

SAFETY OVER COMMERCE: END COPAGANDA



PROTECTING BLACK WOMEN, GIRLS, QUEER,
TRANS, AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING
PEOPLE RAPID RESPONSE TOOLKIT

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Issue Overview

Historically, there has been a prioritization of profit from the commerce of basic life necessities over care for Black women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming people. Specifically, the financial bottom line of retail stores nationwide is being prioritized over human lives.

Retail stores are causing severe harm to our communities by hiring private security companies to manage safety at their premises. Our documentation shows that private security officers racially profile, violently attack, and even kill customers. Additionally, the presence of these officers creates an environment in which store staff in states with open carry laws feel permitted to carry weapons, leaving customers at risk of even more violence.

At In Our Names Network, we center survivors of police violence and community healing to advance the Black feminist infrastructure and ideologies against police and state-sanctioned violence. Our campaign to end the use of violence during instances of shoplifting aims to create alternatives rooted in safety and care, rather than punishment, surveillance, and police violence.

Through this organizing toolkit, we will share our findings, present case studies, and offer rapid response practices to combat violence and death against customers suspected of shoplifting at retail stores. We will also present solutions that prioritize community care over corporate profits.





Who We Are

In Our Names Network is a national network of organizations, campaigns, and individuals working to end police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender-nonconforming people. We formed in 2016 during a Network Gathering at the Allied Media Conference. Our mission is to support and amplify network members' calls to action, resources, and local campaigns to prevent and demand accountability for individual cases and systemic police violence against Black women, girls, trans and gender nonconforming people and to leverage our collective power through nationally networked campaigns to bring about systemic change. We believe that safety from all forms of violence for Black women, girls, trans and gender nonconforming people lies in a world without policing where all of our needs are met accessibly and abundantly, in which our communities are not just a place but a way of being committed to violence prevention, intervention, healing, and transformative justice; and where we nurture a luscious imagination and live into the maintenance of safety, liberation, and freedom.

Why We Are Doing This Campaign

As a network that has been conducting rapid response and case studies of police violence against Black women, girls, trans, and gender non-conforming people since 2016, we have seen recurring incidences of police violence in relationship to shoplifting copaganda. After further research alongside our network member, Interrupting Criminalization Shoplifting: Corporate Copaganda report, our members and community called us to action. We launched the Safety Over Commerce: Ending the Shoplifting Copaganda campaign to make the research report findings and recommendations possible in our communities.

- **Ending Market Dependency** - *which means transforming basic goods and services into rights*
- **Decommodifying Life** - *transforming the production of goods for profit into planning production to meet human needs.*

This toolkit is a resource we created so that members and our communities could understand the issue and discuss it among key stakeholders. In addition, the toolkit outlines ways to intervene and respond during police or security violence due to the shoplifting copaganda. We also provide healing justice resources and ways to support survivors in the long term. Finally, the toolkit is an entrance into taking action with the **Safety Over Commerce: Ending the Shoplifting Copaganda** campaign by joining our membership or discussing the issue on social media with the graphic and talking points.

Understanding The Issue in Practice

Below is evidence From Shoplifting: Corporate Copaganda report by Maurice MP-Weeks & Brendan McQuade from Interrupting Criminalization call for an End To Market Dependence. Ending market dependence means the transformation of basic goods and services into rights.

- The Journal of Empirical Legal Studies, found that Texas's new retail theft statute resulted in a discriminatory pattern of arrests. The study examines the arrest records for 97,740 people who could have been charged with either property theft or organized retail theft and finds that Black people were twice as likely as white people to be charged with the more serious offense, while Hispanic people were 20% more likely than whites to be charged with the more serious offense.
- In 2017 Walmart and partner corporation Corrective Education Company were chided by a California judge for essentially committing extortion. Walmart would detain shoplifters in their store and hand them over to CEC. CEC would then force the shoplifters to pay a fee to complete their diversion class or be turned over to the police and charged with an offense
- The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is an organization known for pushing duplicate bills in front of numerous state legislatures on behalf of its corporate funders. Under ALEC's model bill, an individual who, in coordination with at least one other person - steals at least \$1,000 worth of goods over a six month period (180 days) or is involved in the sale of these stolen goods can be found guilty of organized retail theft.

