

Occupy Boston Commits to Anti-Oppression

<http://www.occupyboston.org/2012/03/07/occupy-boston-commits-anti-oppression/>

This is a living document, ratified by the General Assembly on March 6, 2012:

Oppression exists on many different levels. This statement has been designed to address attitudes and behaviors, and we will continue to address the institutional and cultural levels of oppression.

Statement of Commitment to Challenge Oppression

We acknowledge that it is important to honor these values in order to effectively challenge oppression and build a more just and equitable community:

I enter this space with a commitment to mutual respect, conflict resolution, compassion, collaboration, cooperation and direct democracy.

I commit to supporting the empowerment of each person in order to subvert the histories and structures of oppression that marginalize and divide us.

I recognize that I may still have a lot to learn about types of oppression and I commit to learn.

I refrain from violence or threats of violence in this space. I recognize that certain behaviors – such as shouting someone down at a meeting or trivializing oppression – are antithetical to caring communication and can be triggering.

I acknowledge that there are others who may be quieter or less assertive than myself who also deserve equality in the direct democracy process. I may as a result need to remind myself to honor quiet moments to allow those people a safe space to speak.

I acknowledge that for a sustainable community to emerge & continue, I must aid in addressing the needs of the community, work collaboratively & cooperatively with others & be flexible when suggesting solutions.

Community Agreement to Commit to Anti-Oppression

We speak only for ourselves, and commit to hearing each other and creating opportunities for all voices to be heard, especially for those that have been historically marginalized or silenced, and for those that continue to be oppressed.

We agree that issues which are not on the agenda may arise during a meeting and need to be recognized. We agree that a way needs to be given to address these issues. Such priority is needed to create and support an anti-oppressive space.

As a community, we commit to developing creative and transformative ways to address harm. We seek to affirm the experience of those who were harmed while allowing all involved parties to transform conflict and cycles of abuse.

4th Iteration of Terra/Joe's Tactical Diversity proposal

As a group, the Occupy Movement has employed a wide range of tactics to express our dissent from the undemocratic, inequalitarian forces in American society, and to contest inequitable ownership and control of “property,” on behalf of the 99% and the human rights of all people. Among these tactics, we are proud to be identified with “Occupation”-- which we define as the non-violent holding of sites—a tactic with deep roots in American popular protest movements. We seek a society that prioritizes human over property rights. Nevertheless, we respect “property”, insofar as it is a product of human labor and needed for human survival.

Occupy does not impose ideological uniformity on its members. Our members define the limits of appropriate means towards our movement's goals in very different ways. For this reason, we have defined a policy of “separation of time and space”. That policy holds that all participants in any larger action respect the limits of other participants. Any group planning to go beyond those limits should avoid making anyone an unintentional participant in actions they oppose by “separating {their action} in time and space” from the larger action.

Nevertheless-whatever our ideological diversity, Occupy, as a movement, does not endorse or aid in purposeful violence against people, or the intentional destruction of property as a protest tactic. We do, however, reserve the options of:

- *reasonable action necessary to self-defense
- *unintentional destruction of property in the course of protest and/or occupation
- *actions with an expressive or symbolic rather than destructive intent.

It is our earnest desire that non-violent tactics succeed in realizing the humane transformation of society we seek. But we also note that it is an American tradition as old as the Declaration of Independence to resist by force, if the exhaustion of other means makes it necessary, the tyrannical denial of our inalienable human rights.

Note on “revision history” of doc

1. Terra's original is essentially par. 3
 2. responding to discussion, we added Bullet points
and par. 1, defining “occupation” as non-violent and non-destructive.
 3. after more discussion, added par. 4 on “right of revolution”
 4. after last discussion, added par. 2 defining “separation of time and space”, and modernized grammar
- 1.

Note on original Occupy statement on “Tactical Diversity”

That document, from last year, is essentially a version of the “St. Paul Principles”, first assembled for use by a one-time coalition of groups protesting the Republican National Convention in 2008- a coalition not lasting longer than the convention itself. They were never intended for, and in our view are highly unsuited to be the basis for a multi-focused, long term group like Occupy now seeks to become, able to work coherently, cooperatively, and transparently on a great variety of progressive social and political projects over an extended period. If Occupy wants a life beyond its founding era of “encampment”, it will need to invent for itself a structure that can combine internal transparency, responsibility, democracy, and autonomy for different types of tactics, in a way that also makes Occupy a more potent group in action. We hope this statement of values and tactics can be part of that re-structuring.