Organizing in Jail:
Some Suggestions

The prison system controls us, among other ways, by controlling the space we inhabit, the way our time is structured, and the information we can send and receive. We can take power by organizing our own space, time and information.

INFORMATION/COMMUNICATIONS:

--Find out who has been arrested, which affinity groups are in jail, who if anyone is missing or has been isolated. Consolidate the information so that in one or two phone calls it can be communicated to our legal team and support people.
--Organize our own system of lines or lists to use telephones. Transmit messages for others.
--Use legal team to communicate with others of our groups held in other locations.
--Choosing a jail liaison from among the group will often ease communication with the guards, who feel more comfortable talking to one person. But this role should rotate so no one person becomes identified as ‘the leader’.
--Remember, information from the guards, however nice they may seem, is not often deceptive or inaccurate. DON’T SPREAD RUMORS! Verify information.
--Share information and stories about the action among ourselves, but cautiously—you may be monitored. Don’t talk about your suspicions of being watched, or you lose

SPACE:

When possible, organize our own space in jail: a meeting corner, a quiet corner, a healing space, a workshop space etc.

TIME:

The time we spend together in jail can be enriching. We can organize workshops, classes, nonviolence trainings, political discussions, strategy and theory sessions, games, rituals, exercise sessions, music, talent shows, quiet times, and of course, meetings. Remember not to become obsessed by meetings.
--Don’t become panicked by their timetable. We can take the time we need to do what we have to do.

MEETING AND GETTING ORGANIZED:

When you get into jail, and have a chance to meet:

● Collect information on who has been arrested, isolated, medical needs, etc.
● Develop a strategy for getting that info to supporters.
● Update on information on the action, legal issues, and negotiations.
● Roles and responsibilities in the group—caretakers, liaisons, etc.
● Clustering—make sure everyone has an affinity group or buddy.
● Feeling sharing—perhaps a round on how we each deal with powerlessness

Share information, but be careful not to pass on legal information you are unsure of. Anyone who is too
obviously knowledgeable risks being singled out, so stay low-key and neutral.

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