

**This book is dedicated to Betty and David Segalov,  
who taught me the importance of community  
and compassion.**



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# RESIST

**How to be an Activist  
in the Age of Defiance**

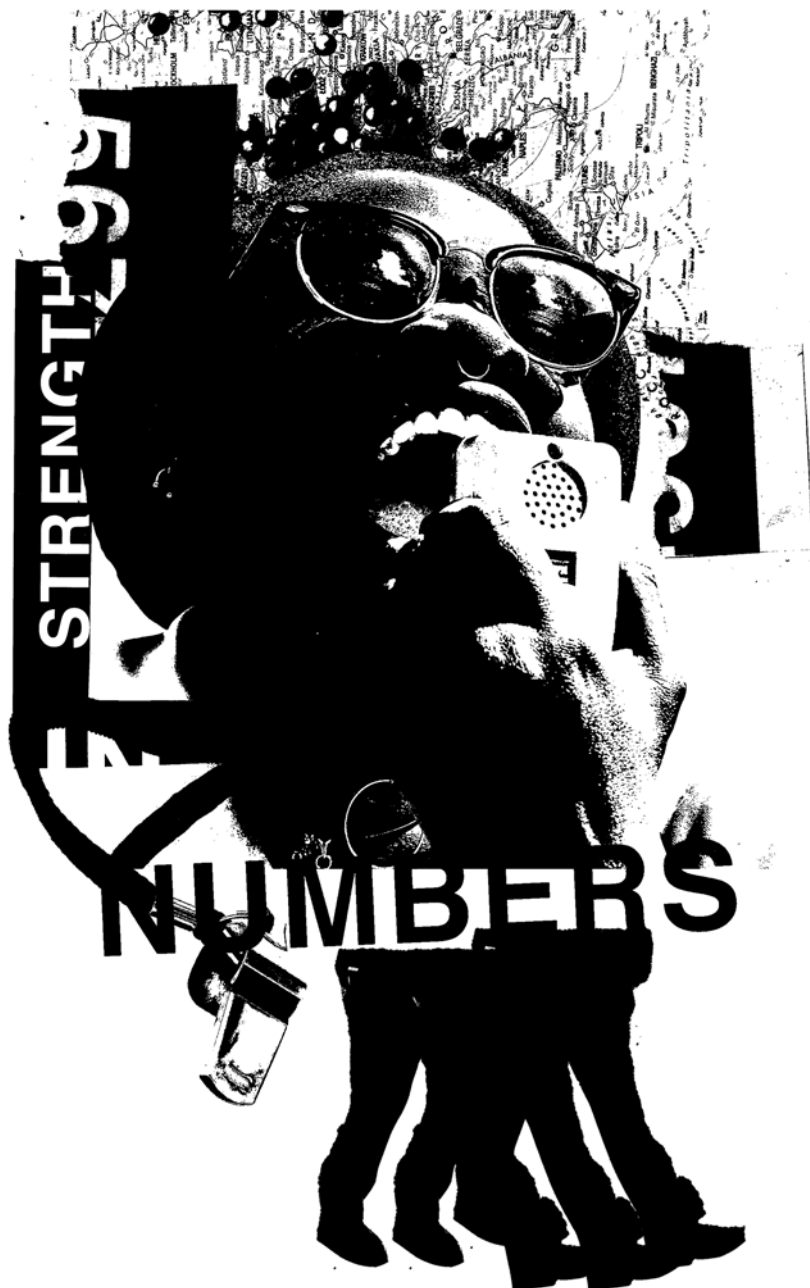
**Michael Segalov**

Laurence King Publishing

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TAKE  
TO THE  
STREETS

Grab a placard and get marching



## INTRODUCTION

While it's true that there's no one-size-fits-all solution to pushing forward with a cause, no single tactic that'll guarantee a win, marches are the lifeblood of activist movements. There's something empowering – almost magical – about taking to the streets in a democracy and reclaiming the public paths that for so long have been ours to march down.

International movements and NGOs sometimes organize massive marches that you can participate in, but the most powerful and spontaneous in recent history have emerged from grassroots campaigns.

From rallies with a handful of people that end in a parade down a quiet side street to protests that see thousands marching on Westminster, there's strength to be found in numbers.

# Choose your moment carefully

Timing, as always, is key. Weekends might seem an obvious choice, but remember that while potential attendees might not be working, nor will those in power who you want to be taking notice. If you're in the city, early evenings can often work a treat, especially if the issue is urgent. It's also worth checking for major sports games, public holidays and other events planned in the vicinity to avoid potential supporters having commitments elsewhere. This is all about getting boots on the ground.

Think carefully about where you want people to gather and find a place for them to assemble before marching from A to B. Make sure that you also find out whether the land you pick is public or private: the law states that you have a right to assemble in public spaces, but if there's a private owner you can be moved on with no warning at all (see Chapter 6).

