

The Loss of a Hero

Remembering Michael Ratner

This May, we lost one of the great social justice warriors of our time. Michael Ratner had been ill for almost a year, fighting his disease in the same manner as he did all of the injustices he encountered: with clarity, tenacity, good cheer, the support of his loving family and friends, and hope for the best possible outcome against the odds. Sadly, this was one fight that he wasn't able to win.

While a law student at Columbia University in 1968, Michael was pushed to the ground and beaten by police during student protests against the Vietnam War. It was this moment that he knew he would always stand on the side

of the oppressed and against the oppressor. A law student was pushed down; a radical rose up. In his words, “[E]vents like this created the activists of the generation and I never looked back; I declared that I was going to spend my life on the side of justice and non-violence.” And this is exactly what Michael did until his last breath.

Michael was the bridge between the work of CCR's founders, from whom he learned how to litigate boldly and work with social movements, and our current generation of lawyers and advocates whom he taught how to carry that work forward. CCR Executive Director Vince



Michael Ratner in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in 2006.

Photo: Jonathan McInosh, CC-BY-2.5

Warren remembers meeting Michael for the first time as an Ella Baker Intern over two decades ago. “I saw someone who lived the vision for how a radical people’s lawyer could shift the world for the most

continued on page 5

With You By Our Side: CCR at 50

For the past five decades, CCR has been a part of virtually every movement for civil and human rights. Because of you, we are dismantling institutionalized power and building the power of movements and people.

We are profoundly grateful to have your partnership in our mission to transform the social, cultural, legal, economic and political systems that support and maintain institutional **racism, patriarchy, oppressive economic structures, and oppressive state power.**

Together we have fought and continue to fight on

behalf of countless individuals and communities at the margins. There are few people like you who are committed to supporting those with the least access to justice. Thank you!

The need for an even stronger CCR with the vision, expertise, courage and credibility to remain at the forefront is deeply important. You have been and continue to be vital to us tackling some of the world’s most egregious human rights abuses.

As we embark on our next 50 years, we are fortunate to have you by our side.

2016 Founders' Award Honoring Jules Lobel

Beyond being the title of Jules Lobel's groundbreaking book, *Success Without Victory* is an animating vision for CCR, one that allows us to fight as hard as we can for what we believe in—to take political risks to speak truth to power.

At our annual President's Reception, I had the honor of presenting Jules with the 2016 CCR Founders' Award. A distinguished litigator, legal scholar, author and former CCR President, he has been a CCR cooperating attorney for 20 years and served on the Board for three decades. Whether working with prisoners in solitary confinement or defending protesters, Jules finds the way forward to support the rights of people over institutions.

While it is true that there is success without victory, it is also true that there is no victory without vision, and there is no more

"A more compassionate friend with whom to sue the United States would be hard to find."

– Michael Ratner on Jules Lobel



Photo: Douglas Gorenstein

important vision than a political vision in the work that we do. Thank you for making this vision a reality.

Vince Warren, Executive Director

2016 President's Reception

CCR's Annual President's Reception celebrates our generous benefactors and allies who are indispensable partners in protecting and advancing fundamental rights for all. Thank You!



Photos: Heidi Solander

After Guantánamo, a New Beginning

CCR Clients Express Gratitude to Those Who Campaigned for Their Freedom

“I have been waiting a lifetime just to start my life again,” CCR client Fahd Ghazy once wrote.

That day finally came for Fahd. In January, he was resettled in Oman.

“There was never much doubt that Fahd’s imprisonment was unnecessary—he was cleared for release nearly a decade ago—yet he grew up at Guantánamo waiting for successive presidents to correct a glaring injustice,” said Fahd’s attorney, CCR’s Omar Farah. “While Fahd and his family look to the future, I cannot help but reflect on how cruel his detention was and marvel at how Fahd preserved his humanity throughout.”

In the months since his release, Fahd has moved into his own apartment and, after over a decade apart, he has finally been reunited with his mother, wife, daughter, and brothers.

In April, two more CCR clients, Tariq Ba Odah and Mohammed Al-Hamiri, were transferred to Saudi Arabia, where their families embraced them upon arrival.

