

CIVIL LIBERTIES NEWS

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Transgender students should be treated fairly

The Minnesota High School League proposed changes to its rules that would make it possible for transgender athletes to compete in a manner consistent with their gender identity while protecting their privacy. They would be joining the NCAA and the 32 other states that already have updated their policies in favor of inclusion. The ACLU-MN argued that inclusion is good public policy, that it is good for all children – and that it is the right thing to do constitutionally.

The ACLU-MN sent a letter to the MSHSL in October, encouraging them to proceed with making the proposed changes into official policy:

We are talking about our children. They need our support, consideration and kindness as they grow to adulthood. Like all teenagers they are sensitive, unsure about their place in society, and uncomfortable in their changing bodies. We all have an obligation to treat them equally with their classmates. We should never imply that they are somehow sinister or dangerous.

The ACLU-MN will continue to urge the Minnesota High School League to update its policies toward transgender athletes in all these important ways when they meet again on December 4th. ■

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ACLU-MN to honor Jim Dorsey with Earl Larson Award



For the last eighteen years, the ACLU-MN has honored the work of members of the Minnesota legal profession who have excelled in their commitment to preserving civil liberties. The first award winner was Judge Earl Larson, who founded the Minnesota affiliate of the ACLU, and for whom the award was named.

This year, the ACLU-MN is honoring Jim Dorsey with its 18th annual Earl Larson Award. Jim Dorsey practices law at Fredrikson & Byron. He received his B.A. from Yale in 1974, served as an infantry officer in

the Marine Corps and then attended the University of Virginia School of Law, graduating in 1981.

Jim has continually represented indigent clients on a pro-bono basis in ways such as family law, juvenile protection, debtor/creditor, landlord/tenant, and contract disputes. He has also worked on larger pro-bono cases for the ACLU (challenging the constitutionality of the Solomon Amendment which ties federal tuition assistance to draft registration), the ACLU-MN (challenging the state sodomy law), and the NAACP (dispersing concentrated and segregated public housing), several death penalty cases, a Guantanamo Bay detainee case, and a case involving voting rights.

In addition to serving on various non-profit boards, Jim was a founder of, and has been the board chair of, the Advocates for Human Rights. He has done human rights work all over the world. *continued on page 3*

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Racial Disparities at the Minneapolis Police Department



Last year the ACLU released a report on arrest disparities for marijuana possession and Minnesota was called out as the third worst state for such disparities in the country. African Americans were 7.8 times more likely to be arrested in Minnesota for marijuana possession than whites despite studies showing usage rates being the same. The Minneapolis Police Department's numbers are even worse. Between 2004 and 2012, the Department was, on average, 11.51 times more likely to arrest an African American than a white individual for marijuana possession.

In October 2014, the ACLU-MN released more data that shows it is not just marijuana arrests that have disparities. The ACLU also looked at data collected by the FBI's Uniform Crime reporting from 2004 - 2012 for three other low level offenses: vagrancy, disorderly conduct and loitering/curfew violations for juveniles. All of these arrest for low level, subjective, offenses showed disparities.

When looking at the data African Americans on average were

- 8.86 times more likely to be arrested than a white individual for disorderly conduct;
- 7.54 times more likely to be arrested than a white individual for vagrancy; and
- 16.39 times more likely to be arrested than a white juvenile for curfew/loitering.

These extreme racial disparities are unjust and need to be addressed. An arrest – even without a conviction – makes it harder for anyone to get a job and rent an apartment, and it can significantly limit educational opportunities.

At the same time that the ACLU-MN released the data, they also sent a letter to Mayor Hodges and Police Chief Harteau calling on them to address the disparities and change policies at the Minneapolis Police Department.

View the complete data at www.aclu-mn.org

Earl Larson Award

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Please join us for the 18th Annual Earl Larson Award in honor of

Jim Dorsey

Thursday, November 20, 2014

Minneapolis Club
729 2nd Ave. S., Minneapolis
Main Lounge - Second Floor

5:30 p.m. Reception

6:30 p.m. Award Presentation

RSVP online at www.aclu-mn.org or by contacting Molly Miller, mmiller@aclu-mn.org

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A profile of ACLU activist

Mahad Olad

At age 16, Mahad Olad is one of the youngest ACLU activists in Minnesota. He moved to the United States at a young age from Kenya and is currently a junior at Brooklyn Center High School.



He started his involvement with the ACLU-MN this year when he volunteered at the State Fair, and shared his impressive knowledge about civil liberties and the Bill of Rights. Since then he has helped to coordinate ACLU speakers coming to his school, the distribution of “know your rights cards” and building general civil liberties awareness among his peers.

Mahad’s social activism goes back farther than his more recent involvement with the ACLU-MN. A few years ago his family returned to Kenya so he could be exposed to life there as well. While living in Kenya he saw the harsh realities faced by women who were trying to access comprehensive reproductive health care services and how the gay and lesbian community is forced to live underground. This experience changed him and when he returned to the United States he decided to get involved.

While Mahad cares about many social justice and civil liberties issues he is especially drawn to reproductive freedom and LGBT rights because of his experience in Kenya. He has been one of his school’s biggest advocates for comprehensive sex education and has helped to organize events at his school to teach students important information about comprehensive safe sex practices, something that his school does not teach in class.

The ACLU-MN is lucky to have Mahad to spread the word among young people about the importance of standing up for your rights, and to share important messages of equality and justice and the work of the ACLU. ■

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