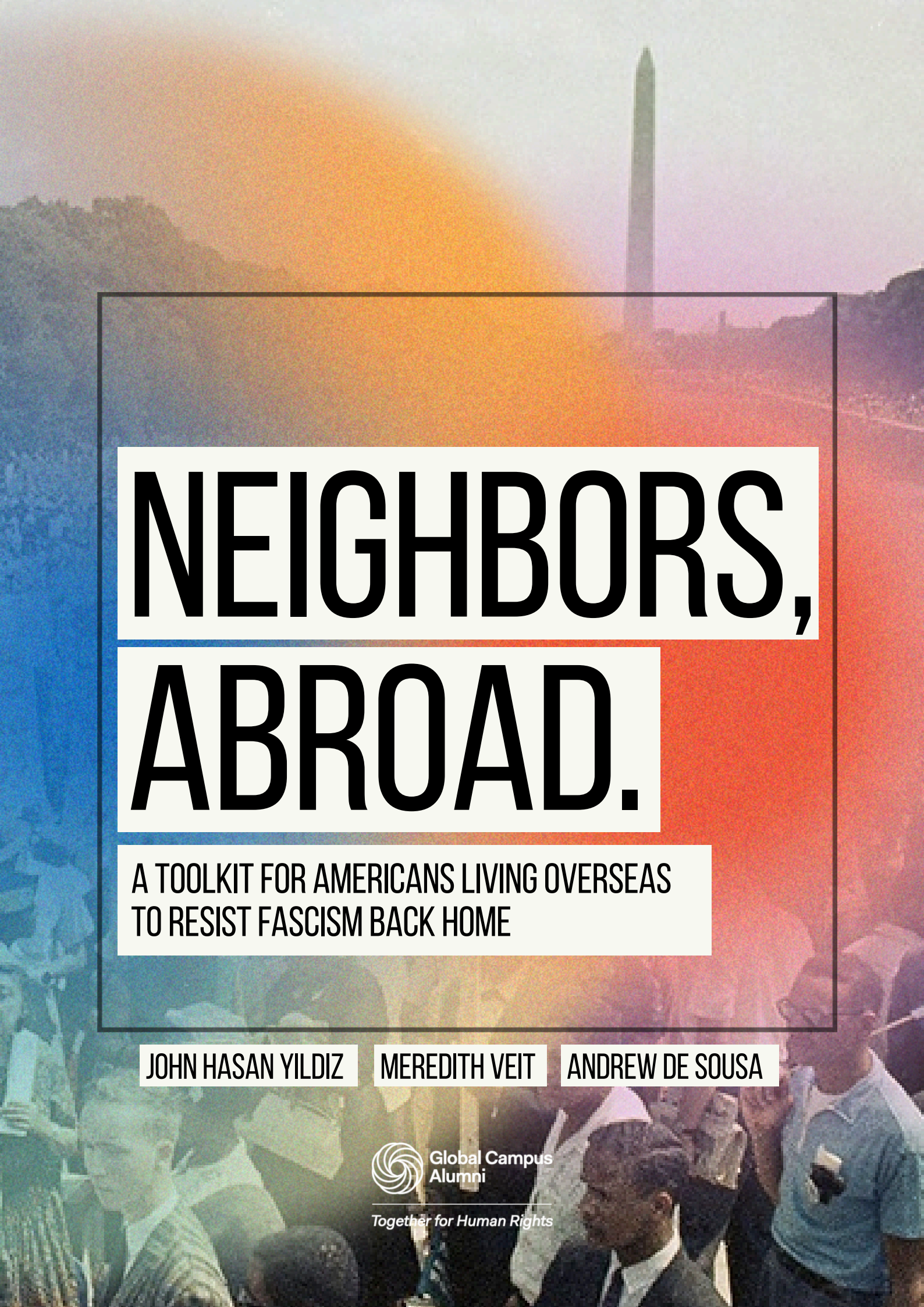




NEIGHBORS, ABROAD.

A TOOLKIT FOR AMERICANS LIVING OVERSEAS
TO RESIST FASCISM BACK HOME

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Introduction

Since early 2025, American democracy has faced unprecedented erosion from the Trump administration and the MAGA movement. Marked by ICE raids and murders¹, lawsuits against journalists,² a broad weakening of judicial oversight,³ and a blatant disregard for international law⁴ - we have witnessed a dramatic decline in executive accountability, and a steady drift towards autocracy in the United States.⁵

As this continues to take place, Americans living outside the United States can only look home in horror, as our institutions are hollowed out, our neighbors are deported, and the communities we were raised in come under assault. While there has been widespread resistance across the US to the Trump administration's actions, those living abroad are physically unable to join this local, grassroots mobilization. As a result, many of the 5.4 million Americans living abroad feel powerless, paralyzed, and unsure how to fight back.

This toolkit is a love letter to them.

Fondly titled *Neighbors, Abroad*, this toolkit is a collection of concrete tactics that Americans living outside the country can use to fight against authoritarianism back home, and the ways it spreads across borders. Inside, you can find seven sections, each detailing a different action that any American living abroad can take to defend democracy, or support the communities under assault by Trump's policies.

Each section was carefully crafted through a detailed literature review, alongside insight gathered from 20 interviews with US-based activists, NGO workers, researchers, international movements, and diaspora organizations who have experience mobilizing against authoritarianism from exile or abroad.

In his speech, "*What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?*", Frederick Douglass rejected the idea that slavery was a southern problem.⁶ He argued that physical distance from injustice, does not grant one moral amnesty. In fact, he believed the opposite – that those who possess the privilege to challenge oppression have a moral *obligation* to do so. Just as Northerners used their position to advocate for abolition, Americans living abroad today can transform their distance from the United States into a source of leverage to confront the specter of American fascism, and support pro-democracy movements at home.

It is only together that we can build a brighter, more just tomorrow, and we – the authors – hope this toolkit shines just a bit of light on the path there.

Thank you for reading.

How was this toolkit made?

The information inside this toolkit was compiled in a few ways – through a comprehensive literature review of academic sources on authoritarianism and pro-democracy social movements, pouring over mountains of existing anti-fascist & community organizing toolkits, and semi-structured interviews conducted over the past five months (February to July 2026).

Beyond very niche activist and policy circles, there is not an overwhelming amount of dialogue between Americans living abroad and those back home on how to resist authoritarianism in the States. As a result, we (the authors) wanted to place an explicit focus on shaping this toolkit around what US-based activists, NGO workers, democracy researchers, and community organizers felt would be particularly useful for an American diaspora to be doing.

We also wanted to draw from the experience of international movements and diaspora organizations, who have organized across borders or from exile for years. For this toolkit, we spoke to Syrian, Spanish, Palestinian, Nigerian, and Indian human rights activists – all working transnationally in different ways – to hear their victories, challenges, and advice.

Lastly, while the authors endeavored to conduct interviews with a diverse a sample as possible, it's not as if we spoke to activists from every state, and every diaspora movement. So, while we have shaped the sections of this toolkit based on our findings, this does not mean other tactics or actions are not worth pursuing by Americans living abroad.

Many of the tactics list in this toolkit have not been done at scale by Americans living outside the US, but between the experience of diaspora movements and direction from activists back home, **it is a recommended starting point, one that should update as time passes.**⁷

What is fascism? Authoritarianism?

What are we talking about?

If you've been following American politics over the past few years, you've probably noticed the word *fascism* get thrown around. **But what does it actually mean?** What beliefs or policies can be described as *fascistic*, and how is that different from authoritarianism?

That being said, we'd like to start this toolkit with some definitions.

