



NYCLU

NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

LOWER HUDSON VALLEY CHAPTER

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OCTOBER 2010

Bryan Stevenson returns!

This November we will present our 12th annual Henry Schwarzschild Memorial Lecture, which we co-sponsor with the Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action at Manhattanville College.

We are delighted to again host Bryan Stevenson, who was the inaugural speaker when we began the series in 1999. The event will take place at Manhattanville on Monday, Nov. 29, 2010. We would be pleased if you would lend financial support.

Bryan Stevenson is the founder and executive director of Equal Justice Initiative (www.eji.org), an Alabama-based nonprofit group that provides legal representation to poor defendants and prisoners who have been unjustly treated.

It focuses much of its work on representing death row inmates. (See the front page of *The New York Times* for August 11, 2010, for an account of a recent EJI case.)

Bryan Stevenson is a lawyer and graduate of Harvard Law School. He is a faculty member of the NYU School of Law, as well as the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship. His lecture in 1999 was informative and inspiring. We are truly gratified that he has agreed to return to Manhattanville. As you may have noticed from attendance at past lectures, we often attract experts who have first-hand knowledge about the death penalty

and the practice of law among the impoverished.

We are pleased to have Steve Emanuel, an alumnus of Harvard Law School and founder and main author of the Emanuel Law Outlines series, introduce Mr. Stevenson.

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 the NYCLU and our local chapter, and his warmth and knowledge were foremost in all of his work with us.

**12th ANNUAL
HENRY SCHWARZSCHILD
MEMORIAL LECTURE**

Monday November 29 • 7:00 PM

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

**Guest speaker:
BRYAN STEVENSON**

**Introduction:
STEVEN EMANUEL**

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC • FREE

Banned Books Week

Our chapter held two special events during this year's Banned Books Week (Sept. 25 through Oct. 2): one on Sept. 27 and the second on Sept. 29, at the Greenburgh Public Library.

On Sept. 30, Chapter Director Berns discussed the history of book censorship on a panel at St. Thomas Aquinas College in Rockland County. She discussed the Pico v. Board of Education case in Nassau County, which went all the way to the Supreme Court in 1982. The other two speakers were faculty members who spoke about the censorship of books in schools, emphasizing those books that deal with violence and sexuality, including a discussion of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Books that were challenged during 2009 include *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, the *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank and *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger.

Established by the American Library Association in 1982, Banned Books Week celebrates the freedom to express ideas and opinions, even if they are unorthodox or unpopular. It highlights the importance of ensuring that controversial viewpoints are available to anyone who wishes to study them.

Director's Corner

by Linda Berns

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

The chapter has been very involved in the effort for immigration reform. We have accomplished the following:

- Sent a letter to each of our Congressional representatives: Engel in the 17th District, Lowey in the 18th, and Hall in the 19th. The letter espoused our five planks for reform. We succeeded in getting 10 groups to sign on to these letters: the Hudson Valley Community Coalition (HVCC), Mid Hudson Progressive Alliance, NAACP, Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action at Manhattanville College, WESPAC Foundation, Rockland Immigration Coalition, Blauvelt Dominican (Sisters) Social Justice Ministry, Philipstown for Democracy, Westchester Progressive Forum, and the Rockland Coalition for Democracy and Freedom.
- Lobbied with Congressman Hall's 19th District Representative, T.J. Rogers, at his office in Carmel with Betsy Palmieri of the HVCC.
- Held call-in days to our congressional offices with each of the above groups pledging 15 to 20 calls.
- Co-sponsored four rallies from February through June at Congressman Hall's and Senator Schumer's offices, and in Rockland County with the Immigration Coalition. There were 150 to 250 people at each of these gatherings.
- Sent an e-alert to 3,512 supporters in the lower Hudson Valley. (Please make sure the office has your e-mail address so I can reach you between newsletters.)

- Held a wonderful dinner on June 8 to cap the year's activities by giving the Myron Isaacs Community Service Award to three local leaders of our immigration reform efforts—Gail Golden, director of Rockland Immigration Coalition; Betsy Palmieri, director of the Hudson Valley Community Coalition; and Martha Lopez, former Westchester director of Hispanic affairs to the County Executive.

Hamilton Fish, senior advisor and president emeritus of *The Nation Institute*, introduced Victor Navasky, the keynote speaker. Mr. Navasky provided much insight as he conveyed the "Lessons of McCarthy for Today." He served as editor, publisher and now publisher emeritus of *The Nation*. He is the George Delacorte Professor of Magazine Journalism at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, where he directs the Delacorte Center of Magazines and chairs the *Columbia Journalism Review*. He has also served as an editor of *The New York Times Magazine*.

People we have helped:

North Rockland School District suspended a 9th grade boy for wearing a rosary outside his shirt, which the school determined conflicted with its anti-gang regulations. We called the school and the student's parents. The mother gave an interview to Channel 7 Eyewitness News and mentioned that she was in contact with the NYCLU. The superintendent met with the mother and rescinded the suspension.

