



NATALIE WHITE
FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

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Natalie White to transform her criminal trial proceedings into performance artwork ***United States of America v. Natalie White: a performance piece on*** ***female self-representation in D.C. criminal court***

Straddling the line between activism and performance art, White will orchestrate an artistic performance piece in a D.C. courtroom to heighten visibility of the yet-to-be-passed Equal Rights Amendment, a constitutional modification that would guarantee gender equality under U.S. law

New York, NY and Washington, DC — January 16, 2017 — In response to the criminal charge of “defacing public or private property” (using washable paint to write “ERA NOW,” in reference to the Equal Rights Amendment, on the sidewalk in front of the U.S. Capitol building), Natalie White will represent herself at trial after a lengthy investigation by the D.C. Capitol Police that culminated in overnight jail time. With prior advisory from acclaimed D.C. first amendment attorney Mark Goldstone and support from legendary New York civil rights attorney Ron Kuby, White will transform the D.C. Superior Court into a venue to continue her longstanding artistic investigation into “the country’s puzzling failure to integrate such a fundamental statute into its constitution.”

The idea to use the trial as the framework for a performance art piece was in response to the absurdity of the case’s investigative process, as well as to the gender equality platform’s expanded resonance when accompanied by the trial’s fortuitous scheduling within days of the Trump inauguration and Women’s March on Washington. White’s courtroom performance on January 17 will feature “a creative defense that confronts the cultural climate that has been pervasive since long before the Equal Rights Amendment’s introduction to Congress in 1923, and which Trump is slated to perpetuate and amplify nearly a century later.”

In a second layer to what Natalie White supporter Patricia Arquette called “a wild goose chase,” White criticized the exorbitant taxpayer resources the Capitol Police used in the course of their investigation: “A woman exercising free speech shouldn’t be treated as a crime, but the police wasting taxpayer money going after an activist should be.” White’s legal advisor for the investigation, Ron Kuby, relayed that long after the washable paint had disappeared completely, the D.C. Capitol Police flew two separate officers from D.C. to New York City for several paid work days to apprehend a suspect they described in their initial police report as “a white, slender female ... blonde, wearing a white t-shirt and a ponytail.” They hadn’t even checked beforehand to confirm that White was at her home address; in fact, she had been in D.C. the entire time, as was evident across her public social media accounts. White surrendered the day she was informed that there was a warrant out for her arrest. She was then put in jail overnight—a tax expenditure of even further excess.

Responding to the absurdity of the case’s precipitating elements, the artist will launch her *United States v. Natalie White* performance with a 20-minute monologue; or, formally, the defense opening statement for the trial. The performance will continue with White questioning the government’s witnesses, mostly police officers. Character witnesses on White’s behalf include activist/model Lizzy Jagger, Academy Award-winning actress Patricia Arquette, and Kamala Lopez (director of seminal Equal Rights Amendment documentary *Equal Means Equal*).

Emphasized White of the cause’s crucial nature: “The U.N. bill of rights for women has been signed and ratified by virtually every country in the world except for 7 countries: Iran, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, two

Pacific Island Nations, and the United States of America. If women's rights are human rights, then we have a common human rights issue in those countries.”

United States v. Natalie White: a performance piece on female self-representation in D.C. criminal court conceptually extrapolates White’s 2015 cross-media solo show at New York City gallery The Hole, the performance component of which entailed White sitting topless on a crumpled American flag in the gallery window. Where as the 2015 performance took place in an experimental Lower East Side gallery, though, the courtroom performance has White in conventional business attire, garnering visibility for the ERA movement by aesthetically and structurally aligning her performance with the conventions of the apt backdrop of a D.C. courtroom.

Court proceedings will begin at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, January 17 in room 210 of the D.C. Superior Courthouse (500 Indiana Ave NW #6000) under presiding judge Robert Salerno. Advance remarks from the artist and her witnesses will take place outside of the courthouse at 8 a.m. Additional programming tied to the courtroom performance will include an intimate dinner reception following the Women’s March on Washington (January 21) with Natalie White, Lizzy Jagger, Patricia Arquette, Kamala Lopez, and other vocal supporters of Natalie White’s advocacy work for the Equal Rights Amendment. Kamala Lopez will subsequently host a screening of her award-winning documentary, Equal Means Equal, with a Q&A.

ABOUT NATALIE WHITE

Feminist by nature, a riot by habit. Natalie White is a provocative and progressive feminist and artist, best known for her self-portrait work with Giant Polaroid photography, and her contribution as a "Muse" to the work of many of today's art and fashion luminaries. Her creative drive and unapologetic spirit have led her to collaborative ventures with artists such as Peter Beard, George Condo, Olivier Zahm, Michael Dweck, Will Cotton, Spencer Tunick, and Sean Lennon.

Growing up in a small town in West Virginia, Natalie first gained attention internationally as a young model, featured on the covers of numerous European Magazines. Never one to shy away from the risqué, she was also the first American ever featured in French Playboy.

In 2013, at the "Who Shot Natalie White?" show, amidst a retrospective of 25 different artists for whom she has been a muse, Natalie debuted herself as a solo artist. Through this series of double exposed Giant Polaroid nudes, she re-defined herself as "her own muse."

As a leader in female empowerment and self-affirmation through art, Natalie also works in activations for women's rights. She has performed at the "Art Basel Miami Women in Art Benefit" in collaboration with the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth Sackler Center, as well as the "Natalie White for Equal Rights" show at the Hole in 2015 and a 2016 follow-up at the WhiteBox Foundation for the Arts. In July 2016, She led a 16 day, 250-mile march from NYC to DC promoting the fight for inclusion of The Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution.

ABOUT THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution that would expressly prohibit discrimination against girls and women on the basis of sex. The Constitution does not guarantee equal rights for women. As late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia stated: “Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn’t.”

The ERA was passed by Congress in 1972: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States of by any state on account of sex.” By the time the deadline for state ratification ended in 1982, 35 states had ratified the amendment, just three states short of the number needed to put the ERA into the Constitution. Since then, the ERA has been reintroduced in Congress every session. Although polls indicate that more than 90% of Americans support the ERA, Congress has not once voted on it over the past thirty years.

Why do we need the ERA?

The ERA is an important statement of principle. The Constitution embodies the nation’s core values. Equality between women and men is a fundamental human right that should be guaranteed in the Constitution.

Sex discrimination continues to limit equal opportunity and justice for women. Economic inequality, pregnancy discrimination, violence against women, and other forms of discrimination against women and girls are pervasive and leave women without effective legal recourse. State laws are not uniform and federal laws are not comprehensive. Moreover, these laws can be, and in some cases have been, rolled back anytime.

The Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution does not protect women from sex discrimination. The Fourteenth Amendment provides equal protection of the law, but it has been interpreted to require state action and the intent to discriminate. Much discrimination occurs through private action and is not intentional, making intent hard to prove. The Supreme Court reviews sex discrimination claims using intermediate rather than strict scrutiny, a lower standard of review than for racial and religious discrimination claims.