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# A HANDY "HOW TO" GUIDE

By Lilja Otto

Bussana Vecchia, Italy



WWW.DILUVI.COM

## Visit Liberated Places

... and come home inspired with ideas for free living. Here are a few we recommend:

**Work in an Ecovillage** (*gen.ecovillage.org*), or join a solidarity work camp to help grow local food or build a free space in a community. Volunteers for Peace, is an example: [www.vfp.org](http://www.vfp.org)

**Spend a weekend touring local family farms** (call ahead) or join a farm tour and talk to the people who grow your food. Find farms at [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org), ask at your farmers market, or check the phone book.

**Visit City Repair** installations in the next city you visit—or in your own city. Find a list at [www.cityrepair.org](http://www.cityrepair.org)

**Stay at Hotel Bauen**, Buenos Aires, Argentina, which was reclaimed by its workers after the country's 2001 financial crisis. The hotel also offers free meeting spaces for area activists. Phone + 54-11-4372-1932.

**Visit a squat** like Christiania, a former military base in the center of Denmark's capital, Copenhagen ([www.christiania.org](http://www.christiania.org)). Or the idyllic village of Bussana Vecchia in Italy ([www.bussana.com](http://www.bussana.com)), once abandoned after an earthquake, then squatted by artists in 1960 and lovingly restored. Wikipedia's listing of squats is at [wikipedia.org/wiki/squatting](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/squatting)

**"To live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."**

HOWARD ZINN  
HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR

## Practice Your Voice

**Speak up** when you hear somebody perpetuate a gender-, race-, or other stereotype.

**Sing out** loud, on the street, on your break, in a community choir.

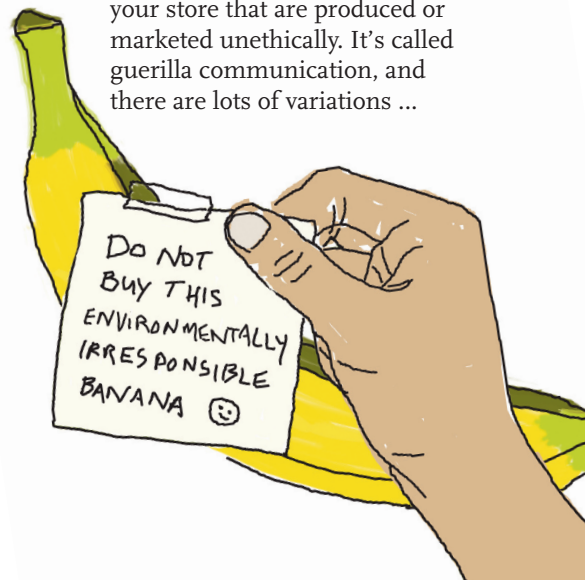
**Write** a column in a local or national paper, or in a blog.

**Tell yourself** how your day would look in a liberated world.

**Tell your friends.**

**Vote.**

**Stick notes** on products in your store that are produced or marketed unethically. It's called guerilla communication, and there are lots of variations ...



ELINA SHATKIN

Christiania, Denmark



More ways to find freedom in the Winter 2008 issue of YES! Magazine, **Liberate Your Space**. Back copies at [YesMagazine.org/store](http://YesMagazine.org/store).

Interactive online version and printable PDF of this Guide at [YesMagazine.org/DIYfreedom](http://YesMagazine.org/DIYfreedom).

Related articles at [YesMagazine.org/LiberatedSpaces](http://YesMagazine.org/LiberatedSpaces).



MIKE EVERETT-LANE

## Get Debt Free

**Say good-bye to predatory lenders.** Transfer balances from high-interest credit cards to one with a low rate, or take out a loan with a local bank or credit union.

**Pay off old debt as quickly as possible** and avoid new debt by keeping track of your expenses. Decide where money spent adds to your happiness and where to cut spending.

**Question assumptions:** Do you need or want a (second) car? Do you need pre-processed foods or could you make it yourself? Could you share instead of own? Could you buy used? Do you need it?

**Start a zero-interest lending circle** with your friends or colleagues. Set up a monthly contribution and take turns in using the fund created by all of you.

