

PEACE RESPONSE
American Friends Service Committee
Northeast Ohio Office
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[www.afsc.net]
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Support Karl Liske in Court Tomorrow
[Ticketed for writing the word "TRUTH" on public sidewalk]

Karl Liske is a Quaker from Kent. He's concerned about peace. He's concerned about young people going in the military. In the eyes of Akron police, Karl is also a criminal.

Karl's crime? He wrote the word "TRUTH!" in water-soluble red paint on the public sidewalk.

Karl was nearly arrested last Friday at a downtown Akron military recruiting center at a vigil to "Stand Up for Truth in Recruiting" and say that "One Day is Not Enough." The Akron vigil was one of dozens organized across the country on that day in response to the recent exposure of serious recruiter improprieties, including fraud and coercion. The US Army closed many recruiting centers around the country last Friday for recruiter retraining.

Retired and soft-spoken, Karl was one of 10 vigilers who stood outside a military recruiting center on Summit St. with signs and leaflets. The center was open -- probably because other branches of the armed forces were still in operation.

Shortly after the vigilers arrived, someone inside the recruiting center locked the door. We vigilers must have looked threatening.

Upon seeing Karl spell the word TRUTH!? out on the sidewalk, a call to the police was made. Within minutes, the police arrived.... eight of them in cars and on bicycles.

Ten peaceful vigilers. Eight police officers.

There's something wrong here.

One police officer began screaming, "who did he [Karl] think he was defacing public property." Karl quietly said it was paint that would wash right off when it rains next (note: it has rained almost every day since). It was pointed out that children all the time chalk public sidewalks. The police said, that different, they're children. Karl responded, "I'm a child of God." One police officer was heard to say the difference between children and this was that, "this was political." Does that mean that if Karl had drawn a "hop scotch" diagram on the ground, he'd be off scot free?

Karl was issued a ticket. His offense: "criminal mischief." He was also given a court date: Friday, May 27 at 1:00 PM at the Akron Municipal Court, 217 S. High St., Room 740.

We need to support Karl Liske by showing up to court tomorrow. The military recruiters and Akron Police totally overreacted to the vigilers presence last Friday. We must show our support for the right to speak out. We cannot be intimidated.

Sad to say that the illegality of the Iraqi war and occupation and the "crime" of poverty that forces many young people to look at the military as their only serious career choice are not reasons for us to call the police. No one who has directed the bombing, invasion and occupation of Iraq has been arrested, or even ticketed. Acts resulting in the deaths of nearly 1700 US military personnel, injuries to roughly 12,000 US military personnel, and deaths of more than 100,000 Iraqis are legit, but painting the word TRUTH on the sidewalk is a crime.

There's something wrong here.

p.s. Before the vigil ended, a few other vigilers found some water and washed off the "criminal act" in a few minutes. No word whether they were subsequently ticketed for "destroying evidence at a crime scene."

p.p.s. Several Akronites have commented on the irony of the police rarely showing up in certain neighborhoods when serious complaints are made, but turned out in force in response to this harmless incident.