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October 29, 2020

**ELECTION EDITION**

# Bearing Witness

*Active Bystander Training*



Mission Impact  
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE U.S.**

# Housekeeping



This webinar will be  
**recorded.**



Use the Q/A section to  
add your questions  
and direct them to  
certain speakers.



Use the Chat Box to  
share commentary  
and to participate in  
scenarios activity.  
Staff will be  
monitoring it.



**Note:** Double check  
send your message in  
the chat box to “All  
Panelists and  
Attendees”

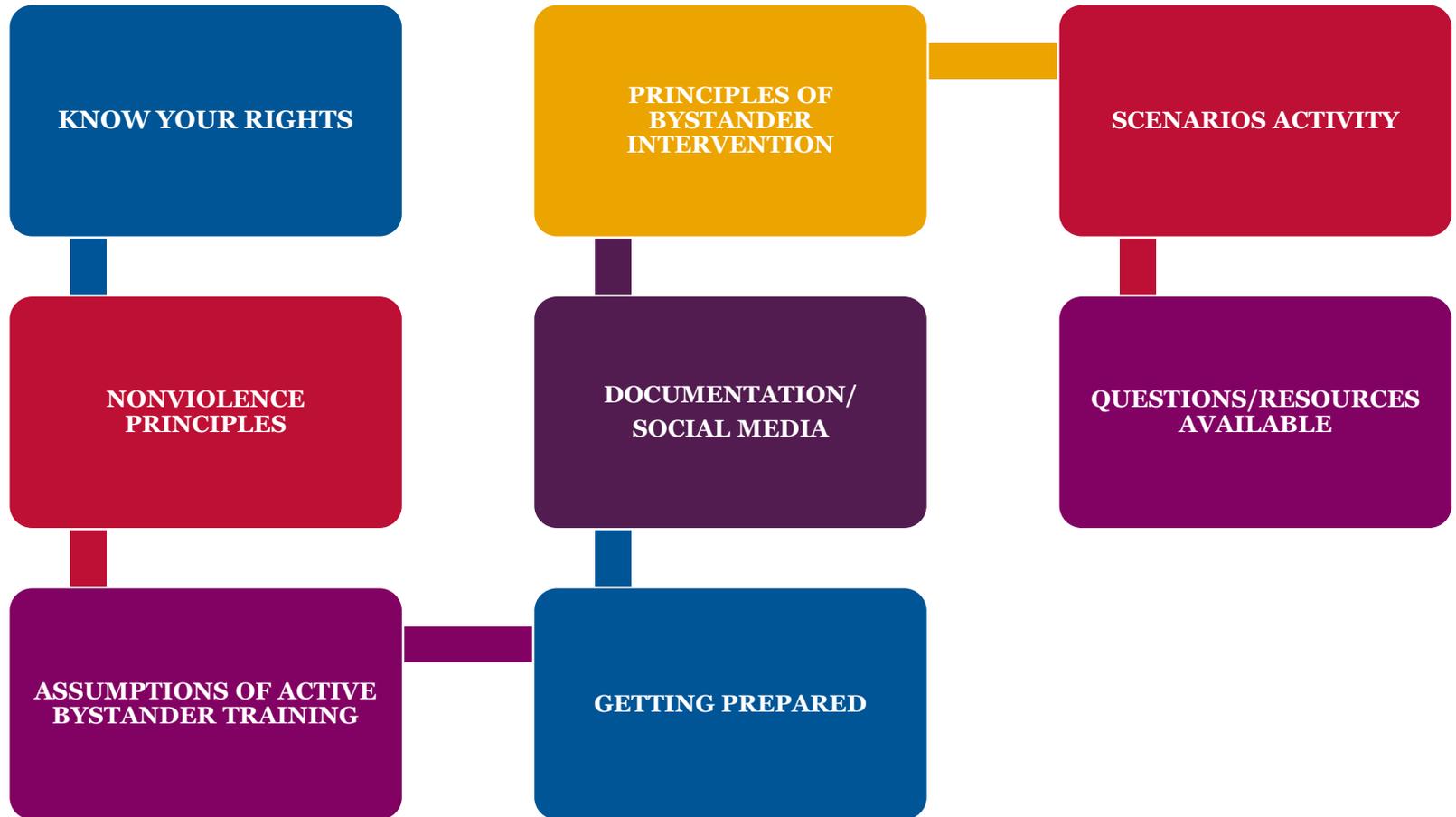


# Alma Couverthie

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**National Organizing Director (she/her/ella)**

# Agenda



# By the end of this training, you will understand:

You will know your rights, free of intimidation



Background and Principles of non-violence discipline



Improved skills of de-escalation based on principles



Resources Available

# Community Norms



Bring your full self and limit distractions.



What is learned here, leaves here.



Use active and reflective listening.



Protect  
Democracy

Rachel Homer

Counsel at Protect Democracy

# Know Your Rights: Federal Law Prohibits Voter Intimidation

**You have the right to feel  
safe while you vote.**

*Federal law prohibits  
intimidation, threats, or  
coercion that interfere with, or  
that attempt to interfere with,  
your right to vote.*

*42 U.S.C. § 1985(3); 52 U.S.C. § 10101(b); 52 U.S.C. § 10307(b)*



# What Does Modern Voter Intimidation Look Like?

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- Armed militia members harassing voters waiting in line
- Overly aggressive poll monitors following voters to the polls and photographing voters' license plates

# What Does Modern Voter Intimidation Look Like?

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- Falsely telling voters that if they vote, someone will check if they outstanding warrants and unpaid debts
- Threatening to call ICE because a voter "looks illegal"

# What Does Modern Voter Intimidation Look Like?

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- Displaying false signs about "voter fraud" that threaten false criminal penalties
