DC Peace Team

Nonviolent Peacemaking and Resistance

Measurement, Evaluation, Research, Learning Report

Unarmed Civilian Protection and Accompaniment

*Election Day***:** November 3, 2020 (9 people deployed)
Protests DC due to Post Election Political Divisiveness: November 14, 2020 (10 people deployed)

November 3, 2020

Quantitative Assessment

De-Escalation Incidents: requiring active intervention to defuse de-humanization, hostility, or physical threats of violence

4.5 incidents
4 successful de-escalations

Empathy Building Incidents: active intervention to generate deeper understanding of self and/or others who disagree with one's political position.

41 persons engaged and responsive to empathy building

Qualitative Assessment

Example 1: Example 3: Location: BLM Plaza, from 6-10pm

De-Escalation Incidents:

-Total number: 2

-Total number that were successful: 2

-Tactics that made it successful: presence, accompaniment, interposition

Empathy Building Incidents:

-Total number of engagements generating self-empathy: 3

-Total number generating other-empathy: 3

Other Comments

One particular incident involved a large black man with a "Make America Great" t-shirt loudly sharing his views in BLM plaza. Some press tried to interview him. Soon a couple white adversaries started yelling at him and he got intensified. He started circling with his fists out front rotating. The adversaries told him to go to the alley for a fight with them. He kept swirling around the plaza. More press gathered to intensify it. I started to follow and get closer to the center of the conflict. The press soon formed a circle around both of those in conflict, creating a possible space for fists to fly. So, I walked into the circle slowly moving in between the two yelling back and forth. The man who was wearing a "Make America Great" t-shirt then darted out of the circle and started moving more quickly up the street away from the crowd and adversaries. A few police soon came near and worked to move him further out of the scene.

Example 2: Location: BLM Plaza from 9pm - 12am

De-Escalation Incidents:

-Total number: 1

-Total number that were successful: 1

-Tactics that made it successful: Eye contact, distraction, CLARA, accompaniment, presence

Example 3: Location: BLM Plaza, from 3-6pm

De-Escalation Incidents:

-Total number: 1 partial

-Total number that were successful: 0

Empathy Building Incidents:

-Total number generating other-empathy: 4

Example 4: Location: Pembroke, North Carolina from 11am - 9pm

De-Escalation Incidents:

-Total number: 1

-Total number that were successful: 1

-Tactics that made it successful: patient listening, and recording complaint

Empathy Building Incidents:

-Total number of engagements generating self-empathy: 24

-Total number generating other-empathy: 10

*Other Comments

Most of the work involved calmly talking to people who were agitated by long waits or replies from poll workers; later in the evening we gave out snacks. Two women came out of the polling building saying if we were reporting problems that we should report one of the poll workers who was not wearing a mask and was being impatient and ugly to voters. One of the women was repeatedly screaming "I'm a veteran and don't deserve to be treated this way." I asked her to tell me more, and eventually she calmed down while her friend gave details for a written report filed by Frontline Election Defenders. I later heard that the lead poll worker received a call about this from the local election board.

November 14, 2020

Quantitative Assessment

De-Escalation Incidents: requiring active intervention to defuse de-humanization, hostility, or physical threats of violence

30 incidents

26 successful de-escalations; 2 partially successful

Empathy Building Incidents: active intervention to generate deeper understanding of self and/or others who disagree with one's political position.

8 people engaged and responsive to empathy building

1 situation enabled of dialogue between persons of different political positions

Qualitative Assessment

Example 1: Location: Supreme Court/March/BLM Plaza from 1pm-10:30pm

De-Escalation Incidents

-Total number: 18

-Total number that were successful: 17

-Tactics that made it successful: Distraction, Presence, hand motions, Interposition, Dignity, Solidarity, accompaniment

Other Comments:

Three pro-Trump supporters entered the counter-protest area yelling at a group. I went up to one of them on the side and asked, "what brings you here today?" He kind of smirked and trying to be funny said, "I came to go fishing." So, I said, "I love fishing, where did you go? Did you catch anything?" He said, "some lake and caught a bass." So, I said, "great, was it 10, 12 inches; how big?" He started shaking his head and the energy in his group dissipated, as they turned around and left while facing more pressure for them to leave.

