

# Non-Escalation Guidelines for Third Actors: Staying Peaceful, On Message, and Resolute

At Third Act, we show up with purpose, dignity, and the wisdom of experience. Our strength lies in our calm, collective presence—especially in moments of tension. We practice nonviolence in both moral and practical terms, in the spirit of Martin Luther King jr., who wrote: “Nonviolent resistance is a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love.”

These guidelines are here to help us all safely and effectively engage in nonviolent protests, rallies, actions, and other public gatherings. Our goal is to ensure everyone feels prepared—especially when interacting with people who may disagree, disrupt, or attempt to provoke.

## 1. Stay grounded in our values

- We are nonviolent in word and action.
- We speak from love—for future generations, for the planet, and for democracy.
- We lead by example, showing what elder leadership looks like: wise, composed
- We Practice our [Third Act Working Principles](#). A strong and healthy culture rooted in kindness makes Third Act productive, safe, and joyful for those involved.

## 2. Be intentional with your voice and body

- Speak with clarity, not anger. Use your voice strategically, not reactively.
- Our signs, songs, and silence often speak louder than reactive words.
- Avoid engaging in shouting matches or verbal sparring. If chanting or speaking, stay unified and on message. Avoid reactive slogans or personalized insults.
- Maintain neutral body language and calm facial expressions.
- Remember: our collective voice—through chants, stories, and song—is powerful when focused and aligned.

## 3. Don't engage with detractors

- Keep your distance from those attempting to provoke or disrupt.
- Do not argue or confront people trying to escalate.
- If someone else is escalating, your calm energy can help defuse the moment. A soft word or gentle redirection can go a long way.

### *If you are approached by someone hostile:*

- Breathe deeply and stay calm
- Say: “I’m here for a peaceful protest. I wish you well.” Then disengage.
- Walk away slowly and calmly (let them vent if they must); emotional regulation is part of the work—and it’s contagious.

## 4. Remember: We represent more than ourselves

- Every action we take reflects on our movement. Let’s embody the future we want to build—one of justice, care, and fierce compassion.
- Avoid behaviors like shouting, cursing, or shoving—especially if provoked. And be aware that protests are documented and these moments can get exaggerated in photos

or video, misrepresenting the broader, peaceful action or drawing the wrong kind of attention to our community.

- Assume your presence, signs, and speech may be recorded or shared out of context. Represent your values accordingly. Always imagine that your speech or sign may end up in the news—for better and for worse!

## **5. Prepare with awareness and care**

- Use a buddy system whenever possible. Stay emotionally and physically connected.
- Take breaks, stay hydrated, and know when to step away.
- Trust designated organizers or marshals for instructions during the event.

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### **💡 Recommendation: Choose a press contact or spokesperson for your Working Group**

As your Working Group becomes more visible, reporters and partners may want to talk to someone directly. Having a designated press contact or media spokesperson ensures your group's voice is clear, confident, and aligned with Third Act's values.

Here's what we recommend when selecting someone for this role:

#### **1. Choose Someone Who Speaks with Clarity and Calm**

- The ideal spokesperson is a clear communicator who can stay grounded — especially when questions are tough or surprising.
- They don't need to have media experience, but they should feel comfortable speaking in public and being quoted.

#### **2. Look for Someone Who Embodies Your Group's Values**

- A good spokesperson brings your local story to life.
- They should be able to speak authentically about why your group cares about climate, democracy, and the future—with warmth, urgency, and focus.

#### **3. Keep Message Discipline in Mind**

- The press contact should feel comfortable sticking to core messages, not veering off into personal opinions or unrelated issues.
- We'll support with top-line talking points and training—your job is to bring them to life with local context.
- Ideally, a spokesperson can feel comfortable pivoting to their main message and talking points regardless of the question from a reporter so that your main points come across.

#### **4. Availability Matters**

- Choose someone who can respond relatively quickly to emails or calls from reporters, or who can easily loop in a backup if needed.

#### **5. Make It a Team Effort**

- Consider naming a small media team of 2–3 people, with one primary contact and one or two backups.