Let's start with authoritarianism. Like "democracy," it can be difficult to offer one definition that perfectly describes all aspects of a country's political system. After all, many democracies contain "illiberal elements" which make it difficult for everyday people to vote, demonstrate, or make their voices heard.⁸ However, leading scholars on authoritarianism have identified its main elements as (1) the rejection of plurality as normal elements of politics, (2) the will to preserve the status quo by keeping all political dynamics under close control by a strong, central power, and (3) the erosion of democratic voting procedures, the division of powers, and the rule of law.⁹

But is being an authoritarian the same thing as being a fascist?

Well, not exactly. Fascism dates back to the early 20th century in Europe, when the Spanish flu, changes in technology, and the social & economic fallout of the first World War created an extraordinary era of instability. That instability was seized on by people like Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, who offered fiery speeches, scapegoats, promises of economic revival, and a nation *reborn*.¹⁰

Drawing on his own childhood under Mussolini, the philosopher Umberto Eco argued that fascism isn't one fixed ideology, but a recurring political *style* - a cluster of features that don't necessarily all need to appear together for a movement to be considered fascist.¹¹

A few of those features that are relevant today are:

- **A “cult of a mythic past,”** which is a social momentum that calls for the return to a romanticized, often imaginary, past golden era of a nation.
- **Fear of outsiders,** like migrants or a specific minority, often fueled by a middle class that feels socially or financially squeezed and looking for someone to blame.
- **Obsession with conspiracies,** casting enemies to be weak, as not strong enough to solve societal problems, and terrifyingly powerful at the same time, actively preventing political change.
- **Politics as permanent struggle,** glorifying action and treating compromise as betrayal.
- **Simplified, populist language,** claiming the leader alone speaks for “the people,” regardless of what they do, what journalists report, or what experts say.

Historically, fascists are ultra-nationalist, deeply militaristic, and organize themselves in a mass-based party of committed activists working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, to (1) abandon democratic liberties, (2) pursue violence against labeled enemies without ethical or legal constraints, and (3) dream of internal cleansing and external expansion.¹² While manifesting differently across countries and history, **these are the qualities that make a fascist, a fascist.**

Broadly speaking, fascism is different from authoritarianism because dictators and autocrats can centralize power in many different ways. Fascism is a specific political style, that requires a specific political context, which adds emotional fuel and structure - via nostalgia, grievance, and enemies - to an autocratic ascent.

Now, let’s be absolutely clear - Trump *did* win the presidential election in 2024. However, during both presidential terms, has used rhetoric, called for action, and enacted policies that fit the abovementioned criteria for authoritarianism, *and* fascism.

Whether that’s through the establishment of detention camps for migrants,¹³ his cult of personality in the “Make America Great Again” movement,¹⁴ or the incitement of the January 6th attack on the US Capitol building by denying the 2020 Presidential election results¹⁵ - there is an ever-growing list of reasons why the Trump administration should be considered autocratic, and fascistic. In fact, the list exists! Since early 2025, UCL Professor Christine Pagel has tracked all of Trump’s actions that “echo authoritarian regimes and may pose a threat to American democracy.” It currently lists 3,620 distinct entries, and the number increases every week.¹⁶

Organizing a protest (or several)

Signs. Chanting. Someone with a megaphone. Whether you've been to a protest or not, you probably have a general idea of what a protest *looks like*. Perhaps the Suffragettes come to mind, or the 1963 March on Washington, when Martin Luther King Jr. told the world he had a dream. In either case, exercising one's right of assembly has long been a staple of democracy, and of American history.

And indeed, between the Women's Marches, Fridays for Future, and Black Lives Matter, countless demonstrations have been organized in recent history to demand change from elected officials.¹⁷ That was true during the first Trump administration, and it's true now – as millions of people have hit the streets over the past year to oppose ICE, the Iran war, and democratic backsliding broadly in the States.¹⁸ This happened largely through the No Kings Day protests, which totaled over 4 million participants.¹⁹ These demonstrations also took place outside the United States, with groups like Indivisible Abroad and the Stop Trump Coalition organizing protests that saw over 500,000 people turn out.²⁰

While not being able to join these protests back home can produce a very real FOMO, there are plenty of reasons for US citizens to be organizing demonstrations abroad as well. Take for example, the way the American far-right is organizing across borders. Groups like CPAC and the Heritage Foundation have been working transnationally for decades now, coordinating with conservative movements around the world to export Project 2025's authoritarian playbook.²¹

Between international far-right conferences, Trump-allied ambassadors,²² fascist ideologues on press tours,²³ and American multinational companies that have bankrolled the Trump campaign²⁴ or lobby to undermine human rights frameworks²⁵ – there are countless targets abroad that have enabled authoritarianism in the States that we can demonstrate against.

So to kick off this toolkit, in this first section, we're going to go over how to plan a demonstration, how to find allies to do it with, how to do so in a way that touches hearts & minds.

Does protesting actually change anything? What's the point?

It's a fair question! After all, we can't say that the Black Lives Matter demonstrations succeeded in ending mass incarceration,²⁶ nor can we say Fridays for Future lead to sufficient investment in decarbonizing global economies.²⁷ So it needs to be asked – **what's the point of hitting the streets if the people in power can just ignore us?**

The authors of the toolkit will be the first to admit – *no one single protest was large or powerful enough to affect change by itself*. MLK's speech and the March on Washington went down in history, yes – but it's not as if JFK was so moved to run out onto the White House lawn with a signed executive order. No, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were the victories won by the Civil Rights *Movement* – a

a country-wide, long-term collection of groups and campaigns, all coordinating together to demand the betterment, rights, and equal legal standing of black folks across the United States. They organized hundreds if not thousands of demonstrations to advance their cause, each earning them a bit more press coverage, a few more members, and even greater pressure on elected officials – who ever feel the weight of nearing election cycles and popular opinion upon them.²⁸

In fact, research of Harvard political scientist Dr. Erica Chenoweth suggests that there is no non-violent social movement has failed to bring about social change once it has mobilized 3.5% of a country's population.²⁹ This is obviously a huge claim, but it's not without scientific merit, as that (rough) percentage is based on a review of over 300 major social and political movements between 1900 and 2006.³⁰ She found that movements rooted in nonviolence were able to mobilize more people, with greater diversity, and less state repression compared to violent insurgencies.

Nonviolent demonstrations are a huge component of those movements, with each being a steppingstone to greater visibility, recruitment, and impact. And even if our greatest political objectives are not achieved, that doesn't mean we don't experience other victories. To make a full circle, let's take Black Lives Matter and Fridays for Future. Both movements failed to achieve systemic change, but they did succeed in raising overwhelming awareness for racial and climate justice, resulting in many policy changes at local levels around the world.³¹

The authors resonate (greatly) with those experiencing protest fatigue and political defeatism – however, we hope that this section, and this toolkit as a whole, can demonstrate that hope is far from lost. It is simply, something we must fight for.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

Like any good demonstration, it should be done strategically, and with friends! We've written out a few questions below to get you started, and get you thinking about how to curate your messaging and type of protest to your local context.

- **Why are you protesting?** – Perhaps the best place to begin is your *why*. Are there people or something cherished in your community that's being affected by the American far-right? Is there a Trump official coming to your country soon, or something happening back in the States you want to have solidarity with? Try to formulate in one or two sentences, what you want to oppose with a demonstration – and why.
- **What do you want to achieve?** – It's important to define clear objectives for your demonstration. What would you like to happen as a result? But remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was the Voting Rights Act. When thinking about outcomes, try to be as specific, measured, and realistic as possible.