Tariq had been on hunger strike for more than nine years to protest his indefinite detention. His case received worldwide attention as his weight hovered at just 74 pounds, half of his ideal body



Activists from Witness Against Torture hold a painting depicting recently released CCR client Fahd Ghazy in Guantánamo Bay.

weight, during this past year. Now that Tariq is finally free, we’re hopeful that he will receive the sophisticated medical care he desperately needs.

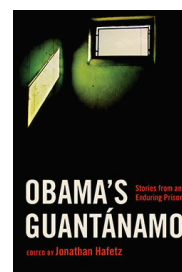
“When people are released we think about those who remain. It’ll be hard not to think of the other brothers,” Mohammed said to Omar when he heard the news of his release. “God willing, this place will close with the help of your hands.”

After spending 14 years without charge at Guantánamo, Fahd, Tariq, and Mohammed are now looking to the future and rebuilding their lives. Each of them expressed deep gratitude to all of you who refused to forget their plight and who courageously shared their stories and dreams for a life of freedom.

Obama's Guantánamo: Stories from an Enduring Prison

The following is an excerpt from the essay “Storytelling #Guantánamo” by CCR’s Aliya Hana Hussain in the newly released collection of essays, which examine Obama’s failure to close Guantánamo: *“There’s no doubt in my mind that if the public could sit across from Fahd, Tariq, Ghaleb, and Mohammed as I have, and hear the compassion in their voices, learn about their families, and see how they struggle every day to prevent the prison from claiming them, others would be closer to understanding the human cost of Guantánamo as acutely as my colleagues and I do.”*

Copies of *Obama’s Guantánamo*, which includes contributions from five CCR attorneys and advocates, can be purchased online at nyupress.org.



Black and Brown Communities Under Siege

Being Black is Not a Crime

In July, CCR and ColorOfChange filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the FBI and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) seeking information on the surveillance and monitoring of Black-led protests.

The FOIA request was filed in response to revelations of numerous instances of military and counter-terror resources being used to surveil Black Lives Matter protests and activists nationwide since the murder of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, two years ago. It’s clear from both media publications and activist reports that federal and local authorities have been coordinating to track the movements of Freddie Grey activists in Washington, D.C., and to monitor cultural events and prayer vigils in predominantly Black neighborhoods around the country.

We hope that our work with ColorofChange will illuminate law enforcement authorities’ suppression of First Amendment activity and provide activists with important tools to further the movement.

No Muslim Exception to the Constitution

In October, the court issued a stirring decision in *Hassan v. City of New York*, reversing a district court ruling dismissing the case, and recognizing that New Jersey Muslims who have been subjected to the NYPD’s suspicionless surveillance stated a valid claim of discrimination on the basis of their religion.

CCR’s Legal Director, Baher Azmy, responded: “The court reaffirmed the elementary principle that law enforcement cannot spy on and harass



Photo: Fibonacci Blue

CCR and ColorOfChange are seeking information related to the surveillance of Black Lives Matter protests and activists around the country.

individuals for no other reason than their religion and the equally important principle that courts cannot simply accept untested claims about national security to justify a gross stereotype about Muslims. There is no Muslim exception to the Constitution.”

Changes to How the NYPD Documents Stops

In March, the federal court in *Floyd v. City of New York* approved the new version of the stop report that NYPD officers will now use to record the stops-and-frisks they conduct. Gone from the new form are the infamous checkboxes used to stop hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers —“furtive movement,” “suspicious bulge,” and “high crime area.”

None of these explanations for the stops satisfied the legal requirement of reasonable suspicion and instead served as an excuse for harassing Black and Brown people. The new form also requires officers to explain in their own words the specific reasons why they stopped someone.

Remembering Michael Ratner (continued from cover)

precarious in our society, by shaking the ground under the most powerful. Hearing his stories of representing clients and political movements from every corner of the globe, Michael inspired me to see how I could use my law degree for something extraordinary and eternal.”

