

Civil Claims Pursued

Deborah Lashman

Two Vermont lesbians who are alleging that they were violently arrested are pursuing civil claims against the police who arrested them and the Howard Johnson's where the arrest occurred. Susan Aranoff, an attorney and Georgina (Dinny) Forbes, and artist and psychotherapist, were arrested on Saturday, December 28, 1991, in White River Junction and charged with unlawful trespass. No criminal charges were filed against them and the State's Attorney has stated that she will not be filing any such charges in the future.

Forbes and Aranoff claim the arrest violated their civil rights in that it was unlawful and the police used excessive force. The women allege that one of them was knocked on to a table and then to the floor where she was straddled by officers and handcuffed, and that the other received numerous bruises from the undue roughness.

Both women are lesbians and think that entire incident was precipitated by the sexism and homophobia of a Howard Johnson's employee who refused to admit a 39 year old lesbian who was in their party into a lounge where alcohol was being served because she lacked legal identification. Although Forbes and Aranoff possessed and displayed identification and were in no way trespassing, the police refused to listen to them and instead forcibly removed them

from the lounge and charged them with trespassing. The pair have retained a legal team headed by attorney Charles DiMare, a nationally recognized expert in the field of police misconduct and constitutional law.

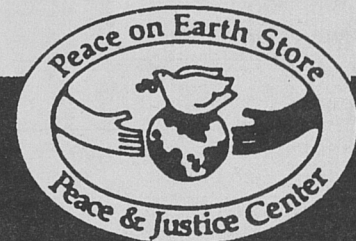
Forbes and Aranoff both feel strongly that the police must be held accountable for the alleged harassment and use of force and violence. Aranoff, who is an attorney, also feels that, "The assaults I suffered wouled my ability to heartily believe in the possibility of obtaining justice in our system of law. In seeking redress of my injuries within the legal system, I am seeking a restoration of my faith in the system...By pursuing my charges, I hope to establish for myself and the community that my right to go out dancing and be free from police brutality is the same as any other citizen's."

Many of Forbe's clients are women dealing with issues of violation and abuse. For her, pursuing the claim is essential for her clients as well as herself. "I hope that through use of the legal system these wrongs can be righted and an act of victimization transformed into a model of empowerment for other women."

The Chief of Police for the Town of Hartford has refused to comment on the case beyond stating that the officers did nothing wrong. ▼

Goslant Assists with Police Training

For the past four years Keith Goslant has been an adjunct instructor at the Vermont Police Academy. All Vermont police officers, local and state, are required to attend training at the Academy. Goslant, along with a lesbian co-presenter, provides officers with a two hour introduction to Vermont's lesbian, gay, and bisexual community. Issues covered include what the gay community is, its perception of law enforcement, the reality members confront in their daily lives, some historical background, and a discussion of hate-motivated crimes. In the four years since the course started, Goslant has noted a definite change in the attitudes of attendees and the general atmosphere at the Academy. Officers ask about the course and engage in active discussion during the sessions. Currently Goslant is working with Academy staff to put together a comprehensive package on enforcement of the hate crimes law. ▼



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