

When Activism Becomes a Dangerous Religion

Purpose of This Educational Document

This document examines **how activism or protest movements can become dangerous when they take on the structure and psychology of a religion**, particularly a *coercive or cult-like religion*. This paper offers a framework for identifying when activism stops serving the greater good and begins to **undermine individual freedom, social trust, and democratic process**. It becomes evil.

The goal is prevention: to help communities, educators, faith leaders, policymakers, and citizens recognize warning signs early and preserve ethical, humane civic engagement.

Defining Activism and Its Intended Role

At its best, activism is a **civic tool**: - To raise awareness - To advocate for reform - To protect vulnerable populations - To hold institutions accountable

Healthy activism is outcome-oriented and grounded in ethical restraint.

Problems arise when activism ceases to be safe and becomes an **identity, belief system, or moral authority based on instrumental harms**.

What It Means to Call Activism a “Religion”

This framing is metaphorical but precise. A religion—particularly a dangerous or authoritarian one—typically includes: - Absolute moral claims - Sacred language and symbols - Rituals of belonging - Enforcement of orthodoxy - Punishment of dissent - Justification of harm in the name of righteousness

When these elements appear within activist movements, activism shifts from **ethical advocacy** to **dogmatic belief system**.

Activism as a Spectrum of Coercive Power

To understand how activism can become dangerous, it is useful to examine it **as a spectrum of behavior rather than isolated categories**. Along this spectrum, protest, disruption, sabotage, militias, terrorism, and even forms of modern enslavement can emerge from the *same underlying logic* when movements prioritize belief, loyalty, and power over human autonomy.

This framework does **not** assert that all protest movements engage in these harms. Rather, it shows how **the same movement ecology**, when unchecked, can generate

escalating forms of coercion. ***Intimidation and coercion can lead to crimes against humanity. We are sadly seeing this more and more today.***

Core Characteristics of Activism as a Dangerous Religion

1. Moral Absolutism

- Issues are framed as pure good versus absolute evil
- Complexity, context, and competing values are rejected
- Individuals are reduced to moral categories rather than human beings

Disagreement is treated as immorality.

2. Heresy and Apostasy

- Questioning the movement is framed as betrayal
- Former supporters are treated as enemies
- Intellectual independence becomes a punishable offense

Doubt becomes evidence of moral corruption. ***Things get weird and volatile.***

3. Ritualized Protest and Performative Faith

- Repetitive slogans, gestures, and public declarations of belief
- Social media becomes a confessional space
- Visibility replaces effectiveness

Participation signals virtue; silence signals guilt.

Shame Shame Shame On You ~ Was a slogan used during WW2.

4. Social Enforcement and Punishment

- Public shaming, cancellation, and deplatforming
- Economic, professional, or social harm justified as accountability
- No proportionality or due process

Punishment replaces persuasion, cold war tactics replace healthy dialogue.

5. Authority Without Accountability

- Informal leaders wield power without responsibility

- No clear mechanisms for correction, appeal, or forgiveness
- Harm is excused if committed “for the cause”

Power becomes self-legitimizing. Rogue actors take center stage.

6. Identity Supremacy

- Personal identity is subordinated to movement identity
- Individuals exist to serve the cause, not the reverse
- Emotional loyalty is prioritized over ethical reflection

The movement becomes like an idolized god; the person becomes expendable.

From Protest to Coercion: How Escalation Occurs

When activism, particularly angry activism becomes religious in structure, escalation is a core feature, a culture of hate transpires.

Movements begin with symbolic protest, but when belief hardens into dogma and urgency replaces ethics, the movement often advances through predictable stages:

1. Protest (Symbolic Expression)

- Marches, slogans, boycotts, and demonstrations
- Moral signaling intended to awaken conscience

At this stage, activism can still be healthy. Still, it can be a public nuisance, unchecked, often accompanied by negative intentions or criminal acts.

2. Disruption (Compelled Attention)

- Blocking infrastructure, institutions, or speech
- Interfering with daily life to force compliance

Disruption reframes persuasion as pressure.

3. Sabotage (Instrumental Harm)

- Property destruction
- Economic interference
- Targeted reputational or professional ruin

Harm is justified as necessary for the cause.

Activism then, becomes an act of terrorism, or war front.

4. Militant Organization (Enforcement)

- Informal patrols, security wings, or ideological enforcers
- Group identity hardened through uniforms, symbols, or internal codes

The movement begins to police behavior. Bizarre behaviors start to overshadow normal community experiences. The cult of activism, or religion of activism cements and becomes the “norm.”

