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## 2010 Wintergames

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# Protesters' Guide to 2010 Olympics useful reading for all

By Jeff Lee 25 Nov 2009 Inside the 2010 Olympics

It's a rough thing, wanting to protest and not knowing how to do it. Just how far can you go if you want to voice your disapproval about the 2010 Winter Olympics when the show comes to town next year?

What happens if you carry to the protest "rattles", paper machier balls with rocks in them? What happens if you touch a police officer's arm? Can you be arrested for obstructing a police officer for asking why he's arresting your friend? Can an officer search your person without a warrant or without arresting you? How will Vancouver's new Olympic bylaw or Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act affect you and your right to protest?

The answers, I am happy to say, appear to be offered in a revised Protesters' Guide to the Law of Civil Disobedience in B.C., which Vancouver lawyer Leo McGrady has just published. (Here's a download link, but watch out, it's a large .pdf file.) It's at Lawyers Rights Watch Canada and it's free to anyone who wants it.

McGrady first began publishing his guide in the 1960's when he and his chums were protesting against the Viet Nam War. He thought it was important for people to know what their rights are, how far they can go in practicing civil disobedience, and what happens if you cross the line. I talked to him the other day, and here's what he said in a news story we published this morning.

Over the four decades he's revised the book a dozen times and it has grown from three or four pages to the 43-page tome it is today. It's been printed hundreds of thousands of times over the course of its long history.

Best message he gives: understand your rights to peaceful protest and civil disobedience, don't engage in violence, and be prepared to accept the consequence of your actions. I like this message because it doesn't accept the version being pumped by some, such those anti-Olympics or anti-poverty activists who took over peoples' offices, vandalized public property and generally left some targets terrorized to the point they had to hire security.

I read parts of McGrady's guide yesterday and today and concluded I know very little about my rights as a citizen. Not that I intend to pick up a protest sign or yell into a megaphone, or, heaven forbid, resist arrest or cause a disturbance. I'd rather write about those who do than become the subject of the stories. But I greatly appreciate someone who has taken the time to help people understand their rights in practicing civil disobedience without crossing the line. I think the book should also be required reading for any police officer assigned to the Olympics.

Want to protest, to practice civil disobedience? Fine with me. But get Leo McGrady's book and learn just how far you can go. And what happens to you when you go too far.



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