

Women in Black found 'guilty' in district court

Shane Perlowin

2003

Asheville, North Carolina, August 6. Ten Asheville women from Women in Black (WIB) found themselves in court on Aug. 6 faced with charges of trespassing. WIB is an international peace network that was started in Israel in 1988 by women protesting against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. They wear black as a symbol of sorrow for all victims of war, for the destruction of people, nature, and the fabric of life.

The women were arrested on March 28, 2003 in front of the Vance Monument in Pack Square for standing vigil in the public park after the city had closed it off with barricades to prevent Ashevilleans from expressing their dissent over the US invasion of Iraq. WIB had held their vigil in front of Vance Monument every Friday for 18 months prior to their arrests.

WIB defendant Jodi Rhoden said after the trial: "I think that the judge upheld the beliefs and the stance of his fellow men in power in this county and in the city. Our actions were legal and we were acting within our first amendment rights."

WIB defendant Beth-Trigg said: "Not surprisingly, the judge found us guilty and we intend to appeal the case to Superior Court. We are hoping that the conviction will be overturned and we have good indication that it may be. We still maintain that we did not do anything wrong. The people of Asheville own Pack Square and it's not up to the discretion of the City Manager or the police to close that space to free speech."

— Shane Perlowin, *Asheville Global Report*

fifth Estate

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