



Civil Rights Division Association NEWSLETTER Issue 10, June 2024

The Civil Rights Division Association (CRDA) is a non-partisan organization comprised primarily of former employees of the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, with current employees also welcomed and encouraged to join. The CRDA Newsletter is intended to provide members with information on CRDA activities, member updates, and information about the work of the Civil Rights Division.¹ We are very excited to be able to stay connected with CRDA members and encourage member networking. Still need to join the CRDA? Just click to the [CRDA website!](#)

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NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

We invite you to share any news or personal updates for the Newsletter's Division Alumni News and Updates Section! This includes news about family or personal activities, interesting trips you have taken, job changes, career posts, publications, awards, recognitions and retirements. We also invite creative submissions and reflections, too! Creative submissions and reflections should be no longer than 500 words, and can be:

¹ The CRDA is a membership organization and is not affiliated with the U.S. Department of Justice or any other government agency. Any views expressed in the CRDA Newsletter are those of the author or organization.

- Insights on interesting experiences during your tenure with the Division;
- Photos of memorable events with a brief summary of the event; and
- Thoughts on or reviews of books, articles, movies or other publications pertaining to civil rights history and policy.

The CRDA is a nonpartisan organization, and the Newsletter will not publish any statements concerning any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for public office.

*Please send your information to CRDA Newsletter Editor Lisa Wilson Edwards at CRDANewsletter@gmail.com. The Newsletter is published bi-monthly. **The deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is July 15, 2024.***

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CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION ALUMNI GATHER TO CELEBRATE THE LEGACY OF ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL STEPHEN POLLAK

Civil Rights Division alumni gathered with current Division staff and friends on May 24th to honor former Assistant Attorney General Stephen J. Pollak at the U.S. Department of Justice's Great Hall in Washington, D.C. The Division welcomed the assistance of the CRDA in planning the program, which featured remarks by Attorney General Merrick Garland and Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke. Steve was a Founder of the Civil Rights Division Association.

The Attorney General observed Steve's early contributions assisting with the federal planning for the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, his instrumental involvement in the development of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and leading the federal response and community assistance after the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Attorney General noted Steve's recognition of the important duties of government service, stating that:

"When Steve was asked about his early career goals during his oral history interview, he said: 'From an early time I wanted to be in government. I thought that the government was a force for good, and that I wanted to be part of it.'

Steve's extraordinary service to this Department, and to the cause of civil rights, helped ensure that the government in which he served was in fact a force for good. We all owe Steve Pollak an enormous debt of gratitude."



Assistant Attorney General Stephen J. Pollak swearing in
with Attorney General Ramsey Clark (at far left), and wife Ruth Pollak

Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke spoke about the lasting impact of Steve's work and his ability to inspire others to contribute towards the good of our nation. She observed:

“In 1886, Oliver Wendell Holmes, lecturing at Harvard Law School, spoke of the opportunity to ‘live greatly in the law.’ It was, and is, an admirable aspiration — to transcend the everyday limits of legal practice, to make a lasting contribution, to earn respect and approbation that endures.

Steve Pollak did not merely live greatly in the law. He inspired others to do the same. Throughout his decades of service and mentorship, Steve was a beacon of hope and justice for both the victims of discrimination and the civil rights warriors seeking to protect them.”



Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke

Panel discussions led by CRDA Co-President Paul Hancock and CRDA Vice President Jon Greenbaum followed.

Paul moderated a discussion of Steve's work at the Division, and the instrumental role he played during the Division's formative years, with former Chief of the Division's Education and Appellate Sections Brian Landsberg, private voting rights attorney Armand Derfner, and former Chief of the Division's Housing Section Joan Magagna. The panel shared with the audience an audio clip of a great interchange between Steve and Justice Hugo Black in the landmark Voting Rights Act case *Allen v. State Board of Elections*, in which both Steve and Armand argued. Steve was an integral figure in the enactment, defense and initial implementation of both the Voting Rights Act and the Fair Housing Act.



CRDA Co-President Paul Hancock



Paul Hancock moderating a discussion about Steve's early contributions to the Division and the nation with Brian Landsberg, Armand Derfner and Joan Magagna



Former Housing Section Chief Joan Magagna



Former Division colleagues, family and friends celebrating Steve's life and legacy



CRDA Vice Chair Jon Greenbaum

CRDA Vice Chair Jon Greenbaum moderated the next discussion which focused on Steve's work after his government service that focused on his contributions to the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (National Lawyers' Committee) and the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs (Washington Lawyers' Committee), as well as other pro bono work as a partner at his law firm, Shea and Gardner (and later, Goodwin Proctor). Jon was joined on stage with former Chief of the Division's Criminal Section and former Director of the National Lawyers' Committee Bob Murphy, former long-time Executive Director of the Washington Lawyers' Committee Roderick V.O. Boggs, and current President and Executive Director of the National Lawyers' Committee Damon Hewitt.



