

## HANDOUT

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## 10 STREET LAW COMMANDMENTS

by Ethan Viets-Vanlear &amp; Wilfredo Rivera

It's been going on for years, the cops treating the youth like they're animals.  
So we got together and we wrote you a street law manual so we can help you manage through  
when the cops role up with shiny bracelets  
you'll be faced with getting locked up or signing a statement.

Number one: when the cops roll up on you in the street there are laws:  
identify yourself, name, birthdate, address, then pause,  
catch your breath, treat the cops with respect.

Number two: present yourself properly,  
tell them they don't have the right to search your property.

Number three: ask, "Am I free to go?"  
If they say "yes," better leave 'cuz crooked cops got some tricks up their sleeves.

Number four: if they say "naw," lock your jaw, you're under arrest:  
give that mouth a rest— get a lawyer so you don't falsely confess.

Number five: at school you have to march to a whole different drum:  
you can be searched for anything, anytime, by anyone;  
but respond, don't react to each situation,  
school to prison pipeline's crisscrossed the nation.

Number six: if a court appearance is what you're faced with  
don't be tasteless, grab a shirt with a collar,  
show up on time and call the judge "Your Honor."

Number seven: this rule is so underrated:  
family's aren't lawyers— keep the two separated.

Number eight: don't frustrate, act like a saint.  
Grab the badge number and file a complaint.

Number nine: being on parole comes with fines,  
so stay on your grind, keep the positive on your mind.

Number ten: remember that you do have a voice,  
unfortunately in the streets the cops make all the choices.  
Alone you'll be quiet— so organize and make loud noises.

Gotta ignore the cops dissing.  
Follow these rules, you'll stay out of the system.  
If not, you'll be locked in a cage wishing you woulda listened.

So if you happen to be in the station, facing interrogation— here's the number:  
1-800-LAW-REP4. Again, 1-800-LAW-REP4.  
It's Ethan and Wilfredo, know your rights, know your rights!



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## WHAT TO DO

## WHAT TO SAY IF APPROACHED BY OFFICERS:

- Give your name, address, birthday, and phone number. Then ask if you are free to leave. If they say yes, leave immediately without saying anything else! If they say no, that you are not free to leave, consider yourself under arrest, and ask to speak to an attorney. Tell them you are going to remain silent, then do not say anything else.

## NOTE

You are **not required** to give your name or any other information to the police. **But**, in most cases (unless your name, address, etc itself might implicate you in a crime), you want to appear as cooperative as possible while still providing as little information as possible. Giving the police only this basic “booking” information is a good method of doing that. Still, don’t provide **any additional** information until you talk to your lawyer!

- Use your right to remain silent! To use it, say so out loud immediately: “I don’t want to talk, and I want a lawyer.” Then don’t say anything else, even if it seems like it will help you – anything else you say could be used against you.
- If they ask to search you or look through your stuff: say, “I do not consent to searches.”



## HOW TO ADDRESS THE OFFICERS:

- Be respectful and refrain from using inappropriate language. Refer to the officers as “ma’am,” “sir,” or “officer” only.
- Stay calm. Breathe. Avoid using sarcasm. Observe the officer’s badge number, the squad car number, where the incident took place (for example on the intersection of 67th Street and Martin Luther King Blvd). You will need this information if you need to make a complaint.

First Defense Legal Aid provides free 24-hour legal help for people who are in Chicago Police custody.  
1-800-LAW-REP4 (1-800-529-7374)

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@Rights2Power

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## WHAT NOT TO DO

**WHAT NOT TO DO IF APPROACHED BY OFFICERS:**

- Do not give information about where you were born or if you are a U.S. citizen.
- Do not answer questions about your Green Card, citizenship or country of origin.
- Do not say anything about the reason they stopped you or what you were doing. If you are arrested, ask for a lawyer and say absolutely nothing else until your lawyer arrives. Remember, the cops can lie to you, and the things they promise you to make you talk will probably not be true!
- Do not run from the police. This will only get you in more trouble.
- Do not touch the officer in any way, no matter what they say or do to you.
- Do not make sudden movements, because officers can use these as an excuse to arrest or use force against you.
- Do not sign anything, even if it's a blank piece of paper. Don't sign your rights away.
- Do not do anything disrespectful, including calling the officer anything other than "ma'am," "sir," or "officer," spitting on the ground, or making noises that show your frustration.
- Do not reach into your pockets without asking and getting permission or being told to do so.
- Do not make small talk even how great the Bulls are or what you did last week. Stay silent!
- Do not talk to anyone except your lawyer about your case.
- Do not talk about your case over the phone (except to your lawyer with his/her permission).
- Do not waive your rights or sign anything without your lawyer present! A false confession or a waiver of your rights could land you in jail for the rest of your life!

