



Community Response Guide

*Your Community **Can** Stand Up To Hate*

This *Community Response Guide* is for people just getting started in taking a stand against the fascist street gangs trying to spread hate in their neighborhood.

Experienced anti-hate organizers should check out our [Street Teams Guide](#) to help them take their activism to the next level.

You can download your copy and check for updates of this *Community Response Guide* at <https://taskforcebutler.org/community>.

Background:

A Fascist Street Gang is Spreading Hate in My Neighborhood

Yes, it's awful AND *you are not alone*.

You don't have to tolerate the creeping advancement of hate in your community.

Task Force Butler's *Community Response Guide* is a roadmap to help you identify the problem, form partnerships with your neighbors, make smart and safe choices about how to respond and then...get in action!

Research has shown that neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and other fascist street gangs are increasingly targeting American communities with graffiti, flyers, and other acts of property destruction and intimidation.

Seeing racial slurs and hateful slogans displayed boldly can be shocking when first encountered. The appearance of this type of hate speech is a cause for concern...but not panic. There are actions you can take on your own or, ideally, with the help of other community members.

What are their objectives?

America's fascist street gangs are desperate for attention and new recruits.

They have embraced a strategy of outrage-inducing stunts to make a play for relevance and to gin up attention that will lead to new recruits. **The centerpiece of this strategy is to induce fear and provoke outrage.** But fear and outrage aren't the only desired ends.

These fascist gangs tend to have relatively few members, experience *a lot* of turnover and are broke. To appear bigger, stronger, and scarier than they are, they gather what few members they have and coerce them into dedicating all of their time, money, and energy into promoting their fascist gang.

For the price of a few stickers or spray painted stencils – generally purchased from the gang as a condition of their membership – they can generate a lot of fear and outrage.

Those responses, in turn, generate media attention that platforms their hate message. A local news story about a fascist gang putting up a racist sticker on a college campus in Florida can end up getting national attention – which can result in recruits coming into the group from around the country.

Their ultimate objective is to accelerate violent conflict. Their theory of the case is that media stunts will draw new recruits that they can radicalize and inspire to take action in their cult to violence.

How do you undermine their objective of inspiring violence?

You can make a difference by developing a community response that uses lawful means to hold them accountable, and amplifies the voices of those who reject their message.

It's our collective responsibility to demand our local law enforcement and legislative leaders work within the law to make being an active member of a hate group a difficult and expensive lifestyle choice.

If we disincentivize this behavior, we can stop them before they achieve their ultimate goal of facilitating violence.

Paramount is prioritizing the safety of your community and yourself.

If you encounter activity or evidence of activity by a hate group, you do not need to put yourself at risk in order to document or counteract their activity. If you feel that the guidance we offer below would cause you physical, emotional, psychological, or other forms of harm, please share this guide with members of your community who may be better positioned to actively engage in these issues.

What To Do When You Discover Hate Group Activity

Build a community response to extremist activity.

Even in areas or communities where extremist groups feel they have popular support for their hate, you do not need to take this on alone. Organize and build coalitions with others who are as distressed and disgusted by hate groups. [This guide](#) from the Bard Center for the Study of Hate, Western States Center, and the Montana Human Rights Network provides a more in depth approach to establishing a community response to hate activity.

Identify your goals.

What is your criteria for success? Who will need to be involved to meet this criteria? What kind of timeline will be needed to achieve these goals? Do you have fall-back, or best alternative positions?

Be honest and clear about the possible risks.

While the desire to counteract hateful activity in your community is often universal, the willingness to work with the authorities may not be. If your community partners have had past negative experiences with law enforcement or hate groups, they may not feel comfortable communicating with law enforcement or civil society organizations.

Ensure that everyone involved knows the potential risks associated with counteracting hate groups, and that all interactions with law enforcement, elected officials, civil society organizations, or the press are clearly communicated in advance. If you become known for your fight against fascist street gangs, the potential risks include being targeted for harassment by hate groups, their followers, and extremist propagandists. Hate groups frequently seek to intimidate those working against them by targeting families, friends, and employers with online and real-world threats.

