



*A Message from the Board of Trustees*

## Fundraising Goal is Surpassed

Our supporters gave generously with donations ranging from \$50 to \$2,500. As a result, our basic operating expenses are covered for the next year.

On June 20, 2021, we launched a fundraising drive to attract sufficient financial contributions to cover the basic annual operating expenses of Spectrum Institute. Although the time and talent of board members, officers, executive director and website manager are offered as volunteers, it takes money to run the essential operations of the organization. Essential expenditures include liability insurance, postal expenses, website hosting, graphics, legal research services, and the like.

We reached out to potential donors through our email marketing program, newsletter, website, and social media platforms. Some of us posted on our personal Facebook pages. Our friends, associates, and supporters responded. We are pleased to announce that our campaign raised \$6,450 in six weeks.

Many thanks to those of you who responded. Of course, since our financial needs are ongoing, we invite people who were not able to donate in June or July to do so in the coming weeks and months. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by federal law. To make a donation -- either one time or recurring -- [click here](#).

With much appreciation,

Board of Trustees  
Spectrum Institute

## Summer Interns Propel Our Projects Forward



As summer is ending, our college interns are finishing their work and getting ready to transition back to fall classes or employment opportunities. We were fortunate to have several highly motivated and talented students helping us for the past few months. Two of them joined us as part of a work-study program, one was fulfilling "pro bono" requirements, and two were receiving academic credit.



Maria Reyes Olmedo staffed the ADA Judicial Compliance Project which is focusing on the extent to which courts in California are complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Maria engaged in research and educational outreach to the ADA coordinators and presiding judges in all 58 superior courts as well as the ADA coordinators in all districts of the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. Many courts made changes in their policies and to their websites as a result of our outreach. Attorney Even Nelson is an advisor to the project. The legal director will use Maria's work product as the basis for a progress report for the project to be released in the coming weeks. Maria is a student at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. Maria's video will be available in the next newsletter.

Ben Dishchyan staffed phase one of the Funding and Fees Review Project which is examining how public funds are being used to provide legal services for indigent adults who are targeted by conservatorship petitions or who are living under an ongoing order of conservatorship. Ben was engaged in communications with county public defender departments, private law firms acting as contract

public defenders, and superior courts that operate court-appointed-counsel programs. Attorney John DiPietro is a research associate with this project. The legal director will send a draft of The First Report: Use of Public Funds to the project's 10 advisors for review in the coming weeks. Ben is a law student at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. To view Ben's 1:00 minute video about his experience as an intern with Spectrum Institute, [click here.](#)



Sarah Barlow is graduating this month from Washington State University. She has been our social media association for the past few months. Sarah developed and has managed our social media accounts with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. She helped promote the Freedom Files podcast and expanded the use of our Get Response email outreach program. In addition to doing an amazing job with all of this, Sarah also produced and edited a series of videos featuring our interns which will be used to attract other interns in the future. She also produced and edited "Meet the Team" videos which give board members, advisors, and volunteers an opportunity to discuss their experiences with Spectrum Institute and their hopes for its future. To view Sarah's 2:00 minute video about her experience as an intern with the organization, [click here.](#)

Emmi Deckard, an undergraduate student at UCLA, has been interning with Spectrum Institute for more than six months. The first part of her internship involved writing feature stories for several upcoming episodes of The Freedom Files podcast. More

recently, Emmi has been developing an article for the Mental Health Project. The article synthesizes the findings of several studies and commentaries about the harmful effects to individuals with developmental disabilities when they are denied prompt and appropriate mental health therapies when they are needed. Her article will be included in a publication titled *The First Report: Consequences to the Individual*. It will be released in the coming weeks. However, prior to publication it will be reviewed by mental health advisors to the Mental Health Project. To view Emmi's 2:00 minute video about her experience as an intern with Spectrum Institute, [click here](#).



