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Attorney Richard I. Fine Released

By Stephen Lendman
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An earlier article explains his judicial lynching, accessed through the following link:

<http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2010/04/richard-i-fines-judicial-lynching.html>

A longtime distinguished lawyer, detailed information about him, his career, and lawless disbarment and imprisonment can be found through the following link:

<http://sites.google.com/site/freerichardfine/>

From the early 1990s until his disbarment and March 4, 2009 jailing, Fine challenged and corrected state corruption, returning about "\$350 million to California taxpayers which state, county and municipal governments (unlawfully took from) 'special funds' and 'trust funds' in a series of taxpayer cases filed in federal" and state courts.

Yet, for his many years of crime fighting, he was charged with "contempt of court" and "moral turpitude," disbarred by California's Supreme Court, and jailed by Superior Court Judge David Yaffe (retiring November 1) "in retaliation for bringing the cases and exposing the unconstitutional payments," ones later held to be unconstitutional.

Last spring, Fine appealed to the US Supreme Court for release. The California Bar waived its right to respond, meaning his appeal was unopposed. Nonetheless, on May 24, 2010, Fine's Petition for Writ of Certiorari (an order to a lower court) was denied without explanation or comment. As a result, he remained a political prisoner, one of many hundreds in America, a topic an earlier article addressed, accessed through the following link:

<http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2010/08/political-prisoners-in-america.html>

At the time, his daughter Victoria Fine, a Huffington Post journalist and editor, said:

"We are deeply disappointed in the outcome of this. It's scary to me that the justice system at all levels doesn't see the inherent flaws in the system and is choosing not to correct them."

Richard Fine Released

With few details available, and little media coverage outside Los Angeles, the following accounts announced the news:

On September 18, Los Angeles Times writer Scott Glover headlined, "Lawyer abruptly freed from jail," saying:

After a year and a half in jail on contempt charges, "Richard Fine was released from Los Angeles County Jail in downtown Los Angeles shortly after 9 p.m. but did not wish to speak to a Times reporter."

On LA Observed, Kevin Roderick wrote:

"Fine, the 70-year old lawyer and self-styled taxpayer advocate sent to jail 'indefinitely' by a ticked-off Superior Court judge (was) released abruptly last night."

On Examiner.com Los Angeles, Laura Lynn said:

"Attorney Richard Fine was released from jail Friday, according to an LA Times article and children's rights advocate Janette Isaacs."

Isaacs suggested that Yaffe may have released him on Yom Kippur (a day of

onement for Jews) as "a symbolic act."

Los Angeles Daily News writer Troy Anderson said Fine told the paper, in a phone interview, that his release showed "right will win over might. This is really a great day for Los Angeles and for California."

He'd written Yaffe recently, requesting a new judge because of his retirement. He then speculated that Yaffe may not have wanted to hand someone else his "complicated case....I guess Friday it all came to a head and Yaffe suddenly decided he wanted out of all this and decided to release me."

Perhaps he also wished to close it ahead of his retirement, or even had second thoughts about his outrageous sentencing of a man deserving praise, not indefinite punishment for serving the people of Los Angeles County heroically and selflessly.

Until September 17, he'd spent 563 days in solitary confinement, the longest ever for an attorney (or perhaps anyone) for contempt of court. Emerging, however, his spirit was as high as last May after the Supreme Court denied his petition, saying then:

"I'm in fighting condition. They haven't broken me down, and they won't break me down."

On September 18, he said:

"We can now look at cleaning up the judiciary and stopping (23 years of) illegal payments....that have cost taxpayers \$300 million."

While imprisoned, Fine filed dozens of motions, including a complaint several days before his release, charging local, state and federal prosecutors with a massive "judicial corruption and bribery scheme" in California courts.

Writing District Attorney Steve Cooley, state Attorney General Jerry Brown, and US Attorney Andre Birotte, he requested local, state, and federal investigations of LA County judges and supervisors for alleged corruption, a longstanding problem Fine challenged from the early 1990s until his illegal disbarment and March 4, 2009 jailing.

Now free, he may continue his work and advocacy to cleanse LA County of corruption, costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, the same problem throughout America, especially in Washington, as well as from Wall Street and other corporate predators, notorious for ripping off unsuspecting customers and clients.

A Final Comment

Those challenging entrenched power risk grave harm to themselves. Besides many others, Fine and two other courageous lawyers stand out.

Paul Bergrin is one, an earlier article addressing his case, accessed through the following link:

<http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2009/12/targeting-lawyers-case-of-paul-bergrin.html>

A "top prosecutor" and one of New Jersey's "most prominent (and effective) defense lawyers," according to The New York Times, he ran afoul of the system by defending one of US soldiers charged with killing four Iraqis near Samarra during Operation Iron Triangle in May 2006, a case that made international headlines.

Yet as Professor Stjepan Mestrovic explained in his book titled, "The 'Good Soldier' on Trial: A Sociological Study of Misconduct by the US Military Pertaining to Operation Iron Triangle, Iraq," four charged soldiers followed their commander's (Col. Michael Steele) Rules of Engagement (ROE) to "kill all military age males." They had to obey or face Court Martial and imprisonment, their fate as it turned out anyway to absolve their commander of responsibility.

Bergrin wanted him and the entire chain of command, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, George Bush and Dick Cheney held culpable, and therein lay his undoing.

Arrested and imprisoned since May 2009, he was accused of racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, wire fraud, wire fraud conspiracy, the murder of a federal witness, and conspiracy to commit murder plus other charges in a 14-count indictment. One or more of the charges were later dropped, but if convicted of those remaining, he faces a potential life sentence - not for any crime, but for doing his job honorably and courageously.

Six earlier articles discussed another longtime heroic lawyer, Lynne Stewart, access through the following link, the most recent article includes

links to the others:

<http://sjlendman.blogspot.com/2010/07/darkness-in-america-lynnestewarts.html>

The opening paragraph said the following:

She worked selflessly, tirelessly, and heroically for 30 years as a human rights champion, defending America's poor, underprivileged, and unwanted - people never afforded due process and judicial fairness without an advocate like her.

She knew the risks, yet took them courageously until bogusly indicted on April 9, 2002 on four counts, then convicted by outrageous government-orchestrated antics inside and outside the court. Initially sentenced to 28 months, she was re-sentenced to 10 years after losing her appeal.

Another is planned. If turned down, perhaps followed by one to the Supreme Court for justice she's been so far denied. Age 71 in October, she's been ill with cancer, now in remission, a recent biopsy confirming it. Since imprisonment, she's also had surgery, successfully done with no complications, but not by doctors or in a hospital of her choice.

West Coast Director of the Lynne Stewart Defense Committee called her "a brilliant and dedicated fighter sacrificed on the alter of an intolerant class-biased system of repression and war."

So is Paul Bergrin for confronting US barbarism and Richard I. Fine for challenging LA County corruption.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network Thursdays at 10AM US Central time and Saturdays and Sundays at noon. All programs are archived for easy listening.

<http://www.progressiveradionetwork.com/the-progressive-news-hour/>.

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