- Harassing or aggressively questioning voters who are speaking a language other than English

# What about campaigning? What about people carrying guns?

- Supporters have a right to campaign (subject to state laws about location)
- Depending on state law, individuals might have the right to carry firearms, but cannot use them to intimidate voters
- No one has a right to intimidate voters

# Bearing Witness

*If we are aware of an injustice, there is a responsibility on us to do what we can to reduce that injustice.*



GREENPEACE

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# Jonathan Butler

**Democracy Campaigner (they/them)**

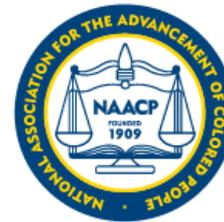
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**When you engage in nonviolent activism, you are part of a long line of activists who have done the same thing across history**

What are some examples of this that come to mind? **Put it in the chat.**

# Principles Laid Out by Dr. King

- Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people
- Nonviolence seeks to win through friendship and understanding
- Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people
- Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform (geared toward peaceful protest and civil disobedience)
- Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate
- Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.



**NAACP**  
*Youth & College*

# Wisdom Cole

**National Organizing Manager (he/him/his)**

# Bystander Intervention Training Assumes:



# #1

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We have an ethical, social and political **obligation** to help each other, when we are in a position (situationally and psychologically) to do so.

# #2

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Stepping up to act in **solidarity** with others can help to reduce the impact of a problematic situation.

# #3

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The best way of responding as a bystander is through **de-escalation**.

# #4

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As a bystander, you are there to **support** what the targeted person wants.

# #5

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**Practicing** how to respond helps us to get past our hesitations so we can step up when necessary.