Pledge of Allegiance. A student from Pearl River High School in Rockland

County was reprimanded for not standing and participating in the Pledge of Allegiance. His homeroom teacher demanded to know if he was a citizen of this country, if he loved this country, and if he supported the troops. He refused to answer any of these questions. The principal agreed to speak to the teacher.

Katonah-Lewisboro School District.

The mother of a 5th grade boy with Asperger's Syndrome asked us for help regarding repeated bullying in school. The principal had not been responsive and wanted to put him in "alternative placement." Several calls to the principal were not returned until finally she responded by saying that she could not discuss the matter due to a notice of claim filed by the family. The NYCLU represented the family at a 50H hearing in the case and is following up with advocacy and with a demand letter.

Putnam County Ethics. The chairman of a volunteer group, the Putnam County Coordinating Council for People with Disabilities, objected to filing a highly intrusive disclosure form with the Putnam County Board of Ethics. Many areas of the form, such as the financial value of the person's home, have been blacked out by the county over privacy concerns.

www.nyclu.org

Check it out
for the latest news
on civil liberties!

Bill of Rights Essay Contest

For this year's Bill of Rights Essay Contest, the chapter chose a topic that addresses the recent controversy surrounding the Park51 Islamic cultural center. We reminded the students of the 118 schools in our seven-county area that the First Amendment protects everyone's religious freedom. We also acknowledged that many people oppose the building of this center.

We posed a hypothetical situation where two friends have contrasting views on Park51. We then asked the students to pretend they are one of the friends and write a persuasive essay stating their position for or against building this center and to consider the other side's arguments.

Awards will be presented at our Bill of Rights Day event at St. Paul's Historic Site in Mt. Vernon on Dec. 15 at 10 a.m. All of you are welcome to attend.

Background

Originally called the Cordoba House, Park51 is an Islamic cultural center planned to be built a few blocks away from the World Trade Center site. The proposed 13-story building intends to promote multi-faith communication, understanding, and peace and will contain facilities such as a performing arts center, a fitness center, a child care center, a culinary school, a bookstore, and a Muslim prayer space.

Park51 is not visible from Ground Zero, however, many have come to refer this place as the "Ground Zero Mosque."

Supporters of Park51, including the NYCLU, stress the importance of tolerance and the fundamental right to religious freedom that is ensured to all under the U.S. Constitution.

This year's Bill of Rights Day Essay Contest was designed to encourage students to reflect on the

issues surrounding the controversy and engage them in a healthy debate.

No matter their findings, we hope that the students come to appreciate how the Constitution guarantees everyone's right to safely express their opinions.

**Just think
what we could
accomplish with
a little more help
from our friends**

- **Donate money**
(Make checks out to NYCLU Foundation for tax purposes. Mail to our return address.)
- **Volunteer your time**
Office work, lobbying, & more
- **Recruit ACLU members**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
(914) 997-7479

Six NYCLU achievements

1. *The Dignity for All Students Act*
The Legislature, after a decade of stalling, finally acted to protect our children. The new law prevents bullying in schools through training, mediation and counseling.
2. *Family Health Care Decisions Act*
This law empowers family members, spouses, domestic partners and close friends to make major medical decisions for incapacitated loved ones in the absence of a formal proxy (*think: Terri Schiavo*).
3. *Stop-and-Frisk Database*
The stop-and-frisk bill prohibits the NYPD from keeping an electronic suspect database of the hundreds of thousands of innocent individuals stopped and released

by police each year.

4. *Domestic Workers Bill of Rights*
This makes New York the first state to provide domestic workers with basic labor protections.
5. *The Census Adjustment Act*
This bill ends a legislative redistricting practice that counted incarcerated people who cannot vote as residents of their prison's district, rather than their home district, where they will likely return upon release. This practice gave New Yorkers who live near prisons disproportionate representation in Albany, threatening the principle of one person, one vote.
6. *Civil Remedies for Hate Crimes*
This is yet another bill that the NYCLU has supported for years

that finally passed. The bill allows victims of hate crimes to sue and collect monetary damages from their assailants.

We Spoke Out

FOR:
Women's reproductive right to choose, on a panel at SUNY WCC.

The need for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, in an Op-Ed in the *Poughkeepsie Journal*.

AGAINST:
Finger scanning students in the White Plains Middle School, in the *Journal News*.

Senator Schumer's proposal for biometric scans or any national ID cards, in the *Journal News*



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Annual Election of NYCLU/LHV: 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 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 Lower Hudson Valley Board of Directors has appointed a nominating committee for the next Chapter election. The nominating committee is required to report its nominations no later than two months before the date selected for the annual meeting. In addition, at any time from three

months to seven weeks before the date of the annual meeting, any member in good standing may be nominated for any of the aforementioned positions by a petition bearing the signatures of seven members in good standing. The petition must 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 the petition be submitted to the membership.

Written communications concerning this process should be addressed to NYCLU, Suite 217, 297 Knollwood Rd., White Plains, NY 10607.

The office telephone number is 914-997-7479.

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