

You Are Known By the Company You Keep: How to Choose Your Allies Wisely

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“Associate yourself with skilled doers, not ‘talkers.’ Seek out people that share your outlook and morality. Living in close confines with other families is sure to cause friction but that will be minimized if you share a common religion and norms of behavior. You can’t learn every skill yourself. Assemble a team that includes members with medical knowledge, tactical skills, electronics experience, and traditional practical skills.”

– James Wesley, Rawles



Free association is an application of the libertarian principle that is the **self-ownership axiom**, namely, that **individual humans** enjoy absolute property rights in their own person, and as such, they are free to choose whom they will associate with voluntarily; conversely, this also implies the **right to disassociate**. Similarly, the **freedom of contract** is a parallel application of self-ownership as well, and as such, the right to refuse service, much like the right to disassociate, is another voluntary way to **keep the peace**. This freedom of association is implied by the **freedom of assembly**, which is constitutionally recognized by the **United States Constitution's Free Assembly Clause** within the First Amendment and the Texas Constitution's **Art. I §§ 27 & 29**, which say, respectively, that:

“Congress shall make no law...abridging...the right of the people peaceably to assemble...”

“The citizens shall have the right, in a peaceable manner, to assemble together for their common good...”

“To guard against transgressions of the high powers herein delegated, we declare that everything in this ‘Bill of Rights’ is excepted out of the general powers of government, and shall forever remain inviolate, and all laws contrary thereto, or to the following provisions, shall be void.”

Despite these constitutional clauses, both the federal and Texan governments [unjustly profile Americans in order to chill their dissent](#). For this reason, American citizens will be able to freely associate once they begin using [security culture](#) techniques.

Failure to abide by security culture increases the likelihood of becoming a [political prisoner](#). [William Wolf](#) was arrested for violating Title 18 United States Code § 922(o) for “possession” of a “machinegun” that was, in actuality, a shotgun; this was only possible because [Ed Gray](#) was acting as a [confidential informant](#) for the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) (FBI). Similarly, [Schuyler Barbeau](#) was arrested for violating 26 USC §§ 581(d) & 5845(a)(3) for “possession” of an unregistered “firearm” whose rifle barrel was less than 16 inches long; this was only possible because [Oliver Murphy](#) was acting as a confidential informant for the FBI. The only reason Wolf and Barbeau became political prisoners for committing these [victimless crimes](#) was because Gray and Murphy [snitched](#) to their FBI handlers.

Obviously, both Wolf and Barbeau had terrible security culture, otherwise they wouldn't have been informed on by Gray and Murphy, respectively. Putting aside the joys of informant hunting (by which I mean **public exposure** as such), the quite serious threat of [informants, provocateurs, and operatives](#) could seriously alter the very enjoyment of your freedom, so they are not something to be trifled with or carelessly dismissed. Regardless of geographical proximity, whether it is the local neighbors or your [Facebook “friends,”](#) the dangers of bad character might just incentivize those already in your life to emulate the behavior of Gray and Murphy, with or without financial compensation from the [government police](#).

For these reasons, it is imperative for Americans to choose their associates wisely. This necessarily entails the judicious and discretionary use of both [vetting](#) and [ostracism](#). As you would expect, vetting is the prevention whereas ostracism is the cure. Simply put, the better the vetting, the less necessary ostracism becomes for dealing with undesirable people.

Why bother seeking out associates and potential comrades in the first place, though, especially given all this hassle? The value of peer-to-peer relationships is grossly underestimated, not just in terms of their [marginal utility](#), but also with respect to the ability of [individuals](#) to complement each other, whether it be platonic or romantic in nature. Although I am an individualist, that doesn't therefore mean I am 100% self-sufficient, or would even want to be; the free market is entirely composed of individuals who **rely on each other** to voluntarily exchange their skills, goods, and ideas in mutually beneficial trades. To that end, individuals must learn how to “size each other up,” and the [spontaneous order](#) of a business' reputation for being trustworthy and “keeping private matters private” is an illustrative example for how vetting and ostracism are expressions of market dynamics.

Where do you find people locally? In order to vet someone, you must begin looking for them, and attending political meetings is a good first step. Whether it be scheduled through a [Meetup](#) “group” or Fascistbook “event,” going on [political fieldtrips](#) is an excellent way to “get a lay of the land,” besides an opportunity to practice using a [inconspicuous car](#), being the [grey man](#), and [keeping your own counsel](#). You could also meet people one-on-one through casual encounters at outdoor supply and gun shops, or more purposively by arranging for “meet ‘n greets” with people you came across on a discussion forum board, email list, or even a NING website.

