



A Message from the Executive Director

Campaigns in Fundraising Mode

Some on Pause While Others Move Forward

Spectrum Institute has several major campaigns designed to stimulate changes in policies and practices that will beneficially affect adults with mental or developmental disabilities. For the past several years, those projects have been operating on an all-volunteer basis. The complexity and depth of our research and writing necessary to give our work product credibility and power now require that some staff time be compensated. As a result, substantive advancements of some campaigns are being paused until funds are raised for staffing needs. As donations are received for a specific campaign, the work in that issue area will resume.

Donations of \$4,000 will allow us to complete a "Consequences" report for our [Mental Health Campaign](#), which will be used as an educational and advocacy tool to improve mental health services for adults with developmental disabilities. We need to raise \$6,000 in order to move into the next phase of the [ADA Judicial Compliance Project](#) during which we will press the judicial branch in California to take affirmative steps to ensure that litigants with cognitive disabilities have access to justice in legal proceedings. Some \$20,000 is needed to pay for some 350 hours of staff time to complete phase two of the [Funding and Fees Review](#) project which will produce a "[Fee for All](#)" report recommending changes to current judicial practices that deplete the assets of conservatees in order to enrich the attorneys who litigate these cases. In the meantime, we are beginning to receive donations to fund our [LGBTQ Outreach Campaign](#) which enables us to develop the [Birds of a Feather](#) 50th Anniversary Commemoration. Net proceeds raised during the

commemoration will fund a [Capacity to Love](#) campaign that we will launch in November 2022.

While it is likely that funds for these campaigns will be received in small or modest donations, we would certainly be pleased to find a check in our mail from one donor sufficient to fund a particular campaign for which that benefactor has a passion. If you or someone you know would like to surprise us in this manner, we are all for it.

Click on the green donate button at the end of this newsletter for information on how to make a donation of any size by check or credit card.

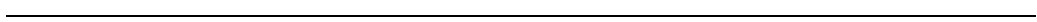


Thomas F. Coleman
Executive Director



“California now requires the appointment of counsel in all conservatorships, regardless of whether the proposed conservatee has requested counsel. Much credit goes to Spectrum Institute which has been pushing for this in California for some time.”

John Pollock
Coordinator, National Coalition
for a Civil Right to Counsel



Register Today -- Nov. 16 at Noon -- Open to All



Presents

Zealous Advocacy

A Webinar on the Implications of AB 1194
for Conservatorship Attorneys, County
Risk Managers, and Court Administrators

This one-hour presentation will explore the duties of attorneys as they fulfill the zealous advocacy requirements of AB 1194, a conservatorship reform law that takes effect on January 1, 2022. Participants also will receive a rundown of 10 potential legal and professional dangers of neglecting the duty of care, as well as an analysis of such issues as third-party standing to file motions, complaints, appeals and civil actions against attorneys who do not provide zealous advocacy to their clients and to the public entities that employ, appoint or fund them. Attendees will receive a [47-page report](#) explaining various dimensions of zealous advocacy for attorneys who represent conservatees and proposed conservatees. It's not just for lawyers. The public may attend the webinar too.



New Member of Board of Trustees

Barbara Imle has joined the board of trustees of Spectrum Institute. Barbara is a doctoral candidate in the sociology department at Portland State University. Her current research is focused on improving the process of establishing limited conservatorships of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in California. Emphasis is placed on finding alternatives, such as supported decision-making arrangements.

Barbara, who has disabilities herself, has some 15 years of professional experience working in the disability service delivery system in California. She was employed by two regional centers. This combination of experiences has provided her with a solid understanding of the complexities related to navigating the disability system, and the challenges that people with disabilities and service agencies face. Barbara has collaborated with Spectrum Institute on a variety of projects for the past several years. She is featured in our *Pursuit of Justice* documentary film. Barbara resides in San Diego. To listen to a one-minute audio statement from Barbara about her new position with Spectrum Institute, [click here](#).

New TV Series on California's Broken Conservatorship System



Earlier this year, Sacramento TV Channel 10 produced a [five-part series](#) of investigative reports on the broken conservatorship system in California and how it adversely affects the elderly. Investigative reporter Andie Judson is currently working on a follow-up series which will focus mainly on conservatorships for adults with developmental disabilities and how that part of system is badly broken too. She recently spent three hours interviewing Thomas F. Coleman, legal director of Spectrum Institute, at his home in Palm Springs. If all goes well, the new series will air by February 2022. This month, November 2021, the station will air three short segments about conservatorships. November 10: the enactment of AB 1194 and its impact on legal services. November 11: the continuing saga of Britney Spears. November

12: an overview of the dysfunction of the limited conservatorship system for adults with developmental disabilities. We will provide links to these videos on the [what's new](#) page of our website. Above: Coleman, Judson, and a Channel 10 videographer.

