute a legal contact number to everyone at the action—this could be the direct number for a lawyer or a legal support team. It is a good idea to hand out permanent markers so that everyone can write the legal number on their bodies, in case personal effects get lost in a scuffle or confiscated after detainment or arrest. Lawyers often know how harshly certain acts may be punished, and can offer advice as long as (for legal purposes) you speak as if you have no real intention of getting involved in those acts. This conversation should happen outside of the office or any other location likely to be under surveillance.

**LEGAL OBSERVERS** document what the cops are doing. Designated legal observers wear an item of clothing that indicates their status—police are not supposed to arrest them (but they often do). Legal observers document arrests and police abuse. Legal observers make sure to find out the name and contact person for every arrestee. They also write down badge numbers of all police in attendance as well as noting license plate numbers of any violent motorists or vigilantes and take notes on the progression of events. Legal observers should preferably be lawyers or those who’ve been through legal observer training.

**MEDIA LIAISON** communicates directly with the media. This person volunteers ahead of time, and makes sure to familiarize themselves with the consensed-upon issues and message of the group, and agrees to talk primarily along these lines. Watch out for NPIC grifters and any paid organizers that try to flip your message.

**FOOD SERVICE** Everybody loves free food, so it’s always a good idea to provide it. We like to serve vegan food! Arrange ahead of time for a cooking plan, serving arrangement, and a way to keep track of the food during the action.

**MEDICS** provide first-aid in case of emergency, and generally wear glamorous medical gear to call attention to their duties.

**SCOUTS** generally dress relatively “normal,” in order to discreetly travel ahead on the route and look for police activity or other problems or unexpected changes and communicate this information.

**COMMUNICATION CREW** moves from front to back and side to side of the demonstration for situational awareness to be made as accessible as possible by encouraging communication.

**DOCUMENTATION SPECIALISTS** make sure that the cops are being watched so that everyone stays as safe as possible. This work also serves to document the action for the public record, since the media isn’t going to do it for us. It is always a good idea to make our own media so that we aren’t so swiftly disappear from history. While we want to document, self-incrimination is a possibility knowing that cops are always watching: the irresolvable oscillation between the closet and the surveillance camera.

**Who’s the Boss? EVERYONE/NO ONE.** Direct action can often become hierarchical, since there is usually a group of people who have planned the action ahead of time and are familiar with the goals, tactics and strategies. Therefore, at the action it is important to remain conscious of things to do in order to create a participatory environment and break down the division between organizers and participants. In spite of much work around this issue, we have not always succeeded in bridging this divide—we would love to hear your ideas.

Talk to everyone in the crowd and on the street to make sure that people are aware of what’s going on. Distribute propaganda as widely as possible and engage people in conversation about the issues. Move through the crowd to figure out who would like to wield a wicked accessory, sign or prop. Share tasks whenever possible and make new friends.

**Making Props** Permitted marches are ineffective. Black Blocs can be boring. Speak-outs are tedious. Make your action festive, colorful, ridiculous and fierce by developing themes that engage the issue in the most direct manner possible. Once the group decides upon a strategy, then it is time to develop visual aids to emphasize the intended message of the action. These may include:

**SIGNS** should be clear, clever and concise. (i/k)

**BANNERS** are good for blocking traffic and hanging off buildings.

**EFFIGIES** are replicas of people made from flammable materials that are set on fire to make a statement against the person in question.

**COSTUMES** Dump out grandma’s steamer trunk, we’re going to church, Mary!

**ART OBJECTS** These are not just for the museum, darling. Always bring assorted theatrical toys to illuminate the theme and devastate the scene.

**KEEP TRACK** of banners, props, etc. for retrieval after action. We always forget this part and have to recreate our props, but it’s probably better to save them for use in the future, unless this involves risk of arrest.

