

Sonoma Civil Liberties

FALL, 2002 #42

James Brosnahan Keynote Speaker at Awards Celebration & Annual Dinner February 6th

While James Brosnahan is most recently known as the attorney representing John Walker Lindh, the 21 year-old Marin County youth who converted to Islam, joined the Taliban Army and was captured in Afghanistan, Brosnahan's long and illustrious career earned him the title "Freedom Fighter" by the *Daily Journal*, California's newspaper for attorneys.

Brosnahan will deliver the keynote address, "*Civil Liberties and Attorney General Ashcroft*" at the Sonoma chapter's 2003 Awards Ceremony and Annual Dinner on Thursday, February 6th, 5:30 p.m. at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Auditorium. He will discuss how the U.S. government's course, led by Attorney General John

Ashcroft, is restricting our protections under the Bill of Rights.

At age 68, James Brosnahan has a long history of helping those in need and fighting politically charged cases. Twenty-five years ago he founded the San Francisco Bar Association's Volunteer Legal Services Program, which provides free legal aid to low-income and disadvantaged people, including battered women, disabled children, abused seniors, homeless people and countless others. In 1992, he joined the Office of the Independent Counsel and was the lead attorney prosecuting former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger for perjury in the Iran-Contra affair. He publicly criticized then President Bush for pardoning Weinberger after the grand jury indictment



James Brosnahan

and before the trial. Afterwards he successfully defended alleged Irish Republican Army terrorist Kevin Barry Artt from extradition in an eight-year struggle against the U.S. and Great Britain.

Brosnahan is a senior partner in the prestigious San Francisco law firm of Morrison & Foerster. He was inducted into the

Sonoma Chapter Awarded 2002 ACLU of Northern California Dick Criley Activism Award

The Sonoma Chapter was presented the 2002 Dick Criley Activism Award at the ACLU of Northern California's Activism Conference September 21st. The award was created in 2000 to honor the ACLU Chapter that has done the

most to activate their members.

Mickey Welsh, Chair of ACLU's Field Committee, presented the award stating that the chapter was awarded "for its outstanding work for civil liberties in a very difficult year after 9-11.

They deserve our thanks and acknowledgment of their extraordinary effort."

Co-Chair Steve Fabian thanked the chapter's board members, the many volunteers and supporters that have helped make the Sonoma Chapter so effective.

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Edited by Steve Fabian

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James Brosnahan

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State Bar of California's "Trial Lawyers Hall of Fame", and awarded the "Samuel E. Gates Award" by the American College of Trial Lawyers, named one of the country's 10 best and most influential trial lawyers by The National Law Journal, in 2001 was named the "Trial Lawyer of the Year" by the American Board of Trial Advocates and was named by the San Francisco Lawyers Club as their 2002 "Legend of the Law".

Explaining why he takes the cases he does, Brosnahan said: "As long as I practice, I hope I would not shy away from a difficult case if it was appropriate for me to take and if my firm agreed to it...The reward is both psychic and intellectual. I like the action."

In accepting the Lindh case, he was barraged with e-mails from an angry and threatening public. In order to protect the firm's lawyers and employees while representing

Lindh, the firm increased security at their offices throughout the country.

In defending Lindh, Brosnahan personally witnessed the loss of civil liberties and restrictions of freedoms put in place in the name of the "War on Terrorism." Although he immediately contacted

"Anybody who tells Americans to be quiet just doesn't get it."

the Departments of State, Defense, Justice and the White House to inform them that he was hired to represent John Lindh and that the parents wished to see their captured son, the government refused to respond.

John was kept incommunicado for 54 days as a "battlefield detainee," while the government interrogated him, waged a war in the media falsely branding him an "al Qaeda fighter" and asserted that he was not entitled to have any communication with his attorney. Brosnahan immediately made public his alarm that the government was violating his client's constitutional rights by interrogating him without an attorney and that the Attorney General's false public statements concerning his client were extremely prejudicial and in

violation of the Justice Department's own prosecutorial standards.

The story of James Brosnahan's defense of John Walker Lindh, the actions of the Justice Department and Ashcroft's suggestion that people who disagree with his office are aiding America's enemies have led Brosnahan to believe that Ashcroft is one of the most dangerous people to hold high office in a long time.

James Brosnahan is a terrific speaker and his address you should not miss. So come join us.

Art Ibleto "The Pasta King" will return to serve a delicious dinner of mixed baby greens, lasagna, pesto pasta and garlic bread. Wine and dessert are also included.

Mark your calendar: Thursday, February 6th, 5:30 p.m. at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Auditorium. Make your reservation now.

Sign up a new ACLU member and their dinner is free! Advertise in our program, donate to our silent auction (contact Neva Turer at 539-1220), bring a raffle prize to the dinner or become a dinner sponsor, which gives you 2 dinners with reserved seats up front, and receive an acknowledgement and an ad in the dinner program.