These are not idle suggestions, for I think that for someone to “talk the talk,” he ought to also “walk the walk.” My experiences last year with [Johnnie Russell](#), [Robert the Eagle Scout](#), [Katie Brewer](#), [Heather Fazio](#), [Justin Arman](#), [Robert Butler](#), and [Bo Zimmerman](#) amply demonstrate that I practice what I preach. Although I have no interest in publicly disclosing the best examples of vetting and ostracism in my encounters from years past with a variety of survivalist and anarchist groups and individuals, I hope that what guidance I have to offer here will be given some due credence. What I know about vetting and ostracism is based upon *practical* experience, even though these methods are validly rooted in libertarian theory.

Usually, in the course of events, people become soldiers, and then later *some* of them become spies. Analogously, “we” must learn how to be spies first before learning how to become soldiers. Guys join a militia unit expecting to

“play war,” and then they either become [embroiled in infighting](#) or fall into serious trouble with the government, so they end up finding themselves “playing spy,” “playing publicist,” or “playing lawyer,” instead. Briefly put, the skill set you must cultivate in order to attract other individuals to you is *not* the same skill set that you would use to develop your capabilities in waging [serious self-defense](#).

So, how do you choose the location and time for a meet ‘n greet? It is best to avoid heavy traffic by seeking a calm atmosphere, since presumably both of you will be acting as grey men. Taking this as a given, then it would be prudent to schedule a get-together on the weekdays *during* normal business hours (preferably, during normal [government school](#) hours as well) in public spaces, such as coffeehouses, diners, or sushi bars. Mutually agreed upon recognition symbols ought to be arranged ahead of time if you haven’t communicated by webcam or otherwise don’t know what either of you look like. In a pinch, a telephone or even VoIP call is an expedient compromise, but as alternatives to face-to-face meetings, they sacrifice body language and facial expressions, which make vetting that much more difficult to conduct well.

During the meeting, feel each other out by using your [conversational skills](#). Try to determine his likes and dislikes, his virtues and vices, his enlightened sensibilities as well as his bigoted prejudices. Remember, he should be talking at least half, if not most, of the time; vetting requires as many details as possible from a potential ally, not a lengthy sermon from a rather drab proselytizer.

[Don’t fruitless “debate” him](#). Ask him to clarify anything you might not understand, but don’t ever persist in arguing. Nothing is to be gained and everything could be lost by pushing him towards accepting your views. It is better to cultivate an ally who is 25% on your side than alienate someone to the point where he chooses to give you the cold shoulder, or worse, decides to work 100% for your enemies.

You want to give off the impression of being unassuming. Keep your body language casual yet not flirtatious. What you are essentially doing is conducting the equivalent of a job interview without it feeling like one. The idea here is to elicit information about him while maintaining the aura of a leisurely conversation. Hunching over, needlessly whispering, and otherwise acting standoffish is to be avoided. You want your prospective associate to feel relaxed yet focused on the conversation without seemingly doing so.

Once the meeting is nearly done, keep him on the hook for the time being by arranging for a *tentative* follow-up meeting. This is to give the impression that you are still interested in him without actually making a decision on the spot; you do that *afterwards* in terms of whether to “recruit” him or cut him loose. For those who are worthy, recurring face-to-face meetings ought to have a scheduled rendezvous point *different from* the actual location of the get-together, which necessitates travel between the two locales.

Vetted individuals that you have successfully “recruited” are far more likely to respect the practice of security culture, and therefore render the necessity for ostracism to be less than if they hadn’t been vetted. To reiterate, good security culture relies more heavily on vetting than on ostracism, although both are indispensably vital for choosing your allies wisely.

Speaking of which, ostracism is more complex than just giving someone the proverbial “cold-shoulder.” Shunning is *not* the same as “deFOOing,” with the difference being that the former is disassociating from one or a few individuals, whereas the latter is disassociating from your entire [family of origin](#) (this is the “FOO” in “deFOO”). Having done both, trust me when I say that shunning is infinitely preferable to deFOOing for reasons that bear further scrutiny at a later time. Suffice it say for now, “simply” shunning someone does not carry anywhere near the emotional toll that escaping both your nuclear and extended family wholesale does, due primarily to the costs of “disentangling.”

