

Legal  
Observer  
Training



# What is a legal observer?

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Legal observers are individuals, usually representatives of civilian human rights agencies, who attend public demonstrations, protests and other activities where there is a potential for conflict between the public or activists and the police, security guards or other law enforcement personnel. The purpose of legal observers is to monitor, record and report on any unlawful or improper behavior by the police or other government authorities.



# What is a legal observer?

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- Non Participant
- Trained witness
- Help ensure that people's right to protest is not unduly interfered with



# Know your role

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You are not a peacekeeper

You do not give legal advice

You do not promise to help or intervene with police on behalf of anyone

You do not promise legal representation for anyone

Be courteous, and alert organizers or police to any immediate problems

**You are suspending your First Amendment rights to protect the First Amendment rights of others.**



# Know your role

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Neutral, impartial  
volunteers

Silently document

Observe police

Witness arrests



# What legal observers should not do

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Do not get arrested

Do not intervene with police activities

Do not engage with the press much

Do not get arrested



# WHAT DO I DO IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

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- Stay calm
- Contact the nearest Legal Observer or Site Coordinator
- Contact support staff at the ACLU of Hawai'i
- OBEY POLICE ON SITE.



# WHAT IF SOMEONE APPROACHES ME WITH QUESTIONS?

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Please engage people and police about what you are doing!

Media/press – send all media to the ACLU Hawai‘i Executive Director, Salmah Rizvi

People seeking legal help?





# DOCUMENTING

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Photos, videos and written notes



# WHAT TO WATCH FOR

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Constitutionally protected activity

Sidewalks, parks, plazas in front of government buildings, protest routes

Record police interactions on your phone

Record counter protestors interactions on your phone

See suspicious police practices?

Record Aggressive counter protesting

Keep a safe distance, record & report!

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# HOW TO DOCUMENT

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- We must objectively and independently describe events.
- Our job is to document police violence & misbehavior, compile reports & serve as witnesses if needed.
- Attorney work product of the ACLU of Hawai'i and other Civil Rights Agencies
- Notepad, plastic bags, ballpoint pen & Sharpie
- Smart phone= contemporaneous reporting
- Time stamp
- List of media/attorney contacts



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# LAW ENFORCEMENT BEHAVIOR & SPECIFICS TO DOCUMENT

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- Position in relation to protest
- What agencies are present? (UH Security/HPD/Sheriffs)
- Warnings given, what they said & when
- Officers' conduct and force used
- ID information and physical description
- Badge number
- Officer name & rank
- License plates
- Types of vehicles
- Times
- Witness contact info



photo: Michael L. Mitchell



# WHAT IS NONVIOLENT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

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Peaceful To Unlawful...in Seconds

# AFTER THE PROTEST

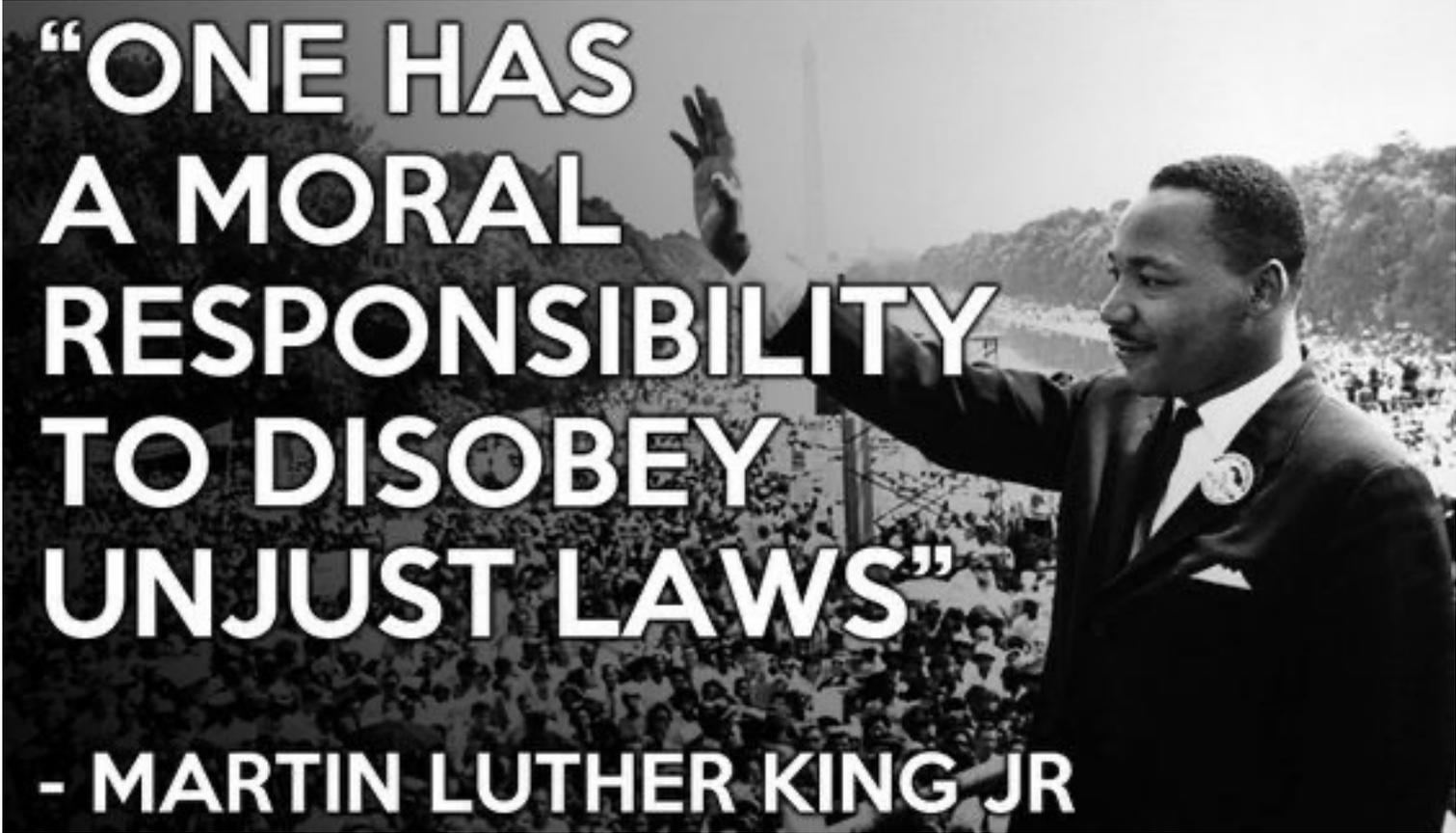
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- Check in with your team before you leave
- Return notes, materials, t-shirts, vests etc., and get questions answered
- Determine if media or legal representation needs to be contacted
- Be ready, willing & able to be a witness in a possible future lawsuit.



# Questions

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**“ONE HAS  
A MORAL  
RESPONSIBILITY  
TO DISOBEY  
UNJUST LAWS”**

**- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR**