



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 20, 2011

Police Arrest Woman Refusing to Leave Outside Chair

Shequita Walker, a 40-year old disabled woman from Atlanta, Georgia, asserts that she was arrested merely for sitting outside in a chair. Her account of the events indicates that she was sitting outside when she was approached by a police officer, who asked her to move from her chair. When she refused, she said she was thrown to the ground and arrested.



The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* provides some background:

Shequita Walker, 40, suffers from severe joint pain and has a limited range of motion. For several years, Walker has enjoyed sitting in a metal chair in the vacant lot next to her apartment complex on Boulevard. Walker says she isn't on the sidewalk or in anyone's way, and has spent many hot afternoons waiting on the ice cream truck to drive by so she can buy a cold treat.

On April 21, however, police officer Kenneth Thomas asked Walker to move from her usual spot. Walker replied that she was not in violation of any law and was within her rights to remain in place. She also told Thomas that other officers had seen her in that spot on numerous occasions and had never taken given her any trouble.

In response to Walker's "defiance," Officer Thomas reportedly seized her wrist, twisted her arm, and caused her to fall to the concrete. Her physical ailments rendered her unable to get up on her own, prompting another officer to help her to her feet. The officers then escorted Walker to their patrol car.

An ambulance was called to take Walker to a local hospital, where she required treatment for a shoulder injury she sustained when she hit the ground. After her brief interlude at the hospital, she spent a night in jail on the charge of disorderly conduct. Eventually, the charges were dropped, but Walker and her attorney declare that the case is not over.

Attorney Dan Grossman explained, "It's not like they did this to a healthy woman. She has a very limited range of motion. She suffered and she deserves some compensation."

Constitutionalists have noted, however, that Grossman seems to be missing a larger point. If a police officer may make a random arrest based on trumped up charges of "disorderly conduct," how can average citizens be assured that they will not fall victim to such treatment?

Art Spitzer, legal director of the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, [asserts](#) that even if one is rude to a police officer, that is not a crime:



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In general, you can't be lawfully arrested for saying nasty or offensive things to a police officer. Police officers are supposed to have the training and the discipline to understand that public criticism is not a crime and the proper thing to do in the face of public criticism is to respond politely and leave if there's not actual crime going on that requires an officer's attention.

Police records indicate that Officer Thomas made 38 arrests during a five-month period, 27 of which were for disorderly conduct. That number is three times as many arrests for the same offense as were made by other officers who patrol the same area.

"These people are just arrested because [Thomas] doesn't like their attitude," concludes Grossman.

Meanwhile, the Atlanta Citizen Review Board examined Walker's complaint and determined that Officer Thomas should be disciplined for his actions.

Photo: George N. Turner, Chief of Police, Atlanta Police Department



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