The joys of informant hunting are but one form of ostracism, yet it is quite possible that your experience in using it will be against someone far less sinister. Far more likely a candidate for ostracism is an acquaintance who fails to pass the “smell test.” One such variant of this is the litmus test that is the [Against Me argument](#), which simply asks

whether the individual being asked supports the use of initiatory force against you for simply disagreeing with him. Asking someone whether they support the use of **coercion** against you, by *personalizing* the violence inherent in the system, forces him to directly address his attitude towards you, specifically. Naturally, if they do support you being shot for simply disagreeing with them, then perhaps those individuals do not have your best interest at heart, to put it mildly.

Generally speaking, authoritarians **do** support the initiation of the use of force against you for disagreeing with them, or the government. Conversely, libertarians do **not** support initiatory violence being used against anyone for simply disagreeing, even if they take personal issue with the nature of that specific disagreement. The only question you have to ask yourself, regarding this form of ostracism, is, **do you want to be surrounded by people who want you shot?** Unlike naïve approaches to exercising your freedom, [practical politics](#) focuses on what you *can* control in your own life, rather than frittering away your precious time and effort on ineffective, or even counter-productive, actions.

Believe it or not, good [role-modeling](#) is uniquely precious, since most people I have encountered will not value [integrity over friendship](#). They do this because they are still collectivistic – they want to be “accepted” because they bow before peer pressure, they want to follow the herd, and they desire the comfort of shallow praise. Encryption of any kind does not matter if the human at the other end of the line is a person of ill-repute; consider, for example, the actions of [Luke Rudkowski](#), [Jeffrey Phillips](#), [Nancy Genovese](#), [Ed Snook](#), [George Hemminger](#), [Ron Paul](#), [Mark Dice](#), [Stewart Rhodes](#), [Christopher Blystone](#), and [Mark Kessler](#). I would submit to you that these are the types of miscreants who deserve ostracism for what they’ve done, especially because of the people most of them have scammed.

Back in 2002, [Barry Reid](#) suggested using a coded address book for all of your contacts. He said:

“Protect the names, addresses and telephone numbers of your friends. Use a code of your own making to disguise the actual names and numbers, or try to memorize what you need to know. You’d be amazed at how much you can remember in this area if you make the effort.

“Try to avoid carrying this coded address book with you. Cops always flash on such items, and so-called ‘rings’ are usually busted this way. A smart thing to do would be to carry a dummy book of names and numbers selected at random from the phone book. Keep your working book stashes in a safe place.

“This practice protects you, too, inasmuch as suspicion is cast on you should some of your friends be busted and their names appear in your book.”

Of course, nowadays it might be more practical to do so using a digitally encrypted smartphone, but it would be prudent to determine the efficacy of that at a later time. For now, just understand that once you’ve successfully “recruited” people to be your allies, *how* you go about storing their contact information is a security culture issue all by itself.

If you’ve learned nothing else from this cursory guide on finding allies and keeping foes at arms length, then I hope you would take away from all this the importance of keeping a relatively small social circle, at the very least. I know that the Fascistbook phenomenon encourages you to maintain and grow your ceaselessly expanding list of *thousands* of “friends,” but I would encourage you to aim for **quality**, not quantity. Should empty “popularity” be

important to you, then just consider the fates of political prisoners who are currently rotting away in government dungeons because too many of them failed to use good security culture in vetting and ostracizing the people in their own lives, as needed. There is nothing wrong with [compartmentalizing](#) information on a “need-to-know” basis, or exercising caution with those who turn out to be [false friends](#). Finally, ponder over this one of Aesop’s fables entitled, [The Ass and His Purchaser](#):

“A man who wanted to buy an Ass went to market, and, coming across a likely-looking beast, arranged with the owner that he should be allowed to take him home on trial to see what he was like. When he reached home, he put him into his stable along with the other asses. The newcomer took a look around, and immediately went and chose a place next to the laziest and greediest beast in the stable. When the master saw this, he put a halt on him at once, and led him off to be handed back to his owner again. The latter was a good deal surprised to seem him back so soon, and said, ‘Why, do you mean to say you have tested him already?’ ‘I don’t want to put him through any more tests,’ replied the other, ‘I could see what sort of beast he is from the companion he chose for himself.’ Thus arose the adage, ‘A man is known by the company he keeps.’”