

Woman arrested after confrontation with Black man over whether he could be on Winnetka pier, police say

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Irene Donoshaytis, 65, of Northfield, was charged with battery in Winnetka. (Winnetka Police Department)

A Northfield woman was charged with battery after a confrontation in Winnetka Sunday over whether a Black man and two women were allowed to be on the pier, police said.

Winnetka police arrested Irene Donoshaytis, 65, of Northfield, after they responded about 7:35 p.m. near the Winnetka Pier, 720 Tower Road, said Dep. Chief Brian O'Connell.

A Northfield woman was charged with battery after a confrontation in Winnetka Sunday over whether a Black man and two women were allowed to be on the pier, police said.

Winnetka police arrested Irene Donoshaytis, 65, of Northfield, after they responded about 7:35 p.m. near the Winnetka Pier, 720 Tower Road, said Dep. Chief Brian O'Connell.

"A verbal dispute turned physical over what appeared to be a disagreement of the need for a Winnetka beach pass," O'Connell said.

Donoshaytis could not be reached for comment.

The dispute started after Donoshaytis approached Otis Campbell, 25, of Skokie, who was ending a 15-mile bicycle ride at the pier with his cousin and a friend, Campbell said Wednesday.

"It's not a short ride. We were exhausted," Campbell said.

Donoshaytis approached the group after they coasted down the hill, finished their ride and sat down at the bottom of the pier to rest, Campbell said.

"She decides to take it upon herself and come over to me and our group and ask, 'Where are your passes?'" Campbell said.

"We're like, 'What are you talking about? We don't even know who you are. You're not a staff member.'"

Campbell said Donoshaytis questioned the group's right to access the pier.

"She says, 'This is America. This is America, you can't do this. I'm from Winnetka. You need to go back where you're from,'" Campbell said.

Campbell is a first-generation U.S. citizen born to immigrant parents and a graduate of Niles North High School in Skokie, he said. His mom is from Belize and his dad from Jamaica.

Donoshaytis then walked over to a Winnetka Park District attendant monitoring the beach, Campbell said.

"In my head, something clicked. This is how people get in trouble," said Campbell.

So, he also walked over to the attendant and began recording the encounter with his phone.

In the [video posted to Twitter](#), where it has been widely shared, Donoshaytis is seen approaching the park district employee to complain about Campbell and his group.

The employee explains that where the three cyclists were sitting is public property and a beach pass is not required.

"To walk up and down this driveway and onto the pier, you don't need a pass," the employee said.

Donoshaytis disagreed.

"It's not public. For people who live in Winnetka and we pay for it," she is heard saying in the video.

Campbell can be heard laughing on the video and Donoshaytis then turns back to him.

"Are you crazy? What, you want to kill me? No? It feels like it," she is recorded as saying.

"Why would I want to kill you? Is it because I'm Black?" Campbell replies.

"Yes," Donoshaytis said.

At this point, the employee offered to get her supervisor.

Donoshaytis then is seen moving quickly toward Campbell's phone, and the video shakes and cuts off.

Campbell said she hit his arm twice, leaving a bruise.

Winnetka police responded soon thereafter and Donoshaytis later was arrested.

O'Connell confirmed Wednesday that Campbell and his group were on public property and not in a place that required beach passes.

Also, because the group was on bicycles, they did not require a parking pass, either, O'Connell said.

Campbell said he plans to attend Donoshaytis' next court date and believes that, based on the comments she made toward him, the charges should include hate crimes.

O'Connell declined to comment on the racial aspects of the encounter.

Campbell said he was disappointed that responding officers didn't approach him first but instead went up to Donoshaytis to see if she needed help. Otherwise, he was pleased with how the situation was handled by police.

"It's not saying that they didn't do their job right. It's just showing the world that this is an extremely toxic place when it comes to race," he said.

Campbell said Donoshaytis is "probably a great person" but the encounter was still distressing.

"She just needs to get educated on the fact that everyone is not what you think. I'm not going to hurt you if I'm sitting here on the pier," Campbell said.

Donoshaytis was released on bond Sunday evening and is next set to appear in court Aug. 31, O'Connell said.

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