2011 Awards Luncheon Honoree

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 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 will be held at the historic Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Downtown Los Angeles, where over 300 leaders from Los Angeles' legal, business and civic communities will gather to support Inner City Law Center's work and to recognize those whose life's work have made notable contributions to our client communities.

The luncheon is one of Inner City Law Center's single most important source 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.

For more information, please contact Harry Batt at (213) 891-2880, extension 210 or via e-mail at hbatt@innercitylaw.org.

Who's the Worst Slumlord in Los Angeles?

A KTLA special investigation shines the light on one L.A. slumlord, Jacinto Martinez, whose tenants have been living in conditions no human should be forced to endure.

Inner City Law Center staff attorney Cynthia Mendoza and KTLA reporter Micah Ohlman document these tenants' shocking conditions to KTLA's cameras.

ICLC has filed a suit against this slumlord.

Jonathan Galatzan in the Los Angeles City Attorney's office says these kinds of tenants are the real victims of Los Angeles' worst slumlords.

The slumlords look at their property as strictly a business, and it's about the bottom line,” Galatzan says. “They forget there are human beings living in these buildings, who deserve a certain standard to live by.”

At ICLC we believe that “no one, no matter what their circumstances, should have to live in these conditions”, Mendoza says.
Changing Lives—Your Investment At Work

Inner City Law Center’s Homeless Prevention Project provides legal, rental and case management assistance to people who are at risk of homelessness due to an unexpected financial hardship. Thanks to your support, in 2010 we kept over 800 people in their homes.

Sylvia Wilson, a longtime resident of Los Angeles, is one example of a client who was at risk of homelessness due to unforeseen circumstances. Ms. Wilson is a dedicated single-parent who has worked as a legal assistant in several prominent Los Angeles law firms. She has made a comfortable life for herself and her child, renting a lovely Westside apartment and preparing her teenage son to enter college at the University of Southern California. However, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer her life quickly changed. Almost immediately she began a series of arduous and intense cancer treatments that included over 30 radiation and chemotherapy treatment sessions. This painful and exhausting process left Ms. Wilson physically and mentally debilitated. Returning to work was no longer an option; she had no choice but to apply for state disability benefits.

Ms. Wilson applied for state disability benefits which were not granted until over two months after she had applied. This interruption in income caused her to fall one month behind in her rent. One month behind was too much for her landlord, who filed an eviction lawsuit with a trial date set for three days before Christmas. Facing the risk of homelessness for her and her son on Christmas, Ms. Wilson scrambled to find resources and contacted our Homeless Prevention Project. Staff attorney Javier Beltran worked to resolve the eviction action, however the landlord’s attorney refused to settle the case unless he received $800.00 in attorney fees. Seeing as Federal regulations do not allow ICLC to use rental assistance to pay attorney’s fees, Javier realized that he would not be able to keep Ms. Wilson in her unit and tried to get her more time to move out.

However, on the day of Ms. Wilson’s eviction trial the landlord’s attorney remained callously uncooperative and insisted that Ms. Wilson pay costs. At this point, Javier decided to fight the eviction. He told opposing counsel that he was ready to go to trial, while at the same time suggesting that Ms. Wilson would be eligible for rental assistance and could possibly pay some costs if she could stay in her unit.

Concerned about the additional costs of trial, the landlord relented and settled the case to allow her to stay. As a result, Ms. Wilson and her son have kept their home and although she continues her fight with cancer, she no longer worries about becoming homeless.

Permanent Supportive Housing Victory

Last week, ICLC achieved a significant policy victory that will help people who are chronically homeless find permanent supportive housing. The victory is a change to eligibility for the Shelter Plus Care program that will allow for more people who are chronically homeless to participate. Shelter Plus Care is a federal program administered by the City’s housing authority (HACLA) that provides rental assistance for hard-to-serve homeless persons with disabilities. These are the people who have been on the street the longest and impose the most costs to government services when left on the street.

HUD’s eligibility rules are designed to allow participation by people who are chronically homeless. Thus, prior evictions, criminal records and substance abuse issues are not automatic bars from participation. However, HACLA undermined HUD’s intent by adding its own eligibility standards on top of HUD’s that made it next to impossible to serve the people that the program was designed for. For example, HACLA denied people who had drug or alcohol histories or who had previously been evicted from federal housing for unpaid rent.

After months of testimony to the HACLA commissioners, meetings with the Mayor’s office, submission of written comments and meetings with HACLA staff, finally, on Friday, HACLA agreed to do away with its additional criteria and instead use only the most minimal criteria: Is the person income eligible, homeless and disabled? If yes, they are eligible. This change will allow permanent supportive housing providers to prioritize housing for those most in need and Los Angeles will save money by doing so.

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 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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