

# Lower Hudson Valley Chapter

# NYCLU



FALL 2006



## Dead Man Walking: The Journey Continues

### HENRY SCHWARZSCHILD MEMORIAL LECTURE

*Guest speaker:*

Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ

*Introduced by:*

Ronald Tabak, *Renowned Death Penalty Opponent*

*Place:* Manhattanville College, The Castle, Purchase NY

*Time:* Thursday, October 12, at 7:15 PM.

In 1999 we inaugurated the Henry Schwarzschild Memorial Lecture Series, which we co-sponsor with the Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action at Manhattanville College. Each year we have hosted an impressive guest speaker. This year we are pleased to continue our tradition. The 8th annual lecture will be delivered by **Helen Prejean, CSJ**, author of the bestseller, **Dead Man Walking**. The event will take place at Manhattanville, Thursday, October 12, 2006 at 7:15 PM.

Sister Helen Prejean was born in Louisiana and lives in New Orleans. She joined the Sisters of St. Joseph Medaille in 1957 and earned her MA in Religious Education in 1973. In 1981 Sister Helen began her prison ministry. She became the spiritual advisor to Patrick Sonnier, a Louisiana death row inmate, and through their relationship she became deeply involved in death penalty reform. **Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty** became a bestseller in 1993 and 1994. The Academy Award-winning film starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn was released in 1996.

Sister Helen's second book, **The Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions**, was published 2 years ago. She lectures widely, and, in fact, it took us several years to coordinate schedules to enable Sister Helen to lecture this year!

Henry Schwarzschild, in whose memory this lecture series was created, served as the executive director of the Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee beginning in 1964. Later, he joined the ACLU staff and became the coordinator of the national death penalty campaign. In his ACLU position he became a tireless and eloquent advocate against capital punishment. Henry served on the boards of both NYCLU and our local chapter, and his warmth and knowledge were foremost in all his work with us. It is most appropriate that Sister Helen Prejean who, like Henry, has witnessed too many executions, is this year's lecturer.

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## **From the Chair: Then and Now**

by Arlene Popkin

December 15 is Bill of Rights Day, the anniversary of the adoption of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. As we do every year, the Lower Hudson Valley Chapter of the NYCLU will celebrate the birthday of our favorite client at the St. Paul's Church National Historic Site in Mount Vernon.

The history of that place connects to the trial of John Peter Zenger, a printer jailed for publishing unpleasant truths about the Governor of New York. It was, at the time, against the law to print criticisms of government officials. A prominent attorney from Philadelphia rode up (on a horse) to defend Zenger at his trial. He spoke to the jury about people's rights, about the freedom of opinion and what becomes of people who are not allowed to speak the truth as they see

it, and about what you might call a government that can throw a person in jail for reporting that an election was rigged. Then the judge instructed the jury that if Zenger had printed that, he was guilty and truth was no defense. And the jury thought about it a bit and basically decided that Zenger printed it and thank you very much. They found him *Not Guilty* and he got to go home to his wife, who had been running the newspaper for the year he'd been in jail.

There wasn't any United States of America yet - this was 1735 - but people understood how important freedom of speech, of conscience, of the press was. If no one is watching and no one can speak about abuses, we'd soon enough have no freedom at all. And it's pretty obvious that it helps to have a lawyer when the government wants to take your liberty and your livelihood. And there's trial by jury - you can bet Mr. Zenger appreciated that.

## **What An Eye-opener! Civil Liberties Awareness for Teachers,** by Stacy Kinlock Sewell

Can a teacher access a student's myspace.com website? How can a discussion of the death penalty be used in a 4th-grade geography lesson? What skills can we build by asking students to read and interpret New York State's marriage statutes in light of recent efforts to press the issue of equal marital rights?

These were among the many questions discussed by the fourteen teachers and five weekly presenters at the NYCLU-Lower Hudson Chapter's "Civil Liberties for Educators" course, which ran in May at Washingtonville High School in Orange County. Teachers of social studies from the 4th through 12th grades, as well as one science teacher and one ESL teacher from schools in Middletown, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh and nearby districts, attended the five-week program to learn

about today's civil liberties climate and its relation to classroom issues and teaching content.

Attorneys and law professors, exuberant and passionate defenders of civil liberties in their professional lives, discussed their area of expertise in contemporary civil liberties law with the teachers. Kevin Doyle, New York State Capital Defender, discussed how the death penalty works and why it can and should be discussed by teachers; Bennett Gershman, Professor of Law at Pace University, discussed the 4th Amendment in changing contexts; Jeanne Mettler, an attorney in private practice who also has taught high school social studies and government classes, discussed marriage equality; Robert Isseks, also an attorney in private practice, discussed civil liberties in academic contexts; and Marianne Artusio, Associate Professor of Law at Touro Law Center and a

As it happens, the way the governor tried to rig the election involved disenfranchising a particular religious group. And as it happens, Zenger himself was an immigrant. The case involves quite a few issues that, when we came to build ourselves a country, were included in the Bill of Rights. Those principles aren't important because they're in the Bill of Rights; they're in the Bill of Rights because they're so important. We celebrate to remind us how important they are, and have always been. In case, in times of stress, we might for a moment forget.

Please join us from 10 AM to noon, December 15, at 897 S. Columbus Avenue (Rte. 22), Mount Vernon.

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*"Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it..."* - Learned Hand

NYCLU-LHV Board Member, discussed freedom of speech.

One teacher commented, "The last thing I'd want to do after a day in the classroom is sit in another one for three hours...but I looked forward to our meetings!" Others said it was "a real eye-opener," and "the best course" they had taken. And while it is tough to get a 9-year-old to understand the "right to privacy," teachers did take with them numerous lesson plan ideas and a heightened awareness of civil liberties concerns to bring to their classrooms.