For example, “protect democracy and change the narrative” – bad. “Get at least 5 local press

outlets to cover our demonstration, 2000 views on social media, and 10 new members to join our organization” – fantastic. The more intentional you are at this stage, the less you set yourself and fellow organizers up for disappointment later.

- **Who are your target audiences?** – This is absolutely critical. Identifying who you want to reach is just as important as setting your objectives, because your audience should shape how you develop your messaging. It determines how you get the word out about your protest, what organizations you invite to demonstrate with you, what press you invite, all the way down to what you write on your signs.

Say Steve Bannon has come to town for a speaking engagement, and you’re organizing a counter-demonstration outside the venue. If your objective is to make people where you live dislike Bannon, then you should think about what is valued in your community or country, and how this particular person has transgressed against that. Your messaging, and even the type of demonstration, may depend greatly on your local context.

- **What kind of demonstration do you want to do?** – This leads us to our next question, which is about form. What *kind* of protest would you like to do? Once you have a better idea of what you’re demonstrating against, your objectives, and target audiences – this will already feel a bit clearer. However, you also need to decide what you want the actual gathering to look like. This could indeed, be a traditional rally with signs, chanting, and megaphones, but a nonviolent protest could also be a concert, a sit-in, a road blockade, or interrupting a conference.

Each of these interventions need to be planned in very different ways, and fortunately, you’ve got generations of activists who came before you to figure out which methods work best, and which don’t. What matters most here, is that you choose something that works well in your local context, for your capacity, and group comfort level. [Here’s a full library of different types of protests you can sift through.](#)

- **How much help do you need?** – As capable and committed as you are, no protest can be organized alone. Between the coordination, communications, and logistics needed for even the smallest of demonstrations – there is just too much work for any one person to handle.

We would recommend getting started by finding one or two people who can commit to supporting you throughout the entire organizing process. You can call them your co-coordinator(s). From there, make a list of all the tasks that need to be done *ahead* of the demonstration, all the roles that need to be filled *on the day* of the demonstration, and what is needed *after* the demonstration. From there, you can get a sense of the overall capacity you’ll need to pull this off.

- **What happens after the demonstration?** – Strangely enough, this final question is one that you should also answer before protest organizing gets underway. We know that social change doesn’t

happen overnight, and because of this, it's worth asking yourself if you'd like to see your protest as part of a wider campaign. In a nutshell, this would mean your demonstration would be one amongst many actions on a similar subject matter – with the intention of achieving some larger objective. When you do this, you can think longer-term, and your goals can get more ambitious. This, of course, can be an incredible amount of work, so really think about your long-term capacity when committing to longer-term campaigns, and always temper your objectives against the time you can afford to spend.

Lastly, and regardless of a longer campaign arc or not, it's good to plan a post-protest de-brief for everyone you organized the demonstration with. This is a moment to share what went well, what went wrong, and what can be improved on for next time. It's also a great way to stay connected to everyone who made your vision possible, perhaps to organize again in the future

Other resources

- [How to organize your first protest](#) – Article Twenty Network
- [How to prepare your tech for a protest](#) (in the US, but useful) – Activist Checklist
- [How to organize a wider campaign](#) – The Activist Handbook

How should I start?

If you want to organize a protest abroad to defend human rights and democracy in the States, the best thing you can do – aside from answering the questions above – is to find like-minded individuals to do it with.

For this, we recommend getting in touch with [Indivisible Abroad](#). They're a network of Americans living outside the States committed to protecting democracy, and fighting against fascism in the United States from afar. They've done this through social media, fundraising for mutual aid groups back home, and, of course, by organizing demonstrations.

They have 28 chapters across four continents, so it's worth getting in touch! You could also consider starting your own chapter, as this is a great way to recruit other Americans into something concrete. [You can click here to get started.](#)

We would also add that you don't necessarily need to be organizing with other Americans to mobilize against authoritarianism in the States. This certainly depends on where you're living, but there are often existing grassroots groups or political organizations who will stand in solidarity with you, and help you organize a demonstration. We highly recommend working closely with, or at least in coalition with, local groups – as this lends a greater air of legitimacy to your protest, and creates tighter bonds between Americans and the community at large.

Mutual aid & Fundraising

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic, when communities around the world mobilized to meet the needs of their quarantined and immuno-compromised neighbors, there's been an explosion of interest in mutual aid as an organizing tactic.³²

Mutual aid is where people in a specific area or community come together to support one another, collectively meeting each other's needs without the help of official bodies like the state or NGOs. It's often referred to as "survival work," as it often happens amidst a crisis, or context where the government has failed to meet the needs of certain folks.³³ Mutual aid has taken many forms throughout history, with neighbors pooling their resources and capacities for each other to provide food, legal aid, medical treatment, safe housing, and childcare.

The community response to Hurricane Helene in Appalachia was a great example of this – with people coming together to offer free food, ride shares, and other survival items like tampons or diapers to those in need amidst the destruction, and a slow FEMA response.³⁴ And as such, mutual aid isn't charity – it's solidarity. That means resources, respect, and decision-making flows horizontally, as opposed to the vertical relationship often present between institutional aid providers and recipients.

These efforts have shown us how sharing resources can directly support those being targeted by fascist policies, and is a tangible act of resistance. And even though we can't show up physically for our neighbors back home, we can still participate in mutual aid from abroad! We certainly wouldn't be the first, as many other diasporas who've fought against authoritarianism in their own countries have done so by supporting human rights defenders and activists monetarily from afar.³⁵

How does mutual aid help protect democracy?

Mutual aid has proven essential for the health of democracies throughout history. At its core, it does this by keeping people, families, and communities safe, who would otherwise be struggling or harmed by state negligence.³⁶ Physical safety and material sufficiency are key determinants in how people engage politically, and as such, mutual aid has filled critical gaps that allow people to participate in democracy.³⁷

Mutual aid networks have also helped protect people from authoritarian policies in the United States today, namely by keeping people safe following ICE abductions across the country. Many people who are undocumented or have a weak legal status can't safely leave their homes if ICE agents are in their city, and through mutual aid networks, their neighbors have showed up to drop off groceries, ferry their children to and from school, and make sure they didn't feel alone in an otherwise terrifying context.³⁸ That's been happening in places like Minneapolis, where Renée Good was murdered.

We should take a moment to note here, that mutual aid alone does not target the root causes of need. The intention of bringing groceries to undocumented folks on lockdown, is not to kick ICE out of the city, no more than ride-shares in the aftermath of a hurricane will slow global warming and worsening tropical storms. That's why many researchers and activists often call for mutual aid to be done in tandem with movement building for social justice.³⁹ That way, people are given the basic decency and material support they deserve, and movements can rely on those communities for support to achieve change, or in our case, to defeat fascist momentum.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

- **Build relationships & identify trusted partners back home** – There are countless mutual aid groups across the US doing concrete and urgent work. However, you shouldn't choose one at random. When thinking about which groups to support, we recommend looking for networks where you share something in common. Perhaps a network that's based in the city you were raised, or is dedicated to serving a specific demographic you're part of. It could also be a network in a community experiencing some kind of crisis.

You don't need to fret too much over who will make the "most efficient" use of your resources – but do look for some track record that they're doing what they say they are. Many have pictures & videos of the work they're sharing on Instagram or online. However, what would be best is being able to make contact, and have some kind of conversation with the mutual aid group in question. That way, you start to build trust, and international solidarity.