Michael had the vision to see things on the distant horizon—things that others barely glimpsed or discounted entirely. From his work challenging U.S. imperialism in Central America, Iraq and at home, Michael stood for accountability for the inevitable abuse that accompanies the use of force. He never shied away from a fight, no matter the odds; indeed, it is likely he specifically selected the cases with the longest odds. After all, the clients involved in those cases were most in need of a legal ally.



Michael Ratner testifies before Congress in 1987 on the surveillance and harassment of those opposed to U.S. policies in Central America.

Michael dedicated his life to the most important justice causes of the last half century. He was CCR’s first Legal Director, a longtime Board Member and Board President, and helped shape the course of the work for four decades. He is survived by the legacy he created at CCR. We were fortunate to have had so much of Michael’s vision, time and leadership over these many years. Michael said of his decision to spend his career in partnership with CCR: “I believed then that it is the place

that will change the world. I am as excited to walk into the Center today as I was that first day. And I still believe it is the place that will change the world.”

We close with Michael’s words:

“There is not the same sense of strength in struggle that you can change things, not as there was in the ‘60s and ‘70s. You get to the point where you have a very conservative government and you feel like you are only a flickering light. But we have to keep the light lit.”

All of us in the CCR community will keep the light lit for you, Michael.

Banking on Detention

In June, CCR and Detention Watch Network released a report on “local lockup quotas,” the payments to prison contractors for detaining a “guaranteed minimum” number of immigrants. A sequel to our 2015 report, which drew on materials obtained through FOIA litigation, our new report documented the existence of quotas for families, and found that 93% of “guaranteed” beds are promised to private contractors. **Read the full report online: bit.ly/bankingondetention2016**



Thank You, Betsy Landis!



A longtime CCR donor, Betsy was also a member of the Thelma Newman Planned Giving Society, generously leaving CCR in her estate plans.

If you would like to leave a social justice legacy like Betsy, please contact Theda Jackson-Mau at 212.614.6448 or tjackson-mau@ccrjustice.org to learn more about your options.

Victory for Palestinian Solidarity Movement

Soon after you received our last newsletter, Steven Salaita, a Palestinian-American professor fired from his tenured position at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign over personal tweets criticizing the Israeli government's assault on Gaza in 2014, reached a significant agreement with university officials to settle his claims against them.

Salaita's firing is part of a broad crackdown on Palestinian rights activism that includes event cancellations, baseless

legal complaints challenging the boycotting of Israeli goods, administrative disciplinary actions, and false and inflammatory accusations of terrorism and anti-Semitism.

"This settlement is a vindication for me, but more importantly, it is a victory for academic freedom and the First Amendment," said Salaita. "The petitions, demonstrations, and investigations, as well as the legal case, have reinvigorated American higher education as a place of critical thinking



Photo: Jeffrey Putney

Salaita's firing became a flashpoint for debates over academic freedom, free speech, and the repression of Palestinian rights advocacy.

and rigorous debate, and I am deeply grateful to all who have spoken out."

IN THE SPIRIT OF **Michael Ratner:** CCR Celebrates 50 Years

Thursday,
Oct. 6, 2016
6:30 pm

City Winery
155 Varick Street
New York City

- Live Performances with Special Guests
- Dinner Reception
- Tribute to **Michael Ratner**
- After Party Dance

For more information, please contact
Theda Jackson-Mau at tjackson-mau@CCRjustice.org

50th
anniversary

1966 1970 1972 1976 1980 1982 1986 1990 1992 1996 2000 2002 2006 2010 2012 2016

For more information or to register, please go to: CCRjustice.org/50Years

Staff Spotlight:

Theda Jackson-Mau, Associate Director of Development

Earlier this year, on Theda Jackson-Mau's third day at CCR, we learned that our client Fahd Ghazy had been released from Guantánamo where he had been imprisoned without charge for 14 years.



"It was a transformative moment for me because I saw first-hand the power and courage of this critically important organization." During her career, Theda has headed development programs in support of civil rights, civil liberties, the arts, land conservation, and social services in New York and Seattle. Please view Theda's full bio on our website.

CCR does not accept corporate or government funding. We rely on your dedication and generosity to fuel the fight for justice. Please give today!