

Mary Beth Tinker

Class of 1970

Mary Beth Tinker began her life of activism at age 13.

In 1965, Tinker, her brother and a group of students in Des Moines, Iowa, wore black arm bands to school to protest the Vietnam War.

In a community meeting, the decision was made to suspend the students from school. Tinker suffered death threats, and the family home was vandalized.



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When the suspensions were upheld, the Iowa Civil Liberties Union sued, alleging that the students' First Amendment rights had been violated.

Three years later, *Tinker v. Des Moines* made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in her favor. For the majority, Justice Abe Fortas wrote that students and teachers do not “shed their constitutional rights ... at the schoolhouse gate.”

Tinker continues to advocate youth activism, speaking to students across the country, including U. City students.

In 2000, an annual youth advocacy award presented at American University was named for Tinker. In 2006, the ACLU National Board of Directors' Youth Affairs Committee renamed its annual award for Tinker.