

# NIGHT OUT FOR SAFETY AND LIBERATION

## Community Organizing Toolkit

### INTRODUCTION

During Night Out for Safety and Liberation (NOSL) we want to start a different conversation about public safety—one that is less grounded in fear and punishment, and more focused on how we can build equity and power by investing in our communities.

NOSL is an opportunity to redefine and reimagine what #SafetyIs. Through events like block parties, rallies, and teach-ins, and a social media campaign under the umbrella #SafetyIs, organizations can change the narrative about public safety.

The NOSL Community Organizing Toolkit is a resource for organizations to connect their campaign work to NOSL, find ideas for activities before, during, and after NOSL, and find templates to use in organizing related to NOSL.

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#### I. What is Night Out for Safety and Liberation (NOSL)?

On Night Out for Safety and Liberation on the first Tuesday of August, we redefine and re-imagine what public safety means for our communities.

Night Out for Safety and Liberation began in 2013, as an alternative to the more police-centric National Night Out, which highlights police-community partnerships as the pathway to community safety.

Too often, conversations about public safety revolve around policing and punishment. But safety is about more than that—it's about having a living wage job, healthy food, healthcare, housing, education, and more.

Changing the narrative about what safety means is the first step towards winning reinvestment in the resources our communities need to thrive.

### [Talking points for Night Out for Safety and Liberation.](#)

## II. Guiding Questions: Connecting Campaign Work to NOSL

- In what ways is our current work advancing a new vision for public safety?
- Are we engaging in reinvestment campaigns/initiatives/policies? If we are, we can connect that reinvestment work to supporting a new vision of public safety because community investments mean safer, stronger communities. If we aren't, what are some opportunities to call for reinvestment that is connected to our current work? Examples:
  - **School to prison pipeline:** eliminating zero tolerance policies can be connected to reinvestment by including a demand related to investment in lower student/counselor ratios through divestment from school police.
  - **Housing justice:** passing tenant protections can be connected to reinvestment by including a demand related to investment in more low-income/emergency housing. Passing a policy that decriminalizes infractions/charges resulting from homelessness would result in reduced police, jail, and District Attorney costs
  - **Jail/Prison closures/Sentencing reform:** include a demand identifying where to reinvest savings from reduced rates of incarceration. If sentencing reform campaign is related to drug sentencing, savings could go towards community-based treatment alternatives.
  - **Addressing state violence:** working to win police accountability or to end police brutality in your community can be connected to demands for city government to invest in public health solutions to public health issues rather than using law-enforcement based responses. Find out if neighbors in your area meet with police to discuss issues of public safety, and identify if there is an opportunity to encourage a more public health oriented conversation about safety.
- What is the goal of our NOSL event? How can we use NOSL activities to:
  - Introduce people to our work, and
  - Connect people more deeply with our work
- What is the “ask” we want to identify to engage people after the NOSL event? I.e. come to a city council meeting, join Freedom Cities, attend a townhall, join a member meeting, etc.
- How does NOSL help build/expand/position your base? Your issue? Your message?
- Is your messaging reflective of the NOSL framework and your own organization's values and mission?

### III. NOSL Activities

**A. Leading Up to NOSL:** Consider what events/activities your organization can engage in to make your NOSL event as impactful as possible for your campaign work.

- Plan your event/block party at a park or other public space ([see event planning tool template, including comprehensive checklist of considerations](#)). Involve your members/base in the planning if possible.
- Canvas in the neighborhood you will be hosting your event to get the word out. Include inviting people to the NOSL event in your ongoing organizing efforts.
- Write a blog post on why your organization is participating in NOSL and share it with your listserv and social media followers.
- Share sample social media posts.

**B. Day of NOSL:** Consider what activities would make NOSL more than an event, and an opportunity to advance campaign work. Identify next steps to ask people to take during the NOSL event, and how to keep newly engaged members connected to your campaign work. Communicate the next step during the NOSL and sign people up.