The course was co-sponsored by the Mid-Hudson Social Studies Council and the Washingtonville Teachers Center, and teachers could receive professional development credits for their attendance. The NYCLU-LHV hopes to run the course again in the near future in another school district.

## Executive Director's Musings

by Linda S. Berns

I hope that you will join our NYCLU e-activist list. Please email me at [info@nyclulhv.org](mailto:info@nyclulhv.org) to periodically receive emails that will update you about civil liberties concerns and local ACLU events. I will try to provide clear information without overwhelming you with too many messages. You will receive less than one message per week. Examples are: the Patriot Act and other post 9-11 erosions of civil liberties; the Death Penalty in NY State; Rockefeller Drug Law Reform; and Chapter Events.

Our office will soon be using a new system to send out these e-

activism alerts.

In order to make sure that you primarily receive NY state-related alerts that pertain to our region, please send your name, email address, city or town and zip code and even civil liberties issues that you are most interested in. Please be assured that I will keep your information confidential. Your information will not be shared with anyone outside the NYCLU staff and board members and my local volunteers, all of whom are bound by and committed to our obligation to protect your privacy. This is a core value in the ACLU.

Wouldn't you have wanted to get information this summer about:

- The White House version of bills on

warrantless domestic surveillance and military tribunals pushed through Congress before the end-of-September adjournment?

- Our Same Sex Marriage case finally heard in the highest court in the state?
- Department of Homeless Security's plan to track you by a fingerprint database?

*Nowhere else is such info available about your civil liberties and mine !!!*

### WE'VE MOVED!

297 Knollwood Road, Ste. 217  
White Plains, New York 10607  
*Come see our great new space!*

## High School Essay Contest

*"Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety."* Benjamin Franklin

In this troubled time, when the U.S. government is asking its citizens to give up essential rights and protections in the name of purchasing "a little temporary safety" or rather, the illusion of safety, The Lower Hudson Valley Chapter of NYCLU is asking high school students in our area to think about and write about American Civil Liberties on Trial in a Climate of Terrorism.

The LHV Chapter applied to NYCLU and has received a grant of \$700 in order to sponsor this essay/speech/poem contest for high school students in our seven-county area.

Prizes will be presented to the students whose submissions most effectively defend a civil liberty that, in spite of being guaranteed by our Bill of Rights, is now under attack. The Lower Hudson Valley Chapter Board of Directors will judge entries and

select the three prize winners. All entries must be submitted by November 17th and winners will be notified in early December.

This contest is being held in honor of the 215th year of our Bill of Rights. Winners will be recognized at the Chapter's Bill of Rights Day Celebration on December 15th at St. Paul's Historic Site in Mt. Vernon.

*"America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves."*

Abraham Lincoln

*Dead Man Walking,*  
cont. from page 1.

Manhattanville College  
2900 Purchase Street  
Purchase NY 10577

**For directions:**  
Call 914-694-2200, or  
log on to [mville.edu](http://mville.edu)

## 7 Important Volunteer Jobs Need Filling!

1. Lobby government decision-makers
2. Join our Speakers' Bureau
3. Be a volunteer Attorney to review and take cases
4. Write letters to the editor in favor of Civil Liberties
5. Help in the office as little as 3 hours a week
6. Donate money
7. Review local publications for civil liberties issues

If you or someone you know has can perform any of these needed functions, please call Linda Berns at (914) 997-7479 or email her at [info@nyclulhv.org](mailto:info@nyclulhv.org).



# NYCLU

**NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION**  
**Lower Hudson Valley Chapter**  
*Formerly Westchester Chapter*

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## Annual Election of NYCLU-LHV Board: Nomination Process

The annual election for officers and members of the board of directors of the Lower Hudson Valley Chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU-LHV) is held on a date in the first quarter of each year, usually in the second half of March.

The positions to be filled are the chairperson, two vice-chairpersons, secretary, treasurer, and ten (or more in the case of temporary vacancies) non-officer members of the board of directors. The NYCLU-LHV Board of Directors has appointed a nominating committee for the 2007 Chapter election.

Below is an excerpt from the by-laws, describing the nominating procedure: "The Nominating Committee shall nominate at least one member in good standing to fill each office and to fill each directorship expiring during the year. The Nominating Committee shall report its nomination, either directly to the secretary or to the secretary via the Chapter office, not less

than two months before the date selected for the annual meeting. At any time during the period commencing three months before the date of the annual meeting and ending seven weeks before the date of the annual meeting, any member in good standing may be nominated for any office or for any directorship expiring during the year by a petition bearing the signatures of seven members in good standing.

The petition shall be delivered, either directly to the secretary or to the secretary via the Chapter office, no later than seven weeks before the date of the annual meeting, together with a request that the name of the nominee and the office shown on such petition be submitted to the membership.

Written communications about this process should be addressed to: NYCLU- LHV, 297 Knollwood Rd, Ste. 217, White Plains, NY 10607, 914-997-7479.

## Calendar: Fall 2006

10/12

'Dead Man Walking' lecture,  
see page 1 for details

10/16

Freedom Files-Gay and Lesbian  
Rights Meeting, 7:30 PM  
WESPAC Office, 255 Dr. Martin  
Luther King Jr. Blvd, White Plains

10/19

Community Forum on Marriage  
Equality, 7:00 PM  
YWCA (69 N. B'way, White Plains)

11/17

Deadline for Bill of Rights Essay  
Contest

12/15

Bill of Rights Day Celebration  
St. Paul's Historic Site, Rte. 22,  
Mt. Vernon