Video using interposition and walking back tactics between two people starting to push each other. [Permission of BIPOC partner granted to share this video]

Police got rough with a group near BLM plaza. They were standing in the driveway of a hotel as our group was on the sidewalk. After they arrested a black young adult, a small group tried to get his name and find out what he was arrested for. After a few moments, they pushed three people

back over bushes and they fell back onto the sidewalk. Two DCPT members tried to help them up and see if they were ok. After those who got pushed started yelling back on the police for pushing them down, things simmered. We were standing on the sidewalk and then all of a sudden, the police formed a line with batons and started shoving us in the back to get off a public sidewalk onto the street. The group tries to move between the parked cars into the street. They would yell "move back" while they were already pushing us. People were falling on the ground and we tried to help them. Two DCPT members were trying to protect some demonstrators and we got hit in the back multiple times as the police pushed us up the street toward BLM plaza.

Example 2: Location: Supreme Court/BLM Plaza from 4-6pm

De-Escalation Incidents
-Total number: 4
-Total number that were successful: 3
-Tactics that made it successful: Physical presence, use of tactical phrases like "I hear you," body blocking, separation of individuals

Empathy Building Incidents
-Total number of engagements generating self-empathy: 2
-Total number generating other-empathy: 1

Other Comments:

Navigating through a very mobile counterprotest and pro-Trump observers, as well as a relatively disorganized post-march, kept us on our toes. I would say that while our more isolated interactions were successful, the confrontations between pro and anti-Trump demonstrators were rarely equal in number, swaying either way. While some folks craved dialogue, others certainly were not ready for it. This allowed us to target folks who were looking for safety, conversation, or simply to talk more openly. However, the potential for violence, and overt use of it, forced us to utilize more physical and reactionary tactics of de-escalation, like separation of parties or physical interruption with our bodies.

Example 3: Location: Supreme Court/march/BLM Plaza from 10am-9pm

De-Escalation Incidents
-Total number: 6
-Total number that were successful: Most were successful, 1 was partially successful
-Tactics that made it successful: body blocking, distraction (complimenting earrings or shoes), asking victim if they are ok, actively listening to aggressor/distracting them from victim, asking friends of aggressor to help intervene with aggressor, empathizing with victim "I'm sorry that happened to you".

Empathy Building Incidents
-Total number of engagements generating self-empathy: 2
-Total number generating other-empathy: 1

Other Comments
Protesters were very agitated from the police treatment near a hotel, and I was positioned between the police and protesters. I then began engaging with BLM protesters and asking if they were ok or if they had been injured in the incident. There was one woman who was particularly upset, and I found that standing in front of her and rubbing her arm and speaking to her in a calm voice saying, "I'm here for you, say what you need to say, we hear you, what they did wasn't ok". I would also like to note that during this time my DCPT buddy was within visual distance and we had communicated visually that I was OK once I had gotten in-between the police and protesters. Having that made me feel safer in the position that I was in.

During the MAGA/BLM interactions most of the de-escalation happened when MAGA protesters who were leaving the rally encountered the BLM counter protest march. There were at least two instances where counter protesters and MAGA protesters were engaging in productive discussion, which then escalated as others began to insert themselves and get involved.

In one unsuccessful instance this resulted in a MAGA protester shoving a BLM protester who then shoved him back. De-escalation was successful by body blocking and continuing to walk with the small group of trump protesters alongside the BLM March until the March had passed and they had to turn down another street to walk to where they had parked.

In the other instance which was somewhat successful two individuals were having a productive conversation, both seemed emotional but were also listening and engaging in empathic behavior. There were no signs of escalation between the two individuals having the conversation (e.g. getting closer to each other, turning to face each other or blocking a pathway etc). Other MAGA supporters began to get involved in this interaction and things began to escalate. These additional individuals started screaming and chanting at the BLM individual. I asked that these individuals please let them have a conversation which led to accusations that I was "one of them" and "antifa" and of "killing black people". Shortly after the crowd of people grew to 4-5 people yelling at this BLM individual, and they were getting closer to him, the individual decided to re-join the BLM march, which happened safely.

Example 4: Location: Supreme Court Bldg. from 11:30am – 3pm

De-Escalation Incidents

-Total number: 3

-Total number that were successful: 2

-Tactics that made it successful: Distraction, Delaying, Listening, Interposition

Empathy Building Incidents

-Total number of engagements generating self-empathy: 3

Contact:
Eli S. McCarthy, PhD
esm52@georgetown.edu
510-717-8867 (cell)
www.dcpeaceteam.com