# How to Prepare Yourself



As yourself certain  
questions



Be aware of what's  
happening around  
you



Don't assume  
someone else will  
do something



Don't do it alone-  
use teamwork



Make contact



# Brittny Baxter

Training & Movement Building Coordinator (she/her/hers)

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# Documentation/Social Media

- Put your phone in “Do Not Disturb” mode
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Always record with the phone sideways.
- Keep your phone as stable as possible.
- Provide necessary context but don’t distract from what is happening
- When posting on social media be sure to add time and location
- Always check your local laws around recording and documentation



# Principles of Bystander Intervention

## **We want to show moral courage:**

- by acting from a centered place despite our fears
- by choosing principles over emotion (anxiety, anger, self-righteousness)

## **We want to engage in de-escalation:**

- by limiting the ability of a situation to become more intense
- by reducing the drama in the situation

# Principles of Bystander Intervention

## **We want to shift the attention:**

- by interacting as much as we can only with the targeted person
- by ignoring the attacker
- by creating a safer space for the targeted person
- by bringing in other people for additional support and varied responses



# Principles of Bystander Intervention

## **We want to reach out to the targeted person:**

- by being present as an ally and an equal
- by not taking away the ability of the targeted person to respond
- by asking if they want our help
- by asking before we touch them
- by asking how we can best help them
- by offering possible solutions
- by offering emotional support and empathy



What would  
you do?

*Scenarios*



# Maddie Schumacher

**Legislative & Policy Specialist for Justice Reform (they/them)**

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# Community-Based Scenarios

## **SCENARIO 1**

During early voting, a group of demonstrators at the polling place are displaying banners and signs while loudly chanting support for their preferred candidate.

## **RESPONSE**

- Under the law, this is not voter intimidation.
- This may feel awkward for some, but this is a protected activity under the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment.
- Best recommendation: Ignore
- Remain alert in case conditions change.



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# Community-Based Scenarios

## **SCENARIO 2**

Man harassing a woman with a hijab who is waiting in line to vote 10 feet ahead of you.

## **RESPONSE**

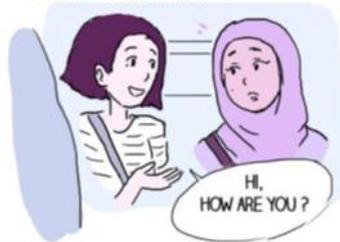
- Approach the targeted person (ask them if you can join) and ignore the attacker.
- Recruit other people-ask the targeted person if they would like to move somewhere else with you.

## What to do if you are witnessing Islamophobic harassment

A bystander's guide to help the person who's being targeted



- 1 Engage conversation.**  
Go to them, sit beside them and say hello. Try to appear calm, collected and welcoming. **IGNORE THE ATTACKER.**



- 3 Keep building the safe space.**  
Keep eye contact with them and don't acknowledge the attacker's presence: the absence of response from you two will push them to leave the area shortly.



- 2 Pick a random subject and start discussing it.**  
It can be anything: a movie you liked, the weather, saying you like something they wear and asking where they got it...



- 4 Continue the conversation until the attacker leaves & escort them to a safe place if necessary.**  
Bring them to a neutral area where they can recollect themselves; respect their wishes if they tell you they're ok and just want to go.



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# Community-Based Scenarios

## **SCENARIO 3**

Person harassing a Latino man speaking Spanish while waiting in line to vote.

## **RESPONSE**

- Approach the targeted person (especially if you speak Spanish) Don't worry about losing your place.
- Find an election official



# Final Thoughts

- This is an active bystander training. We cannot train you for immediate life-threatening incidents.
- During emergencies we strongly encourage to leave the area as quickly as possible with as many as people as possible.
- Do not attempt to engage or de-escalate a dangerous situation.



# Resources

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- Voter Intimidation Explainer
- Active Bystander Handout & Training Materials
- **Election Protection Hotlines**
  - English 866-OUR-VOTE
  - SPANISH/ENGLISH 888-VE-Y-VOTA
  - ASIAN LANGUAGES/ENGLISH 888-API-VOTE
  - ARABIC/ENGLISH 844-YALLA-US

# Election Protection Hotline

Make sure you are prepared to vote in your state's upcoming elections. Find state-specific information including voter registration deadlines, absentee ballot information, and election dates.



# Questions?