- **Fund/fundraise for mutual aid in the US** – Many people living abroad, US citizens or otherwise, are deeply opposed to the Trump administration, and empathetic to American communities who are fighting back.⁴⁰ That can lead to many potential collaborations (see Organizing a Protest & Communications), but also the potential to raise money to support mutual aid groups across the States. Take Indivisible Netherlands, for example – who organized a bake sale for mutual aid networks in Minneapolis.⁴¹ Whether through a potluck, a film screening, book signing, or game night, raising a few hundred dollars can both connect you to the immediate community around you, and have a tangible impact on lives back home.
- **Offering non-monetary resources** – Beyond funding, it's also possible that you have access to tools or spaces that could be useful to communities or movements back in the States. Say you live abroad, but you have a second residence back home that's unoccupied – perhaps you could offer a free room for someone who needs temporary housing? Or, say you have a connection at an art museum or school, which you could leverage to offer supplies to activists who need to make signs. Even having access to a building with air conditioning can be an object of mutual aid during a heat wave, if made available to the public.

Far-right and authoritarian movements increasingly operate across borders, referencing or replicating each other's strategies, narratives, and policy ideas. The influence of U.S. far-right politics does not stop at national borders; debates and policies around issues such as immigration, policing, and civil liberties are increasingly shaped by international networks of conservative and nationalist movements. The emergence of more restrictive migration policies in Europe via the EU Deportation Regulation (sometimes drawing comparisons to US approaches such as ICE) illustrates how problematic it is when these ideas travel.

For Americans abroad, supporting mutual aid in the places where they currently live therefore part of a broader effort to strengthen democratic resilience. Building strong, connected, and caring communities wherever we are helps create the social foundation needed to resist authoritarianism in all its forms across jurisdictions.

Other resources

- [Introduction guide to Mutual Aid, and how to get started – Mutual Aid Disaster Relief](#)
- [Library of guides for various mutual aid organizing scenarios \(more advanced\)](#)
- [How to organize a fundraiser – the Commons Library](#)
- [Library of guides on how to fundraise \(also more advanced\)](#)

How should I start?

If you're interested in joining mutual aid efforts, we would recommend starting by taking stock of your own resources and capacity, to understand how best you could contribute. Effective mutual aid starts with relationships, trust, and a realistic assessment of your own time, skills, resources, and capacity. You can do this by asking yourself the following questions:

- What kind of resources do I have access to? How could these be useful for communities or social movements? This might include money, professional skills, translation abilities, research experience, community connections, event spaces, or the ability to volunteer remotely.
- What communities or issues am I already connected to? Consider your hometown, professional networks, cultural communities, or personal experiences.
- If you want to give money to a group – what can I sustainably contribute? How much would you be willing to send every month?
- If you want to do mutual aid where you live - are there American far-right politicians or thinkers active in your country? In what way have their actions affected communities tangibly?

If you want to organize a fundraiser, you can start by finding 1-2 people to organize it with. It's always best to have help in these things! Maybe even think about connecting with [Indivisible Abroad](#) if your

country has a local chapter, as this is a great way to find like-minded Americans who'd be willing to help. As for organizing the event itself, [here's an easy-to-use guide on how to organize a fundraising event!](#)

The goal is not to do everything at once. The strongest mutual aid networks are built through consistent, practical acts of support that grow into long-term, trusting relationships.

(Popular) political education

We promise, this section isn't telling you to get a political science degree.

However, we should start this section off with explaining what we mean by “political education”, and what makes it “popular.” At its core, political education is the process of educating individuals about political systems, democratic values, and civic responsibilities, often with the objective of mobilizing some type of community engagement.⁴² This is something that happens formally, in schools and universities, but also informally, in grassroots movements, labor unions, and free time. It's this informal approach that we're focusing on here, and partly what we mean by “popular.”

The term “popular education” was coined in 1968 as a new approach to education – one that “*raises consciousness for organizing and movement building*” by coming together in community, and critically examining why our social and material conditions are the way they are.⁴³ In other words, popular education is a collection of practices that help anyone, regardless of education level, understand how power *actually works* – who holds it, who's harmed depending on how it's used, and how ordinary people have organized to check it in the past. And the goal here is not gaining knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but to give people the confidence enough to act – to see themselves as participants and power-holders in political life rather than spectators of it.

Popular education has deep roots in movements for democracy and human rights, dating all the way back to Freedom Schools set up during the Civil Rights Movement,⁴⁴ to community teach-ins that have taken place worldwide.⁴⁵ Through these programs, people became more durable, effective organizers. Not because someone sent them an email, or got them to come to a protest, but because they came to understand, in their own words, why their movement mattered, and how they fit into it.

We'll be helping you do just that in this section – as we'll share a few methods and tools you can use to get other Americans and allies living abroad to see how they themselves fit into a wider struggle for American democracy.

Does political education do anything for democracy?

Authoritarian movements depend on confusion, isolation, and a sense of inevitability.⁴⁶ They thrive when people don't understand what's actually happening in government, when neighbors don't talk to each other about politics, and when opposition feels hopeless or purely symbolic. Political, popular education protects democracy because it directly undermines all three conditions.

Firstly, it counters disinformation with understanding, not just facts. Authoritarian and far-right movements rely heavily on distorting how institutions work – including courts, elections, traditional

media, and the Constitution itself – so that their abuses look normal, and normal safeguards look suspicious.⁴⁷ However, people who understand the basic architecture of their own democracy, and that they have the power to change things, are much harder to disorient. Political education is not just information – it's inoculation.

Second, it turns fear and outrage into strategy. Many Americans – at home and abroad – are alarmed by Trump's policies, but don't know what to do with those feelings of frustration or rage. Political education helps them channel those feelings into something healthy, and meaningful. Whether that be phone baking, a local meeting of some kind, or joining a demonstration – it can transform feelings of doom, into action and community.

Lastly, it makes organizing more sustainable. Movements built only on urgency burn out. However, movements built on shared understanding of stakes, history, and strategy keep people showing up for years. And considering that democratic backsliding can take place over a long period of time, so must be our resistance to it.

Political education can be slow work, and it rarely makes headlines. But it is the foundation that every other tactic in this toolkit depends on. One cannot organize a demonstration, mobilize people to vote, or raise money for activists back in the States alongside people who don't yet understand why it matters. Wherever you live, you can be the person who makes that understanding a little more contagious.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

There's many concrete ways to do popular education abroad, each potentially leading to greater connection with your community and political awakenings. That's especially true for Americans living abroad, we believe, for two main reasons.

The first, relies on the fact that many US citizens living outside the States right now are doing so temporarily. Many are studying abroad, on a temporary program / contract, or are military, on deployment. Sooner or later, they'll return home, where they'll be able to engage in local, state, and national politics on the ground in the States. Living in a different country is an eye-opening experience, and for many Americans, is their first exposure to things like functional public transport, affordable healthcare, healthier work cultures, and different forms of democracy.⁴⁸ Not everyone has a formal political education. And as a result, this is a great opportunity to raise the political consciousness of US citizens in the window while they're abroad, so when they go back to the States, they'll continue to defend democracy and human rights in the communities they were raised.

The second, is that many Americans abroad do not have a forum to talk about how they feel about the autocratic currents we've seen back home. The methods of popular education give them an outlet to do

that, along with the language, empowerment, and social group they need to take action where they are, against authoritarianism back home. Ideally, through one of the many methods highlighted in this toolkit.

Between these reasons, here's a few ways you could go about popular education:

- **Using the Spiral Method** – The Spiral Method is a staple of popular education. It offers learners a framework to understand a specific issue, by starting with their own experiences, identifying patterns, introducing new information, and eventually practicing skills to do something about what we've learned.⁴⁹

Over the years, movements and groups have used the Spiral Method to get people to think about the criminal justice reform, economic justice, and housing. However, it can be adapted to any particular issue, including the ways American authoritarianism affects those of us living abroad. If you're interested in this method, you can find a full guide below.