Diane Coleman-Rogers Retires as a Trustee



Diane Coleman-Rogers has been a member of the board of trustees of Spectrum Institute for more than 20 years. In addition to participating in governing the organization, over the years Diane has contributed her skills in advertising, marketing, and graphic art. She designed the logo for the American Association for Single People when the nonprofit was engaged in activities to protect the rights of single adults and unmarried couples. She designed newspaper ads to announce National Singles Week and when singles' rights advocates went to Washington D.C. to meet with members of Congress. Later, she designed the logo for the Emancipation Project and supported our efforts to stop the abuse of troubled teenagers who were shipped off to boot camps and boarding schools without judicial process. Diane also designed the logo for the Disability and Abuse Project when that was part of our agenda. The current logo of Spectrum Institute was her creation. In appreciation of her years of dedicated service to Spectrum Institute, the board of trustees has conferred on Diane the status of Trustee Emeritus. Her brother, Thomas F. Coleman, had this to say when Diane retired from the board: "Diane is caring, giving, and brilliant at what she does. I have been fortunate to have her closely participating in my nonprofit activities for so many years." (Photos above: Diane speaking at a book reception in 2016 when her brother Tom released a book titled *Growing Up in Ferndale: A Baby Boomer's Memories of Life in Mid-Century Suburban Detroit*.)

Zoom Webinar Specialist to Assist Spectrum Institute



Clara Garcia has offered to assist with the technical aspects of our first Zoom webinar which will be held on November 16. The presentation will explain the duties and risks associated with AB 1194 -- a new conservatorship reform law that takes effect on January 1, 2022. We are grateful to have the assistance of Clara for this important event.

Clara is the Director of Programs at Autism Society Inland Empire. She has been active in the field of social services for the past 26 years in the areas of mental health and drug treatment counseling as well as gang prevention/intervention programs. Clara has spent the last 14 years serving people in the disability community by promoting inclusion, advocating and educating. She has created and implemented inclusive programs for special needs children and their typical peers which include a summer camp, play dates, and outings in the community. What stands out most about Clara is the special relationships she builds with families. Because of her genuine care for families, they turn to her for assistance with advocacy, share important family issues and best of all invite her to gatherings where there is always great food!

Our appreciation is extended to the Autism Society Inland Empire which will be hosting this webinar on Zoom. The organization promotes systemic reforms by working at the local, state and federal levels in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders. It provides expertise, leadership, and support around critical issues such as autism assessment, autism services, education issues, employment, housing and more. All of these issues are related to conservatorship reform.



Unpacked:
Podcast Examines the
Origins
and Unfolding of the
Conservatorship of Britney
Spears

Unpacked is a new investigative podcast that "delves into the world's most curious and complex stories." In this season's first episode, investigative reporter and podcast host Edwina Stott unpacks the story of Britney Spears by talking to the people who were there to examine how the media, her family and the general public have played a part in Britney being forced into a conservatorship and therefore losing control of her career, her money and her life. Legal aspects of the conservatorship are explained by attorney Lisa McCarley who practices law in probate court and attorney Thomas F. Coleman, legal director of Spectrum Institute. For a written description of the podcast episode and to listen to the audio file (27 min.), [click here](#).

The Freedom Files

New Podcast Episode Now Available

The Freedom Files

**EPISODE 5: Dr. Sam Sugar:
An Iconic Warrior for
Guardianship Reform**

This episode covers the work of Dr. Sam Sugar, founder of a nonprofit education and advocacy organization, as he presents at the AAAPG Guardianship Symposium.



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& STREAMING PLATFORMS**

pursuitofjusticepodcast.com / Sponsored by: Law Office of Thomas F. Coleman and Spectrum Institute

Dr. Sam Sugar is the founder of a nonprofit education and advocacy organization known as Americans Against Abusive Probate Guardianship. Since 2013, Dr. Sugar and AAAPG have been in the national forefront of the guardianship reform movement, focusing the attention of the media and the public on the plight of victims of guardianship abuse. To listen to this 30-minute podcast and to access prior podcast episodes, [click here](#).