Case Study #1 - Meika Prince



An incident involving Meika Prince sheds light on the impact of police and private security when trying to acquire the necessities of life. Meika is a grad student who went to pick up her medication from Walgreens in Seattle, Washington and was harassed and tormented by a military-armed security guard. Despite the incident's impact on her life, she sought accountability through legal channels and filed a suit against ASC Security, Walgreens, and Brian Vinegar.

Case Study #2 - Banko Brown



Banko Brown's tragic final rest exposes the intersections of gendered and racialized police violence upholding commodities over the value of a trans person's life. Banko Brown was a 24-year-old black trans-men who was murdered by a security guard at Walgreens in San Francisco, CA in April 2023. Banko's story and its connection to police violence can be explored more in Interrupting Criminalization Shoplifting Cooperate Copaganda Report.

Case Study #3 - Travonsha Ferguson



Travonsha Ferguson's experience sheds light on the criminalization of Black women and the lack of regard for black lives. In April of 2023, After being accused of stealing lip gloss, Travonsha, 7 months pregnant, was followed outside of Walgreens in Nashville, TN. There, she was shot 7 times by a Walgreens employee. She was forced to have her child early. Thankfully, they both are alive, though the baby is suffering from critical health conditions. The employee had charges dismissed on the claim of self-defense. Currently, Travonsha is seeking to sue Walgreens due to negligence.

Safety Over Commerce: End Copaganda: Debate Activity

The purpose of this activity is to sharpen your ability to talk about the Safety Over Commerce: Ending the Shoplifting Copaganda campaign. It can be done individually or in a group. Use the worksheet to help guide your talking points about the campaign. Sharpen your skills by practicing being on both sides and creating coherent arguments within structured time.

Debate Instructions

Step One: Prepare

1. Review Information regarding shoplifting and its impact on Black Women, girls, trans and gender non-conforming communities.
2. Complete the worksheet and prepare your arguments for a debate.

Step Two: Curating A Debate

1. Host two rounds of debate.
2. For the first round, debaters will have two minutes to present their arguments.
3. During the final round, debaters will have one minute for rebuttal.
4. Choose debate order based on the winner of a rock, paper, scissors game.
5. If doing it by yourself, discuss it with a friend, colleague, community member, or family to get their thoughts and feedback

Need a timer? - [Here](#) is a free one online.

Step Three: Debrief & Review

1. Discuss the valid points each debater made.
2. Write a synopsis of what you gained from the feedback you received from others regarding the activity.

Need more help? See the examples below.

Activity Example



DEBATE PLANNER

Participants: In Our Names
Network Working Group
Members

The best and most effective
strategy to End Market
Dependence for IONN--
target governmental policy,
legislation and officials

ARGUMENT	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
Argument 1: In many jurisdictions menstrual products are no longer taxed, because it's increasingly understood that people shouldn't have to pay for necessities. We can advocate through legislative and regulatory processes to move away from market dependence. [there's an accessible process for this change]	At least 34 states have special organized retail crime laws, with many others and enhancements to existing laws currently under consideration.
Argument 2: Government already provides certain public goods; public education, libraries, public hospitals etc. so the advocacy we do, could build onto existing structures.	Evidence: social services, free public education, etc.

Closing Statement: The government should be accountable to the people, and we can advocate and organize for more democratic processes and abolish retail criminalization. In addition, state and local governments can provide for people's basic needs.

Blank Activity



DEBATE PLANNER

ARGUMENT	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
Argument 2:	Evidence:

Closing Statement:

Rapid Response tactics to protect Black Women, girls, queer, trans, and Gender Non-conforming People

If you see a Black woman, girl, trans, and gender non-conforming person or people being harassed by the police, security, or militarized armed personnel for accused shoplifting and you, as a bystander, would like to intervene you can apply the 5 D's of Bystander Intervention to deescalate the situation. The 5 D's of Bystander Interventions should only be completed after you have assessed the situation and fully understood your decision to intervene.

