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CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST JAILED METROFOCUS REPORTER

Reporter arrested while covering the Occupy Wall Street Protests gets charges dismissed

NEW YORK, NY (November 3rd, 2011) – On Thursday, November 3rd, *MetroFocus* reporter John Farley and approximately 70 Occupy Wall Street protesters appeared in New York City Criminal Court to face charges stemming from mass arrests on September 24th.

Farley is a staff reporter for WNET's online news and culture magazine *MetroFocus*. On September 24th 2011, Farley while conducting an interview with a woman who was pepper-sprayed at the Occupy Wall Street protests was [arrested and detained for nearly eight hours](#). At the time of his arrest, Farley was wearing his WNET issued employee-identification card and although he identified himself as a member of the press, Farley was arrested, detained, processed and charged with disorderly conduct.

Today, Farley appeared at the Criminal Court of the City of New York at 100 Centre Street, where the charges of disorderly conduct against him were dropped.

In requesting the dismissal, Assistant District Attorney Michele Bayer read from a letter that WNET President Neal Shapiro sent to Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. on Monday, requesting that the case be dismissed. "As head of WNET, the former president of NBC News, and a lifelong news producer and television news executive, I am gravely concerned about the First Amendment implications of the New York City Police Department's actions in this matter," said Shapiro's letter.

The First Amendment implications of Farley's arrest have been widely covered by various national and international media outlets including [Columbia Journalism Review](#), [Salon](#), [Huffington Post](#), [The Daily Mail](#) and others.

"I am incredibly glad to have this matter behind me," said Farley. "As a young reporter, being in police custody for nine hours was quite an ordeal. But ultimately, this morning it was an incredible opportunity to see freedom of the press prevail."

Farley's was the first case heard by Judge Neil Ross today and the only one dismissed outright. Farley was represented in court by Robert Feinberg, general counsel for WNET and a former federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York. "We appreciate the Manhattan district attorney's office for wisely exercising its discretion to request a dismissal," Feinberg said.

"Having someone on our small reporting team arrested and then having this case hanging over our heads for five weeks has hindered our ability to cover the Occupy Wall Street protests on the ground, arguably the biggest New York story this fall," said Laura van

Straaten, Editor in Chief of **MetroFocus**. “We are very relieved to have this case dismissed, as we had hoped it would be.”

MetroFocus launched in July, 2011. Farley began his employment with **MetroFocus** in May. Previously, Farley, 25, was a web editor at Pop City, an online news and culture magazine in Pittsburgh, PA. He also served as editor of chief of the alternative newspaper The Grape at Oberlin College, from which he graduated in 2009. He is a resident of Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Visit our press room for additional material:

- Letter from WNET President/CEO Neal Shapiro to Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr.
- Photograph of Farley’s Arrest on September 24th
 - **Suggested Caption:** **MetroFocus** Web Editor John Farley, kneeling, was arrested Sept. 24 while reporting on the Occupy Wall Street protest. Farley was working on a story about citizen journalism at the time. His case was dismissed at a court appearance Nov. 3. *Credit: MetroFocus/Sam Lewis.*
- PDF of Farley’s Desk Appearance Ticket

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About MetroFocus

MetroFocus is an online magazine that covers local news, culture, and life in and around the New York City area. **MetroFocus** is a production of the Interactive Engagement Group in association with WNET New York Public Media, the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21, New York’s public television stations. Read more about [MetroFocus](#).

About WNET New York Public Media

WNET is America’s flagship public media outlet, bringing quality arts, education and public affairs programming to over 5 million viewers each week. The parent company of public television stations THIRTEEN and WLIW21 and operator of NJTV, WNET produces such acclaimed PBS series as Great Performances, American Masters, Nature, Need to Know, Charlie Rose, Tavis Smiley and a range of documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as Get the Math, Noah Compende and Cyberchase and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique culture and diverse communities through SundayArts, Reel 13, *NJ Today* and the new online local newsmagazine *MetroFocus*.