

## A Day in the Life of a Photographer

Oct. 19 began with my morning prayers. I had not made plans for the day nor had I any goal. After finishing chanting, things began to move. I recalled there was an exhibit at the local library about Anne Frank, and that elementary school students would be visiting. The work I would do that day became even more clear when I learned of a vigil to be held in Manhattan for the murdered student Matthew Shepard, who was targeted in a hate crime because he was gay.

I sometimes feel my camera is a light and, having been deeply affected by Matthew's murder, I wanted to shine it on the vigil held to remember him and the manner and reason for his death.

First, though, I went to the Anne Frank exhibit and watched a short film about her and the Holocaust with a class of fifth graders. I was deeply moved, and the room was very quiet after the screening. I listened as the guide spoke and explained how the Nazis unleashed the power of prejudice.

One student showed me a poem she had written about Anne Frank: "Anne Frank's life was difficult / Her life was torn apart by the Nazis / She and her family hid from them for two years, without speaking aloud, or going to school, or even going outside / She was tortured by the Nazis, and died before the war had ended / Anne's life was a struggle, not without hope, a struggle." A poem from a 10-year-old, who told me Anne was killed for being different.

After that, I went into town for the vigil. What began as a simple memorial march had grown into a crowd of about 8,000 people. No one was prepared for such an outpouring. Marchers began to move down 5th Avenue toward Madison Square Park, where the vigil was intended to end. Police motorcycles came roaring through the crowd, racing ahead to block the street. Wearing riot gear and carrying night sticks, police marched straight into the crowd. A club was shoved into my stomach. I was pushed back as I held my eye to my camera.

I have witnessed many civil disobedience actions, however this demonstration made a strong impression on me. The contrast between my morning at the library and the evening demonstration left me wanting and wondering. I had gone from hearing words that taught tolerance to witnessing violent actions of what I felt were intolerance. The events forced me to see firsthand how desperately we need to communicate with each other — to build bridges, to use common sense, to act with respect, to realize that we are all human.

The importance of chanting each day to take responsibility for this has been demonstrated to me over and over. As a photographer, I try to reflect on the realities of society and on the promise of our potential. The experience I had on Oct. 19 brought these two points clearly home to me.

The next morning, I noticed two small white drops of wax on the black bag I use for my cameras: two drops from a memorial candle. I thought about who might have been holding the candle and how and when the wax had marked my bag like two tears.

**WT**