We would also encourage you to keep a close eye on the audience you bring together for the Spiral Method, as the effectiveness of this framework relies on being able to create some solidarity and shared grievance among learners.

- **Organizing an “Arpentage”** – While book clubs are a fantastic way for a group of people to get to know each other and a specific concept over a longer stretch, it's not always a guarantee that people are available, or have had the time to actually engage with the content. Thus, we'd like to introduce the French concept of “Arpentage.”

Arpentage is essentially a popular education method for collective reading. It involves bringing together a group of 2-12, to read an entire book in a few hours. This happens by literally dividing up the text of the book into chapters, reading them individually, and then coming back together as a group so each reader can share what they've learned. This saves an incredible amount of time, and encourages learning in a way that is collective, participatory, and exciting. You can find a guide to Arpentage below!

- **Organizing a film screening & discussion** – Reading is certainly one way to do popular education, but it's also possible through visuals. Organizing a film screening about what's been happening back in the States – between ICE raids, the effects of DOGE, or journalists under assault by SLAPP suits – is a great way to raise awareness, but also to inspire emotion.

However, we couldn't consider this “popular” education without some element of audience participation. That's why, we would recommend hosting a guided discussion after the movie, to really have the viewers understand that the issues we're covering do not live inside the screen – they've affect everyone's lives concretely. We've included an extensive guide on how you can do this below.

Other resources

- [How to use the Spiral Model for learning – Community Organizing Fellowship](#)
- [How to organize an Arpentage \(in FR, but page translates well\) – Action Populaire](#)
- [How to organize a film screening / discussion – Film Hub Scotland](#)
- [Anti-fascist book club list – Veterans Against Fascism](#)

How should I start?

If you'd like to organize some form of popular, political education, we'd recommend starting by thinking of your audience and the group you're going to bring together. Is it going to be solely Americans, an international mix, or mainly nationals of where you're living? What is their level of political awareness about the US, and their own country?

That's a great way to determine the subject matter that you'd like to focus on, and how advanced vs. beginner-friendly it is. After all, if everyone already knows about what you'd like to collectively cover – you'll have less turnout, and less results. What would be best is choosing something that people can relate to personally – perhaps a hot-button issue where you're living, or an issue back in the States that concerns everyone.

Lastly, and like many other tactics in this toolkit, we'd recommend not organizing all of this alone. Either bringing people together through your local chapter of [Indivisible Abroad](#) or [Democrats Abroad](#), or looking up local political education groups, is a great way to have an existing, interested audience ready to go.

Underground Railroading

These days, Americans are leaving the US in record numbers.⁵⁰ For the first time since the Great Depression, the United States is experiencing *net negative migration*, which means more people leaving the country than coming in. To put that in perspective, 150,000 to 180,000 Americans officially relocated abroad last year. And a Gallup poll done last November showed that one in five Americans now want to leave permanently.⁵¹

The cost-of-living crisis, unaffordable healthcare, and political disenchantment are all cited as reasons for the exodus. These justifications are valid enough, but many are also leaving the States because they no longer feel safe. That includes trans folks, who are increasingly facing hate crimes, barriers to healthcare, and other forms of anti-trans discrimination.⁵²

With ICE targeting people with weaker political protections, that's also true for Dreamers – the nickname given to over 800,000 migrants who were brought by their parents to the United States as children.⁵³ The recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program have the right to work, drive, and travel in the US. But DACA does not offer them a pathway to citizenship, putting them at risk of abduction by ICE agents. As a result, many Dreamers are considering leaving the States to go somewhere safer.⁵⁴

Even beyond these specific groups, some have argued that the United States no longer meets the European Union's definition of a "safe country of origin" – a concept used in EU asylum law to designate non-EU nations where there is no persecution, torture, or threat of violence⁵⁵ - due to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) use of lethal violence against civilians, peaceful protesters, and legal observers.⁵⁶

It is this tangible danger, alongside decades of policy decisions that has made life more expensive and complicated for the vast majority of Americans, that explains this historic exodus. However, for many, things are not so simple.

Only half of the US population holds a valid passport, meaning many Americans have never left the US, and have no idea where to begin, even if they wanted to move abroad.⁵⁷ There are concerns about visas, language, healthcare, schools, social life, and overall integration. In response to this, a number of organizations have been started to help folks at risk to leave the US, providing information on what they might need to start a new life, safely and legally, in another country.

If you were raised in the States, you no doubt have heard of the Underground Railroad. This network of secret routes and safehouses helped enslaved people escape to freedom in the North. At its core, it was an organized resistance to slavery through escape, and it ran for decades, right up until the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁵⁸

While altogether a different form of danger – the organizations mentioned above are continuing this tradition of resistance by helping people at risk in the States escape to safety. As such, the authors of this toolkit are referring to their work as “Underground Railroad.”

How does doing this protect democracy? What’s the point?

As the point of this toolkit is to offer methods to protect democracy and advance progressive causes, it’s important to answer this question, and to understand how helping people find safety abroad contributes to it.

Throughout history, authoritarian systems have depended on being able to make examples of dissenters and vulnerable groups — showing the broader population what happens to those who don’t comply.⁵⁹ If those targeted are able to evade persecution by safely relocating abroad, it undermines the Trump administration’s ability to crush popular dissent.

But more importantly, it provides safety to people, families, and communities that would otherwise be destroyed or deeply destabilized. Here we recall the immortal words of Huey Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party: “*survival, pending revolution.*” This was used to describe programs that the Black Panthers developed to help African American communities in life-saving ways, including free health clinics and free breakfast for children at school.⁶⁰ These methods were made to help black people survive, while they continued to organize against systemic problems that made life in America so difficult for black communities. Material support and radical empathy is itself a tangible form of resistance, as movements need people to sustain them – often through hours of volunteer labor and unpaid time – over a long period of time.

At the same time, others argue that emigration can lead to negative consequences for democracy. Specifically, this kind of mass departure is an overall loss of the voices, capacities, and lived experiences that democracy and communities need to defend themselves at critical moments in history.⁶¹

However, there is no research to definitively say that people who leave the States, especially those at risk, fully disengage themselves from American politics. In fact, diasporas are often deeply involved in resisting authoritarianism from abroad or exile. This has been the case for Palestinian communities, Iranian dissidents, South African anti-apartheid activists, or Spanish Republicans – just to name a few. Whether that’s by lobbying foreign governments, keeping international attention on abuses back home, or just providing safe harbor for organizing – diasporas have played an instrumental role in anti-authoritarian resistance through their unique position of being abroad. That’s also true of the American diaspora, as indicated through groups like Indivisible Abroad, and Democrats Abroad.

We also spoke to American activists who didn't believe that the numbers of people leaving are actually going to undermine the organizing capacity of groups back home, citing the relatively low number of people who have left, compared to the number of people who've joined movements over the past year.⁶² To put this further in perspective, the number of Americans who relocated abroad in 2025 is only 0.4% of the total US population.

The actions of the Trump administration have mobilized hundreds of thousands of people across the US to get involved in movements for democracy, human rights, and progressive values.⁶³ But for those who feel they have no other option but to flee to country to guarantee the safety of themselves or their loved ones, the authors of this toolkit believe helping them to do so is also part of the resistance to American fascism.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

As we mentioned above, there are a few groups who work internationally to support folks who need to leave the United States for a safer country. Each of these groups is a bit different, and each has ways you could get involved.

