

# The **ACLU** News



**Victor Stone introduces Keynote speaker Paul Simon to kick off "Crime, Compassion, and Citizenship". See story on page 2.**

## **RESERVE NOW FOR ANNUAL MEETING ON APRIL 21**

The Champaign County Chapter annual meeting and dinner will be held Sunday April 21 at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Urbana.

We are fortunate to have as guest speaker this year Colleen K. Connell, ACLU-IL Executive Director. Annual awards will be presented and steering committee members will be confirmed.

See the enclosed response form for more details. If the form is missing, you may reserve via the web at [www.aclu-cu.org](http://www.aclu-cu.org) or by phone to Joan Severns, 352-1875.

## **So What Has Your Chapter Been Up to?**

The past year has been a busy one even if we have not sought nor obtained dramatic headlines for the Chapter and its activities. Our monthly meetings, on Thursday evenings at 7:30, invariably start on time. While our adjournment is set for 9:00, we have gone beyond that end point on many occasions.

The topic that has consumed more of our attention than any other has been the matter of racial profiling by local law enforcement organizations. We have talked about specific incidents that have come to our attention and have had very helpful conversations with the Chiefs of Police for both the City of Champaign and the City of Urbana. Both of those leaders came across as being both sensitive and informed about the issues involved and seemed dedicated to providing every assurance possible that such behavior will not occur in either of their departments. We found both to be forthright and responsive to all of our questions.

The Crue case, which is the legal definition of the law suit between ACLU and the University of Illinois, has been a regular conversation piece. That the matter was not resolved legally months ago has been especially troubling. As this is being written the community at large is waiting for the report of the Trustees. Our concerns with racial issues have led to conversations about the incident at Mahomet-Seymour middle school, the incident at the Assembly Hall with regard to the Chief, and access and trespass rules of the Champaign County Housing Authority. We have looked at the Truancy Policy that was under consideration by the Rantoul City Council, a policy proposal on mandatory drug testing by one of the area schools, holiday-Xmas musical programs in a local high school, and apparent

restrictions on leafleting and publicizing of activities on the University campus. We were co-sponsors of a Forum for Supreme Court judicial candidates, have signed a pledge to support persons who may be unjustly accused or targeted under the new anti-terrorism legislation, and are participating in a forum discussion to establish a civilian police review board in Urbana. We have also discussed the new federal anti-terrorism legislation that emerged from the 9/11 tragedy, contraceptive coverage for UIUC employees, and the UIUC student discipline system.

We have been very proud and financially supportive of the UIUC undergraduate ACLU chapter, which sponsored an outstanding day of information and discussion about the Death Penalty. We continue to be active participants on the Delinquency Policy Prevention Board. Some of the members took a tour of the University Archives and examined an outstanding civil liberties collection. We are diligently working toward the establishment of a high school essay contest, which would be an annual project to encourage high school students to think about and write about civil liberties. We continue to be the occasional recipient of phone calls, e-mails, or conversations with persons seeking the assistance of ACLU in responding to particular problems. An expedited process is now in place to refer such concerns to the staff in Chicago.

Clearly we invite our members throughout the area to communicate with us on issues of concern or interest to them. Thanks to Ed and Loretta Dessen, who hosted our fall gathering, we have had quite adequate resources to undertake projects and activities thanks to the generous contributions of those

# CRIME, COMPASSION, AND CITIZENSHIP

## STUDENT CHAPTER BRINGS DEATH PENALTY EXPERTS TO UI



Student chapter members Kevin Miller and Maeve Anderson assist with conference registration.

Keynote speakers Rob Warden of the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University and former senator Paul Simon were only two of more than a dozen workshop leaders and people personally affected by the death penalty to bring together a remarkable day-long conference on the Death Penalty, Saturday February 9 at the University YMCA.

Co-sponsored by the Student ACLU and Amnesty International Chapter 124, the conference also featured a panel discussion with former death row inmates and six workshops on topics dealing with such issues as race and class biases, execution of mentally disabled, victim's families and reconciliation, and how to take action through lobbying (lead in part by ACLU-IL Legislative Director Mary Dixon).

Simon highlighted the fact that prosecut-

ing death penalty cases costs far more than incarceration for life without the possibility of parole. He also noted racial inequities in application of the law - blacks are four to six times more likely to receive the death penalty than whites, yet in Kentucky, of the 39 blacks currently on death row, none were convicted for killing another person of color.

Rob Warden echoed similar concerns, noting that of 100 whites on death row in Illinois (only 41% of total), only three have been sentenced for killing black victims. Warden believes there is a five to ten percent error rate in death penalty cases. Of the 288 people sentenced to death in Illinois, 13 have been exonerated and he believes there are more cases that have not been reopened due to cost and legal constraints.

Another highlight of the conference was when Stephen Hartnett, a former college teacher at San Quentin, read works of poetry some of his former students had written on death row. He passed around a sheet for audience members to write short messages back to the inmates.

**ACLU Death Penalty**—[www.aclu.org/death-penalty](http://www.aclu.org/death-penalty)  
**Amnesty International**—[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)  
**Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty**—[www.icadp.com](http://www.icadp.com)  
**Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation**—[www.mvfr.org](http://www.mvfr.org)



Rob Warden and exonerated former death row inmates Delbert Tibbs and Gary Gauger (left to right) participate in the afternoon panel discussion "On and Off Death Row". Tibbs told his story of being held for two years on Death Row in Florida after being in the "wrong place at the wrong time" - namely, being a black male driving through central Florida in the late 70s after a white woman had been raped and killed. His conviction was overturned by the Florida Supreme Court for lack of evidence.

