pink bloque
THE PINK BLOQUE IS A CHICAGO BASED RADICAL FEMINIST DANCE TROUPE who is dedicated to challenging the white supremacist capitalist patriarchal empire one street dance party at a time. On the street we look like 7 to 12 women dressed in matching hot pink doing choreographed dances to loud booty jams trying to talk to passers-by, handing out flyers that incorporate witty pop culture allusions into political analysis.

The editors wanted to know more about how we as a group communicate, both with each other and with the public. What follows is a short and incomplete explanation.

YA CATCH MORE FLIES WITH SUGAR THAN YOU DO WITH SHIT: TACTICAL FLIRTING AND THE PINK BLOQUE

The Pink Bloque puts on workshops where we share the basic tools of what goes into an action in hopes that we inspire the audience to enact their own creative actions. We outline how we decide on an issue, how we pick a song, what pop culture references we will embed in our flyers and banners, and maybe teach a dance. We also give a tutorial in “tactical flirting” which is essentially a lesson in street etiquette.

Part of the Bloque’s strategy is to access sexist stereotypes about how women should look and act in public (dancing sexy, wearing pink, smiling a lot). Rather than trying to disrupt those tropes by going in the opposite direction [by yelling, breaking things] we use our audience’s comfort with those stereotypes as a conversation point of entry.

When tactically flirting, we do not raise our voices or interrupt people who disagree with us, instead we nod and give non-verbal cues that we are actively listening. What we hope to achieve with all this nodding and saying “Well, I have heard that argument, but I have also heard this one…” is to get people used to engaging demonstrators in a calm fashion rather than viewing us as foreign bodies with no desire for conversation.

Perhaps calling manners and de-escalation skills “tactical flirting” is a bit misleading. Tactical flirting has little to do with flirting in the traditional sexualized sense, but the term “trying not to get punched in the face” is less cute, funny and harder to work into a presentation. Arguably, the hardest part of a Pink Bloque performance is not the execution of a flawless body roll but is seeming gracious and maintaining the Tactical Flirt in the face of people saying incredibly offensive things. Although grace can be challenging, finding ways to open up room to engage people with our messages for social change is essential to our mission. Does Tactical Flirting work? So far, none of us have been punched in the face!

CASHING THE VIBES CHECKS: ATTEMPTS AT HEALTHY INTRA-BLOQUE COMMUNICATION IN THE STREETS

On the street we do frequent sports huddle “vibes checks.” How are people feeling? Is anyone too cold, hot, tired? Is anyone scared that the police might crack down? Have people lost the tactical flirtability and are about to get in a fight? We might stop and get a drink, or we might decide to move locations or just stay and do the dance routine again. But all of this is planned for—we trouble shoot problems beforehand. We recently decided that each action needs a captain (this is a rotating position—more of an information point person than a singular decision-maker). We found that in some stressful actions we would get confused about where we were moving to next and as a result it would be extremely difficult for ten people to have the patience and clarity of communication to come to consensus on the spot or articulate the specifics of a decision. We also try to have specific people volunteer to be in charge of certain logistical pieces, such as someone to mind the amp and CD player and another to mind that we still have the banner.

JULIE SMITH TELLS THE TRUTH, THE PINK BLOQUE CANNOT

One of the most fluid aspects of how we communicate, both intra and inter-personally is how we relate to press. In the beginning we spoke as a group, The Pink Bloque. We wanted to get away from the individualizing tendencies of capitalist media and acknowledge that our individual ideas are informed by the group's input and process. Corporate media required quotes attributed to individuals, not groups. So we made up two names, Ellen Jones and Julie Smith, we would all use as mainstream news aliases. When we began authoring articles about our project for independent media, one or two people would write an article based on group discussions and send it to the whole group for approval with the author cited as the Pink Bloque. Our articles caused an unexpected flurry of attention from mainstream and independent media that led us to talk amongst ourselves about how we marketed ourselves.

During the initial flurry of attention and interviews, we tried to have most of the Bloque present for interviews. We soon realized that it was not the most efficient use of our energies to try to corral 13 people for a 20-minute interview. We began asking that writers e-mail interview questions. These questions would either be answered by one or two people and forwarded for the rest of the Bloque to look over before sending, or be brought to meetings for all the Bloque to answer. These types of interviews are always attributed to “The Pink Bloque,” so the collective voice still resonates. Other times (as in the case with this article) individuals decide they want to speak from their personal experiences and not under the auspices of the group. As the Bloque becomes a more complex group, our ideas on how to talk begin to widely vary. We still feel that presenting a collective Bloque is important, but we also want to make space for individual voices to add layers onto what it is and feels like to be a part of the activist project that is the Pink Bloque.
The 7 P’s of the Pink Bloque Philosophy

Protest - Giving the look of protest a makeover!

Public space - Should be for dancing and dialogue!

Performance - Making a spectacle to be heard!

Popular culture - We draw people in with familiar sights and sounds to open them up to the message of social justice!

Pinkness and Femme-inism - We bring femme back to feminism and activism by exploring what it means to be pink and political.

Party - Dance party, that is.

Partnership - Working in collaboration towards a better and cuter world.