Kendall James, a student at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, is a work-study intern with Spectrum Institute for the summer. Kendall has been working with the Mental Health Project to research and develop an article for *The Second Report: Consequences to Conservators and Guardians*. Her article will explain the legal duties of guardians and conservators to ensure that adults under their care and control receive necessary and appropriate mental health care in a timely manner. It will explore the legal consequences that should occur to these mental health therapy "gatekeepers" when they willfully or negligently fail to secure such care for protected adults who need it. Prior to inclusion in *The Second Report*, her article will be reviewed by legal advisors to Spectrum Institute. Kendall's video about her experience as an intern with Spectrum Institute will be available in the next newsletter.

Students who did internships with Spectrum Institute in the spring also did short videos. Maia Gryskiewicz did post-production editing for several podcast episodes. To view her 1:00 minute video, [click here](#). Trinity Pierce was an assistant producer and feature story writer for the podcast. To view her 1:30 minute video, [click here](#).

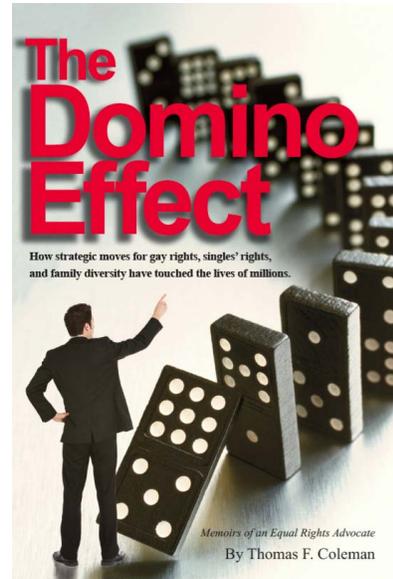
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## THE FREEDOM FILES

Podcast Episode #2 Released on August 1

The Domino Effect: My Life as an Advocate

This episode of the podcast series gives the audience a glimpse into the past of the Tom Coleman and takes a virtual walk down memory lane, reminiscing about life growing up in Ferndale, Michigan, his entry into law school in Detroit, and his move to Los Angeles where he began his lifetime role as a legal advocate at Loyola Law School. The episode touches on a few phases of Tom's advocacy for various causes -- from his focus on LGBT rights and sexual civil liberties in the 1970s, to privacy rights, hate crimes, domestic partner benefits and recognition of family diversity in the 1980s, and then on to the rights of single people during the next two decades . . . with an unexpected adventure for a few years exposing injustices to troubled teenagers by an industry that abducted and confined them in private boot camps and boarding schools. This era ended with the publication in 2009 of *The Domino Effect*, a book of Tom's memoirs as an equal rights advocate. For access to video and audio versions of the podcast, [click here](#).



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## Supreme Court Can Fix Conservatorship Lawyering Mess



The Daily Journal published a commentary on July 20 pointing to California's top court as the best way to fix a mix of systemic problems that undermine the constitutional right of adults with disabilities to have effective legal representation in probate conservatorship proceedings. The supreme court has ultimate responsibility for ethical and professional standards for attorneys who practice law in California's probate courts. It also supervises the State Bar's complaint and discipline system. With such power comes responsibility.

The commentary, written by attorney Thomas F. Coleman, urges the court to start the process of cleaning up an obvious mess off bad lawyering by convening a *Workgroup on Conservatorship Right to Counsel Standards*. The blue ribbon panel would investigate what appears to be a pattern and practice of deficient legal services for conservatees and proposed conservatees and make recommendations on what steps the court should take to ensure that vulnerable adults in these proceedings receive effective legal representation by a lawyer who is loyal and provides zealous advocacy. The Daily Journal is California premier legal newspaper, read by thousands of attorneys, judges, and public officials. To read the commentary, [click here](#).

The same day as the commentary was published, a formal [request](#) was received by the Supreme Court to create such a workgroup. It was submitted by Spectrum Institute and 10 other organizations representing a variety of interests and constituencies. Also endorsing the request is the Long Beach Bar Association. For a press release about the request, [click here](#). To read the news release via Newswire, [click here](#).

