Some reasons to consider concealing your identity at a protest: As someone who has been a part of protest movements for over 15 years, it is my opinion that the widely held belief of “I should be able to protest with my face out in the open” works against many protests and protesters. As well as that in some cases it can become dangerous or a liability. Specifically, the idea that in a free country you should be able to speak and protest without legal repercussions and thus not concealing your identity is affirming this. Below I will make a case for why you should consider concealing your identity when going to a protest and offer tips on how to do it effectively.

Let’s run through a scenario. If you go to a protest face out and proud and you remain safe, but someone else takes a bold action that you may disagree with or not you can be tracked down later and questioned about the incident and those that did it. Maybe they broke a window, or maybe they tried to prevent ICE from kidnapping their neighbor. Both of these things could result in serious charges and even prison time. If this happens and the person who took the action gets away with their face is concealed but yours wasn’t; you can now be questioned by law enforcement. The power of the state can be levied against you to get you to give information. Threats against you could used whether true or not. Remember that cops are allowed to and often do lie and any information could lead to someone’s arrest.

Another scenario: You go to a protest proudly showing your face because we shouldn’t have to hide for standing up for what’s right. Often law enforcement will declare a protest an “unlawful assembly” or sometimes even a riot, with little to no provocation. I have witnessed many times were nothing apparent changed and the police decided to throw flash bangs, tear gas, and shoot impact munitions, then declare the protest “violent” after the fact. This was despite the violence starting and continuing overwhelmingly from the police themselves. If you are documented being present at an event that gets declared an unlawful assembly and you don’t immediately leave, you are documented committing a crime. Another important consideration is counter protesters, such as patriot front, proud boys, or a right wing media influencer such as Andy Ngo. If they record your face they now have the ability to target you for violence and/or doxxing. Andy Ngo and many other right wing media influencers have doxxed many well-meaning protesters fighting for a more just world.

So with that argument in place I’ll continue on some tips to consider for concealing your identity in a protest whether you plan on doing anything particularly illegal or not.

No Face No Case: This means if they can’t identify you they can’t charge you or will have a more difficult time doing so with less evidence. But your face is not your only identifying feature. This principle refers to any and all identifiable markings. Tattoos, piercings, hair, eye brows, scars, birthmarks, identifiable bags or clothing- all of these things can be used to identify you. If you have visible tattoos cover them up. Band aid’s work well for smaller tattoos or birthmarks and there are really good concealers meant for models and actors that come in all sorts of shades and tones to blend with your skin. Dermablend is a high quality brand that is supposed to be water proof and last for up to 12 hours. With today’s high level of

surveillance and ai facial recognition it is more important than ever before to be very careful about concealing your face.

Faces: Covid masks are better than nothing but won't hold up under investigation or carfeul scrutiny. We can all identify our friends in a covid mask. The bone structure around your eyes are some of the main parts of the face that facial recognition uses. Pay particular attention to your eyebrows. People often forget about their eyebrows and when you are dealing with state surveillance that can be used against you. A tee shirt with the neck hole stretched across your eyes and the sleeves tied behind your head to make a makeshift balaclava can cover the majority of your face, but make sure to keep it below your eyebrows. Throw in a pair of non descript sunglasses and you're doing pretty good.

Clothing: It can be good to wear loose fitting weather appropriate layers. Long sleeves and pants. I like a sturdy pair of work pants. In the winter you can wear a rain jacket or rain pants with layers under them. In the summer there are some really light weight and breathable options for long sleeves. It's good to have a change of clothes on you that looks different from what you wore at the protest. A good practice is to wear a second outfit underneath your other clothes, but not visibly showing. That way when leaving if you can find an area that doesn't have security cameras and random bystanders you can change outfits quickly and not look so much like a sketchy protester. Clothes that blend in with the people you will be around is ideal, fashionable clothes if you're near clubs, bars, or shopping areas or normal street clothes if you think you'll be in a neighborhood. Shoes often get overlooked. You can be completely anonymous above your ankles but if you are wearing a distinctive pair of shoes that can give you away in security or streamers footage later, especially if they are your everyday shoes. Having very common or bland shoes can really help. If you are able to it is helpful to have a dedicated pair of shoes that you only wear to protests. Also covering up any brand names is important. If a bunch of people are in black bloc and some are wearing adidas brand hoodies and some north face brand hoodies that's a thing that can be pointed out to single people out for arrest. You can use appropriately colored tape to cover logos. There is still identifying information in the placement of the tape but less than a visible logo. If you can try to change out the clothes you wear to protests. This can be really hard because a lot of us don't have much money. But if you show up in the same clothes or the same respirator night after night and one night get arrested they can potentially go back through footage and pin other crimes against you. If money is an issue consider having a goth, punk, or otherwise black clothes clothing swap. Decide if you only want to invite trusted friends or how wide you want to make it. Remember, black clothes never go out of fashion.