CRDA Vice Chair Jon Greenbaum moderates a discussion of Steve's work after his federal service with Bob Murphy, Rod Boggs, and Damon Hewitt

Division alum Dorothy Landsberg narrated a beautiful series of photographs chronicling periods of Steve's life.



Division alum Dorothy Landsberg

Throughout the program, speakers reiterated Steve's observations about the exceptional people at the Division who dedicated their professional, and personal, lives towards advancing the nation's civil rights laws. Indeed, AAG Clarke recounted Steve's remarks that he made at the Division's 65th Anniversary Celebration in the Great Hall in December 2022, where he "reminded each of us about the sacred trust we bear." AAG Clarke quoted Steve's statement:

"I did not do it alone. I served with great people in the division...There were outstanding people then and there are outstanding people now. It's a great honor to serve in the department. I think it was the best of my career. All of you who are serving now or have served, I commend you and commend your tasks. These are great laws that you are enforcing, and they need everything that you can give them."

The program concluded with a poignant slideshow tribute to recently deceased Division alumni. You can view the slideshow here: [CRT In Memoriam Slideshow 5.24.2024 Final.pptx](#). The slideshow is best viewed by clicking "File," then "Download" and opening in Microsoft PowerPoint. Then click the slideshow icon for "Start from beginning" so that you can hear the background music that accompanies the slides.

National Public Radio reported on the event. The NPR coverage is available here: [Remembering Steve Pollak, a lawyer whose work inspired generations : NPR](#).

More photos from the tribute to Steve are set out below:



Steve testifying before the House Labor Standards Committee



Steve standing at far right behind President Lyndon B. Johnson, and next to the First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson. Then-United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark is pictured 4th from left.



Steve, law firm partner at Shea and Gardner



Stephen J. Pollak

The program was a wonderful opportunity for current and former Division employees to meet each other and celebrate Steve's inspiring legacy.



Pictured here are three former Criminal Section Chiefs: Bill Gardner (far left), Bob Murphy (second from right) and Judge Richard Roberts (far right). Division alum John Rosenberg (second from left) litigated criminal cases during the Division's early years.



Pictured here are three Housing Section Chiefs: From left, former Chiefs Joan Magagna and Paul Hancock, and current Housing Section Chief Carrie Pagnucco

CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION NEWS

Here are summary updates of recent Civil Rights Division news. More details can be found on the Division's [website](#).

Justice Department Releases A Webinar With The Department Of Education's Office Of Civil Rights To Improve Accessibility Of School Buildings

On May 23, 2024, the Civil Rights Division and the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights announced the release of a webinar setting out ways for school districts across the country to increase accessibility for students and teachers with disabilities in their school facilities. The webinar, entitled "Accessible Public Schools," was developed by the Division in consultation with the Department of Education and responds to a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation and report issued in 2020: [School Districts Need Better Information to Help Improve Access for People with Disabilities](#). That report detailed significant accessibility barriers for students with disabilities across the country in the nation's K-12 public school buildings, and recommended the federal government provide additional resources for school districts.

In its report, the GAO recommended that the Justice Department, in consultation with the Department of Education, create guidance on K-12 school accessibility issues. The webinar lays out the common accessibility problems found in schools (and identified in the GAO report) and ways to address them. The webinar can be found on YouTube at [Accessible Public Schools \(youtube.com\)](#)

Seven Defendants Sentenced for Federal Conspiracy Against Rights and Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act Convictions Related to 2020 D.C. Clinic Invasion and Blockade

On May 15, seven defendants were sentenced following their convictions for federal conspiracy against rights and Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act offenses following three separate trials in connection with the use of force and physical obstruction to blockade a Washington, D.C., area reproductive health clinic on Oct. 22, 2020.

Defendants Lauren Handy was sentenced to 57 months in prison, John Hinshaw was sentenced to 21 months in prison, and William Goodman was sentenced to 27 months in prison. Defendants Jonathan Darnel was sentenced to 34 months in prison, Herb Geraghty was sentenced to 27 months in prison, Jean Marshall was sentenced to 24 months in prison, and Joan Bell was sentenced to 27 months in prison.

"Violence has no place in our national discourse on reproductive health. Using force, threatening to use force or physically obstructing access to reproductive health care is unlawful," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke. "As we mark the 30th anniversary of the FACE Act, it's important that we not lose sight of the history of violence against reproductive health care providers including the murder of Dr. David Gunn in Florida — tragic and horrific events that led to passage of the law. The Justice Department will continue to protect both patients seeking reproductive health services and providers of those services. We will hold accountable those who seek to interfere with access to reproductive health services in our country."