5. Terroristic Logic (Psychological Control)

- Use of fear to compel behavior
- Threats, intimidation, or exemplary punishment

Terror here refers to *method*, fear as governance.

6. Enslavement (Total Subjugation)

- Individuals reduced to instruments of the cause
- Emotional, economic, or social captivity
- Exit punished or made impossible

At this stage, the movement consumes its own members and targets alike. People are afraid and living in fear. Stalking, filming or psychological games become a forced structure of organization, assault, victimization and slavery becomes normalized.

This is how activism, when untethered from conscience, can replicate the structures of the very oppression it claims to resist. We witnessed the worst of humanity within these structures of society.

Why This Form of Activism Is Dangerous

When activism functions as a religion, it can: - Normalize bullying, coercion, and psychological harm - Create climates of fear and self-censorship - Encourage mob behavior and moral panic - Undermine democratic dialogue and pluralism - Replicate the very power abuses it claims to oppose

History shows that movements driven by absolute moral certainty are among the most prone to abuse, precisely because belief is used to override restraint.

Psychological and Social Consequences

For individuals: - Anxiety, trauma, and hypervigilance - Loss of autonomy and self-trust - Fear of social or professional annihilation

For communities: - Polarization and fragmentation - Breakdown of trust - Replacement of dialogue with accusation

For institutions: - Policy driven by fear rather than evidence - Erosion of due process - Governance by spectacle

How Healthy Activism Differs

Healthy activism: - Accepts moral complexity - Protects human dignity and autonomy, even of opponents - Encourages internal critique - Uses proportional, ethical means - Measures success by outcomes, not purity

Dangerous activism: - Demands certainty - Justifies harm - Silences dissent - Rewards conformity - Exists primarily to sustain itself

Borders, Enforcement, and the Risk of Moral Erasure

A recurring feature of escalatory activism is the **redefinition of public servants as illegitimate enemies**, rather than as citizens performing lawful roles. This dynamic has appeared in movements calling for the abolition of immigration enforcement, where rhetoric collapses distinctions between *policy disagreement* and *dehumanization of personnel*.

Enforcement Officers Are Citizens

Members of the military, immigration enforcement, and border agencies are **United States citizens**. They live in civilian communities, raise families, vote, and are subject to the same constitutional framework as those who protest them. Treating these citizens as enemies of the people fractures the social contract and accelerates **clan logic**.

When movements forget the citizenship of those they target, the threshold for justification of harm lowers.

Borders Are a Civic Reality, Not a Preference

Every nation-state maintains borders. Borders are not ideological symbols; they are **structural features of sovereignty** used to manage security, trade, asylum, public health, and law.

To call for the abolition of immigration enforcement is, in effect, to call for the abolition of borders themselves. This is not a realistic policy outcome. No amount of protest eliminates the necessity of borders in a modern world.

When movements pursue demands that cannot occur, escalation becomes likely, because failure is guaranteed, and failure fuels radicalization.

Protest, Weapons, and Escalation Risk

Across modern protest movements, there have been **documented instances** in which demonstrations occur alongside the presence of firearms or militarized posturing. Regardless of intent, the combination of protest, weapons, and dehumanizing rhetoric **raises the risk of catastrophic miscalculation**.

Armed protest transforms civic expression into coercive spectacle. It introduces fear, invites counterforce, and places civilians, officers, and bystanders at risk.

Shared Responsibility for Public Safety

When activists target enforcement agencies while rejecting the realities those agencies manage, responsibility for resulting risk does not rest solely with the state.

If enforcement is dismantled without a viable replacement, the consequences include: - Increased exposure to transnational crime and violence - Destabilization of border communities - Greater strain on military and local law enforcement - Heightened geopolitical vulnerability

Public safety is a shared burden. When movements knowingly increase risk while denying accountability, they replicate the logic of the very power abuses they condemn.

They put themselves, our public servants and our country **at risk**. Activism then becomes public endangerment.

Economic Cost and Civic Burden

Beyond ideological and security concerns, large-scale protest movements impose **real and measurable costs on society**, costs that are often absorbed by the general public rather than by the movements themselves.

The Taxpayer Burden

Each major protest requires extensive public expenditure, including: - Law enforcement deployment and overtime - Emergency medical services - Infrastructure repair and sanitation - Court, detention, and administrative processing - Disruption to local commerce and public services

These costs are borne primarily by **taxpayers**, regardless of whether they support the protest's aims. In effect, the public is required to subsidize civic disruption, even when that disruption targets public safety, national security, or community stability.

