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“CIVIL LIBERTY” EXHIBIT TO OPEN AT MIDTOWN GLOBAL MARKET

Minneapolis, MN - Civil Liberty is a public installation project that features a broad look at America’s civil libertarian traditions. The project reaches beyond easy political classifications, pulling in discussions about free speech, search and seizure issues, and gun rights in equal measure. During a month that features both Constitution Day and the ten-year anniversary of the 9-11 attacks, it is fitting that we examine the role of individual rights in America, and the challenges that attend them.

Civil Liberty is presented by Public Record Media (PRM). The project draws upon over ten years of documentary and journalistic work undertaken by PRM’s Matt Ehling. The installation interfaces with audio and video content hosted on PRM’s web site. Both the installation and the on-line content will be viewable beginning on September 1st, 2011.

Exhibit Location & Schedule

Civil Liberty can be seen inside the 10th Avenue door of the Midtown Global Market from September 1-30 of 2011. Midtown Global Market is located at 920 E. Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

About Public Record Media

Public Record Media (PRM) produces independent-minded, non-partisan public affairs writing and programming. PRM also vigorously pursues government data through open records requests. Information is the lifeblood of a healthy democracy. PRM’s mission is to encourage substantive discussions of public affairs issues, and to promote civic values such as open, constitutional governance.

About Matt Ehling

PRM president Matt Ehling is a Twin Cities based television producer and writer. He founded Public Record Media in 2010, after nearly two decades in the communications industry. Ehling’s television and radio documentaries frequently focus on national security, civil liberties, and legal issues. His original broadcast programs include “Urban Warrior” and “Intent: Searching For Meaning In The Constitution”, and have appeared on PBS, the Bravo Channel, and the Independent Film Channel, as well as at national and international film festivals.

His written work – both news articles and op-ed pieces – has appeared in a variety of publications, including the on-line news magazine Minnpost.com. He has lectured and taught at the University of Minnesota, the University of Saint Thomas, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. He has served on the boards of several non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities area.

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“CIVIL LIBERTY” SAMPLE TEXT

FREE SPEECH AND ITS CHALLENGERS

The Constitution guarantees specific freedoms in the First Amendment – the freedom to speak, the freedom of the press, and the freedom to assemble, among others. While these rights have been promised, they have not always been upheld.

Sometimes, the government has tried to stop the publication of things that have displeased it. The Nixon administration attempted to get courts to halt the publication of Vietnam-era war plans that were leaked to the New York Times. In that instance, Nixon lost, and press rights emerged triumphant.

At other times, the government has acted to stop people from assembling freely. After the first day of the 1999 World Trade Organization protests, the mayor of Seattle banned everyone but WTO delegates from the city center. Later, courts issued mixed rulings, upholding the city’s power to shut down the streets, but finding that some individuals had their rights violated.



“So what wound up happening was that Mayor Schell set out for Wednesday and for the rest of the week what he called a ‘no-protest zone.’” – Geoff Parrish, journalist

Often, the government has acted to surveil speakers that it dislikes, and to keep track of their actions. Such activities have served to chill the speech of these groups or individuals. Government agents have surveilled and infiltrated political organizations, have recorded their conversations, and have sometimes actively worked to disrupt entirely legal activities.

Such actions occurred during the FBI’s COINTELPRO era of the 1960s, and were echoed in later decades with differing variations. During the 1980s, church groups that focused on Central American policy issues were subjected to break-ins. Within the past decade, undercover operatives from the Defense Department were sent to infiltrate peace groups.

“I know a number of people who I was active with who have remained paranoid all of their lives as a result of that surveillance. It gets people afraid. You never know who in the room is the one doing the reporting, the watching, the telling.” – Dennis Stoval, anti-Vietnam War activist



After 9/11, national security concerns provided new rationales to constrain speech. Memos written by Bush administration lawyers stated that “First Amendment speech and press rights may also be subordinated to the overriding need to wage war successfully.”

As of late, government action has focused on post-publication punishment for speech-related activity. The web site Wikileaks, for instance, has faced threats of prosecution for publishing leaked government documents.

The story of the First Amendment in America is a work-in-progress, and it charts a continual tension between those who seek speech, and those who see constraint.



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