Create a safe, accessible, and restricted space for group communication.

Using encrypted communication apps like Signal or WhatsApp can be an effective way to safely coordinate with your community partners. These apps allow for some degree of anonymity for community partners who may not wish to have their names associated with responding to hate activity. By creating a central place for all involved to communicate openly, you can develop a plan together and strengthen your community's ability to respond to any future activity.

Develop your response and communicate it with your community.

Once you've established who will be helping you respond to the hate activity, we encourage your community response group to develop a plan together and ensure it's been communicated before you act. If you are going to report or interact with law enforcement, civil society organizations, or local elected officials it's important that all involved in the community response are aware of who is doing the communicating and what will be shared.

Document the activity using the techniques of the SALUTE acronym.

Whether it's discovering racist fliers distributed on your lawn in the night, or finding a mural celebrating peace and diversity destroyed by spray painted racist slogans – a critical step to protecting your community and holding these gangs accountable is ***creating visual evidence about the activity.***

If the immediate area looks secure, **take 3-5 good quality pictures of any physical evidence you discover with your phone**, ideally in landscape mode rather than portrait mode. Try to fit the entire subject into the frame.

If the evidence is too large for a single image (such as large graffiti or a banner drop) take as many pictures as necessary from left to right to fit the entire subject so they can easily be pieced together. If there is text on a sign, clothing, patch, etc, try to make it easily legible in your pictures.

SALUTE stands for: Size, Activity, Unit identification, Time, and Equipment. It's an easy way to ensure you have collected all the necessary information about extremist activity in a way that you can clearly communicate to others. This guide's checklist has more details.

- a. **SIZE** - Find ways to **quantify** what the fascist street gangs have done. Can you tell if it was a single member, or a team? Did a handful of stickers get posted on a single targeted building, or have hundreds of flyers been spread across multiple neighborhoods overnight?
- b. **ACTIVITY** - **What** did they do? Was private or public property damaged or destroyed? Did they harass or assault anyone? What crimes may have been committed?
- c. **LOCATION** - **Where** did this occur? On public or private property? Were they trespassing? **Why** did they choose this location? Because they were targeting a nearby minority community, minority-owned business, or children at a school? Can you tell what direction they were traveling in, or where they came from?

- d. UNIT IDENTIFICATION - **Who** did this? Did they self-identify by using a known gang's name, logo, slogan, or color scheme? Is there security footage showing them in a known gang uniform?
- e. TIME - **When** did this occur? Time and date that the suspected fascist street gang action took place?
- f. EQUIPMENT - **How** did they do this? Did they use stickers, or stencils and spray paint to deface property? Did they use break-in tools to access the property? Did they set fires, or burn road flares? Is there evidence that they used vehicles, such as to drop flyers throughout a neighborhood? Can recordings on doorbell cameras be used to identify the vehicles?

Limit social media activity and take steps to sanitize any visual evidence you post.

Your posts can make you a target!

Hate groups and threat actors often monitor social media in areas they have targeted, and publicly posting on an account with your information could turn you into a target. Sharing what you are encountering in a local forum (without images) or in a direct message with people you know and trust is a powerful - and safer - way to create community and spur action. If you must post from your personal account, avoid additional commentary that could make you a target.

If you choose to post on social media, take steps to ensure you are not platforming the hate group or message. Blurring out QR codes, URLs, mis/disinformation, and deliberately inflammatory hate speech must happen before posting images to social media. Ensure that you are not revealing any additional information about your location. For example, if you discover racist flyers in your driveway, do not reveal that you live at the location the flyers were discovered.

Know the applicable local, state, and federal laws.

Free speech is protected, yet there are limits. Your ability to identify and clearly articulate the ways specific local, state, or federal laws are being violated is a huge asset. Communicating these violations alongside your evidence can help unwieldy organizations respond quickly and appropriately.

Share your evidence with others who can improve your community's safety.