Externalization of Consequences

A defining feature of destabilized activism is the **externalization of cost**. Movements claim moral authority while transferring financial, emotional, and physical burdens onto uninvolved citizens.

When activists do not bear the consequences of their actions, escalation becomes easier. There is little incentive for restraint when others are forced to absorb the damage.

Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability

In some protest contexts, participants include individuals who are **not citizens** and therefore do not share long-term responsibility for the civic systems they disrupt. Regardless of intent, this dynamic deepens public resentment when: - Non-citizens participate in protests against national security or border enforcement - The financial burden falls disproportionately on citizens - Local communities are left to repair damage and restore order

Civic protest traditionally rests on the idea that participants are members of the polity who must live with the outcomes of their actions. When this link between participation and accountability weakens, trust erodes.

Destabilization as a Feedback Loop

When communities are repeatedly forced to absorb the costs of protest-driven disruption, the result is not reform but fatigue: - Public goodwill declines - Polarization intensifies - Support for hardline responses increases

Ironically, destabilized activism can produce the very outcomes it claims to oppose.

Is the aim to destabilize the country you claim to be fighting for?

Destabilization is terrorism and warfare.

Democratic Consent and Civic Limits

In a constitutional republic, policy change requires public consent. On immigration enforcement, **significant portions of the American public have repeatedly rejected abolitionist demands.**

When activists respond to democratic refusal not with persuasion but with escalation, they abandon civic engagement and enter **coercive territory.**

Democracy does not require unanimity, but it does require restraint.

Clan Logic: How Movements Become Tribes

As activism hardens into belief, movements often adopt **clan-like structures**: - Strong in-group identity - Shared symbols, chants, and narratives - External enemies used to reinforce cohesion - Loyalty tests to determine belonging

These dynamics can appear across many ideological contexts. Labels differ; the structure is consistent.

For educational purposes, it is more accurate to analyze **patterns** rather than accuse specific organizations, *however we certainly have named these organizations in other papers.* When movements define themselves primarily by opposition, purity, and obedience, they function as clans, regardless of stated mission.

Ethical Boundaries for Civic Action

Any movement claiming moral authority should be required to answer: 1. Who is harmed by our actions? 2. How are mistakes corrected? 3. What protections exist for dissenters? 4. Is forgiveness possible? 5. Do individuals matter more than ideology?

Movements unable to answer these questions safely should not wield social power.

A Continuum of Abuse

What emerges is not a series of isolated incidents, but a **continuum of abuse**—directed at the general public and at anyone who dissents.

At one end, the abuse is symbolic: Language that shames. Slogans that reduce. Accusations that strip complexity from human beings.

As the movement accelerates, the abuse becomes material: Disrupted livelihoods. **Public intimidation.** Economic and reputational harm.

Further still, it becomes coercive: Fear as persuasion. Force as communication. Compliance as proof of virtue.

Those outside the movement bear the cost. Those inside bear the pressure. And those who disagree are treated not as neighbors, but as enemies or obstacles to subjugate. The promotion of slavery is enabled.

This is how activism, when absolutized, turns outward and inward at once— Policing the public. Policing belief. Policing conscience.

Abuse is no longer a deviation. It is the operating system.

Helter Skelter: When the Slide Has No Bottom

What begins as a climb toward justice can become a carnival of acceleration.

Up is declared righteous. Down is declared necessary. And anyone who refuses to climb aboard is pushed.

This is the logic of helter skelter: A spiraling descent disguised as moral urgency. Momentum replaces judgment. Speed replaces wisdom. Noise replaces truth.

The crowd believes it is rising, But it is only falling together.

In this spiral, protest ceases to be a call and becomes a command. The chant becomes the creed. The sign becomes the scripture. The movement no longer asks what is right—only who is next.

Those caught beneath the slide are told their suffering is required. Those crushed at the bottom are told history will thank them. And those who question the descent are accused of sabotaging the ride.

Helter skelter movements do not pause. They cannot. To stop would require reflection, And reflection would reveal the fall.

Conclusion

Activism untethered from conscience is dangerous.

When activism or protest becomes idolized like religion or god, dissent becomes sin. When ideology replaces discernment, harm and abuse becomes holy. When the movement demands sacrifice without limit, it reveals itself as cult and clan.

A just society does not require collective freefall. It requires restraint. It requires courage. It requires the willingness to stop the slide.

Justice is not found at the bottom of helter skelter. It is found where human autonomy, safety and dignity is preserved, Where power is answerable, And where no cause is permitted to devour the people it claims to save.

This document is intended for educational, community, and policy discussions and may be freely adapted for public-facing use.