- **Event ideas:**
  - Community forum
  - Block party
  - Mobilization (march, direct action)
  - Concert
  - Town hall
  - Teach-in
  - Film screening
  - Potluck dinner
  - Canvassing
  - Picnic
- **Activity ideas:**
  - Community mapping—Print a large map of the city/neighborhood where your event is happening. Ask people to mark locations on the map that are significant to them.
  - Community timeline—Community members create a timeline together, identifying significant moments that have happened in the neighborhood.
  - Find Someone Who...—This is a good icebreaker for neighbors and community members. Create a list of characteristics like “Has lived in this city since they were born,” “Has moved here within the last year,” “Owns a local business,” etc. Hand out the list of characteristics and ask people to find someone at the event who has one of those characteristics. The goal is for people to get to know each other better and to meet new people in their community.
  - Theater of the Oppressed—Theater tool for social change. Learn more: <http://www.mandalaforchange.com/applied-theatre/theatre-of-the-oppressed/>.
  - Employment support—Station providing resume support, free headshots, etc.

- Trainings—Know your rights, community first aid, or other trainings your members have asked for.
- Letter writing—If your organization is connected to people on the inside, set-up a table where members can write to people who are currently incarcerated.
- Take a pledge/sign a petition—If you have a pledge or petition related to a local campaign, ask community members to sign.
- Create Direct Action Visuals—Have an upcoming protest or demonstration? Provide art supplies so that people at your NOSL event can create posters, artwork, and other visuals to amplify messaging and presence for your next action.
- Community services—Reach out to local agencies who provide support for the community to see if they would like to set-up a booth at the event. For example, reaching out to the Public Defender's office to set up a table explaining legal rights, impacts of ballot initiatives, legislation, or policies, etc.
- Set-up a live art/mural space—Construct a large canvas by using a wall, or other structure and allow NOSL attendees to illustrate their thoughts around the themes of the event.
- Open mic or storytelling corner—Allow community members to share-out their experiences related to community safety.
- Health and healing corner—Free massage, acupuncture, reiki, aikido, etc. Look for local healers in your area, connect with local vendors who sell healing remedies and see if they would like to set-up a table at your event. Here are some websites with some resources and provider services to get you started: <http://www.soularbliss.com/about-soular-bliss/>, <https://thisbridgecalledourhealth.wordpress.com/>.
- Kids corner—Games and activities for kids and families to enjoy (coloring pages, bubbles, relay races, etc).
- Performances—Identify local artists, poets, musicians, and others to perform.
- Virtual participation
  - Follow the conversation on twitter using #SafetyIs, #NOSL, and #NOSL19
  - Share sample social media posts.

**C. Post NOSL:** Now that your event is over, consider the best way to keep people engaged. The following are suggestions related to other campaigns/movements to connect members to, as well as additional activities to try out with members if they relate to your campaign work.

[Freedom Cities is a new framework](#) that envisions safety as our communities having the resources they need to thrive. It emerged from the leadership of people directly affected by policies that jail, displace, and economically marginalize Black and Brown communities. The Freedom Cities framework focuses on making entire cities, towns, and communities safe for immigrants, Black people, Muslims, workers, and all oppressed communities, without reliance on policing and punishment.

In reimagining safety and belonging, people of color, immigrants, women, Muslims, LGBTQ people, workers, youth, and undocumented people will build power from the bottom up to create a world of justice, liberation, dignity, and safety. Freedom Cities aims to create communities of unity without fear and hate and aims to keep power in the hands of our communities. The Freedom Cities framework includes demands like sanctuary policies, investment in humanity and our planet, safety beyond policing, real community control, worker rights, community defense, and divestment from militarization and programs that oppress our people.



#### **Learn More:**

<http://freedomcities.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7SZwrpPPUY&t=3s>

#### **Get involved with the Harm Free Zone Project!**

WHAT? Move from imagining public safety with your community to implementing it. Following the guidance of SpiritHouse in Durham, North Carolina, [The Harm Free Zone Project](#) emphasizes independent and self directing community autonomy as a necessary step towards creating accountability for our communities, and reduces our reliance on law enforcement.

