

SONOMA CIVIL LIBERTIES

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EDITED BY STEVEN FABIAN

2000 - THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Police misconduct/accountability was this year's leading issue. We have continued to press city and county officials to establish effective independent citizen review boards to investigate and resolve complaints of police misconduct. After the release in May of the report of the U. S. Civil Rights Commission's investigation into police shootings in Sonoma County, the Chapter renewed its call to establish civilian review boards. Board member Steve Fabian helped assemble a coalition of community groups to bring former California Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso, a member of the U. S. Civil Rights Commission, to address the community about the Commission's report. Over 200 people came in August to see Justice Reynoso make an eloquent and moving appeal to law enforcement agencies to recognize that a serious problem exists in Sonoma County, and he urged them to reach out to minority and low-income segments of the population to address the problem.

Chapter Board members helped organize the successful opposition to Internet filters in the Sonoma County public libraries. Board Member Marvin Pederson headed this effort. Sonoma County Public Library Director Roger Pearson, who refused to accede to the demands for censorship, was later awarded the 2001 Jack Green Civil Liberties Award.

The chapter opposed efforts by Santa Rosa to criminalize panhandling by homeless persons. After threatening legal action, city officials agreed not to enforce the repressive ordinance, and later replaced it with a much more limited prohibition on aggressive conduct. Board members Susan Williamson and David Grabill conducted the negotiations.

The chapter also successfully opposed efforts by Santa Rosa to impose a sweeping prohibition on adult

ACTION ALERT: DEATH PENALTY VIGIL: NIGHT OF MARCH 26TH – 27TH

At one minute past midnight on March 27th, California is scheduled to kill its ninth person, Robert Lee Massie, since it reinstated the death penalty in 1978. Already 697 people have been executed in the U.S. since the death penalty was reinstated.

Massie is using the state to commit suicide. He initially pled guilty against his lawyer's objection, but the

entertainment. The chapter pressured the city to rewrite the ordinance so that it was more limited, and complied with constitutional mandates. Board member Steve Fabian represented the chapter.

In September, the Board and other interested civil liberties activists held a one-day retreat to discuss ways the chapter could be more effective in promoting civil liberties. "Focus groups" were formed to address the following issues:

Education/Students' Rights	Gay/Lesbian Issues
Police/Jails/Citizen Review	Economic Justice
First Amendment/Privacy	Capital Punishment

Some of these committees are still in the formative stage; some have met a number of times.

Please consider participating in the work of one of these committees (they all need your help), to write letters to elected representatives and to the media, to speak up for civil liberties at each opportunity, so your chapter can become more effective in our local efforts to protect civil liberties. Call our Hotline (765-5005) or send us an e-mail (aclu@monitor.net) if you would like to participate in the work of one of these Chapter committees.

Civil liberties are under greater attack than at any time in recent memory. The Attorney General is an avowed opponent of a woman's right to choose. People unsympathetic to civil liberties dominate Congress. The President wants to increase the role of religious groups in public affairs and education. The Supreme Court is dominated by Scalia and Rehnquist. In sum, we're likely to face many challenges in the coming year. With your help, we hope to meet those challenges. by David Grabill

California Supreme Court disallowed the plea. After a jury sentenced him to death, Massie was able to stop all appeals after his mandatory one to the California Supreme Court. On death row he has attempted suicide twice. While it is clear to those near him that he is clinically depressed, a federal court judge has allowed him to withdraw his appeal.

A vigil against the death penalty will be held Monday night, March 26th starting at 8:00 p.m. until the time of execution outside the east gate of San Quentin Prison. There will be a special focus on prison conditions and the prison industrial complex at this vigil. If you are interested in attending, remember to bring warm clothing and good walking shoes, for there is no parking close to the gate. If you wish to attend and want to ride share, contact Steve Thornton at 544-8115. For further

information, contact Death Penalty Focus at (415) 243-0143.

WALK OF LIFE: People have walked to San Quentin to protest every California execution since the 1960's. At 7:00 a.m., on Monday, March 26th, the walk will begin at the Legion of Honor, San Francisco and proceed across the Golden Gate Bridge, through Marin County to the East Gate of San Quentin. The group will stop at St. Paul's Episcopal Church for an interfaith service at 6:30 p.m. before continuing to San Quentin prison.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE DEATH PENALTY?

