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FELLOW AMERICANS HELP ME UNDERSTAND OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AS CITIZENS

Fellow Americans Help Me Understand Our Constitutional Rights as Citizens and “Shout It Out” Park, two smart poems by the American author Leah Lubin.



The Shout by Shayna Michaels

Fellow Americans Help Me Understand Our Constitutional Rights as Citizens

It was in October that I moved to Santa Cruz.

A place I've been visiting since the late 1980s.

Freedom and funky.

A mix I enjoy downtown on Pacific Avenue for many years.

But changes have taken place that I don't understand.

Along with the free music and good vibes, a feeling of disturbed and rebellious energy that I feel is too much for this town.

Then, in a period of one week, personal experiences I still can't forget or understand.

Yes, I people watch. I need to.

I am a writer and an artist. I need to express the real scene.

So, when on a Tuesday morning I watched a group of anarchists leave their café and throw their empty plastic cups on the ground, I said:

“Hey wait a minute Anarchists! There is a garbage bin 5 feet away. Why can't you use it?”

Walking further, I went past the Catalyst with their one dollar pizza slices for lunch.

On the floor he sat asking for money.

That's OK, but “Why are you throwing your paper plate on the ground right next to you?” I ask him.

He ignores me.

Two days later I am back on Pacific Avenue close to the New Leaf when I started hearing screaming.

There he stood right in front of the store on the corner.

A life size wooden cross in front of him, shouting and screaming we were all going to hell if we didn't believe like he does.

Then I notice across the street a cop standing and staring at him.

Great, I thought.

I am going to ask him what he is going to do about it.

“Nothing” he tells me.

“It's this man's constitutional right to scream his beliefs at us all” says the cop and even starts yelling at me when I don't buy his answer.

What sounds to me like disturbing the peace apparently is our constitutional right especially when you're preaching religion as you see it he loudly tells me.

But I respect cops, I think to myself.

I don't get it.

An American citizen myself since 1986.

I want your opinion.

Does this make sense to you?

Really?

I want to know.

“Shout It Out” Park

You probably learned about my incident.

A situation that included my disliking of public craziness, and my expressing this to a cop who refused to stop the noise due to what appears to be the noise maker's constitutional right.

Well, I've been doing a lot of thinking about it.

And, I've come up with a solution that should please most.

So here goes: We create a park where if you need to scream about something, you can.

A public park not in a residential area.

They don't want to hear it.

Not on a public street downtown where shoppers, diners, and people enjoy a good walk and then a sit down on a bench to relax.

They definitely don't want to hear your screaming.

The park will be clean.

It will be friendly.

People will come to hear you, even expect to see you.

And at 4:20 I might join you.

But when you start shouting, I'll leave.