

Occupy Arrests Questioned, Compared To History

By Adam Ghassemi Oct 28, 2011

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Hours after announcing they would no longer be allowed to camp on Legislative Plaza, Tennessee Highway Patrol officers carried 29 Occupy Nashville protesters to jail just after 3 a.m. Friday. A night court commissioner refused to sign their arrest warrants, which released everyone.

"The response of the government in Tennessee was totally inappropriate," said Nashville attorney David Raybin who says Friday's arrests were a blatant attack on the constitutional rights of people trying to peacefully assemble.

With no one getting out of hand, he says, the state didn't give Occupy Nashville protesters enough notice. "In the absence of some compelling need, you don't do that without violating the constitution rights of your own citizens," Raybin went on to say.



For some, it's also a reminder to different era with stark differences in the police.

"They don't bring dogs. They don't bring fire hoses. They don't swing the batons," said Fisk University Dean and History Professor Dr. Reavis Mitchell, who was in Jr. High when the Civil Rights movement began.

Mitchell believes the thing Occupy Nashville protesters are missing is a distinct goal or message. "They aren't challenging any existing laws. They're challenging the perception of an economic disaster, which is in place, and how to change it," he said.

Dr. Mitchell pointed out if the Occupy Wall Street protesters get a more clearly defined goal like what he marched for during the Civil Rights movement their supporters could quickly grow. He says he hopes 50 years from now they can look back and know they got what they wanted, like he does today.

While the protesters may have a message issue, Raybin believes the state is playing with fire that could end up costing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

"The government who's worried about the cost of policing this area, they could spend a half a million dollars in lawyers' fees in

the next six-months over law suits as a result of this," said Raybin.

Raybin also said if the state was worried about safety on Legislative Plaza, they could have policed the area from theft and violence without making the protesters leave.