With the death row population in California reaching 600 people, it is time to look at and understand what's wrong with the death penalty.

THE DEATH PENALTY KILLS INNOCENT PEOPLE. Studies have documented that over 400 innocent people have been sentenced to death and 23 executed in America in the 1900's. Illinois recently placed a "moratorium" on the death penalty after it was proved that there were more innocent people on Illinois' death row than the total number of people the state had executed since the death penalty was reinstated by Illinois in 1977. Over 85 people on death row have been released from prison since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976. There is no way to correct a wrongful conviction after an execution.

THE DEATH PENALTY PUNISHES THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIM. The long appeal process prevents the victim's family from moving on with their lives. A study of all of America's death penalty cases over a 23-year period found over 2/3 of the death sentences were reversed on appeal, requiring new a trial years later or dismissal.

THE DEATH PENALTY WASTES TAXPAYERS' MONEY. The average cost of a death penalty prosecution exceeds \$2 million. Many of these cases do not result in a death penalty verdict. A 1993 study by the Sacramento Bee concluded that California taxpayers would save over \$90 million a year if the death penalty was replaced with life sentences without the possibility of parole (LWOP). A jury in a death penalty case always has the option of giving LWOP as a possible sentence instead of death. Additionally, death penalty cases backlog the courts and make it difficult for other cases to be heard without long delays.

THE DEATH PENALTY IS NOT A DETERRENT. It does not stop others from killing. In California, a person need not be the actual killer nor even intend to kill anyone to face execution. How can the death penalty deter in these circumstances? The Sonoma County District Attorney has stated he could not prove that capital punishment is a deterrent. The studies conducted have not shown that the death penalty reduces the murder rate. States without the death penalty have a lower murder rate per capita than states that execute. Studies show that the murder rate actually goes up with each execution. Unstable people react to media attention surrounding executions with "copycat" crimes or use the state to help them commit "suicide."

THE DEATH PENALTY HAS ALWAYS BEEN ADMINISTERED IN A DISCRIMINATORY FASHION. Studies show that it is the poor, uneducated, mentally retarded and people of color who are more often sentenced to death. If the victim is white, middle or upper class, the death penalty is more likely to be given. This means that it is the I.Q., class, and race of the perpetrator, and the race and class of the victim, which determines whether the state will kill, not the act committed.

AMERICA IS ONE OF THE ONLY DEMOCRATIC, INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, WHICH STILL EXECUTE ITS PEOPLE. Worldwide, over 105 countries have stopped using capital punishment. Of our allies, only Japan still has the death penalty, which it rarely uses. The U.S. is one of only 6 countries in the world that executes juveniles. Most countries look upon the death penalty as a human rights violation. Almost all religions and human rights groups oppose it. Only China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Congo execute more people than the United States.

Isn't it time that we join the rest of the world's leading countries and just say "No" to the death penalty?

ACTION ALERT: ROHNERT PARK CITY COUNCIL RESUMES PRAYERS

In 1995, Rohnert Park stopped the practice of having a prayer open the first city council meeting of the year after the Chapter and our Rohnert Park members protested to the mayor. This year Mayor Jake Mackenzie invited Rev. Stephen Mills of the Holy Father Episcopal Church to open the meeting with a prayer for the New Year. It is the belief of the ACLU that church and state should be kept separate and the government should

endorse no religion. Please call or write the City Council: Jake Mackenzie mayor, Armando Flores vice-mayor, James Reilly, Linda Spiro, and Vicki Vidak-Martinez Jr., at 6750 Commerce Blvd., Rohnert Park, 94928, 431-3320, 431-3321 (fax), or go and speak at the beginning of the City Council meeting each Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. and let them know how you feel.

ACTION ALERT: NEW RACIAL PROFILING BILL INTRODUCED!

Call Governor Gray Davis at (916) 445-2841 and tell him to sign AB 788 when it reaches his desk!

