

Pursuit of Justice

A Film on Guardianship Reform

Pursuit of Justice is a documentary film tracking the activities of a civil rights attorney, a clinical psychologist, and a small but growing network of supporters as they advocate for reform of state guardianship and conservatorship systems. These advocates expose injustices that systematically have been affecting hundreds of thousands of Americans of all ages.

The advocates depicted in the film demand that judges and lawmakers reform state laws and court rules so that people do not unnecessarily and unjustly lose the right to vote, or be stripped of the right to make major life decisions regarding where to live, what friends to have, what medical care to receive or reject, whether to marry or have sexual relations, what job to hold, what school to attend, and what products or services to purchase – decision-making rights that most Americans take for granted.

The film focuses on individual stories of injustice, as well as class-action complaints filed by Spectrum Institute with federal, state, and local officials seeking political and legal reform. The film shares successes and failures, support and resistance, as these advocates have promoted guardianship reform for several years. These advocates have tirelessly fought for the rights of more than 1.5 million Americans who are currently under an order of guardianship and the tens of thousands who are involuntarily drawn into these proceedings each year in the United States.

The film will be used as a tool to create greater public awareness of the need for guardianship reform. It will be shared with disability rights and seniors organizations with a request that they give this issue a higher priority on their advocacy

agendas. It will also be distributed to public officials and professional associations with the goal of enlisting their support for the principle that seniors and people with disabilities should have access to justice in guardianship and conservatorship proceedings. The film and the distribution process will emphasize the need for guardianship practices to provide due process of law and to comply with the mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Guardianship reform will benefit seniors as well as people with intellectual, developmental, or other cognitive and communication disabilities.

The filmmaker is Greg Byers. The civil rights attorney is Thomas F. Coleman. The clinical psychologist is Nora J. Baladerian, Ph.D. Film locations include Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento, San Francisco, Seattle, Olympia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC.

Spectrum Institute is a non-profit organization promoting equal rights and justice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Through its Disability and Abuse Project – headed by Dr. Baladerian – the organization works to identify ways to reduce the risk of abuse, to promote healing for victims, and to seek justice for those who have been victimized. Through its Disability and Guardianship Project – headed by attorney Coleman – the organization seeks to improve guardianship procedures for adults of all ages who have disabilities and to promote viable alternatives to guardianship.



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