

SONOMA CIVIL LIBERTIES

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SISTER HELEN PREJEAN KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT 2002 ANNUAL DINNER

Sister Helen Prejean will deliver the keynote address: *Dead Man Walking—Revisited* at the chapter's 2002 Awards Ceremony and Annual Dinner Thursday, March 7th. After her speech, she will autograph copies of her book which will be available for purchase. The dinner is moving to the **Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building**. The event starts at 5:30 p.m. and features a pasta and pasta dinner by the Pasta King, Art Ibleto with complimentary wine and soft drinks.

Sister Helen is internationally renowned for her best selling book, *Dead Man Walking*, which chronicles her visits to Louisiana's Death Row as she counseled two death row inmates. The book reveals how the crimes and death penalty affected the two men facing death, their families, the families of the victims and herself. Sister Helen explains how these two young men wound up on death row and the changes they underwent while

awaiting death. *Dead Man Walking* bears witness to the fact that the death penalty failed to bring relief to any of those involved, including the families of the victims. Sister Helen advocates for the end of the death penalty and the creation of a new system where the victims of crime can be heard.

Sister Helen Prejean is a knowledgeable, engrossing and thoroughly entertaining speaker on the death penalty and its effects on the families of the victims and society.

This event should not be missed for those who are for or against the death penalty, and especially those who are undecided or have mixed feelings.

We expect a large turnout for this event, so send in your reservations early. Paid reservations are: \$25 (\$13 low income) prior to February 28th; \$30 (\$18 low income) thereafter. Paid reservations are held at the door. For Info: 765-5005.

Once again we are giving free dinners to those who join



Sister Helen Prejean

the ACLU for the 1st time at the regular rate (\$20 individual, \$30 joint for 2 free dinners). So take a friend to the dinner by treating them to a membership. It's the gift that keeps on giving!

YOU CAN HELP MAKE THIS A SUCCESS:

1. Come to the dinner and bring a friend.
2. Become a sponsor to the dinner for \$100 and get two dinners with reserved seats up in

AMERICA RESPONDS TO TERRORISM: THE WAR ON OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES – FEBRUARY 6TH

After the 9/11 tragic events, the USA/Patriot Act and a series of executive orders have had a profound effect on the civil rights of all Americans. These laws and orders allow the government to eavesdrop and monitor telephone calls, e-

mails, Internet use and attorney-client conversations without court orders. Thousands of people have been searched, detained and interrogated based on racial profiling.

The Sonoma Chapter will present a panel of experts to

discuss how our civil liberties have been effected and what can be done.

The panel discussion will be held on Wednesday, February 6th at 7 p.m. at the Santa Rosa Library, 3rd and E Sts., Santa Rosa. It's free, so come!

MARIA RIFO TO RECEIVE 2002 JACK GREEN CIVIL LIBERTIES AWARD

At age 94, Maria Rifo has a lot to be proud about. Unlike many who have reached this age, she gets up early to walk Santa Rosa's streets and hand out what little money she has to the down-on-their-luck. "I'm not doing this for money or power," she said. "I do this because I like doing this."

Raised in Santiago, Chile, she spent the first part of her life teaching school and caring for her parents. At age 56, she started exploring the world, first Europe, then the United States.

In New Mexico she became active in the Latino community as a Vista volunteer. After hearing Cesar Chavez speak, she moved to California and for 12 years she

worked as his secretary, translating the grower's contracts into Spanish and helping make the union run. Her apartment is filled with photos of Chavez, whose lessons in putting people before profits resonate with her today.

In 1980, she traveled with a friend on a road trip across America. Luckily for us, she came to stay in Santa Rosa.

Locally, she became active in *Mujeres Unidos*, a Latina group active in community and political affairs. She has been active raising money to fight alcohol and drug abuse in the Latino community. Maria helped start the *Alternatives to Violence* program, and is a consultant to the *Girl To Girl* mentoring program. She established a

scholarship fund at Santa Rosa Junior College, and teaches Spanish. On top of all of this, she finds the time to counsel inmates at Folsom State Prison to try to break the cycle of violence. Ms. Rifo has worked with the Catholic Diocese as a liaison for the Hispanic Community with the Sonoma County Faith Based Community Organizing Project.