The first is called **Help Me Leave**. They're a resource hub for marginalized people seeking safe and legal pathways to live in other countries. In practice, that has meant researching and curating several guides that people can use to understand the documents and processes they'll need to go through to leave the States, alongside what's needed to stay in another country legally and long-term. Help Me Leave also offers peer-to-peer support for those who need to leave urgently, and manages a Discord community for information sharing among like-minded folks. Lastly, they advocate for the human rights of refugees and immigrants around the world, namely by trying to get the EU and surrounding countries to remove the US from "safe country of origin" lists.

The second group is the **Trans World Express** (TWE). As the name suggests, this group is committed specifically to supporting trans folks who need to escape the US. Operated and managed by many trans Americans themselves who've now left the States, they offer many step-by-step guides on how to leave, and country-specific guides on how to navigate immigration, healthcare, education, language learning, and social life while trans in a new place. TWE also has a number of country-specific Signal groups, for new arrivals to connect with folks who've already settled.

And last but not least, we have **ONWARD** – which is dedicated specifically to supporting Dreamers in the US who want to relocate abroad. They have a Facebook group where Dreamers can connect with others thinking about leaving the States, or who already have, to share resources, questions, and solidarity. They also host a number of events every month, including DACA information sessions, moments to vent and connect emotionally, and calls about managing US-based finances.

So between these three groups, and advice from a conversation we had with Tawheeda Wahabzada, the co-founder of ONWARD,⁶⁴ here are a few ways you could support or get involved in this work:

- **Join their forums** – As US citizens and allies living abroad, you already have an incredible amount of knowledge about the country you now live in. Whether that’s knowing where the best language courses are, the best schools, or just knowing how to navigate the immigration bureaucracy – your experience could be vital for marginalized folks who need to leave the US. By joining Help Me Leave’s Discord server, the TWE country-specific Signal groups, or the ONWARD Facebook group – you may be able to make someone’s emigration journey much easier. It’s also a way to create community, as many people arriving in a new country do not have a pre-existing social group to connect to, and will need friends to adapt to this new place.
- **Offer temporary housing** – Many folks at-risk who need to leave the States do not always have the financial capacity to make that possible. As such, organizations like Trans World Express have highlighted platforms that anyone can use to access temporary housing on the cheap or for free. If you have a spare room in your home, and have the ability to host someone for a month or two, you can make a world of difference to someone finding their footing in a new place. This can be done on a one-to-one basis if someone asks for help on the forums mentioned above. You can also use a platform called [HomeExchange](#), where you get “points” to offer your place to travelers, which you can then spend to rent out other places to stay around the world. Win-win!
- **Volunteer your time** – All of the operations we’ve listed above are volunteer run. That’s to say that this mountain of resources, guides, and information that they’ve compiled has all been an unpaid act of solidarity, and resistance. And they need help!

If you have specialized skills – perhaps in marketing, fundraising, advocacy, or tech – each of the groups above are looking for help in those areas. Help Me Leave and Trans World Express also have “support” roles, who work with people one-on-one to provide relocation options and resources. Volunteering with any of these organizations is a direct and tangible way to support people in the US on the frontlines of fascism, despite our distance.

How should I start?

If you're interested in supporting marginalized folks who need to flee the US, we would recommend starting by joining the discussion channels of one of the groups listed above.

- For Help Me Leave, [here's a link to join the Discord server.](#)
- For Trans World Express, [reach out to them over Signal here.](#)
- For ONWARD, [you can request to join their Facebook group here.](#)

If you wanted to go a step further and volunteer with one of these groups:

- For Help Me Leave, [you can fill out their volunteer form here.](#)
- For TWE, [you can communicate your interest over Signal.](#)
- For ONWARD, [you can reach out to them over email about volunteering.](#)

Become a pen-pal (for someone in prison)

Long before Donald Trump came (back) into office, the United States already had enduring, systemic problems with its justice system. The US has held the world's highest incarceration rate for decades now, with roughly 2 million people currently in American prisons.⁶⁵ The incarcerated population has quintupled since the 1970s,⁶⁶ even as the violent crime rate across the country has hit historic lows.⁶⁷ To put this in perspective - despite representing under 5% of the global population, the US holds almost 20% of the global prison population.⁶⁸

Incarcerated folks in the States are also disproportionately black, brown, and working-class Americans.⁶⁹ Scholars like Michelle Alexander have called our current system of mass incarceration, "the new Jim Crow,"⁷⁰ mainly due to the ways our justice system was designed to disadvantage working-class, black, and brown communities. It does this through policies that impose mandatory minimum sentences,⁷¹ rob people with felony convictions of their fundamental rights,⁷² all while low-income, black, and brown communities are over-policed, and their schools, public housing, drug treatment, and welfare programs are underfunded.⁷³

A complete re-imagining of the American criminal justice system has been a long-time objective of movements for racial justice and human rights, and that certainly remains true under the Trump administration as protesters have been increasingly confronted by aggressive policing, federal prosecution, and decades-long prison sentences.⁷⁴ However, as we wait for and create windows where policy change is more likely to succeed, there are many organizations working to support and meet the material needs of people who are incarcerated today.

One method in which they do that, is through exchanging letter with folks inside prisons. Also known as having a pen-pal.

Why write letters? How does this protect democracy?

Letter writing has long been an antidote to the mental burden and isolation that can accompany incarceration in the US. It has long been shown to have significant improvements on inmates' mental health, combat feelings of loneliness, and allow them to learn about and feel connected to the world outside of prison.⁷⁵

For decades now, groups like [Black & Pink](#), [California Coalition for Women Prisoners](#), and [Letters for Liberation](#) have been connecting folks outside of prison to people on the inside who would like to have a pen-pal, as a method of fighting against the harmful effects of mass incarceration. Between hours of solitary confinement, remote prison locations, and high phone & video costs,⁷⁶ prisons in the United States systematically strip prisoners of their support systems – which is why writing letters to incarcerated folks is so impactful.

But the question also needs to be asked – what does writing letters do to protect democracy and defeat authoritarianism?

As we've detailed in our sections on mutual aid, political education, and communications, authoritarian movements often rely heavily on communities being divided and isolated. Mass incarceration is the perfect delivery system for that, as it routinely systemizes financial and social barriers for communities to show up for their imprisoned loved ones. And that logic tracks perfectly when we look at Donald Trump's campaign donations, with the US' largest private prisoner operators - GEO Group and CoreCivic - donating millions of dollars to put him in the White House. These companies have now been awarded billions in government contracts, and have been instrumental in ICE detentions and deportations across the US.⁷⁷

In other words, the prison industrial complex has directly enabled, and profited from, the autocratic policies of the Trump Administration. That is also to say, that resistance against mass incarceration also has a tangible impact against US fascism. This, obviously includes keeping a pen-pal, itself a beautiful act of community care.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

Fortunately, pretty easily! And people have done it before. Erin Nieman, a volunteer with Letters for Liberation, has helped folks living abroad to become pen-pals with people inside prisons in the US. We spoke to her for this toolkit, and she shared the following advice for others interested in writing.⁷⁸

- **Reflect on why you're doing this** - Just as anyone would who's writing from the States, it's important to interrogate your motivations as to why exactly you would like to start a pen-pal correspondence with someone in prison. Is it for you? Is it for solidarity? [Black & Pink has a fantastic guide here](#) that you can use to evaluate your why, your capacity, and gauge how you might react to hearing about the realities of the US prison system.
- **Do an orientation** - Beyond the information we share here, it is important to have a proper conversation with folks at one of the organizations who connect pen-pals inside and outside prison. Many of them host "orientation" calls to give interested writers a better understanding of what to expect when writing and receiving letters, and the logistics of how it all works. [Click here to see the Letters for Liberation's calendar of upcoming orientations](#).
 - Some of these meetings may be challenging to attend for folks who don't overlap with US time-zones. However, Letters for Liberation is willing to host an orientation at a more accessible time if there's enough interest! If you would like to start writing letters, you can reach out to letters4liberation@gmail.com to see about scheduling an orientation.