Chapter steering committee member Steve Shoemaker participated along with Rev. George W. Brooks (Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty) and Jennifer Bishop (Murder Victim's Families for Reconciliation) in leading a workshop exploring the role of the church in fostering recovery for family members. One of the primary arguments for continuing the death penalty is purportedly to enable the victim's families to achieve "closure". Bishop related her experiences following the gruesome murder of her pregnant sister and her husband in a Chicago suburb, committed by a 16 year old neighbor. Shoemaker used examples from Judaism and Christianity to reveal how "divine justice" is the showing of mercy. He also related a personal story of how, when speaking with some friends who had just lost a child in the attack on the World Trade Center, he was awed by their humanity in expressing concern for the parents of the terrorists.

## CIVIL LIBERTIES PANEL HELD

A panel discussion entitled "Civil Liberties and the Wars on Terrorism", held January 30 at Levis Faculty Center, attracted nearly 100 attendees despite uncooperative weather. ACLU-IL Communications Director Ed Yohnka braved the elements to drive down from Chicago and participate on behalf of the local chapter. Other panel members were UI Law Professor Francis Boyle, Muslim Law Student Association President Maaria Mozaffar, and UI Institute of Communications Research Professor Bruce Williams. Moderator Stephen Hartnett, assistant professor in speech communications, provided the framework for a vigorous discussion of issues highlighted by recent anti-terrorism legislation.

One of the main concerns brought by Mozaffar was the escalation of fear among Muslim students. Investigations based on secret evidence, the expansion of wire tapping and the trend from "probable cause" to "reasonable suspicion" have many students looking over their shoulder.

Yohnka pointed out that one of the questions being asked by investigators is whether the subject has ever agreed with the **causes** of any militant group. He also stressed that the Bush doctrine is based on the false assumption that we can trade liberties for security. Pointing out that countries such as Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia have severe limitations on civil liberties yet remain subject to terrorism, he addressed new limitations such as restrictions on FOIA requests, closure of free assembly areas to rallies and reduction of judicial authority, emphasizing "We would not have allowed **any foreign power** to subject us to the regime we have endured since September 11."

## Nominations for 2002-2003 Steering Committee

The nominations for this year's steering committee, to be selected at the annual meeting April 21, include two new members.

**Stephen Portnoy**, a professor of statistics at the UI, is a long-time member of the Chapter who has previously served on the committee and as president.

**Ed Dessen**, a vocal supporter of civil liberties, co-owns Illini Studio in Champaign with his son. Ed and Loretta hosted our Fall Gathering last year.

Officer nominees are: Stan Levy, President; Paul Wisovaty, Vice-President; Shirley Stillinger and Kevin Nolan, co-Secretaries; and Joan Severns, Treasurer.

The present members (listed below) have also been re-nominated, with the exception of Jerry Landay and Amy Kummerow. Jerry will be moving out of state and Amy has asked to step down. We wish them both well and thank them for their valuable contributions to the community and the Chapter

## ACLU Officers & Steering Committee

The local ACLU Steering Committee meets on the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm, in Rm. H of the University of Illinois College of Law in Champaign. Meetings are open to members—if you would like to be placed on the agenda, please contact Stan Levy or any other committee member ahead of

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**WWW.ACLU-IL.ORG**

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## **ROGER BALDWIN FOUNDATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT**

While the ACLU of Illinois directs lobbying on civil liberties and civil rights issues at the state and local level, the Roger Baldwin Foundation (RBF) operates as its legal and educational arm. In Illinois, the RBF is staffed by a legal team including seasoned attorneys who have argued and won tough civil liberties matters at all levels of the federal court system, including the Supreme Court of the United States, as well as in various state courts. Along with a team of volunteer attorneys, RBF carries a very large and broad docket of important civil liberties cases.

Since the terrorist attacks upon the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, RBF has mounted an extensive campaign to respond to violations of due process, religious liberty and freedom from unwarranted searches and seizures. It organized a coalition of

legal organizations to assure free legal services to any individual contacted for "voluntary" questioning by the FBI. This work, however, has not deterred RBF attorneys from pursuing RBF's traditional docket of matters affecting First Amendment rights, Racial Justice, AIDS and Civil Liberties, Reproductive Rights and other core matters.

In addition to renewing their individual membership, ACLU members are urged to consider making annual tax-deductible contributions to the Roger Baldwin Foundation in order to insure that the legal program remains strong and effective. Gifts can be earmarked for its general legal program, for specific program areas, or for its post 9/11 advocacy. The RBF depends upon the generosity of members such as you and does not accept any government funding to support its work.

Gifts should be mailed to:

Roger Baldwin Foundation  
c/o ACLU of Illinois  
180 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 2300  
Chicago, IL 60601-9919

For additional information, please contact local Board member Hiram Paley at 384-8165.

### **Now Playing!**

*You Have the Right...* is a television series which has been airing on Chicago cable since October of 2000. Produced by the ACLU of Illinois as a live call-in show with expert guests exploring topical issues, taped 30 minute segments are now running on Thursday evenings on Urbana public access, cable channel 6. Call the cable company for show times.