Ms. Rifo lives her life by the following maxim: "Try to find a thing that is good in a thing that is not so good. Take advantage of the disadvantage!"

Maria will receive her award at the chapter's annual award ceremony and dinner March 7th, at the Santa Rosa Veteran's Building.

AWARDS CEREMONY & ANNUAL DINNER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

front, your name or business listed in the program as a sponsor and we will print a business card sized ad in the dinner program.

3. Send us your business card size ad and \$25 and we will print it in the program.

4. Donate a gift, piece of art, service, wine, meal, or make a basket of goodies

for our silent auction. Contact Neva Turer at 539-1220.

5. Bring a gift to the event to donate as a raffle prize.

This is always a fun event where you meet other people who care about civil liberties, eat a great meal, honor local activists, hear an excellent speaker and have

a good time. As an added bonus, you help your local ACLU chapter, since this is the chapter's fundraising event.

Remember, we've moved the dinner to Santa Rosa this year. The Santa Rosa Veteran's Building is just across Highway 12 from the Sonoma County Fairgrounds at 1351 Maple Avenue. See you there!

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Order Your Reservations To The 2002 Awards Ceremony & Annual Dinner Now!

Send Check with Form to: ACLU OF SONOMA COUNTY, P.O. BOX 14181, SANTA ROSA, CA 95402

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Name(s): _____

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I've Always Wanted to be an ACLU Member - I Want to Join The ACLU & Get the Free Dinner(s)!

BASIC INDIVIDUAL: \$20 (1 FREE DINNER) _____ BASIC JOINT: \$30 (2 FREE DINNERS) _____

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ROHNERT PARK DROPS PRAYERS AT COUNCIL MEETINGS & RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS FROM SEAL

After months of negotiation, the City of Rohnert Park has agreed to end the practice of having religious invocations at City Council meetings, and to change the city seal and logo that featured a church and a six pointed star.

The invocation issue was first raised in 1995, when Irv Sutley and the ACLU of Sonoma County challenged the City Council's custom of commencing the first council meeting of each year with a prayer. As a result of the complaints the practice was ended.

In January 2001, the City Council renewed the invocations, deciding that they would select a different denomination each year to give it. Irv Sutley presented a formal claim against the City for a violation of his civil rights.

In March, the City rejected the claim, but indicated a willingness to discuss the matter. Sutley contacted the ACLU of Sonoma County and board member Marvin Pederson and Sutley began negotiations with the city

The chapter argued that the prayers and religious symbols on the seal and logo violated the establishment clause of the U. S. and California Constitutions and the preference clause of the California Constitution.

The establishment clause

forbids government affiliation with religious beliefs and institutions. The U.S. Supreme Court stated: "[The establishment clause] prohibits government from appearing to take a position on questions of religious belief or from 'making adherence to a religion relevant in any way to a person's standing in the political community.'"

The preference clause guarantees the "free exercise and enjoyment of religion without discrimination or preference." Marvin Pederson reasoned: "If one denomination is selected to give a religious invocation, then not only are persons of every other religion marginalized, persons who are non-religious or atheists are particularly offended."

Rather than dismiss these concerns, Rohnert Park was receptive to the issues being raised. The council and its attorneys carefully considered the points presented by the ACLU and Sutley.

Under the settlement, the city agreed that unless and until the U.S. or California Supreme Court issues an opinion that allows prayers at government meetings, the City will not have religious invocations at its meetings. The agreement does not preclude a secular moment of silent reflection when deemed appropriate by the

Rohnert Park City Logos:

Old

New

mayor.

The agreement also requires the city to remove the church and the star from its logo, seal, stationary, public safety vehicles, equipment, and buildings.

Sutley waived any claim to monetary damages, stating: "Our government should be looking for those things that encourage respect for diversity, and avoid the division that preference of one group over others always engenders."