**So Emotional** We’ve been here doing this. The cops know this and are trying to get us. We’re still going to keep coming out here, so take that paternalist bullshit that “marginalized people” can’t do it, elsewhere. Be fully present, engaged, excited, and emboldened by what’s going on around you, but keep your eyes out for other people. Take into account differing levels of risk and repression that people might be impacted by or the perpetrators of. This is especially important during spontaneous moments.

GAY SHAME aims to resist the tired stoic seriousness of much organizing. Falling to pieces, spilling out, and floating away are all crucial direct action components. Screams, pain, and joy can be co-opted or generative. Organizing spaces can get warped by fantasies of discipline and control which keep participants from the world in order to ensure Daddy’s Haus is in order. Nonprofits have evolved to facilitate talking circles purely for the purpose of ensuring conservative outcomes. Selfcare does not mean inaction, and if organizing feels like a second shift, you need to quit. Shit-talking and action are nibblings. Abort your inner cishet child cop.

## Arrestability and Jail Support

**Discussion** Prior to the action, discuss the comfort level of people in terms of arrest. It’s important to talk about how different people will experience jail along the lines of race, class, body type, gender, sexuality, age, ability, health, diet, education, religion, language, citizenship/immigration status, record of arrest/incarceration or ties with criminalized/targeted persons, etc.

Jail support means coming to consensus ahead of time about what to do when someone is detained, arrested, jailed or disappeared. This should include:

Designated support people to make sure that no one is left to rot in jail (meaning those at the action and everyone else)  
Making arrangements ahead of time for legal representation  
Facilitating communication between people who are separated in different parts of the jail and between people inside and outside the jail  
Pressuring city officials to get people out of jail (this can include finding personal contact information for “sympathetic” elected officials and other people who have power to help get the people out of jail)  
Waiting outside of the jail until people get released—always bring food, water, love and other necessities

## Post-Action Discussion

Always meet as soon as possible after an action to discuss what worked brilliantly, what failed miserably, what worked miserably and what failed brilliantly. Figure out strategies for making the next action more effective, participatory and inspiring. Sometimes this discussion ends quickly and sometimes it lasts for weeks. Savor every minute of it.

## P.A.D.S. (POST-ACTION DEPRESSION SYNDROME)

After your first action, you may find yourselves experiencing a wide range of extreme responses: mania, ecstasy, dizziness, lightheadedness, nausea, dysphoria, vomiting, rage, enlightenment, empowerment, inspiration, disappointment, confusion, numbness, betrayal, vulnerability, euphoria, sensitivity, awareness, invulnerability, wanderlust or enchantment. This is common. It is important to continue organizing. Brainstorm future projects to help keep the group focused, effective and inventive. Don’t be worried if people hate you—when you take an unpopular stance (and we certainly hope you do), expect to be unpopular.

This may be a great time to collectively write a statement in order to communicate the group’s politics. This may help build consensus within the group, encourage more people to get involved and create future actions that work together to build a sustainable culture of resistance. A statement of purpose may give the group focus and direction in order to work toward future actions that articulate the politics of the group in as many relevant directions as possible. Of course, this may also lead to arguing endlessly over differences instead of building an environment where direct action can flourish, so proceed with caution, creativity, glamour, intrigue and clamor.

**\*We are still organizing; if you are in the Bay hit us up.**

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# GAY SHAME

## A VIRUS IN THE SYSTEM

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO A TRANS/QUEER EXTRAVAGANZA THAT BRINGS DIRECT ACTION TO SPECTACULAR LEVELS OF CONFRONTATION. WE WORK COLLECTIVELY OUTSIDE BORING AND DECEPTIVE NON-PROFIT MODELS TO FIGHT WHITE SUPREMACY, CAPITALISM, ABLEISM, COPS, SETTLER COLONIALISM AND ALL FORMS OF DOMINATION. LIBERALS THINK WE ARE FRIVOLOUS DECORATIONS AND MAINSTREAM GAYS WANT US GONE. AGAINST THEM AND WITH EACH OTHER WE INSTIGATE IRRITATE, AND AGITATE, TO BUILD CULTURES OF DEVASTATING RESISTANCE.**