**Ditch the dollar.** Barter instead of buy, join a local currency or timebank, or start one: [wikipedia.org/wiki/Local\\_currency](http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_currency)

**Learn more:** *Your Money or Your Life*, co-authored by Vicki Robin (see [Can We Talk](#)) offers nine steps to change how you earn, spend and save money. Co-op America has info on living green without spending more: [www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org)

## Get Stuff Free

**Clothing Exchange:** Get your friends together to swap clothes that you don't wear any more. Add a potluck and special theme.

**Free Cycle:** Give away what you don't need or want. Get what you do. Free and local: [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)

**Free ads:** Find things others want to get rid of, or advertise your own: [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org) and some local newspapers and websites.

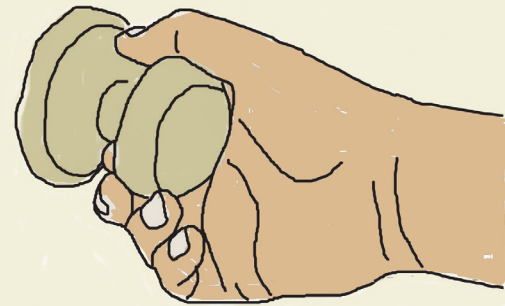
**Dumpster Dive:** Get a headlamp, gloves, and a pole with a hook. A step stool helps, and with a buddy it's more fun. See [www.freegankitchen.com](http://www.freegankitchen.com) for tips and recipes.

**Couch Surfing:** Stay in exotic cities or remote outposts for free. Or bring the world to your living room: [www.couchsurfing.com](http://www.couchsurfing.com)

**With the money you save,** support others who are creating free spaces: local organic food, fair trade goods, union-made, green energy, local arts, your favorite non-profit.

## No-Frills Guide to Squatting

- 1 Talk to successful squatters.
- 2 Find a suitable abandoned building.
- 3 Learn about current ownership.
- 4 Move in silently, or squat publicly to call attention to homelessness and speculation.



- 5 Change all locks and never leave the place empty during the first days.
- 6 Get essential services connected and have mail sent to you at the new address.
- 7 Embellish, repair, and maintain the space: put up curtains; remove trash; paint.
- 8 If the owners appear, negotiate a stay in exchange for maintenance. Have a transport plan ready in case of eviction.
- 9 If the police come, it's helpful to appear settled by showing utility bills, mail, and a tidy, furnished feel.
- 10 Research *adverse possession* or other state laws that could eventually give you title to the property.

Get more advice at [www.geocities.com/squattersguide](http://www.geocities.com/squattersguide) and [www.sftu.org/hnj.html](http://www.sftu.org/hnj.html)



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### Map Your Freedom

Point out liberated spaces in your area with Google's new map function—put community centers, co-housing, flex-car stations, farmer's markets, gathering spaces, and free events on the map.

- 1 Create a Google account.
- 2 Go to [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com)
- 3 Click on *my maps* and find the geographic area you want to work on.
- 4 Save the map and give it a name people will be able to find.
- 5 Mark your liberated spaces, draw lines to show safe bike paths, add images or stories.
- 6 Overlay free content offered by Google, such as transit maps.
- 7 E-mail your map to your friends, hand out fliers with the web address, or put it in your blog or on your website. Google's step-by-step guides help you do all this.



Anti-Advertising Agency activists polled residents living near 10 Oakland bus stops regarding what advertising tactics they found most bothersome.

The team designed bus bench illustrations for each neighborhood.

The agency mission is to question the strategies of today's marketing media by co-opting the tools and structures they use.

Also check out the billboard Liberation Front at [www.billboardliberation.com](http://www.billboardliberation.com)



### Free Your Inner Space

How can you liberate your inner space in the midst of a busy day? Here's how mindfulness can be part of everyday life, creating spaces where you can feel your heart's desire, your true passion, your burning question:

**Simply stop** for a few seconds throughout the day. **Pause and feel** yourself in the moment. **Listen** to what you really long for in that moment. Learn to **do this again and again** throughout the day: before you get up, as you get out of the shower, when you leave work, as you get on your bike, at dinner. Let those **pauses add up**. From this new space, **surrender** to your deep longing.

