Awards Luncheon--June 21, 2011

Inner City Law Center is pleased to announce that former California Supreme Court Justice Carlos R. Moreno will be honored at our upcoming 11th Annual Awards Luncheon. This year's event will be held on **Tuesday, June 21, from 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.** at the historic Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Around 300 people from the legal, political, and corporate communities usually attend the luncheon. Justice Moreno has been selected to be honored by the Board of Inner City Law Center for his distinguished history of protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and promoting social justice.

During his decade on the California Supreme Court, Justice Moreno authored 144 majority opinions. He has made important judicial contributions in many areas of the law, including arbitration, class action, civil rights, and custody matters.

The luncheon is one of Inner City Law Center's single most important sources of funds. Last year, the luncheon raised over $300,000 to power the organization’s work to ensure that the poorest among us have the same access to justice as the richest and most powerful.

To become a sponsor or purchase tickets [click here](#).

For more information, please contact Harry Batt at (213) 891-2803 or via e-mail at HBatt@innercitylaw.org.

Changing Lives For Homeless Veterans

Thirteen percent of those currently in our military are women. Inner City Law Center’s Homeless Veterans Project specializes in representing homeless women veterans struggling with post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). Unfortunately, women veterans are four times more likely to develop PTSD from sexual assault than from combat. By the VA's own estimate almost one-third of all US women veterans experience rape or sexual assault while in service. You read that right: one-third! And that is the VA's own estimate. Survivors are often scarred for life with invisible wounds. They’re forced to live with the memory of their attack. That trauma can have lasting psychological consequences.

Ms. Jennifer Bell is one such veteran. Ms. Bell was sexually assaulted by multiple fellow service members while on active duty in 1979. As a result of the assault, Ms. Bell suffers from severe PTSD and experiences debilitating anxiety, depression and nightmares. She has been homeless for over twelve years, and for the last year and a half she has been living in her car. Recognizing that she needed help, Ms. Bell filed three requests with the VA for service connected benefits over the past twelve years. Each of these requests was denied.

In 2009, Ms. Bell came to Inner City Law Center's legal clinic for female veterans at the West Los Angeles VA Campus. There she met Melissa Tyner, a staff attorney in our Homeless Veterans Project. Melissa helped Ms. Bell to appeal the denial of her claim. Melissa gathered additional medical evidence and used Ms. Bell's service records to establish that the attack had likely happened. Melissa also asserted Ms. Bell's right to a hearing. At the hearing, Melissa established that the VA had been applying an incorrect standard to assess Ms. Bell's claim. This past week, Melissa received notification that Ms. Bell's claim was granted.

Ms. Bell will receive almost $80,000 in retroactive benefits and $2,632.00 every month for the rest of her life. She will also receive increased access to the VA health care that she desperately needs. Ms. Bell cried "tears of joy and relief" when Melissa called her with the news. Then she stepped out of the car where she has been living and "danced a little jig." Ms. Bell plans to use the money to find a place to live and have some dental...
work done. She expressed tremendous gratitude to Melissa and everyone at Inner City Law Center for their assistance. Her resiliency is inspiring to us all.

Ms. Bell’s case highlights the need for attorneys to help homeless veterans apply for benefits that they are entitled to because of their service. If you would like to become trained and certified to volunteer on these cases, please contact Melissa Tyner, MTyner@innercitylaw.org, for more information about the project, available cases, and upcoming trainings.

L.A. Takes Giant Step Towards Solving Chronic Homelessness

Los Angeles is the homeless capital of the United States. Two years ago Inner City Law Center decided to focus our policy advocacy on expanding housing for people who are chronically homeless - i.e., housing for the 12,000+ people with disabilities who have been homeless in Los Angeles for more than a year.

Thanks to the work of a rare collaboration of business, government and nonprofit advocates, of which ICLC is proud to be a part, on April 12, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved an important motion by Supervisors Yaroslavsky and Ridley-Thomas that embraces permanent supportive housing as the solution for chronic homelessness. If fully implemented, this motion will dramatically reduce chronic homelessness by: (1) prioritizing chronically homeless for County resources; (2) requiring the County housing authority to explore how to increase the number of housing vouchers dedicated to people and families who are chronically homeless; and 3) connecting County health services with housing so that chronically homeless can receive health services in a stable housing environment.

By definition, people who are chronically homeless have difficulty getting and keeping housing under the shelter system that has been our predominant homelessness strategy in Los Angeles for many years. Around the country, permanent supportive housing has been the most effective strategy in solving chronic homelessness -- with over 80% of tenants still housed and receiving services two years after leaving the streets. In supportive housing, tenants usually pay 30% of their income for rent in exchange for permanent, stable, affordable housing with access to health services. Not only do people stay housed, it costs the taxpayer less than leaving them on the street. Recent studies show that people who are chronically homeless can cost the County over $8,000 per month in emergency health, policing and other services. By providing permanent supportive housing, the taxpayer saves over $5,000 per month per person.

Over the last two years, ICLC has been active in this effort. Our Director of Policy, Greg Spiegel, serves as policy committee co-chair for the 120 organizational members of United Homeless Healthcare Partners, which is partnering with the United Way and the L.A. Chamber of Commerce’s Business Task Force on this issue. While there is still much work to do to bring permanent supportive housing to scale in L.A., ICLC applauds the Board of Supervisors’ bold step in the right direction. If you would like to become involved in ICLC’s policy advocacy on this issue, please contact Greg Spiegel, GSpiegel@innercitylaw.org.

About Inner City Law Center

Inner City Law Center has been serving the poorest and most vulnerable individuals and families in Los Angeles County since 1980. Founded on the basic principle that every human being should be treated with dignity and respect at all times, ICLC, through its staff of more than 30 attorneys, advocates, tenant organizers, social workers, and other professionals, provides free legal representation and social service advocacy to over 2,000 homeless and working poor clients each year.

As the only full-time provider of legal services headquartered on Skid Row, ICLC is widely recognized for its expertise in housing issues, as well as government and veterans benefits.

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