There are many organizations and institutions that may be able to assist in addressing this type of activity. Determining what type of response your community needs and ensuring you are contacting the right organizations is an important step in the process.

At the local and regional level, there are few forces as powerful as a group of aligned citizens, speaking with a unified voice, persistently demanding responsive action from local elected officials, law enforcement, and the media.

Do not underestimate the power of your collective action.

- **Civil Society Organizations**

- There are many national organizations who take extremist activity very seriously and focus on collecting as much information about these activities as possible in order to encourage government action and ensure accountability. Some of these organizations have been targeted by extreme politicians and media figures.
- It is important to remember that civil society organizations are not law enforcement, and therefore likely cannot respond to acute threats in your community. However, we have found them to be a crucial part of holding extremist actors and organizations accountable, and we encourage you to provide any evidence of extremist activity to them to facilitate accountability and to ensure a better understanding of the degree and severity of extremist activity on a national level.
- Many of these organizations have researchers and specialists who can provide resources to your community in the aftermath of extremist activity as well.
- The following organizations have substantial experience with extremist activity. They can provide useful resources for you and your community to both understand the activity you've documented, as well as help you create your community response. This list is not exhaustive, and certain organizations may not be applicable to your location.
 - [Southern Poverty Law Center](#)
 - [Anti Defamation League](#)
 - [Western States Center](#)

- **Law Enforcement (Federal, State, Local)**

- If you believe the extremist activity you've encountered poses an acute threat to people in your community, you should dial 911 immediately. Because law enforcement training and attitudes on extremist activity varies wildly across the country, you may need to educate law enforcement that responds to your call on the seriousness of the activity. Be specific about the threat or criminal act you are reporting. Be prepared to provide

responding officers with background context about extremist organizations or symbols that they might not recognize.

- ADL Hate Symbols Database:
<https://extremismterms.adl.org/resources/hate-symbols/search>
- ADL Glossary of Extremism: <https://extremismterms.adl.org/search>
- SPLC Extremist Files:
<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files>

- Researching your local and state law enforcement to determine if there is a department that focuses on civil rights crimes and/or extremist activity can help you get in touch with the relevant law enforcement personnel as quickly as possible.
- The FBI and Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division are exclusively focused on investigating [civil rights crimes on the federal level](#). If the extremist activity you encounter involves a national group and/or transportation across state lines, Task Force Butler recommends contacting federal law enforcement, however, you should manage your expectations.
- While frustrating, it's important to remember that not all extremist activity constitutes a criminal act. It has been our experience that federal law enforcement are focused on making arrests only in cases where life-threatening bias-motivated violence has already occurred, or when there's evidence of a suspect making a specific, serious, and imminent bias-motivated threat of violence against an intended victim. However, reporting extremist activity to law enforcement is an important part of holding both extremist actors and law enforcement accountable to threats to your community, and can help establish a pattern of activity that will be used against extremist actors if they continue to target communities in the future.
- When interacting with law enforcement, always ask for a point of contact. Whenever possible, communicate by email so that you can maintain your own record of your interactions with various agencies.

- **State Attorney General Civil Rights Department**

- Your state Attorney General office has a Civil Rights Department that is mandated to investigate civil rights crimes. Even if you've contacted local law enforcement, sending an email to your Attorney General Civil Rights

office with the evidence you've collected ensures they're involved in any law enforcement response to the activity you've encountered.

- **Local Elected Officials**

- Regardless of whether law enforcement is willing or able to act on local extremist activity, your local elected officials are responsible for keeping their constituents safe. Contacting your local, state, and federal elected officials via email will help pressure them into taking action.
- Attending a city or county board meeting and registering to speak during a public comment period is also an option, however your comments would become a matter of public record and may not be advisable depending on the political climate in your area.