Come to our Awards Ceremony & Annual Dinner February 6th

Send check with form to: ACLU OF SONOMA COUNTY, P.O. BOX 14181, SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95402

CNV

Name(s): _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Apt: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

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Join the ACLU & Get Free Dinners! (first time members only)

Name(s): _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Apt: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Individual: \$20 _____ (1 Dinner) Joint: \$30 _____ or Contributing: \$50 _____ (2 Dinners)

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Sister Helen Prejean Wows Audience at 2002 Award Ceremony

"I got involved with the death penalty because I got involved with poor people." And so began the fascinating, sometimes humorous and sometimes chilling story of Sister Helen Prejean's journey from receiving a letter from a death row inmate while working with the poor in New Orleans, to writing *Dead Man Walking*, which became a best selling book, to meeting Susan Sarandon and how the book became a Oscar winning movie, and opera and will soon become a play.

Speaking to over 350 people at the chapter's largest crowd ever for

our Awards Ceremony & Annual Dinner, Sister Helen moved the enraptured audience to give her a standing ovation when she finished her talk.

You can borrow the video of Sister Helen Prejean's speech from the chapter to watch at home or get a group together to view it.

Her keynote address *Dead Man Walking - The Journey* told the tale of how a book can have its own life and power far beyond the author's imagination.

Sister Helen learned that the way to deliver a message was to make it "personal." As she told her tale, she weaved facts about the death penalty with her personal experiences of transformation from being totally naïve and going to New York City to meet a

book editor to her becoming a leading spokesperson for a moratorium on executions and against the death penalty.

The chapter donated \$1,220 to the Moratorium Campaign from part of the dinner proceeds.

Special thanks to Cindy Loscotoff for helping arrange for Sister Helen to speak, Neva Turer for her hard work on the silent auction and to all of the other volunteers who helped make the dinner an enjoyable event and a financial success.

The video tape of this compelling speech is available to you from the chapter to borrow for free. Call us at 765-5005.

Nominations Sought for Jack Green & Mario Savio Awards

The Jack Green Civil Liberties Award was established in 1989 to honor Sonoma County residents who have played a significant role in promoting civil liberties. The Mario Savio Student Activist Award was established in 1997 to honor Sonoma County students whose leadership have made a difference in their school or community.

The civil liberties award is named after Jack Green, an ACLU member who in 1935 attempted to organize apple pickers and cannery workers in Sonoma County.

The student activist award is named after Mario Savio, who led the Free Speech Movement while a student at University of California at Berkeley. He later moved to Sonoma County, teaching at Sonoma

State University and worked with the ACLU of Sonoma County in the fight for diversity on campus and students rights.

Once again, we are seeking nominations from the public and community groups for the awards. The deadline for nominations is December 1st. To obtain a nomination form, call the ACLU Hotline at 765-5005.

Chapter's Student Essay Contest Focuses on 9/11

The Sonoma Chapter has once again initiated a student essay contest. The contest is open to all students who are Sonoma County residents in grades 9-12 at a Sonoma County High School. This year's topic is:

Since September 11, 2001, the government has taken certain steps in response to the attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon. Dis-

cuss whether these steps have violated or restricted our constitutional rights and to what extent, if any, it is appropriate for the government to violate or limit our constitutional rights in the fight against terrorism.

First prize is \$100 cash. Teachers of the winning students are also eligible for prizes.

Contact Bob Klose at 824-8332,

bklose@pacbell.net, or Anne Fitzgerald, 542-6238, afitz@sonic.net, for a copy of the rules and a list of websites to help with your research.

Deadline is December 6th. Prizes will be awarded at our Awards Ceremony and Annual Dinner. The winning essay and names of the winners will be published in the *Sonoma Civil Liberties* and distributed to local media.

Want an ACLU Speaker to Talk to Your Class or Group?

The Sonoma Chapter has speakers available to talk to classrooms or other organizations to discuss

civil liberties, student rights, the effect of 9/11 and the War on Terrorism on civil liberties, the crimi-

nal justice system and other topics.

If you would like a speaker, call our Hotline at 765-5005.

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Notice of Election - New Treasurer Needed

For the past four years Leslie Pederson has performed an excellent job as our treasurer. Keeping our books and providing the board with monthly reports is an essential task for the chapter to function. Unfortunately, she has decided to leave and we need a replacement.

The treasurer does not

have to come to the board meetings. He/she needs to know Quicken and provide monthly reports for the board. If you have bookkeeping experience, and are willing to volunteer, please call us immediately at 765-5005.

Once again its time for our annual elections. Are you interested in helping

the chapter protect civil liberties?

You do not need to be an attorney, just be willing to dedicate a few hours a month to help.

Our election for the board will be held at our awards ceremony and annual dinner. If you are interested in helping call us at 765-5005.

Panel on 9/11 & The War on Terrorism

The chapter brought Aundre Herron, an attorney on the ACLU of Northern California Board of Directors and Yousef Al-Yousef, chairman of American Muslims for Global Peace and Justice and editor of *Nourul Islam*, a publication of Arab and Muslim affairs,

to the Santa Rosa Library to discuss the government's response to 9/11.

Al-Yousef told of the mass interrogations of Arab-Americans by the FBI, acts of violence and discrimination directed at them and the effects of people being locked up while the government re-

fuses to release the names of those being detained.

Herron outlined the attacks on civil liberties; including mass surveillance of e-mails and internet use, the use of secret evidence at secret trials and more. A lively question and answer period followed.