2002 Mario Savio Student Activist Award Nominees Wanted

The Mario Savio Student Activist Award was established to recognize Sonoma County student leaders who have contributed to the cause of civil liberties in our county. The Sonoma chapter is seeking nominees for the Mario Savio Student Activist Award. If you know of a Sonoma County student who has been active in civil liberties contact us at 765-5005 for a nomination form.

Teachers:

High School and College Teachers: Want an ACLU speaker to come into your classroom and talk about student rights or other civil liberties issue? Contact Steve Fabian at 823-1667.

Board Election Notice

Want to do your part to further civil liberties in Sonoma County? How about joining the chapter board? Board Elections will occur at our award ceremony & annual dinner. If you want to be on the board, call the Hotline at 765-5005.

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.

In Memory:

Florence Juvinall
Elaine Handy
Richard "Dick" Day

JOIN THE VIGIL TO PROTEST CALIFORNIA'S NEXT EXECUTION NIGHT OF JANUARY 28TH - 29TH

At 12:01 a.m., January 29th, California is scheduled to execute Steven Anderson for the 1980 murder of Elizabeth Lyman. Steven is one of 606 people on California's death row.

On December 21st, the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals

denied Anderson's request for a rehearing. In a strong dissent, six judges stated: "... [Anderson's] death sentence may well have been imposed, not because of the crime that he committed, but because of the incompetence of an attorney with little integrity and a

pattern of ineffective performance in capital cases."

A vigil will be held at San Quentin Prison main gate beginning 9 p.m. on Monday, January 28th.

Wear warm clothes & bring a flashlight. To carpool contact Steve Thornton at 544-8115.

ACLU HELPS HOMELESS

Over 8,000 persons will experience being homeless in Sonoma County sometime during 2002. Santa Rosa City Code prohibits persons from sleeping in public and the police enforce this law against homeless people. The penalty can be as high as several hundred dollars.

On a rainy night last year, a disabled homeless vet, JW, crawled under a ramp at a city parking garage to stay dry and go to sleep. At 1 a.m., a police officer roused him awake and gave him a ticket for violating the city's "no sleeping" ordinance. The city's winter shelter at the armory was not yet open. There was no place for JW to go. He had no choice but sleep on the street. Someone told JW to contact the ACLU.

ACLU Board members Susan Williamson and David Grabill talked to JW. They got the criminal charges against JW dismissed. They filed a claim against the city on JW's behalf arguing that the 14th Amendment to the Constitution prohibited the city from criminalizing sleeping on the streets if the city does not have shelters where homeless persons can sleep.

City Attorney Brien Farrell and police department officials requested a meeting. After lengthy negotiations, the City agreed to provide a year round shelter for 40 persons, which is scheduled to open in late March.

All agree that 40 beds are only a small fraction of what is needed. Both the city

and county need to do much more to provide an adequate supply of homeless shelters and transition housing. Police sweeps targeting the homeless in Santa Rosa have recently been resumed. Still, the new shelter represents a step forward and the likelihood of achieving better results through a court action is uncertain.

Efforts by ACLU to stop the criminalization of homelessness and to get more shelter beds and services for homeless persons throughout the county are continuing.

For further information about the ACLU's efforts to promote economic justice, call Susan Williamson and/or David Grabill at 528 6811.

By David Grabill

Organizing Against The Death Penalty In Sonoma County

We are seeking volunteers to coordinate efforts in affinity groups to work toward the elimination of the death penalty in California. Although work is proceeding

elsewhere, we need to more intensely organize in Sonoma County.

We welcome assistance and ideas to help create a unified, county-wide organi-

zation to convince people that abolition of the death penalty is a desirable goal.

To help call Victor Chechanover, Chair, Death Penalty Committee at 778-7302

SONOMA CIVIL LIBERTIES

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SISTER HELEN PREJEAN TO GIVE KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

DEAD MAN WALKING - THE JOURNEY

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AND MORE...