# LOCATION

Plot out the route you hope to take, and if you want to be visible, stick to the busiest streets. Protests and marches are supposed to be disruptive, but if you've communicated your plans well in advance, and make your intentions clear on the day, the inconvenience to others will be minor. Do your homework and onlookers will then honk their horns and show their support, instead of getting annoyed.

# IT'S TIME TO SPREAD THE WORD



## Get people talking

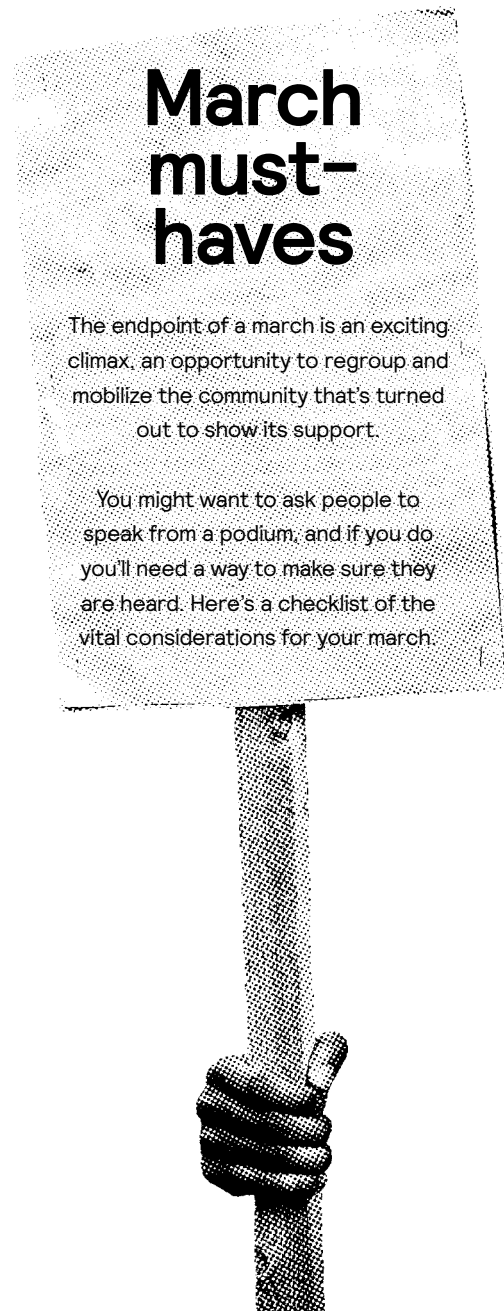
Once you've picked a place, date and time, you're ready to make your protest public. Make an event on Facebook, and invite your friends, family and other supporters of the cause. It's worth managing your expectations, though – not everyone who clicks 'going' on a Facebook event will show up on the day.

Partner up with organizations that may have engaged audiences of their own. Draw up a press release (see Chapter 3) and email it to news sites and stations, both local and national.

Local newspapers and regional news sites are always looking for stories, so try to get some coverage in the build-up to the march – it'll help spread the news in advance. Posters and flyers might be old school, but they're still a great way of creating a buzz if you want your march to be a success.

### FYI

Create a team of reliable people who'll be able to give you a hand (WhatsApp groups are a great way of keeping in contact) and assign everyone specific roles. Make sure to meet before the march kicks off, and hold a debrief afterwards.



## March must-haves

The endpoint of a march is an exciting climax, an opportunity to regroup and mobilize the community that's turned out to show its support.

You might want to ask people to speak from a podium, and if you do you'll need a way to make sure they are heard. Here's a checklist of the vital considerations for your march.

Invite a range of relevant speakers who'll bring support.  
Give them each a time limit and stick to it.

**Find someone to compère.**

Appoint press liaisons to get the message out there, and police liaisons to communicate with officers on the day.

**Think about access:  
is your route wheelchair-friendly?**

Invite performers to get the crowd excited at the start or endpoint of the march.

**Print out legal advice 'bust' cards,  
just in case (see page 143).**

Create a hashtag if you want your message to trend.

**If the route is complex,  
draw up maps and hand them out.**

Give stewards fluorescent jackets to direct the crowd and keep an eye on traffic.

**Grab a first aid kit, just in case.**

Bring a megaphone or microphone – it's important to be heard.

**Whistles or drums? Make some noise.  
Chanting is also a great way to fire people up.**

Make sure someone is taking photos and video, and posting online in real time.

# Control your visual messages

Chapter 4 covered protest art in all its finest forms, but each march needs to have a strong message. Encouraging attendees to be creative and show up with their own contributions is great, but if there's a slogan, phrase or image you want repeating, let those invited know in advance. Visual messages are key.

One useful way of guaranteeing that your message gets heard is by plastering it on a road-width banner. This will look great in pictures and provide a clear explanation of what's going down. It will also allow you to keep control of your group and track of how fast people are moving: coming to a halt behind a banner gives everyone time to regroup.

