

Journey for Justice Court House Speech

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

Hi. My name is Lynne Jackson and I am from Albany New York.

Today, the Journey for Justice reaches its destination at the Federal Court House at 15 Henry Street in Binghamton, NY. In a few minutes, I will walk into the Court House and deliver these petitions I have carried to the clerk of the court.

I have arrived here by walking 82 miles, paddling 25 miles, and having Jack Gilroy pick up when I could not finish to walk the last 26 miles of the Journey.

Why the Journey for Justice? When I knew that Yassin Aref's lawyers were going to file a new 2255 appeal motion for Yassin, I asked myself - what can I do to help? The answer came very quickly - I will walk to Binghamton to deliver signatures on a petition in support of Yassin.

I know the judge will make a fair and just decision in this case.

But, I am here because I want the judge to know how much people in Albany, NY and around the country care about Yassin Aref.

Why did I do this?

I am an American. I believe a terrible wrong has been done to Yassin

Aref. I believe he was targeted because of his religion, which is about as un-American as you can get.

As an American, I believe it is my duty, my obligation to stand up when I see something that violates the constitution. I have never met Yassin Aref in person, but I have an obligation as an American to stand up and speak out for him when I believe an injustice has happened.

This is what the petition people have signed says:

Petition for Serious Consideration

To: Hon. Thomas J. McAvoy

U.S. District Court Judge, Northern District of New York

15 Henry Street

Binghamton, New York 13901

Dear Judge McAvoy:

We the undersigned hereby petition you to give serious consideration to a 2255 motion being made to you by Yassin Aref that requests a new trial or dismissal of the terrorism-related charges against him.

Aref was convicted in 2006 and sentenced to fifteen years in 2007 in a case where the outcome was largely determined by secret evidence. Now Aref has evidence

that the U.S. government targeted the wrong person,
confusing him with an Al Qaeda agent who is now dead,
and that this false identification was secretly given to the
court to ensure Aref's conviction.

We ask for serious consideration of Yassin Aref's assertion
that the government targeted and convicted an innocent
man.

Sincerely,

Signed by 1509 people [need updated number]

I am sure you have questions about the mechanics of the journey -
how did I do this? I have been training for walking long distances for
several months. I spent about one month organizing the trip - lining up
places to stay each night, people to drive to accompany me each day.

I wish to emphasize I did not accomplish this Journey alone! Many,
many people helped me a great deal. There are so many people who
helped me, if I listed everyone, we would be here until dark. However, I
wish to particularly thank all the people along Route 7 who took me in,
fed me, listened to me, and let me stay at thier homes; I want to thank
Jeanne Finley who supported me in every way and did an amazing
job writing all the materials I needed and reaching out to the media.

Maureen Aumand coordinated my trip and took care of all the details for me. We spoke at least two or three times everyday, and she fussed and worried over me.

I want to thank all the people who walked with me, especially Fred Childs who walked four days of the Journey. I want to thank all the drivers and all the people in whose homes I stayed. Kathy Manley and Steve Downs have been incredibly supportive both on the road and in the river. And most of all, I wish to thank my husband, Dan Van Riper, without whose constant, continuous support I never would have undertaken this Journey, let alone finished it.

I had some challenges along the way. I am a slow walker. But, I thought, I could just start in the morning and walk all day, and I would be able to walk 13 miles each day. I did not anticipate a heat wave that made walking after 11:00 in the morning impossible on some days. I needed to adopt a new schedule, and I began getting up at 4:15, getting driven to my destination at 5:00, and on the road. By late morning, I had to quit walking, find a place for a siesta, and then start walking again by 4 or 5.

Unfortunately, this new schedule did not give me enough daylight hours to walk 13 miles a day at my pace, and I gradually fell more than five miles behind.

In addition, I am from the city. I trained by walking on flat sidewalks. Walking along Route 7 is not pedestrian friendly because the shoulder of the road curves to allow run off. This country was settled by people who walked. These days, walking long distances is challenging because the roads are made for cars, not people.

Road shoulders are not made for pedestrians. I believe it is this curvature of the road that caused me to get a very large blister on my right foot. I have never had a blister before, and was unfamiliar with how painful and debilitating they are.

By last Friday, after my visit to the Emergency Room, it was clear that I could no longer walk on my right foot. What to do? I was still more than 40 miles from my destination.

Steve Downs thought a day of rest would be good for me, and so, five of us put our small boats in the Susquahanna for a paddle down the river. It was a gorgeous day. I had never canoed in swift water before, but, I soon became used to the currents and began to think it fun. Alas, we had an incident at Sidney, NY where three of us were caught in a “strainer” a downed tree that strains the boaters from their boats.

Fortunately, we were all wearing life vests. I went into the water and came up under a tree root still looking for air. Somehow, the current kept pushing me, and eventually I came up to the surface. Dan rescued

me. Much thanks to the Sidney Fire Department for their quick response. Steve rescued the petitions. My canoe was crushed, Dan lost his glasses and camera and all the beautiful photos he took.

But, we had a goal, and we got back in the kayaks and paddled to Afton, our destination.

Unfortunately, one day of rest was not enough to heal my blister. I realized I could not walk any more on this Journey. But, this is not about me, but about an idea. My friend Lucy said “it takes a village to raise a child; it takes a community to deliver petitions.”

Jack Gilroy of Johnson City stepped up and offered to walk the last two days for me and to carry the petitions. I am deeply grateful to him.

The Journey for Justice is about people coming together to ask for justice for Yassin Aref. My goal was to bring attention to Yassin Aref’s case and let the judge know how much we care about Yassin.

Yassin wrote this to me about the Journey:

Dada Lynne hope you are well, healthy and ready for your walk! Yes indeed I wish if I can be there and walk with you As you know I play Soccer and I am good in walking and even in running. I thought I am going to run here, in the yard, every day for the same distance you do, but now

Ramadan is here which may slow me down! however I
will walk some every day and as I told you my soul, heart
and mind are walking with you and flying above your head
all the way.

...

be well and take it easy . I don't know what to say and
how I will ever be able to thank you enough for all your help
and support.

I wish you know how much I appreciate what you are
doing.

please stay healthy and take good care of yourself.

[Add more remarks here, if needed]

The Journey for Justice has reached its destination for today. But, the
Journey is not over, we need to continue to speak out and advocate for
our bill of rights.

I want to close with a poem Yassin told his friends when he left the
middle east and came to the US:

Don't say goodbye,

Say, see you later.

If not on earth,

We'll meet in heaven.