

THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

I always like to go to Lesbian and Gay Pride marches. I'd have been upset with myself if I didn't go to Washington, D.C.

I've been involved in the anti-nuclear movement since 1980, since I was 14 years old. I knew I was going to get arrested at the Supreme Court.

Yes, I felt threatened while I was sitting on the steps outside the police barricades. We were sitting right next to the officers. They did make efforts to make us feel uncomfortable.

The police let people in [to the Supreme Court forecourt] in groups of 15-30. They were waiting for the buses to come. "We want you to ride to jail in comfort."

I saw an officer punch a gay man in the face. The protesters started chanting the cop's name, and he was eventually pulled off the line. There were many wrenched shoulders. One woman had a broken arm; she fainted from too tight cuffs. [The "handcuffs" are hard plastic straps, 1/2 inch wide and 1/4 inch thick, which must be cut off.]

But it was the most polite civil disobedience I've ever been involved in. My fear of physical violence has lessened since the CD [at the Supreme Court]. I made myself totally vulnerable to the police.

Diana Cohen

About half the passengers on our flight home Monday were marchers. After we were in the air, someone in the front yelled out, "Wasn't that a great march?" We all cheered. The young man in the front then began to lead cheers; "What do we want?"

"Gay Rights!" we answered.

In the midst of this euphoria, the voice of the captain of the plane came over the public address system to announce baseball scores. Our leader of cheers then decided that the pilot should announce the presence of the gay group. As the attendants passed out our lunches, he passed around a petition asking the pilot to recognize the marchers in an announcement.

Our organizer marched up through First Class to present it to the pilot.

Later, the pilot came on. "I understand that there's a group aboard that wants to be recognized, and I recognize that this is a free country. But if people don't stop trying to disrupt the flight, there'll be a reception party waiting when we land."

At this, we passed around the address of American Airlines, all of us vowing to write the airline and complain about the pilot's attitude.

Becky Wilson

At the rally, I was standing near a group of college students from Ohio. Once in a while, a student would climb upon the shoulders of another to look around. The reaction was always a moment of silence followed by a real prideful, "Oh, my!"

When we left the Capitol Mall after the rally, we left the place clean. People picked up all the trash.

On Tuesday I went to Sen. Hatfield's office at about 10 a.m. and from there I went to the Supreme Court. I saw riot police, a "SWAT" team, armed with what looked like bazookas.

But the demonstrations were very peaceful. I was impressed with the loving atmosphere — even at the demonstration to the Supreme Court.

And most of all, there was the simple and direct love shown in the quilt.

Gary Barnes

I was in a city surrounded by friends and I had a complete sense of safety. There wasn't the usual sense of danger of being alone in an urban setting.

Like at the march of 1963, people facing great adversity in their daily lives had one day in which they experienced a sense of community and could feel that the goal is worth struggling for.

Bonnie Tinker

The peak of the D.C. experience for me was to participate in the Supreme Court Civil Disobedience, to discover the inscription over the entrance claiming "Equal Justice Under Law," to feel tears forming over that irony and hypocrisy, to feel a unity of emotion with thousands of others as a chant spontaneously broke out seconds later: "Read the writing on the wall — Equal Justice Under Law."

The solidarity among lesbians, gay men and straight supporters was powerfully energizing. We were proud to be arrested, proud to be guilty of obstructing injustice. Here we have a turning point, a new Stonewall. No longer do we listen passively as mainstream politicians take our money and tell us to wait until it's politically feasible for them to vote on granting us rights.

Now we affirm that all human rights are inherent, that it's morally unacceptable for our humanity to be subject to popular vote, that obedience is consent to oppression, and that we have no other moral choice than to continue to challenge an unjust system, as we did at the Supreme Court, with the obstruction of our bodies and the witness of our joyous spirits.

Marvin Moore



Photo by Jay Brown

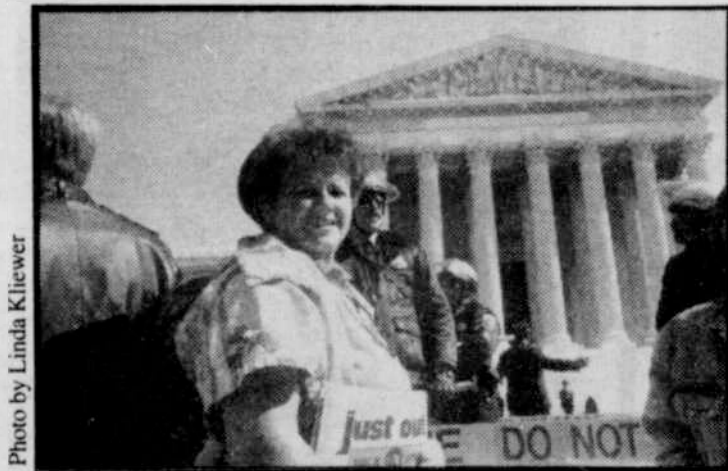


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More than 600 people were arrested on October 13 on the terrace of the Supreme Court building in a civil disobedience action protesting institutionalized homophobia and the erosion of civil liberties for people with AIDS.