The Center for Estate Administration Reform (CEAR) forwarded our press release to California Assemblyman Evan Low and Senator Ben Allen urging them to ensure passage of conservatorship reform legislation requiring attorneys to zealously advocate for the rights of conservatees and proposed conservatees. For a copy of the message, [click here](#).

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# NEWS



## Day of Reckoning is Coming for Britney Spears Court-Appointed Attorney

The *Southern California Record* published a news story on July 9 quoting extensively from an interview with Thomas F. Coleman, legal director of Spectrum Institute, about the consequences that may occur to the court-appointed attorney for Britney Spears. If what Spears says is true -- and there is no good reason to doubt her -- she was betrayed by attorney Sam Ingham III in a variety of ways. At the beginning of the case he argued against her right to have an attorney of her choice. Throughout the case she says she was abused and exploited by her conservators and yet it appears the attorney never brought this issues to the attention of the court. Rather than filing a petition to terminate her conservatorship as she wants, he instead asked to resign. If the court finds that some or all of these matters are true, the judge could order him to repay millions of dollars in legal fees that he received out of her assets. He could also be referred to the State Bar for investigation and discipline. To read the story, [click here](#).

Britney Spears drama sparks partisan splits over conservatorship laws



The Washington Examiner published a story on July 7 noting that even though elected officials in both major political parties agree that conservatorship abuses are real and that the system needs an

overhaul, they are divided as to the approaches that should be taken to fix the problems epitomized in the conservatorship of Britney Spears. The story quoted Thomas F. Coleman, legal director of Spectrum Institute. "Conservatorship abuse is not a partisan issue. Like a contagious disease, it can strike the wealthy or the poor, liberals or conservatives, people of any race or religion," Coleman told the newspaper. "People know that if this can happen to someone as famous and powerful as Britney Spears, it could happen to them or their parents or grandparents." To read the full article, [click here](#).

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## Social Media Episodes: "Meet the Team"



Our social media intern, Sarah Barlow, has expanded a "Meet the Team" series of videos that she launched last month. They give board members, key advisors, and volunteers an opportunity to explain why they are involved with Spectrum Institute and to share their hopes for the organization as it expands and evolves. Some videos can be seen by clicking on the links below. Others will be available with the September newsletter. Thanks to Sarah for creating this series.

Diane Coleman-Rogers (board member) [click here](#)

Sheri Kellogg (board member) [click here](#)

Brook Changala (board member) [click here](#)

Evan Nelson (legal advisor) [click here](#)

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On August 30, 2021, The Commonwealth Club of California will host an Internet forum focusing on the need for conservatorship reform. The 90-minute program

will start at 9:30 a.m. (PDT) and costs \$5.00 for nonmembers.

The mission of The Commonwealth Club is to be the leading national forum open to all for the impartial discussion of public issues important to the membership, community and nation. The club is the nation's oldest and largest public affairs forum. Every year, it presents more than 450 forums on topics ranging across politics, culture, society and the economy.

Thomas F. Coleman, legal director of Spectrum Institute, is a panelist at this forum. Other panelists are: Rick Black of the Center for Estate Administration, attorney Lisa McCarley, and Leanne Simmons from @FreeBritneyLA. The panel moderator is Dr. Gloria Duffy, President and CEO of The Commonwealth Club of California. [Click here](#) for more information.



## Suggested Reading

T. Coleman, "Conservatees Are Legally Entitled to Better Therapy Options," [Daily Journal](#) (Jan. 9, 2020) This commentary discusses the legal right of conservatees to mental health therapy. Depriving conservatees of the full range of mental health therapies that would be available to persons without disabilities may violate laws prohibiting disability discrimination.

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

[Click Here to Donate](#)

Email:

[tomcoleman@spectruminstitute.org](mailto:tomcoleman@spectruminstitute.org)

Website:

<https://spectruminstitute.org/>

