



Stockton College Students Hear Supreme Court Case on Gay Marriage

Camped Out in D.C. for Two Nights in Near-Freezing Temperatures

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Two Richard Stockton College of New Jersey students camped out for two nights in near-freezing temperatures before getting to hear oral arguments on the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) before the U.S. Supreme Court Wednesday.

Nicole Chamra, a 21-year-old political science major who plans to attend New York Law School next fall, and Taylor Ruggieri, 21 and a psychology major with minors in political science and women's, gender, sexuality studies, found themselves the youngest people in line with hundreds trying to get inside the Washington, D.C. courtroom. Most of those waiting were in their 30s to 70s, with many gay couples and parents of gay people waiting to hear the arguments, Chamra said.

Thousands more waited outside, holding signs, demonstrating and taking part in parades.

Chamra, a resident of Carteret, said, "We were not able to get into the arguments yesterday for Prop. 8 because we were Numbers 122 and 123 in line – and they only allowed 64 people in. So we stayed there all night and it was unbearably freezing. We couldn't feel our hands or feet. We only had a couple of throw blankets and layers of long-sleeved shirts, but no big coats, hats or gloves."

After making friends with people from Ohio and Florida and developing an ad-hoc support system to hold their ground against line cutters, “We got in today, because we were Numbers 45 and 46, and they cut off at 50,” Chamra said.

“It was definitely a once- in-a-lifetime experience and opportunity,” Chamra said. “We felt it was important to be in something that was literally marking history.”

“It was so worth it,” agreed Ruggieri.

“I go to a liberal church at home and was raised around all different types of people – all different kinds of love,” said Ruggieri, of Flemington. “Knowing that gay people still don’t have the same rights made me want to go and support same-sex marriage.”

Stockton Associate Professor of Political Science Linda Wharton alerted the college community to the students’ commitment by email Wednesday. “I’m so proud of them for taking this initiative. This level of engagement and passion about issues is truly extraordinary,” she said.

As to how the two think the justices will rule: “In the beginning it seemed so cut and dry – 5-4 against DOMA,” said Ruggieri. “Then all of a sudden, Justice Kennedy asked one question about federalism and if DOMA brought up issues of federalism... and Nikki and I were sitting there getting so uncomfortable with the anti-DOMA answer they got from the solicitor general and the main attorney for the plaintiff. It was at that point it seemed it could flip either way.”

“Seems like it all comes down to Justice Kennedy,” Ruggieri said.

“Outside of that, it was an honor to be there and a phenomenal, life-changing experience – a moment in history we were there for,” she said.

“Hopefully in June, when the decision comes out, it will be for what we believe in.”

Here’s link to LATimes photo of the Stockton students in line if your company wants to get permission to use it:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nation/nationnow/la-na-key-players-gay-marriage-20130325,0,622006.photogallery?index=la-na-key-players-gay-marriage-20130325-006>

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