Anarchist  
Affirmative Case



This case borrows from anarchist thinking to declare most government activity illegitimate – and therefore worthy of disobedience. Claiming that government should only protect against violence has a lot of weird implications – for a few examples, check out the rebuttal section. You should be prepared to acknowledge those implications and lean into them and offer freedom-focused alternatives.

Don’t shy away from your position or get caught in specifics. While your case may sound a bit extreme in practice, it’s very strong philosophically. That’s where you beat your opponent. If you ever have to run a response to your opponent’s contention other than “No Impact,” you’re probably in hot water. On the other hand, if the ballot Reason for Decision is nothing but an exploration of the purpose of government, your chances of winning are excellent.

Anarchist

In the late 90s, Serbia was controlled by a warlord named Slobodan Milosevic. Though the country was technically a democracy, disagreement was very dangerous. Several of his political opponents were kidnapped or murdered. Milosevic’s rule was everything you’d expect of a government that wielded violence rather than fought against it: tyranny, oppression, genocide. All that changed in just two years because a brave group of citizens believed as I do. They were

*Resolved: civil disobedience in a democracy is morally justified.*

Let me start with a quick

# Definition

The American Heritage dictionary defines civil disobedience as:

“Refusal to obey a law as a result of moral objections, especially through passive resistance.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Now let’s talk about how to decide if disobedience is justified.

# Value: Night-watchman State

Which I like to write as “NWS.”

Night-watchman state is operationally defined as: “The principle that government’s only legitimate function is to protect individuals from violence or the threat of violence.” That means a minimal government: military, police, and a court system that stops violent crimes and fraud and breach of contract. Governments should not be allowed to go further – telling us how to live, what we can buy, how to eat and pray and think, and so on.

Here’s why Night-watchman State is the best way to measure the resolution.

## Value Link: All Government Is Violent

Government is like darkness: when it’s everywhere, it’s hard to see. We live under a government that has thrust itself into every aspect of our lives, to the point that we take the threat of violence for granted.

If someone put a gun to your head and said: “give me your money or die,” that would be a violent act, even if the trigger wasn’t pulled.

If someone said: “Do as I say or I’ll throw you in prison,” that would also be violent. That’s what government does. It doesn’t matter whether the gun is to your head or around the corner – the threat is very real: obey or suffer.

No amount of paperwork can conceal the fact that, at the end of the day, everything government does is supported by the threat of violence. There is nothing voluntary or charitable about it. You may pay your taxes willingly, but the gun is still to your head the whole time.

While that’s morally upsetting, we’re willing to tolerate government because without it, we suffer even more violence. But when government uses its power to tax and regulate and coerce for some goal other than protecting us, it has become the bad guy.

That brings me to my next point.

# Contention: Civil Disobedience Protects Night-watchman States

If government’s laws are not protecting us from violence, they are unjust. Those unjust laws, by definition, can be resisted peacefully.

Government may not tax specific commodities to control supply and demand. They may not imprison people for living in a way that doesn’t sync up with the social norm. They may not decide what ethnicities can eat where, or where they may sit on a bus. In fact, most of what modern government does is unjust because it violently levies taxes then uses them to violently enforce laws that don’t protect individuals from violence. They rob us of our freedom and our choice and wrongly declare that they, not we, can make the best decisions about our lives.

Thomas Jefferson wrote:

“Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others. I do not add 'within the limits of the law', because law is often but the tyrant's will, and always so when it violates the rights of the individual.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Civil disobedience is the check against the constant encroachment of government. It’s perfect because it only targets the laws which are unjust. It is impossible to peacefully resist a ban on murder, or to peacefully defraud someone. But you can peacefully refuse to go to the back of the bus. You can peacefully smuggle slaves to freedom. You can peacefully protest in the street. You can peacefully not show up to be drafted into a war that doesn’t protect you or your fellow citizens.

## Application: Otpor!

Very few people were happy with the rule of Slobodan Milosevic.

In the name of restoring a sane government, a small group of brave citizens formed Resistance! – or in Serbian, Otpor! – a group devoted to peacefully protesting the abuse of authority. For two years, Otpor! published the truth about what was happening in the country – even as journalists were beaten and imprisoned. They put up posters in public areas to encourage citizens to hope for a better future. They used humor to maintain morale and mock their oppressors. As the movement grew, they staged protests and bulldozed police barricades.

In one of their well-known campaigns, Otpor! activists painted Milosevic’s head on a barrel and let passersby pay fifty cents to hit the barrel.[[3]](#footnote-3) When police showed up to confiscate it, the activists scattered.

With each passing day, the ranks of Otpor! grew and more citizens had the courage to resist the rule of Milosevic. Eventually, the peaceful movement couldn’t be ignored. Milosevic agreed to transition from a communist one-party system to a multi-party system, then immediately lost in the presidential election. When the military refused to keep him in power, he stepped down and faced trial for his crimes against humanity.

The great Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

“Every actual state is corrupt. Good men must not obey laws too well.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

We ought to be inspired by stories like Otpor!. We ought to be reminded that governments are only as powerful as we allow them to be – and then refuse to give away our freedom. When government tries to take it from us, we should peacefully refuse. We owe it to ourselves and our fellow citizens. Thank you.

Negative Brief

Though “freedom” is still a potent buzzword, most Americans don’t actually want freedom. They want the government to keep them safe, enforce their moral views, and help them become reasonably wealthy. You can tap into that bias to take this case down. Apply Night-watchman State thinking to American laws the judge probably likes.

Here’s a list of popular socialist things the Night-watchman State condemns:

* Public roads
* Post Office
* Public fire department
* Public education
* Public transportation/transit
* Welfare of any kind: social security, food stamps, unemployment, Medicare, etc.
* National parks

Here’s a list of popular statist things the Night-watchman State condemns:

* Worker safety laws
* Minimum wage
* Environmental protection
* Regulation of natural resources: fish, game, timber, water, etc.
* Obscenity laws
* Food safety laws
* Regulation of gambling
* Regulation of prostitution
* Regulation of drugs: ban on cocaine, minimum drinking age, etc.
* Non-defensive wars of any kind, including intervening in genocide
* Most traffic laws

Devote your cross-examination to exploring these lists. As you go, your opponent will either back off the value, making the case helpless, or will stand firm and look like an extremist. Either way, you’re well-positioned for your NC.

1. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition, “civil disobedience,” Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Copyright 2016. <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=civil%20disobedience> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thomas Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson Quotes,” BrainyQuote, Accessed July 30, 2016.

   <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/thomasjeff136362.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. They charged 1 Yugoslav Dinar, which is equivalent to 56 US Cents. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/r/ralphwaldo122579.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)