

Texas vs Johnson

(1989) Landmark US Supreme Court case that resulted in the justices deciding that burning an American flag as an act of protest was legal because they determined it to be protected "symbolic" free speech.

Greg "Joey" Johnson

Johnson, with other young communists, was arrested in 1984 at the time of the Republican National Convention in Dallas, Texas for burning an American flag. He was charged under Texas law with desecration of a venerated object (fancy way of saying he burned a US flag). He was convicted and appealed all the way to the US Supreme Court (took 5 years) who overturned his conviction for the reasons stated above.

symbolic free speech

Something that you do that the court protects as free speech. The justices are saying that when people burn a flag they are using actions to say that they dislike their country.