Author Gunilla Norris writes about mindfulness in everyday life in *Inviting Silence* (2005, Rider & Co.).

### Toss a Flower Bomb

Here are some quick ways to beautify a highway median, an abandoned lot, or a parking strip. Make sure to use locally appropriate seeds.

#### Flowering Eggs

Blow out an egg and carefully fill the eggshell with compost and seeds of local flowers—perennials or drought-resistant annuals are best. Cover the hole with light-weight paper if necessary. Carry your seed eggs with you and toss when you see a likely spot.

#### Fukuoka Seedballs

Mix equal parts of seeds and dry compost, then add clay. Spray water over the mixture, and knead until it just holds together without crumbling. Roll into quarter-sized balls and dry. Easy to carry in your pocket. The seeds sprout once rain or sprinklers hit them.

Read David Tracey's *Guerilla Gardening* (2007, New Society Publishers) for tips on edible landscapes, sod sofas, and other green delights.



# Learn Activism

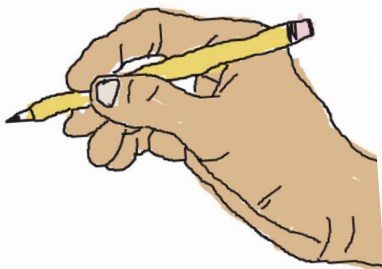
Rosa Parks was not only an activist, but a *trained* activist. If you are a first-time organizer or a veteran looking to hone your skills, here are some places to go:

**The Highlander Research and Education Center** supports grassroots leaders of all ages with tools for building broad-based movements for change.  
[www.highlandercenter.org](http://www.highlandercenter.org)

**The Ruckus Society** provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with tools, training, and support for direct interventions.  
[www.ruckus.org](http://www.ruckus.org)

**Earth Activist Training** graduates have done bioremediation in New Orleans, started community gardens, set up permaculture camps for major mobilizations, and helped restore watersheds.  
[www.earthactivisttraining.org](http://www.earthactivisttraining.org)

**The Rockwood Leadership Program** teaches activists organizational as well as inner skills to support their on-going work.  
[www.rockwoodleadership.org](http://www.rockwoodleadership.org)



[www.YesMagazine.org/discuss44](http://www.YesMagazine.org/discuss44)  
Download our Discussion guide  
and start a conversation



## Just Walk Out ...

Kick your TV addiction. Or your shopping habit. Or screw up the courage to leave a soul-crushing job, school, or relationship. Here's how to get started:

- 1 Bring together** one or two people who have walked out from an institution, societal norm, or dysfunctional mindset, and some others who are still rounding up the courage to do so. Bring food and drinks.
- 2 Start with a talking circle**, where everyone can briefly share their complaints, passions, and desires.
- 3 Encourage each participant** to take the "walk-out challenge," committing to doing one thing—even if it is just for a day—from turning off the TV, to going car-free, to quitting school or a destructive job.
- 4 Set a time to meet again** to share stories and make the next round of commitments. Invite people to bring a friend.
- 5 Repeat**—until everyone is as free as they want to be.

Check out Shikshantar's network in India at [www.swaraj.org/shikshantar](http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar) and connect with people at [www.berkana.org](http://www.berkana.org)

## ... And Walk On

Just walked out, and searching for what can be next? **Find a mentor.** Walked out successfully? **Be a mentor.** Carrie Ellet at Girls for a Change has some tips:

**Don't be afraid to ask** someone you admire. **Set up a way of work**—establish consistent meeting times and frequency. Decide on a **goal or timeline** that will signify the end of your mentoring relationship. Be honest about **what kind of time you can give**. If it turns out you can give more, great! But if you can't meet your promises, this can be damaging to the relationship. Be sincere in **empowering your mentee** to make progress in their goals. Instead of leading, **ask questions**, listen, open your networks, and share your resources. Learn more about a mentor program for young activists at [www.girlsforachange.org](http://www.girlsforachange.org)

