

ANTIGONE IN NEW YORK
by Janusz Glowacki

Policeman, a man in blue, 30-50
Thompson Square Park, NYC
Seriocomic

Here, a member of the NYPD explains how to deal with an unruly homeless person.

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POLICEMAN: Just a few years ago the communists sent a television crew over here to shoot scenes of Manhattan. So what did they do? They shot the most down and out homeless in the city. Drug addicts, alcoholics, the most unshaven raggedy ones they could find and then they showed the film on Russia TV and told them they were typical New Yorkers. So anytime Reagan or Bush got on Gorbachov's back about some human rights violations, Gorby said "and what about the homeless?" Now things have changed for the better because Gorby's out. (*Earnestly.*) The homeless aren't an easy thing to deal with. There's a very delicate balance between civil rights and civil order. You know what I mean? Listen, we're in the United States, the heart of world democracy and all eyes are on us. And what is the main thing about a democracy? (*Points to people in the audience.*) Do you know? Do you? Every person has the same rights and the same responsibilities. All the regulations are the same for me, for my secretary and for you too. If the president of a big corporation comes to the park, sets a fire, lies on a bench and starts to drink liquor without a bag over it, he'll be in the same trouble any homeless bum would be in. (*Points to a very elegant, elderly lady in the audience.*) Lady, if you laid down on the floor in the Port Authority building and started smoking, the police would go to into action. We've got this all worked out. We start with phase one: phase one means we disseminate information. I come over to you and say "lady, you are violating regulations by lying on the ground and smoking. Please sit up and put out your cigarette." Now if you do that, I'll smile and say "thank you for

your cooperation and have a nice day" . . . or evening, depending. And that's that, everything's copasetic. But if you, lady, say "██████ you, ██████" then I'm forced to go into phase two. Okay. Phase two, lady, means you get a warning. (*Points to a another member of the audience.*) Please. No notes. I'm telling you this in strictest confidence. You know these regulations were worked out by an expert team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. MIT. (*Points to another person.*) So you, buddy. The guy next to the lady with the pearls in the sixth row. Turn off that tape recorder. Yeah, you! Not him . . . you. Thank you for your cooperation. Phase two, right? Now there's a warning. I say "Madam, if you insist on lying on the ground and smoking you will be subject to a summons." Now you have another chance to clean up your act. We're not rushing anybody. But if you answer "get lost, ██████ idiot ██████" or you, lady, say "you can take that summons and shove it ██████, you flatfooted ██████ jerk." then I am forced to move to phase three. Okay. Phase three means *steps will be taken*. Now phase three is connected with phase four, five and so on. But in phase three. Okay. Phase three requires a high level of sensitivity in the law enforcement official. The most important factor in phase three is violating your human dignity with as little force as possible. Therefore the most important moment for an officer is the proper evaluation of the would-be violator. (*Explains physically.*) In this case, you, lady. For example: do I simply handcuff you or do I twist your arms behind your back? Do I push your head down and walk you out? Do I need another officer to help me? Is a club required? Should you be dragged, pulled, pushed or escorted? Many factors enter into my decisions: are you drunk, drugged, pregnant or dead? (*Walkie-talkie squawk.*) Sorry. Gotta go. See you later.