HOW? Begin to engage your community in the idea of what it means to organize around collective safety practices. Some questions you may want to ask include: What are some ways that we can build a community network that watches OUT for our neighbors rather than surveils/polices them? How do we regularly hold welcoming spaces for the community to come together in relationship? What causes the most harm to our communities? What are our top priorities as they relate to safety for our community? Who helps to lead and guide our communities? Discuss and note findings, and be sure to get contact information from those participating so you may update and continue to engage them throughout the process of creating a public safety system within your community, by your community. To transform your conversation into practice, [reach out out to those building the Project](#) to figure out which resources, tools and trainings are available to strengthen and develop our capacity to confront and transform harm.

**Learn More:**

<https://www.facebook.com/harmfreezone/>

Contact Nia Wilson for more information: [spirithouse@gmail.com](mailto:spirithouse@gmail.com)

**Follow-up Activities:****PhotoVoice<sup>1</sup>**

WHAT? Photovoice is a process in which people – usually those with limited power due to poverty, language barriers, race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, or other circumstances – use video and/or photo images to capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others.

HOW? After your NOSL event, ask community members to document aspects of their environment and lived experiences through photography and/or videography. Collect the photos. If you ask community members to take pictures before, during, or after the event, ask them to send in their pictures with a description and decide how you want to share the stories that have been captured- E-Zine? Exhibit? Townhall? Get creative!

Once the pictures have been collected, facilitate a discussion around what people captured on film. What does the photo show? What meaning can we draw from the picture - what does it tell us about safety? What institutions have created this issue? What could this image look like in a truly safe and protected neighborhood?

**Learn More:**

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/potovoice/main>

<http://people.umass.edu/afeldman/Photovoice.htm>

**Real Life Monopoly**

WHAT? This activity takes the popular board game of Monopoly and makes it life-sized, with a reality twist! Usually the game gives each player a fair chance at winning, but this version of Monopoly asserts certain privileges to particular pieces, while other pieces are placed at extreme disadvantages. This allows us to understand the myth of “meritocracy” and the idea that we all start on even-footing.

HOW? You can find [detailed rules and facilitator notes here](#). The game should be followed by a discussion of what happened and how it connects to systems of oppression. Feel free to get creative and make your own board, pieces, and rules, catered to the lived experiences of your base!

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<sup>1</sup> This is a modified version of PhotoVoice. Please visit the website for the original activity description and goals.

Learn More:

[Link to Monopoly Rules](#)

Similar games that focus on effects of inequity: [Stack the Deck](#), [Take the Privilege Walk](#)

### **Timeline Activity**

WHAT? Using an interactive timeline around an issue relevant to your organization's campaign work, engage your base with key moments that contributed to the criminalization of and divestment from our communities. The issue or theme can be local, state, or federally based, and/or a combination of the 3. Here are some examples:

- The money bail system
- Drug sentencing enhancements
- Local prison/jail expansions

HOW? Choose a key theme and establish a timeframe around the interactive timeline you want to produce. Identify key points of influence regarding your topic. You may type up key dates and the events, art pieces, literature, speech clips, budget priorities/policies, etc. of the time, with summarizing descriptions on separate sheets of paper. Then using butcher paper, create a large timeline around the room/space, and tape the events in chronological order. To make the session more interactive, you can hand out post-its to participants and allow them to place them under an event on the timeline that they recall had a significant impact for them or their communities. Allow time for discussion of the historical context of the issue at hand, but also how personal stories intersect with the timeline.

Activities like these and others like them also help gain a temperature check of your base. What issues resonate with them? Which are they curious to learn more about?

Learn More:

<http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/7188>

<http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/racismimmigration-timeline.pdf>

## **IV. Templates**

Please feel free to use the below materials, templates and guides to make your NOSL events a success.

- A. [Sample discussion questions](#)
- B. [Event planning tool](#)