The **5 D's for Bystander Intervention** have been used among our movement partners and allied support nationwide. Check out the Interpreting Criminalization's **Abolitionist Pocket Zine for Youth: Bystander Intervention** [here](#) or the **Right to Be 5 D's of Bystander Intervention** [here](#).



Bystander Interventions For Shoplifting : The 5 D's

1

Delegate: Is there an opportunity for you to pull in others who might be able to and are interested in de-escalating the situation? As in any organizing space, there is power in numbers, even if it's just delegating someone to watch the situation and ensure the survivor is not alone.

2

Document - Capture the situation through video, voice recording, jot down a note, or even call a friend to tell them. Capturing your eyewitness account can serve as a research tool and de-escalate the harmers' actions. **Never Post Or Share Without Survivors' Explicit Consent.**

3

Distract - Revert the situation by changing topics, creating laughter, or asking the police, security, or militarized armed personnel questions about irrelevant topics to create a distraction. Distractions are best when the situation has not fully escalated and can alleviate potential harm. Again, you must always remember to assess the situation and be fully aware of your decision before intervening.

4

Delay—It can be important to slow down the impact or delay an incident. You can do this by asking the person who was harmed if you can support or help them. You may offer to sit with them or to stay.

5

Direct—When you interact directly with the abuser and survivor, it is important to be aware of capabilities and resources. Try not to engage in argument or elevate the threat of the situation. Use a Short Phrase and direct comfort towards the survivor.

Bystander Interventions For Shoplifting : Phrases for Intervention + Support

Comfort Statements:

Are you okay?

Do You need anything?

Can I call someone for you?

Confronting the Harmer Short Phrases:

Stop harming them.

Leave them alone.

Important Reminder For Direct Interventions:

Remain calm

Do not yell

Create personal space for yourself and everyone involved

Do not stare down

Survivor Check-In Questionnaire

You may use these questions to check in with a survivor or bystander when a police violence incident occurs. Click the link to access the full template.

Describe what a healthy body, stable and positive emotions, spiritually grounded and socially healthy body looks and feels like:

Three things I commit to reach this vision for my body:

1.

2.

3.

Three things I commit to doing to reach this vision for my emotions:

1.

2.

3.

Survivor Check-In Questionnaire

Three things I commit to reach this vision for my body:

1.

2.

3.

Three things I commit to doing to reach this vision for my emotions:

1.

2.

3.

Healing Justice in the Aftermath

Mental health practices and resource:

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- A. YOUTUBE - ANXIETY REDUCING YOGA PRACTICE WITH AYA FROM HAJI
- B. PLAYLIST

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

- A. NATIONAL QUEER AND TRANS THERAPISTS OF COLOR NETWORK
- B. THERAPY FOR BLACK GIRLS
- C. NATIONAL QUEER & TRANS THERAPISTS OF COLOR NETWORK

THERAPY FUNDING OPTIONS

- A. THERAPY FUND FOR BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS
- B. BLACK GIRLS SMILE
- C. THE OKRA PROJECT
- D. DREAM DEFENDERS FREE THERAPY APPLICATION

Contribution Page



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REFERENCES

SHOPLIFTING CORPORATE COPAGANDA
SURVIVOR QUESTIONNAIRE (AMBER SHERMAN)
ANXIETY REDUCING YOGA PRACTICE
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TRAINING
ABOLITIONIST POCKET ZINE FOR YOUTH
BLACK GIRL FEEL GOOD PLAYLIST
THERAPY FOR BLACK GIRLS
NATIONAL QUEER & TRANS THERAPISTS OF COLOR NETWORK
THE LOVELAND FOUNDATION
BLACK GIRLS SMILE
THE OKRA PROJECT
DREAM DEFENDERS FREE THERAPY APPLICATION