

THE HONORABLE RICHARD A. JONES

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

BLACK LIVES MATTER SEATTLE-
KING COUNTY, ABIE EKENEZAR,
SHARON SAKAMOTO, MURACO
KYASHNA-TOCHA, ALEXANDER
WOLDEAB, NATHALIE GRAHAM,
AND ALEXANDRA CHEN,

Plaintiffs,

v.

CITY OF SEATTLE ,

Defendant.

No. 2:20-cv-00887-RAJ

DECLARATION OF RENEE RAKETTY IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR
CONTEMPT

I, Renee Raketty, declare and state as follows:

1. I am a Washington resident. The information contained in this declaration is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and I am of majority age and competent to testify about the matters set forth herein.

2. I worked for many years for the Seattle Gay News, a weekly paper covering LGBTQ news and entertainment, first as a contributing writer, then a staff writer, and then as an editor. I left the paper several years ago to work as a caretaker, but remained good friends with the publisher, George Bakan.

1 3. When George died in June this year, I stepped in to help his daughter with the
2 paper and to make sure it continues. I have been assigned to take pictures of and write about a
3 few of the protests that have been taking place this summer.

4 4. On Saturday, July 25, 2020, I was assigned to take pictures of the march that was
5 happening in the afternoon on Capitol Hill. I went to the march around 3:30 p.m. and parked my
6 car near the East Precinct.

7 5. I was wearing my press badge on a lanyard around my neck at all times.

8 6. The protest had already moved away from Capitol Hill at this time, and I followed
9 behind to the youth jail and ultimately back to the East Precinct, taking pictures.

10 7. I introduced myself as a member of the press to some of the police and to a
11 SWAT team member in an armored vehicle.

12 8. I am a transgender woman who weighs over 350 pounds and moves at the pace of
13 a turtle. I do not feel like I pose a threat to anyone, and still made sure to clearly identify myself
14 to the police as a member of the press.

15 9. Shortly after arriving at the East Precinct, a commotion broke out, with the police
16 forming a line to push people back and firing flash bangs at them near the intersection of 11th
17 Avenue and East Pine Street. I took pictures of this, and then followed the protestors as they
18 were pushed back toward Broadway.

19 10. At one point, a blast ball went off near me and caused me to cough and my ears to
20 ring. I also assisted a woman who was having an asthma attack as a result of all of the chemicals.

21 11. The action was moving away, so I decided to go rest. I went to a fire escape near
22 11th Avenue and East Pine Street. I had gone up a few steps and was sitting about halfway up to
23 the landing, or maybe 10-15 feet in the air.

24 12. While I was sitting there, the police started pushing the protestors down 11th
25 Avenue again, using explosives of some kind.

1 13. The police line went past me as the police pushed the protestors further down 11th
2 Avenue. An armored police vehicle followed the police line, and bicycle officers followed the
3 armored vehicle.

4 14. At this time, I was still sitting on the fire escape taking pictures and wearing my
5 press lanyard. I was the only person on the fire escape and in my immediate vicinity. I was not
6 protesting, shouting, or otherwise engaging with the police.

7 15. The fire escape overlooked a parking lot. There were a few Legal Observers in the
8 parking lot, as well as a couple of police officers.

9 16. I was filming with my DSLR camera, and I do not think the police realized I was
10 filming video rather than taking only still pictures.

11 17. While I was filming, a bicycle officer got off of his bike on 11th Avenue and
12 walked a few steps toward me. He was not looking at me and did not say anything to me.

13 18. When he was near me, and still without looking at me, he nonchalantly tossed a
14 blast ball in my direction.

15 19. Attached as Exhibit A is a true and correct copy of a video that I took on
16 Saturday, July 25, 2020, at approximately 5:30 p.m., which shows these events.

17 20. I saw what it was he had thrown and heard the munition land on the ground. I
18 braced myself for the explosion, much like you would do right before a car crash. The video ends
19 in this moment. I did not mean to stop it, but must have stopped it as my body tensed for the
20 explosion.

21 21. Though it may sound cliché, I felt like my life flashed before my eyes in that
22 moment.

23 22. I don't recall seeing the blast, but I remember coming out of it really disoriented,
24 choking, and with ringing in my ears. I twisted my knee while trying to protect myself and was
25 shocked and stunned.
26

1 23. After the blast and once I was able to stop coughing uncontrollably, I was too
2 scared to come down off the fire escape. The police were still there, and whereas with my press
3 pass I had felt safe behind the police line before taking pictures, I no longer did. I did not know
4 what to do, so I stayed on the fire escape.

5 24. The attack by the police officer was premeditated and unprovoked. He even
6 waited for the Legal Observers in the parking lot to look away before tossing it at me.

7 25. My outrage does not stem from the fact that I am a member of the press, but from
8 the fact that a sworn officer would do this to anyone. You just do not use extreme munitions on a
9 single person while they are peacefully sitting down.

10 26. I was so shocked by the police officer's actions that I had to watch the video
11 several times to confirm that what I had experienced actually happened.

12 27. I consider myself politically moderate, and this interaction has entirely destroyed
13 my trust in the police and their role in society.

14
15 Executed this 27th day of July 2020 at Seattle, Washington.

16 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States and the State of
17 Washington that the foregoing is true and correct.

18 By: *Renee Raketty*

19 RENE E RAKETTY