

Several different groups organized secret direct actions to occur all over St. Louis on Moral Monday, October 13th following the disclosed Clergy/Faith leader protest at the Ferguson Police Department. I took a short break from standing in the rain watching religious leaders and Cornel West get arrested. After changing into dry clothes, I picked up Joel who traveled from New York City to volunteer as a Legal Observer. Thank God it had stopped raining. It was already dark and we were too far away from the Ferguson Wal-Mart on Florissant where youth protestors demonstrated first to assist there. Joel and I were text dispatched to the fundraiser for County Executive candidate Steve Stenger where protesters were already on the ground. We arrived just as the group was breaking up so headed to the Maplewood Wal-Mart where the next pop-up protest was to occur. It was like storm chasing. They just spotted a twister two miles from here! Step on it!

En route I mused, "Maybe they'll decide to protest at a senior living center next or something!"

"We could totally mess up a nursing home. Get the old people chanting! They like to sing, right?"

Joel and I had no idea what we were doing. Should we stay out front? Should we go in? Where should we go once inside? We bumbled around like Lucy and Ethel trying to pull off a caper. Joel nervously grabbed a shopping cart and I started throwing random items into our basket.

"Get some beans. Completely plausible item to buy on a Monday night at 9:00."

"What kind?"

"It doesn't matter! Just grab a few cans so we look like we're shopping."

"Where should we go?"

"I have no idea. Let's just keep pretending to shop. Try to look natural."

"Don't walk too fast. Should we get toilet paper while we're here? That's a seriously great price on bath tissue!"

"Crap! It's happening! I just got word that shit is gonna go down in the pet aisle."

"The pet aisle? Where is that? Why there? Pets for justice? Pets in solidarity with Mike Brown?"

We made our way to the back of the Wal-Mart and wandered up and down the two pet aisles. Adrenaline pumping, we feigned interest in cat toys and debated different brands of dog food. After a few minutes, about twenty protesters, including local rapper activist Tef Poe, started assembling next to the canine feeding bowls. Joel and

I started filming with our phones and pulled out our obnoxious caps. A barrage of chants erupted from protesters: "They think it's a game! They think it's a joke!" followed by "We've got to fight back!"

Two anxious Wal-Mart security guards arrived immediately while managers quickly shut the store down and ushered confused customers outside. Then four police, then seven. The protesters continued to chant for ten to fifteen minutes at the back of the store. "The whole damn system is going to hell!" Additional police arrived and formed a line in front of demonstrators. The police started shouting at protesters that they had to leave the store immediately. Some protesters left, but others lingered. The cops corralled ten or so protesters in the middle of the store and started arresting people for lollygagging, putting their wrists in nylon rip ties. I had to make a conscious choice about how quickly I exited the store, because going too slow guaranteed arrest. I could see one Legal Observer, SLU Law School Professor Justin Hansford, already in custody. I made my way slowly through the automatic doorways and watched police lead arrested protesters into police vehicles.

Outside, a hundred and fifty protesters took up chanting. A police helicopter hovered above shining a spotlight on the scene. Police from at least six municipalities arrived for back-up and guarded the store in riot gear. I wondered if the protesters were waiting for another round of arrests. It felt like the police were making a plan to surround the crowd. After some tense moments, the protesters dissipated, deciding on the fly where to go next. We ran after them and were soon speeding away towards the St. Charles Rock Road Wal-Mart.

That store was closed in advance of our arrival. Irate Wal-Mart shoppers shouted vitriol at the protesters for inconveniencing their evening shopping. The protest went on for a half hour, then moved on to QuikTrip nearby. Joel and I were exhausted. It was a night to make people think and remember, which was exactly the point.