



## **Ramona Ripston, Executive Director, ACLU/SC**

Ramona Ripston was named the Executive Director of the ACLU of Southern California and the ACLU Foundation of Southern California on September 1, 1972, becoming the first woman to direct the activities of a major ACLU affiliate. She is responsible for all phases of the organization's programs, including litigation, lobbying and education.

During her tenure as executive director, Ms. Ripston has steered the ACLU/SC to regional and national prominence. She not only hired an outstanding legal staff but built a multi-faceted nonprofit corporation with communications and field organizing departments. Under her leadership, the affiliate's staff has grown from six to 60, and its annual budget has risen to \$6.5 million. In 2005, the ACLU/SC opened an Orange County office that has been tremendously successful in expanding and protecting civil rights in communities in that region, and in 2008 the ACLU/SC moved into a new headquarters building in downtown Los Angeles that the affiliate purchased outright and extensively renovated. That building was dedicated on Oct. 15, 2008 as the Ramona Ripston Center for Civil Liberties and Civil Rights.

Ms. Ripston also helped foster ties between the ACLU/SC and some of Hollywood's most prominent figures, including Burt Lancaster, Barbra Streisand, Rob Reiner, Norman Lear, James Whitmore, Camryn Manheim and Rick Nicita. Meanwhile, the ACLU/SC has become a respected voice on crucial issues ranging from freedom of speech, racial equality and abuses by law enforcement to educational equality and immigrants' rights. The affiliate has occasionally adopted positions independent of the ACLU's National office, including one on the current issue of campaign finance reform. A key provision of the ACLU/SC's policy is that limitations on contributions from any source are justifiable and constitutional if the proportion of the contribution to the overall expense of the campaign would be so high as to have a corrupting effect.

In August 2006, the *Los Angeles Times* named Ms. Ripston as one of the 100 Most Powerful People in Southern California. For six years, she served as a member of the California Commission on Judicial Performance. She has been a visiting lecturer for the UCLA Political Science Department, hosted a talk radio program for KABC, and served on the board of directors of the First Amendment Foundation and the Office of the Americas. In 2005 Ms. Ripston was appointed to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority Commission by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. She also serves as a member of the national ACLU's Pension Committee and the Endowment Policy Committee.

Ms. Ripston was a founding member of Death Penalty Focus, and was honored with that group's Abolition Award for 2003. In 2006, she received the Rosa Parks Social Justice Award from the Martin Luther King Legacy Association. She was awarded the William J. Brennan, Jr. Civil Liberties Award in 1991 by the Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law. The Western Society of Criminology presented her with the 1980-81 June Morrison Founder's Award, given yearly to a noncriminologist who makes an outstanding contribution to justice in the criminal justice system. Ms. Ripston also has been honored by a number of other

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organizations and entities, including Women in Communication, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the People's College of Law and the Los Angeles City Council.

She has written and spoken extensively on the rights of women -- including reproductive freedom -- as well as the Voting Rights Act, the rights of the accused, poverty, homelessness, national security, civil liberties, police, the Constitution and the First Amendment, including censorship. She has lectured at a number of law schools, including Harvard, Yale and UCLA.

The daughter of a Jewish mother and a Catholic father, Ms. Ripston was born and grew up in Queens, New York. She graduated with a political science degree from Hunter College, and has an honorary doctorate of law from West Los Angeles School of Law.

Prior to taking over as executive director of the ACLU/SC, Ms. Ripston held various positions within the ACLU's national office, and in its New York and New Jersey affiliates. She also worked for several years for the New York Urban Coalition as Director of Public Affairs. Ms. Ripston is married to Stephen R. Reinhardt, a federal judge who sits on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.