SUSAN JORDAN HIGHLIGHTS ANNUAL AWARD CELEBRATION & DINNER

195 people came to the Sebastopol Vets Building to hear Susan Jordan speak and to honor Roger Pearson, our Jack Green Civil Liberties Award winner. A nice meal of baked chicken and garlic-mashed potatoes by Pearl Lopez was served (unfortunately served too slowly – we

promise to fix that by next year). The ACLU picked up thirty-five new members and the chapter made enough money so it is in good shape for the coming year. The silent auction organized by Neva Turer was a great

success. Thanks to all of the volunteers and thanks to all of you who came for your support.

2001 CHAPTER BOARD AND OFFICERS CHOSEN

David Grabill stepped down as co-chair of the chapter. He will remain on the board. "David worked tirelessly as co-chair over this past year" explains Victor Chechanover who will remain as co-chair. "Few realize the amount of time David devoted to make the chapter function effectively," noted former chapter chair Judith Volkart. David stated: "It's been a good year and I hope we can make further progress protecting civil liberties. There will be a lot of new challenges in 2001, I hope the chapter will be able to deal with all of them."

The 2001 Chapter Board: Co-chair: Victor Chechanover, Co-Chair and ACLU-NC Board: Steve Fabian, Secretary: Irma Ramirez, Treasurer: Leslie Pederson, ACLU-NC Legal Committee: Judith Volkart, Wayne Gibb, David Grabill, Paula Oswald, Marvin Pederson, Richard Redalia, Alicia Sanchez, and Susan Williamson.

Leaving the board are Virginia Heck and Ben Terry, who will be missed.

The Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at the Peace & Justice Center at 7:00 p.m.

HELP PROTECT CIVIL LIBERTIES – SIGN UP A FRIEND!

The second Bush presidency has brought new assaults against civil liberties. Women's choice, the separation of church and state, and American with Disabilities Act are all under attack. The Attorney General has a record of voting against major civil liberties laws (see www.aclu.org. for a report on John

Ashcroft). This president will fill the vacancies in the Supreme Court. The ACLU will have to rely on its membership to let the government know that civil liberties are important and must be preserved. Get your friends and relatives to join the ACLU - we need to be as strong for the fights ahead.

CNV

Name(s): _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Apt. _____ E-

Mail: _____

City: _____ State: _____

_____ Basic Individual \$20	_____ Sustaining \$75	_____ Benefactor \$500
_____ Basic (Joint) \$30	_____ Sponsoring \$125	_____ Limited Income \$5
_____ Contributing \$50	_____ Patron \$250	_____ Student \$5

PLEASE PRINT

TEACHERS – HAVE AN ACLU SPEAKER COME TO YOUR CLASSROOM

The ACLU of Sonoma County will send speakers to Junior High and High School classrooms to discuss with students the Bill of Rights, Student Rights and other civil

liberties issues. If you are a teacher who would like to bring these topics of discussion to your classroom, call Steve Fabian at 823-1667 to arrange for a speaker.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the American Civil Liberties Union of Sonoma County is to protect, support and defend civil liberties, rights and freedoms guaranteed by the United States and California Constitutions.

JOIN THE CHAPTER'S E-MAIL TREE

You may receive a call in the next few months, asking you if you would like to update our member list with your e-mail address. Now, we only have our member's phone number and mailing address. We want to start using e-mails for "phone-tree" like communications with the members.

As always, ACLU membership is confidential, and this includes your e-mail address, which will be used only by the ACLU for short, timely, notices. This will allow us to mobilize our membership instantly when important civil liberties issues arise. You can also send your email address to us by completing the form below or e-mailing us at aclu@monitor.net

COMPUTER PROGRAMER NEEDED

The Chapter needs help from a computer programmer willing to volunteer to help pick out and set up a computer program that will allow the chapter to

create a database for an upcoming project. If you have the skills, please call Steve Fabian at 823-1667.

MELANYA GONSHOROWSKI WINS STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

Melanya Gonshorowski, a senior at Santa Rosa High School won the \$500 first prize in the Chapter's Essay Contest. Second and third place prizes, gift

certificates to Copperfield Books, went to tenth graders at Piner High School: Hank Meisse (2nd) and Aaron Barone (3rd). Congratulations!

SHOULD THE BOY SCOUTS BE ALLOWED TO USE PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES, IF THEY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR RELIGION? BY: MELANYA GONSHOROWSKI