- **The logistics of exchanging letters** - This is the main distinction between pen-pals based in the US, and those living abroad. While it is entirely possible for folks living abroad to send a letter to someone in a US prison (albeit, if they're willing to bear the extra cost of sending mail internationally), it is much harder for the incarcerated pen-pal to send a letter back abroad. This is mainly because of the kind of stamps available to people on the inside, and their increased cost.

However, there's a few ways to circumvent this.

The first, is that you ask your pen-pal to send their letters to a US address. This could a residence you still have in the States, a friend's home, or your own P.O. box. From there – you could have someone send you a picture or photocopy of the letter, or they could physically forward it to you.

The second option, especially for those who don't have a US address that they can direct mail to, is that you ask your pen-pal to address their reply to the Letters for Liberation P.O. box. The organization has a dedicated volunteer who scans and photocopies the letters for folks who use this option. You get this address after going through an orientation call.

- **Corresponding over email** - In addition to hand-written correspondence, many prisons across the US also have systems in place so families and loved ones can send emails to prisoners. This primarily done through companies like [JPay](#) and [Securus](#), which anyone can use. The messages you send are not free, however – they cost around the same price as a US postage stamp.

Other resources

- [Writing Letters to People in Jails and Prisons: A QuickStart Guide – Liberation Library](#)
- [How to Write a Letter to an Incarcerated Person – The Innocence Project](#)
- [Information that incarcerated folks may ask for or need – Prisoner Correspondence Project](#)

How should I start?

There are many organizations that connect folks on the outside with willing pen-pals on the inside. They often try to engage different groups of incarcerated people – often based on geography, race, gender, sexuality, or what the prisoner has experienced. If there is one organization in particular that speaks to you, but you're unsure if they'll work with you writing from abroad – we recommend reaching out!

If you're unsure where to start, but would like to work with a group you know could accommodate your distance – [head to this link on Letters for Liberation's website to get involved](#).

This will take you to a page where you can submit a volunteer interest form, and will then route you to [a calendar where you can see upcoming orientations](#).

Getting out the Vote (also known as GOTV)

Voting is the most basic unit of political power in a democracy. It costs nothing, requires no expertise, and is a right granted to all US citizens.⁷⁹ That includes Americans living abroad, who despite their distance can vote in the State where they last resided. This can offer a real opportunity for impact on local elections and swing states, especially in races with low turnout.⁸⁰

Voter mobilization is perhaps the most exercised tactic of progressive change-making used by Americans living abroad, and as such – it deserves a section of its own.

Why does voting matter? What's the point?

In the United States, the right to vote has long been a point of contention. Originally, this right was only granted to white, land-owning men, but after decades of organizing, was eventually granted to women in 1919, and to black, brown, and working-class Americans with the elimination of voter suppression policies through the 1965 Voting Rights Act.⁸¹ However, there remain very real barriers to the ballot box today, with many states mandating voter ID laws, limits on early voting, disenfranchising felons, and the slow closure of thousands of polling places nationwide.⁸²

However, many people have begun to doubt the effectiveness of voting to achieve progressive change. This was especially true in the most recent presidential election, with many voters feeling that neither Biden, Trump, nor Harris had their best interests or beliefs at heart.⁸³ The Biden administration's support of the genocide in Gaza was a particularly prominent issue.⁸⁴

The authors of this toolkit will not unconditionally defend the Democratic Party, nor will we say, “*vote blue, no matter who.*”⁸⁵ We will, however, highlight that the likelihood of ICE assaults on communities, widespread lawsuits on journalists, the dismantling of USAID, and a kidnapping of a sitting Head of State – would have been slim, indeed, under a Harris Presidency.⁸⁶

The Democratic Party is currently undergoing an identity crisis.⁸⁷ As moderate and progressive forces within the party butt heads and attempt to understand what the vision of their institution will be to break away from a historic losing streak, it should be noted that progressive forces have seen the bulk of electoral victories over the past six months.⁸⁸

That being said, to stop the current onslaught of democratic backsliding and attack on community wellbeing in the United States, it is critical that more progressive voices are elected in positions of power. And with most American elections being decided these days by thin margins, well-organized efforts to turn out voters can have real, tangible results on who's put into office.

Take the case of Christy Holstege, the former progressive mayor of Palm Springs, who ran for a seat in California's State Assembly in 2022. She lost by a hair – by just 85 votes – against Republican Greg Wallis.⁸⁹ There are local, state, and federal elections like this all over the country, decided by an extremely thin margin. That also includes primaries, chance to put more progressive democrats into office.

Americans living abroad are a large enough bloc to matter at that scale. The US Federal Voting Assistance Program puts the eligible overseas voting population at roughly 2.2 to 3.3 million people, and turnout among them has historically lagged far behind turnout at home.⁹⁰ In the 2024 election, only about 11 percent of eligible overseas citizens voted, compared with roughly 76 percent of voters residing in the United States - a gap driven certainly by reasons listed above, but also by real obstacles - confusing registration rules, unreliable mail, and simply not knowing the process exists.

That gap is an opportunity, and it has a real impact on people's lives.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

There are a few ways to go about this, and fortunately you don't need to go it alone!

There are two organizations that do most of the on-the-ground voter mobilization work for Americans abroad, and it's worth understanding how each operates before you get involved. The first is **Vote from Abroad**, which is a non-partisan voter registration platform that any US citizen living outside the country can use to make sure they can vote in elections back home.

It does this by walking voters through the Federal Post Card Application, generating the state-specific paperwork automatically, and tracking state-by-state deadlines and return methods. For many States, you can have your ballot sent to you by email!

Since the process can be tricky sometimes, they also have a Voter Help Desk that offers citizens abroad help around the clock to get your ballot approved. They offer help over Zoom and by email.

The second is **Democrats Abroad**, the official Democratic Party organization for Americans abroad, which has representation in roughly 190 countries. They also do voter mobilization with volunteers, which include tactics that go a bit beyond Vote from Abroad. This includes:

- **“Voting center” events** – Taking place online & in-person, these are dedicated spaces that Democrats Abroad sets up to meet Americans living outside the US who haven't registered to vote, and give them all the information they need to cast their ballot. Manifesting in Zoom calls and fold-out tables, these often take place at consulates, community centers, or any spaces that bring together Americans in their respective country.

- **Phone banking** – This is when a group of volunteers comes together to call other US citizens living abroad over the phone, and help them register to vote and obtain their ballots. There are significant support structures in place to help new volunteers do this work, including a voter assistance training, a phone banking toolkit, and personalized support from GOTV veterans. This also takes place on a service called [CallHub](#), which makes the calls themselves free for both the caller, and the callee. You don't need to use your own number, or drive up your phone bill!
- **Postcard drives** – This is when volunteers send postcards to folks living across the States to encourage them to vote in a particular election. This is often done in swing states and for close races, with a focus on voters that are deemed “the hardest to reach.”⁹¹ The costs of stamps and sending the postcards is often covered by Democrats Abroad, and as a result they often fundraise to finance this action.

This volunteer infrastructure has measurable results — Democrats Abroad have helped grow the civilian overseas vote by more than 73.5% between 2016 and 2020, and helping cut the rate of rejected overseas ballots from 5.7% to 2.1% over the same period by catching paperwork errors before ballots were mailed back.⁹²

So again, there's real impact to be made here!