Feature Story. Dr. Sugar is also the author of *Guardianships and the Elderly: The Perfect Crime* (Square One 2018). The book is described as a survival guide to understanding, dealing with, and avoiding the economic, physical, and psychological abuses of guardianships. To read a feature story about Dr. Sugar and his quest for justice for seniors and others who are targeted by guardianship and conservatorship proceedings, [click here](#). The story was written by Trinity Pierce, then a student intern for Spectrum Institute.



Lachs and Coleman Speak in the Judge Rand Schrader Pro Bono Program Video

UCLA Law School launched the Judge Rand Schrader Pro Bono Program on October 25, 2021. The program is named in honor of Schrader, who along with Thomas F. Coleman and a few other law students created the first gay law students association in the nation in 1972.

Rand went on to become the first openly gay deputy city attorney in Los Angeles in 1974 and the second openly gay judge in the nation in 1980. Retired Superior Court Judge Stephen Lachs spoke during the 8-minute video as did Thomas F. Coleman, the executive director of Spectrum Institute. Judge Lachs is an advisor to the Funding and Fees Review project of Spectrum Institute. Retired Judge Burt Pines, who was the elected city attorney who hired Rand, shared some of his memories of Rand. To watch the video, [click here](#). Rand is one of the trailblazers who will be recognized in the [Birds of a Feather](#) commemoration that Spectrum Institute is launching and which will culminate in the showing of a documentary film at law schools and bar associations in October 2022 about the LGBTQ legal advocacy of the 1970s. Net proceeds from the commemoration will be directed to a [Capacity to Love](#) campaign, being launched in November 2022, to protect the social and sexual rights of LGBTQ adults with mental or developmental disabilities.

In Memory of Theresa Jankowski



We were saddened to learn of the passing of Theresa Jankowski on October 18, 2021. The news was relayed to us by Sharon Holmes, an advisor to Spectrum Institute and a close friend of Theresa. Theresa's quiet and peaceful life was disrupted in 2017 by an unwanted and necessary conservatorship proceeding in the Los Angeles Superior Court. *(Photo: Theresa in center, Sharon at left, Tom Coleman at right)*

A retired employee of the FBI, Theresa was residing in an independent living residence when she was targeted by a conservatorship petition filed by a professional fiduciary. Having outlived her relatives, Theresa turned to an estate planning attorney to prepare a trust and powers of attorney. Theresa, then 83 years-old, had about \$600,000 in liquid assets and an annuity and FBI retirement account that paid for her living expenses. Theresa appeared in court with her chosen attorney only to discover that the judge would not allow him to represent her. Instead, the court appointed another attorney who then refused to advocate for Theresa's wishes which were to dismiss the petition and allow her trust and powers of attorney to take effect. Her appointed attorney argued IN FAVOR OF a conservatorship, and in being disloyal to his client also violated

ethical rules of confidentiality.

Some four years later, Theresa was pressured into a “settlement” where the conservatorship case would be dismissed on condition that she pay the fees of all the attorneys in the case which amounted to about \$350,000. The judge would then allow the trust to take effect. In essence, Theresa was held hostage to a conservatorship with the ransom being the attorney fees. This four-year ordeal took a toll on Theresa and the stress of it no doubt contributed to her demise.

Theresa’s battle with the probate court and her mistreatment by the court-appointed attorney will be used as a teaching example of conservatorship abuse in California. In fact, her case was used to support two provisions in the newly passed AB 1194. One is a legislative declaration that a proposed conservatee has the right to chosen counsel. The other is a provision mandating that counsel for a conservatee or proposed conservatee act as a zealous advocate for the client. Both of these principles were violated in Theresa's case. The attorney-fee abuse Theresa experienced will be discussed at an upcoming "Fee for All" forum sponsored by the Commonwealth Club of California.

Theresa's unfortunate experiences are inspiring legal reforms. May she rest in peace.



Suggested Reading

Autism and Conservatorships: Protecting Civil Rights and Providing Access to Justice

This [presentation](#) provides readers with a basic understanding of what autistic adults face when someone petitions the court for an order of conservatorship. To understand the situation better, it is important to know what substantive rights an autistic adult has prior to a conservatorship, the procedural rights that should be afforded to them in a conservatorship proceeding, and the practical reality of how these proceedings actually operate. Because there is a significant divergence between theoretical procedural protections and actual practices, major reforms are needed to bridge this gap.

Please show your support for our work by making a donation. Since we are an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) charitable foundation, donations to Spectrum Institute are tax-deductible as allowed by federal law.

[Click Here to Donate](#)

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