Bags and Accessories: Any things you carry on you can also be used to identify you. For instance, if you are wearing a gas mask or a respirator and goggles, these can be used to single you out if they look different from everyone else's. Your backpack if it is easily identifiable can be another way of following your actions either in the moment or through survellience footage later. If you bring a backpack you can try to wear it under your

jacket if it will fit. However, if you wear it on your back under a jacket you will have to take your jacket off to access it. You could try wearing it on your front under your jacket or hoodie instead. This has two main benefits and one main drawback. The first benefit is you can conceal your backpack and access it's contents without having to take layers off. The second benefit is it changes the way your body shape looks in a way that is not expected. This can really throw people off, even your close friends. If we see a hump on someone's back under a jacket we assume it's a backpack. However, people don't often think of wearing a backpack on your chest/stomach. The draw back is it can be hard on your back over time and can make things like running more difficult because your center of weight shifts in a way you aren't used to.

No Gait No Case: One aspect that often gets overlooked when trying to be anonymous in a protest is your posture and gait, or the way you walk, move, and hold yourself. I have had friends I knew, when I wasn't consciously changing this, approach me in full bloc and say "I know that walk." This may seem extreme, but the less people know about your risky behaviors the better for you and the better for them. An actor doesn't just read lines. They think about their role, their character. They try to think like the character, stand, walk, and talk like the character. Consider doing this if you are actively trying to conceal your identity. Take on a persona. Be aware of how you hold yourself, how you move, and change it. When in doubt look at someone in front of you and mimic their stance and body posture. If you normally stand leaning to one side and slouching try instead standing with your feet shoulders apart and your back straight. If you want to take it to the next level it really helps to develop a character in mind and stay in character the whole time.

No Trace No Case: Anonymity is about more than people being able to recognize you. No trace no case means try to leave no evidence, or as little evidence as possible. It means consider wearing gloves, and possibly consider wiping down gear with rubbing alcohol beforehand to remove finger prints, you don't know when you might lose something in a protest. It means if you grabbed that water bottle with bare hands be cognizant of where it goes and what you do with it. It also means be aware of cameras, both security and otherwise. Particularly when coming or going from a protest, especially if you arrive by car or an easily identifiable bike. It means don't remove your mask at the protest unless you absolutely have to and if that's the case have your friends block line of sight. It means don't walk to your identifiable vehicle in black bloc wearing a gas mask. It means be as aware as possible of the different ways that you can be traced back to any actions.

After a protest: Security and anonymity doesn't stop at the protest. If you were at a protest where things got spicy, where crimes were committed, no you weren't. I am not recommending lying to law enforcement as that is it's own law. However, it is very hard not to want to talk with your friends about the shit that went down at a protest. Whether you are excited about the cool shit that went down, angry at the fucked shit that went down, or upset about the traumatic shit that went down it is important not to talk about it when you don't absolutely have to. This is hard and we all want to. But bragging will

undo any security measures you took. If you need to emotionally process, as this can be incredibly helpful in working through traumatic experiences at the hands of police, do so with the people you showed up with and do it with confidentiality. And – do it without your phones around. Leave them at home and go for a walk. But don't brag. If you threw that rock that perfectly broke that security camera – NO YOU DIDN'T. If you brag, not only are you putting yourself at risk but now you've made whoever you bragged to an accessory to a crime. You have now put them at risk. We should resist. But we should resist because we want liberation, not clout. The one exception to these things is if you get caught, tried, and found guilty you can talk about the things that you have already been found guilty of. But in that situation consult your lawyer if you have one about what you should or shouldn't say.

On talking to the police: Shorthand, don't. The more complicated version is don't without a lawyer present. If you get arrested say loudly and clearly "I am going to remain silent and I want to talk to a lawyer." This is supposed to legally prevent them from questioning you without a lawyer present. The truth of the matter is they may do it anyway, but you could potentially get that thrown out after the fact. Also say "I do not consent to a search." Police are trained to use coercion and manipulation to get you to comply. Unless you are on the stand at trial, you can always remains silent. Unless being detained, you are always free to walk away. There are plenty of stories, and footage, of police convincing people to falsely confess to crimes they did not commit. This is legal. These aren't fool proof but they are the legally safest options if being arrested. Don't sign anything they give without a lawyer looking it over first. If cops of any variety come to your door don't open the door if you can avoid it. Ask to see a warrant signed by a judge. Ask them to slide it under the door or through the mail slot. Say you won't answer any questions without a lawyer present. Write everything down as soon as you can and call a lawyer. This is a topic that deserves way more attention and in depth information so seek out "Know your rights" trainings and information. The Civil Liberties Defense Center, National Lawyers Guild, and ACLU all have good information on this.

All of these tips are things to strive for. Perfection is a myth. The goal is to make it as hard as we can for our enemies to identify us and punish us for resisting, whether they are the state or non-state fascists. This is part of what "we keep us safe" means. It's not just about individual safety, it's also about community safety. While some of these tips may seem extreme or unnecessary there are plenty of examples of anti-fascist researchers uncovering the identities of nazis with very little information. If they can do it in their free time someone else can. There is no honor and no shame in getting arrested resisting the state and state violence. However, we should try to avoid arrest as much as possible. With very few exceptions you are better off being free to continue protesting than you are at catching a charge. Good luck out there.