



ACLU Honors Capt. James Yee, Muslim former U.S. Army Chaplain at Guantanamo

28th Annual Bill of Rights Dinner speaker lineup includes Katrina vanden Heuvel, editor of The Nation; comedian Baratunde Thurston; and human rights activist Kerry Kennedy.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 28, 2009

CONTACT:
Christopher Ott, Communications Director, 617-482-3170 x322, cott@aclum.org

BOSTON -- Tonight, amid the ongoing national debate over the fate of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay prison, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Massachusetts will present the organization's annual Roger Baldwin Award to **Capt. James Yee**, the Muslim former U.S. Army Chaplain at Guantanamo.

While Yee ministered to Guantanamo prisoners, the government arrested and imprisoned him in a naval brig for 76 days, falsely accusing him of spying, espionage, and aiding prisoners. They held Yee in solitary confinement and subjected him to the same sensory deprivation techniques being used against the prisoners in Cuba to whom he had been ministering. After months of investigation, however, the government dropped all charges against Yee and reinstated him.

"Each year, the Bill of Rights Dinner brings together hundreds of our supporters to honor and celebrate the work of standing up for basic rights and liberties, and the dignity and courage of Capt. James Yee provide a perfect example of exactly that," said Carol Rose, executive director of the ACLU of Massachusetts.

The Roger Baldwin Award that Yee will receive is named for Roger Baldwin, the Massachusetts-born founder of both the ACLU of Massachusetts and the national ACLU, in 1920. Past Baldwin award recipients have included civil rights leader Rosa Parks, author Kurt Vonnegut, New York Times columnist Anthony Lewis, and Sen. Edward Kennedy.

The event will also feature prominent national speakers:

Katrina vanden Heuvel is editor and publisher of The Nation. She comments on politics frequently for ABC, MSNBC, CNN and PBS. Her articles have appeared in The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, Foreign Policy magazine and The Boston Globe. She has received numerous awards for public service, including the New York Civil Liberties Union's Callaway Prize for the Defense of the Right of Privacy.

Baratunde Thurston is a comedian and "vigilante pundit" who writes for The Huffington Post, DailyKos, Jack and Jill Politics, and his own site www.baratunde.com. He has authored three books, including Keep Jerry Falwell Away From My Oreo Cookies, and was nominated for the Bill Hicks Award for Thought

Provoking Comedy. He was declared a Champion of the First Amendment by Iowa State University, and called "someone I need to know" by Barack Obama. Baratunde was an early member of Laughing Liberally and The Black Comedy Project, and his stage presence has earned him emcee duties at the National Conference for Media Reform, Netroots Nation, and South by Southwest. He has been featured in various media outlets including NPR, MSNBC, the BBC, CNN, The Boston Globe, The New York Times, C-SPAN and ComedyCentral.com. Baratunde performs regularly in New York City, where he lives and works by day as an editor for The Onion.

Kerry Kennedy is an activist and advocate for the protection and promotion of fair and equal justice, the defense of basic human rights, and the rule of law worldwide. The author of *Speak Truth to Power*, which features interviews with international human rights activists, Ms. Kennedy has led more than 40 human rights delegations to over 30 countries. Currently, Ms. Kennedy is chair of the Amnesty International Leadership Council, and is a judge for the Reebok Human Rights Award.

The ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts' annual Bill of Rights Dinner takes place this year at Boston's Westin Copley Place Hotel beginning at 6:00 p.m. For wait-list details, please call 617-482-3170 extension 335, or email <mailto:mwarde@aclum.org>. For news media inquiries, contact Chris Ott, Communications Director, 617-482-3170 x322, cott@aclum.org.

ACLU of Massachusetts board member Arnie Reisman and trustee Ron Ansin serve as co-chairs for the event. The dinner's host committee includes Ron Ansin, Jarrett T. Barrios, Roy & Joan Blount, Joshua & Amy Boger, Gary Buseck, Elyse Cherry, Richard Ferrante & Mary Crane, Ellen & Frank Fisher, Celia & Walter Gilbert, Robert A. Glassman, Donald W. Glazer, Scott Gortikov & Ross Ozer, Barbara & Steve Grossman, Holly Gunner & Anne Chalmers, Paul & Patricia Hogan, Jack Hornor & Ron Skinn, Kim Marrkand & Kathleen Henry, Carol Master & Sherry Mayrent, Clark & Jane Moeller, John & Kathy Roberts, Rep. Byron Rushing, Paul & Ann B. Sagan, Norma & Ben Shapiro, David & Lisa Solomon, Drs. John & Holly Thomas, Phil & Kate Villers, Ellen Wade & Maureen Brodoff, and Bob & Hettie Wohlgemuth.

For more details about the honorees, speakers, and the event, see: <http://www.aclum.org/dinner/>

-end-