Evidence presented at trial established that the defendants used force and physical obstruction to execute a clinic blockade that was organized by the group's leaders, Handy and Darnel. The defendants planned and organized the clinic invasion using social media, text messages and telephone calls, and several co-conspirators, including defendants Hinshaw, Goodman, Geraghty, Marshall, Bell, Harlow, Idoni and Smith traveled from northeast and midwestern states to participate in the blockade. Prior to the clinic incursion, the defendants met with other co-conspirators to plan their crime, which included making a fake patient appointment to ensure the group's entry into the clinic, using chains and locks to barricade the facility and passively resisting their anticipated arrests to prolong the blockade. The clinic invasion was advertised on social media as a "historic" event that was live streamed on Facebook. The defendants' forced entry into the clinic at the outset of the invasion resulted in injury to a clinic nurse. During the blockade, one patient had to climb through a receptionist window to access the clinic, while another laid in the hallway outside of the clinic in physical distress, unable to gain access to the clinic.

DIVISION ALUMNI NEWS AND UPDATES

Here are news and updates on our former Division colleagues:



Jon Greenbaum

Jon Greenbaum announced that in April 2024, after two decades with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, primarily as its Chief Counsel, he has launched Justice Legal Strategies, a multi-faceted legal, management and strategic assistance firm for organizations and persons "seek[ing] to achieve a more just, equitable and sustainable society." Jon is Vice Chair of CRDA and served as an attorney in the Voting Section from 1997 to 2003.

Jon states: "This is an especially perilous time for democracy. Meeting the moment requires expansive thinking, creativity, teamwork, and effective time management. Justice Legal Strategies can help as a problem solver and thought partner to progressive nonprofits, philanthropy, law firms, corporations, and governmental officials that aim to advance racial and social justice." Justice Legal Strategies provides services for clients in three central areas: The first, litigation and legal strategy, draws from Jon's expertise developed over his extensive work on "hundreds of civil rights cases including several that have been decided by the United States Supreme Court. ... Much of [his] work has also involved developing multi-faceted strategies that have included a combination of litigation, policy, public education, and programmatic work." The second area is legal management, coaching, and training that stems from Jon's

15 years of experience as an executive manager supervising multiple legal units. Jon is skilled at structuring a legal department to maximize its impact, helping managers find solutions to challenging problems, and providing guidance to individual employees to improve their work. The third area is providing expert legal assistance on “a broad range of civil rights and civil rights-related issues including criminal justice, digital justice, educational opportunities, economic justice and employment discrimination, fair housing, First Amendment, reproductive rights, and environmental justice.” You can learn more about Justice Legal Strategies at justicelegalstrategies.com, and check out Jon’s Justice Blog at Blog – Justice Legal Strategies. Indeed, in his most recent blog Jon reflects on the legacy of Steve Pollak: Civil Rights Lawyer Hall of Famer Steve Pollak. Jon can be reached directly at jgreenbaum@justicels.com or www.linkedin.com/in/jon-greenbaum-1920716.



Gilbert Paul Carrasco

Gilbert Paul Carrasco reports a big victory for his client. Gil is legal counsel for the Church of the Eagle and the Condor which entered into a settlement agreement with the federal government to secure its religious freedom and right to use Ayahuasca as its sacrament. Gil served as an attorney with the Division from 1980 to 1984, as a Special Assistant in the Front Office under then-Assistant Attorney General Drew Days. He is a Professor of Law *emeritus* at Willamette University College of Law where he has taught and written on civil rights law, immigration law and constitutional law.

Gil’s client, Church of the Eagle and the Condor (CEC), is the first non-Christian church to receive protection for its spiritual practices regarding Ayahuasca, and is the first time that a church’s right to import and share its sacrament has been secured without going to trial. The CEC states that the “Ayahuasca ceremony is an essential sacrament for our church. Our ceremony is rooted in the Shipibo Amazonian tradition which has been passed down by countless generations.” As part of the settlement, within their rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the CEC will receive religious exemption from the United States Controlled Substances Act. CEC reports that the settlement “affirms legitimacy of Indigenous spiritual traditions within the U.S. legal system by recognizing the CEC as a bona fide religious organization.” You can learn more about the settlement agreement here: [Settlement - The Church of the Eagle and the Condor](#)



Johnathan Smith

Johnathan Smith has joined the MacArthur Justice Center as Vice President and Legal Director. Johnathan most recently served the Division as Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights under Assistant Attorney General Kristin Clarke from 2021 to April 2024. The Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center is a national, nonprofit law firm dedicated to protecting civil rights and fighting injustice in the criminal legal system through litigation at the trial, appellate, and Supreme Court levels.