While solidarity and support from other groups is always worth embracing, be careful that your protest isn't co-opted by groups with their own agenda. You may want to ask certain groups not to bring their own branded placards if they are not relevant to your cause and action.

# A little bit of law

Under British law, if you're organizing a public march, you're obliged to inform the police in writing at least six days before it all kicks off. This only applies if you're the organizer; if you just plan on attending, or are part of helping make plans, then you don't need to worry. Sometimes marches are responsive, with less time for planning, in which case the police simply ask to be notified as soon as possible. Not everyone decides to follow these rules.

The police will want to know the date and time of the march, the route you'll be taking, as well as the names and addresses of the march's organizers.

They have the power to limit or change the route, and set any other condition on your march. In some circumstances they'll change the location, limit the number of attendees, or call a halt to a sit-down protest if it blocks road traffic or pavements.

If your protest will be static – with no march – then you are not obliged to inform the police.

## FYI

Legal observers are trained volunteers who support the legal rights of activists. They provide basic legal guidance and act as independent witnesses of police behaviour at protests. Appoint trained people and put them in high-vis jackets. They will be your eyes and ears on the ground should anything not go to plan. Activist networks in your area may run training sessions if you wish to become a legal observer. Otherwise contact Green & Black Cross. (See Chapter 6 for more legal advice.)

# COMMUNITY

A



## IS IN THE MAKING

Marches and rallies aren't just a show of force, but a chance to feel powerful, meet like-minded people and create a network that lasts. Don't let the momentum dissipate. For example, you might decide to hold another rally after the march is over. Ask stewards to take names and contact details to keep people in the loop about future plans, and maybe have a social afterwards.



# HOW THE WOMEN'S MARCH ON WASHINGTON WENT GLOBAL

On a sunny Saturday in January 2017, one of the largest globally synchronized protests in history took place in over 600 locations worldwide, in resistance to a rising tide of racist and sexist rhetoric fuelled by Donald Trump's election as US President. It all started with a single message on Facebook and a group of first-timers demanding to be heard.

On 8 November 2016, as the US election results rolled in red state after red state, frustrated people across the globe sat down at their computers and searched for solace. They were connecting with like-minded people, motivated to organize against the sexist and bigoted values being espoused by the newly elected Donald Trump and his supporters. Trump called women ugly and said abortions should be 'punishable'. A leaked recording also revealed the future President boasting about grabbing women by the 'pussy'. Disenfranchised women were looking for outlets for their anger – rallies they could attend in order to show their disapproval of the new administration.

New York-based chef Breanne Butler was one of these people. When she logged on to Facebook the night after the election, she saw a post by a friend of a friend named Bob Bland about organizing a march on Washington D.C. for the day after Trump's inauguration on 21 January. Breanne messaged Bob: 'How can I help?' Bob messaged her back instantly: we need you to make Facebook pages for a march in every state of America.

'When I got involved there were just a couple thousand people confirmed to attend', explains Breanne, 'but by that weekend the number was up to six figures. Then it just kept rising. I thought it was going to break Facebook.' More and more people began volunteering, too. Breanne recalls, 'We didn't have time to stop and ask questions or do background checks on people; it was like: "Are you breathing? Great. Wanna volunteer?" It was just regular people stepping up to the plate.'

The march, which by this point had evolved from the 'Million Woman March' (a name already taken by a race-related march that had been held in 1995) to 'Women's March on Washington', soon found itself with sister events far beyond US borders. Within 24 hours of getting involved, Breanne was answering emails from strangers reaching out to organize a Women's March on London, a Women's March on Toronto and similar events in Geneva and Oslo.



In Rome, a US foreign national called Elizabeth Farren had come across the Washington March in ‘post-election despair’, and reached out to a woman she’d met at the Democrats Abroad election-night party in the hope of organizing a rally for US expats in Italy. In Melbourne, an American teacher named Melissa Goffin considered buying flights home to the US for the Washington March, but finding them too expensive decided to set up a march of her own in Australia.

In Kenya, an expat, employee of Human Rights Watch and mother of two, Neela Ghoshal, joined a group called ‘Progressive Americans in Kenya’, for American women who were angry about the election result and didn’t want to ‘sit siloed in Nairobi’. They set up a rally, too. Meanwhile, in Stockholm, Lotta Kuylensstierna read about the Washington march, then went ahead and made a Facebook page of her own. She had already called the police for a permit when she contacted the US organizers.

These marches created a platform for radical thinking, but they were also about different groups coming together and learning from one another. At the marches, attended by millions around the globe, women, men and children from all backgrounds stood united on the street – or in Kenya’s case, in a forest.

These shows of solidarity are a shining example of how marches can flick a switch inside so many. What started as a feeling of disenfranchisement and hopelessness turned into a powerful display of strength, just because a handful of people decided to stand up and be counted.

