

**THE ACLU/NORTH CAROLINA
COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN
RIGHTS**

By: Slater Newman*

This year's Human Rights Day (December 10) and Human Rights Week (December 10-16) marked the 55th anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Bill of Rights Day (December 15) marked the 212th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights by the requisite number of states.

Again, our Committee, acting through the Human Rights Coalition of North Carolina (of which our affiliate and its Wake county chapter are founding and continuing members, and its Western North Carolina chapter is now also a member) helped to promote recognition of these two "holidays" in several communities around the state. Activities included the following:

1. Governor Easley issued proclamations for Human Rights Day/Week and Bill of Rights Day. Proclamations for one or both were issued also by the Mayors of Asheville, Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Durham, Greenville, Raleigh, Reidsville and Thomasville. For Durham this was the first time. Mayors in the other communities have done so for many years. Each of our Governors at least as far back as 1989 two Democratic and one Republican have issued both proclamations annually.
2. In Greenville there was a public reading of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Bill of Rights.

The event was sponsored by the City of Greenville and the Greenville Human Relations Commission. It was covered by community television.

and was rebroadcast several times that day. Carrboro had a public reading of the Bill of Rights as did Chapel Hill, where there was singing of some civil-liberties related songs by the Raging Grannies, street theater, and the gathering of signatures on a petition opposing provisions of the Patriot Act, sponsored by the Orange County Bill of Rights Defense Committee. Newspaper coverage of the event by both Chapel Hill newspapers was excellent. In addition, on Bill of Rights Day, the Chapel Hill Herald published a guest column, "Take Time to Honor Bill of Rights".

There were two events in Raleigh. On Human Rights Day at the Exploris Museum, fifth-graders read aloud a gender-neutral version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and then eighth-graders read several articles from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and others spoke about how the rights of children were being abridged both in our country and in other countries around the world. On Bill of Rights Day there was a joint celebration of the anniversaries of both documents. It was held in the Rotunda of the Old Capitol and was cosponsored by the ACLU of North Carolina, the Caswell-Nash chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Wake County chapter of the United Nations Association and the Human Rights Coalition of North Carolina. The event included reading of the Governor's two proclamations, short talks on each of the two documents, the singing of "Happy Birthday" to each, plus "Ode to Joy",

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- and the main talk by the Rev. W. W. Finlator, a former national vice-president of the ACLU. On Bill of Rights Day, the Raleigh News and Observer published an op-ed piece, "James Madison and the Struggle for the Bill of Rights"
3. The eighth annual International Human Rights Award Dinner was held at the North Carolina State University Club just prior to Human Rights Week. David Potorti, of Cary, a founder of September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows was this year's recipient. This event was again sponsored by the Human Rights Coalition of North Carolina.
 4. During United Nations Week, the Coalition, in collaboration with the Wake County chapter of the United Nations Association sponsored a public reading of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This was followed by a Dutch-treat lunch at a downtown Raleigh restaurant.
 5. Our ACLU/NC Committee was established in 1989. There are six members, three of whom are members of the affiliate Board. We keep the Board informed of our activities through written reports and the affiliate membership through articles in LIBERTY, the affiliate quarterly newspaper.
 6. We welcome your comments, suggestions, questions. Additional information may be obtained by contacting - Slater E. Newman, Chair, ACLU/NC Committee on International Human Rights, 315 Shepherd Street, Raleigh, NC 27607; Telephone (919) 821-2014; FAX (919) 828-2064; e-mail slaterpat@mindspring.com