How should I start?

If you'd like to contribute to progressive changemaking by registering others to vote, the first thing you should do is make sure you, yourself, are all set for upcoming elections! You can do this through [Vote from Abroad's](#) platform, and by [joining them for their office hours or reaching out to them by email](#) – if anything's unclear.

We recommend opting for an electronic ballot if your state allows it, as this will be significantly easier for you than going through the (now under-funded) USPS.⁹³

After you've done that, we would recommend getting in touch with your local chapter of Democrats Abroad. Whether it's your first time doing GOTV work, or you're a professional with seasons of elections under your belt – Democrats Abroad is the group that has the most expertise, capacity, and name recognition needed to coordinate this work across the world.

[You can get the contact information for your local Democrats Abroad chapter here.](#)

After getting in touch, you can find out when the next voter drive, phone banking, or postcard writing event is, and how to get involved. These events don't last longer than 1-2 hours on average, and require little to no training. For volunteer positions that require more knowledge of how the voting abroad process works, you might need to go through a short Voter Mobilization training, which takes place several times throughout any given year.

Democrats Abroad also has [a comprehensive Phonebanking toolkit](#), which includes scripts, advice, and details on how to set yourself up on CallHub.

Lastly, if you're interested in mobilizing votes for a particular candidate back home as opposed to general voter registration, then by all means – reach out to their campaign over email or social media! Oftentimes, they are in need of volunteers, and may be willing to work with you on digital action points in spite of the distance.

Communications

American politics has always been heavily reported on internationally. Whether that's the result of US hegemony, the transnational presence of American corporations, or just the global usage of the dollar – every country in the world has press reporting on what's happening in the United States.⁹⁴ That's certainly been true over the past two years, as the policies of the Trump administration have had massive implications for the global economy and international law, particularly their rollout of sanctions, the war in Iran, and kidnapping of the sitting president of Venezuela.

The Trump administration is deeply unpopular back home these days, with recent polling showing only a 37% approval rating.⁹⁵ That's also true abroad, with a PEW survey done across 10 EU countries showing only 19% of respondents trust Trump to “do the right thing in world affairs.”⁹⁶ However, that doesn't mean conservatives and far-right in the US have given up in trying to shape public perception.

For example, the American far-right often defends their human rights violations narratively by saying they are simply enacting the will of the people. That to be against them, is to oppose the “unprecedented and powerful mandate” given to the Trump administration by winning the 2024 election.⁹⁷ But if these approval rates tell us anything, alongside the fact that only 31.7% of the US population eligible to vote cast a ballot for Trump,⁹⁸ it's that this narrative is overwhelming false, and deceptive.

Harmful narratives like these present an opportunity for all Americans living abroad to make a difference. Each of us living outside the US has unique access to a different national media ecosystem, audiences on social media, and local communities – each of which we can raise awareness of what's happening back in the States, and undermine messaging used by the far-right to justify their actions. And that attention can translate into new solidarities and support to activists in the States, mobilization for local demonstrations, and even policy changes from local lawmakers.

Whether it's through socials, blog posts, or Op-Eds, communications are an essential component to anti-authoritarian resistance from abroad, and thus – gets its own section.

How do communications defend democracy?

As we've detailed above, communications are essential for defending democracy, as authoritarianism rarely wins through force alone – it wins by capturing narratives. But what about doing communications from outside the US, when your audience isn't necessarily composed of Americans?

There's this old saying – “If a tree falls in the forest, and there's no one around to hear it – does it really make a sound?” In many ways, this is a great way to think about doing communications on what's happening back home. For example - local or national press may be reporting on Trump's tariffs or ICE raids, but have they reported on the No Kings demonstrations, or the ways communities are pushing back against ICE? Or perhaps a Trump loyalist is coming to speak in your city, and surrounding communities aren't aware of who's being platformed in their backyard?

In either case, it's not a guarantee that traditional media, other residents, or even policymakers will be aware of how unpopular the Trump administration is back home, that American fascism is bleeding into their country, or that there are US citizens there who actively resist it.

How can this be done by folks living outside the US?

There's many ways to go about it! Perhaps the best place for anyone interested in doing anti-authoritarian communications to start would be to choose a subject matter and angle to be communicating about.

From there, you also need to think about the form your communications will take. This could span multiple platforms, and even multiple languages (as you might want to communicate in the local language for greater, more niche visibility). We've listed a few of these below:

- **Social media & influencer marketing** – The average social media user reports that they spend about 2 hours on socials every day.⁹⁹ Over a lifetime, that amounts to roughly 5% of your waking life. While research shows this is an overwhelming net negative for physical and social health, it doesn't change the fact that social media – and particularly platforms like Instagram and TikTok – leads to a tremendous amount of visibility for activists. In practice, this means making content can lead to many more people being aware of, or engaging with, your specific issue.

And beyond you making content yourself, you can also do outreach to other content creators with large platforms in your niche, to see if they'll re-post, re-share, and even make a post themselves about your cause. Below, you can find a more comprehensive guide to social media content and influencer outreach.

- **Press outreach & Op-Eds** – Journalists play an enormous role in sharing information across society, at local and national levels alike. Getting their attention, either to write something about what's happening in the States, about something you're organizing in your own community, or pitch them an Op-Ed that you would write, is critical to raising awareness about your chosen issue.

Journalists are also, whether freelance or with a large outlet, perpetually busy. That's why outreach to journalists should be kept clear and to-the-point, with follow-up happening ideally as soon as someone reaches back out to you. Below, you can find a further guide on press outreach, and on how to write a compelling Op-Ed.

- **Blog posts & mentions** – There are nearly infinite blogs, or platforms to make your own blogs, that you can use to get your voice out there. Not all blogs have the same level of visibility, however – so it's worth looking to see which creators & publications have the platform you're looking for. That can often depend based on the specific issue you're writing about, language, or geography. And of course, if you're not finding the specific niche you want to speak to, you could start a blog of your own! Good websites to check out to do this are either [Substack](#), or [Medium](#).
- **Mobilizing community in-person** – While you can obviously mobilize your community digitally through all the abovementioned methods, if you're organizing a demonstration or an event - one of the best ways to get people there is to hit the streets, and talk about it. That could mean leaving flyers in people's mailboxes or community spaces, putting up posters or stickers around town, or having conversations with folks about why you're doing this work. This, combined with the online methods listed above, can lead to real turnout.

Other resources

- [Comprehensive guide on using social media for change](#) – The Good Lobby.
- [How to work with mainstream media \(for outreach & publishing\)](#) – Seeds for Change
- [Toolkit on connecting with strangers in your community](#) – Bridging 4 Democracy.
- [Library of Communications & Media toolkits](#) – The Commons Library.

How should I start?

No matter what form your communications take, we would recommend starting by figuring out the exact angle you'd like to take on rising authoritarianism in the US. We've listed out a few questions below you can ask yourself to help with this:

- Do some research on a local / country level. Do policymakers in the country you live now have any connection to the Trump administration or the American far-right? If so, what is the nature of the relationship? Are they ideologically aligned?
- Are there any American companies that bankrolled the Trump administration with a large presence or role in your community? Here's a list of corporate donors for the 2024 election.
- Are there any hot-button issues happening in the States that can connect with the sensitives, local politics, or news of where you live now?
- Are there any conferences, speaking engagements, or events where American far-right policymakers or ideologues will be present in your country?

Once you've done that, you can choose the form that best suits you depending on who you want to reach, your capacity, and specific skillset. As multiple platforms are generally the best way to go, we would also recommend doing this with a small group – ideally to share the work amongst a few people.

More heads are better than one, after all.

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