- **Press**

- Contacting local, regional, or national press about your experience can be an effective way to ensure law enforcement and other officials take your concerns seriously, however your experience will vary wildly depending on the experience journalists have with covering extremist activity. Before you contact a journalist, Task Force Butler recommends reading past coverage of extremist activity by the same outlet or journalist to gauge their ability to responsibly and safely cover communities targeted by extremist groups.
- While national news outlets have the largest platform, they are rarely able to go beyond a single piece of coverage. We encourage working with local and regional press outlets, ideally ones that have journalists trained on covering extremist activity. These outlets are more invested in your community and can more closely cover the extremist activity and local political and law enforcement response.
- If you are concerned about being identified in a journalist's reporting, you will need to initiate an explicit conversation on the ground rules.
- Going "off the record" is a status that needs to be affirmatively entered by both the source (you) and the journalist. If you want to speak on background ("off the record,") you should clearly state in your communication that you want to speak to them "on background" or "off the record", and that you do not wish to be identified in their reporting. **Do not continue communicating unless and until the journalist confirms that the conversation is indeed occurring as you've stipulated: "on background" or "off the record."** If possible, communicate this electronically so there is a physical record of your desire not to be quoted

or identified. By stating your desire to be “off the record”, a journalist will know that any conversation you have, even if recorded, is not intended to be quoted or published, **but you must ensure that they agree to these conditions**.

- **Community Relations Service**

- The Community Relations Service (CRS) is a component of the Department of Justice. As America’s Peacemaker, CRS provides facilitation, mediation, training and consultation services to communities in conflict — enhancing their ability to independently prevent and resolve future conflicts. Find contact information [for your region’s office here](#).
 - The DOJ’s [Community Relations Service](#) was established by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to assist communities facing disputes, disagreements, or difficulties relating to allegations of discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin. CRS’s mandate expanded in 2009 under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act to include working with communities to prevent and respond to alleged hate crimes based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. With its unique mission, CRS is the only federal component dedicated to assisting state and local governments, private and public organizations, law enforcement agencies, tribal communities, and community groups to resolve conflicts based on these aspects of identity.
 - Even though CRS is a component of the DOJ, they don’t investigate or prosecute, and are required to remain a neutral party while they help state and local units of government, private and public organizations, law enforcement, and community groups resolve conflicts.
 - In all cases, CRS’s services are voluntary and free of charge. CRS strictly adheres to a mandated confidentiality clause to foster trust and ensure the privacy of all parties involved.

TASK FORCE BUTLER'S **COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE** **CHECKLISTS**

DOCUMENTING HATE GROUP ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

- Capture 3-5 images of the evidence I have observed
- Write down info for your SALUTE Report
 - Size (how many people/objects did you observe)
 - Activity (what did you physically observe)
 - Location (open up your preferred map app on your phone and take a screenshot of your location on it)
 - Unit Identification (are they wearing patches, uniforms, or logos, or claiming affiliation with an org)
 - Time (note the date as well as time of day)
 - Equipment (did the individuals use vehicles or tools, were they armed)

BUILDING A COMMUNITY RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- Be safe with what you share on social media (Remove QR codes, URLs, mis/disinformation, and hate speech)
- Identify your goals and discuss with community partners
- Create a safe place to centralize open communication with your community partners
- Research applicable local, state, and federal laws
- Develop your community response plan and communicate it to your group

REPORTING EVIDENCE CHECKLIST

- Civil Society Organizations
 - Southern Poverty Law Center
 - The SPLC recommends using [this tip line](#) to report activity, or sending a message to [@Hatewatch](#) on Twitter. You will receive a confirmation message once your report has been filed.
 - Anti-Defamation League
 - The ADL recommends using [this tip line](#) to report activity to their organization.
- Federal Law Enforcement
 - Department of Justice [Report a Hate Crime](#)
 - FBI Call 1-800-CALL-FBI or submit a tip at [tips.fbi.gov](#)
- State Law Enforcement
 - Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Division
 - State Police and/or state level investigative agency
- Local Law Enforcement
 - Local Police Department
- Local Elected Officials
 - Identify relevant local elected officials
 - Attend a local city or county board meeting
- [Community Relations Service](#) at DOJ