

# CENTER *for* JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, INC.\*

Post Office Box 8220  
White Plains, New York 10602

Tel. (914) 421-1200  
Fax (914) 428-4994

E-Mail: [cja@judgewatch.org](mailto:cja@judgewatch.org)  
Website: [www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org)

Elena Ruth Sassower, Director

**TO: “JOURNALISM THAT MATTERS: THE D.C. SESSIONS” —  
August 7-8, 2007 Conference: “What Will Happen When Only the Journalism is Left?”**

**RE: Pre-Conference Interview Questions: THE TEST OF “THE NEXT NEWSROOM”**

My assigned pre-conference interview partner is the director of the Media Giraffe Project, Bill Densmore, for whom I left a voice mail message on August 1<sup>st</sup> – the day on which my pairing with him was posted. Doubtless due to his busy schedule as an organizer of this “Journalism That Matters” conference, I did not hear back from him.

Consequently, I cannot share with you Bill’s answers to the four suggested questions: (1) “A story that mattered”; (2) “Your greatest contribution”; (3) “What’s working in the new ecosystem?”; and (4) “Envision journalism in 10 years”. I believe, however, that Bill knows my answers from our past lengthy conversations and my correspondence concerning the document I publicly gave him, in hand, at last year’s Media Giraffe conference, “Democracy & Independence: Sharing News and Politics in a Connected World”.

That document is the verified complaint in a public interest lawsuit against The New York Times that powerfully advances “journalism that matters” by a first-of-its-kind cause of action for journalistic fraud. Judicial recognition of such cause of action would give the public a legal remedy against media which place their own financial and other interests above their First Amendment responsibilities to inform the public as to matters of legitimate public concern. It builds on recommendations for media reform and accountability made in three separate law review articles. The lawsuit is based on my more than 15 years of direct, first-hand interactions with The Times, chronicled by a “paper trail” of correspondence, establishing its pattern and practice of knowingly false and misleading reporting and editorializing about the processes of judicial selection and discipline, thwarting reform and “protecting” complicit public officers for whom it election-rigs. This includes New York’s U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, re-elected by a landslide vote in 2006 and now the frontrunner for the 2008 presidential nomination of the Democratic party.

The full record of the lawsuit – whose plaintiffs are myself and the non-partisan, non-profit Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) of which I am co-founder and director – is posted in its entirety on CJA’s website, [www.judgewatch.org](http://www.judgewatch.org) – accessible *via* the sidebar panel “Suing The New York Times”. I urge you to visit, as the lawsuit clearly qualifies as “a story” in which I have been “engaged” having “great productive impact”. Indeed, the lawsuit also represents my “greatest contribution” to journalism, enabling me to bring to the conference “a gift” like none other. These are my answers to the first two interview questions.

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\* **Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA)** is a national, non-partisan, non-profit citizens’ organization working to ensure that the processes of judicial selection and discipline are effective and meaningful – a goal which cannot be reached without media discharging their First Amendment responsibilities to inform the public as to matters of legitimate public concern.

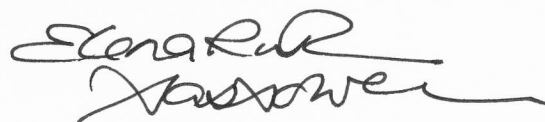
My answers to the third and fourth interview questions are also evident from CJA’s “Suing The New York Times” webpage. It posts an abundance of press releases, handouts, and correspondence establishing my herculean outreach efforts to secure media coverage, as well as scholarship by law and media professors and by institutes of research and pedagogy – all unsuccessful. Among those who rebuffed my entreaties are prominent representatives of the “new ecosystem”, pivotally shaping what journalism will be in “10 years” and participants at this convention. Illustrative is media blogger and professor Jay Rosen – “a leading figure in the reform movement known as ‘public journalism’ which calls on the press to take a more active role in strengthening citizenship, improving public debate and reviving public life”. He has stated to me, outright and without explanation, that he will not comment on The Times lawsuit or the public’s right to be informed about it.

The third interview question assumes that respondents will have positive experiences to recount about the “new realities, in which a story did its work innovatively and well” – and from which they will have learned “about the gifts of both new innovations and the traditional roots of journalism”. I have nothing favorable to say about the “new ecosystem”, with its profusion of blogs devoted to media, political, and legal reporting and commentary. Based on my direct, first-hand interactions with bloggers during the past year and a half, as chronicled by the postings on CJA’s website, it is quite apparent that these new media entities are no less “gatekeepers” than the mainstream media. And like the mainstream media, they have ZERO respect for their First Amendment obligations to the public when such conflict with their personal, professional, and financial relationships.

As for my “insights” as to “how to prepare the next generation of journalists”, I believe the Media Giraffe Project should stop focusing on the impact of technology and revenue sources for journalism, which is what a myriad of other entities do. Rather, like the Giraffe Project from which it takes its name, the Media Giraffe Project should be locating and lauding persons who “stick their neck out for the common good” – in this case, by their courage in a journalism context. This is imperatively needed. Time and again, since my first conversation with Bill in early 2005, I have asked him for names of “media giraffes” who will report on readily-verifiable documentary evidence of systemic governmental corruption involving the judiciary and the processes of judicial selection and discipline – as well as scholars who will examine this media taboo. Bill has yet to furnish me with a single name.

Until Bill and participants of these “Journalism That Matters” conferences are able to identify journalists who – for starters – will inform the public of a story so transcendently important to our democracy as CJA’s lawsuit against The Times for journalistic fraud and the tight-lipped refusal of professors and academic institutes to even comment about it – I don’t believe it reasonable to envision that in ten years time journalism will be “fulfill[ing] its core mission of serving healthy democracy – providing the information people need to make good choices in their lives...” – which is the fourth interview question.

The goal of this conference is to plan and launch “the next newsroom”. Will “the next newsroom” be investigating and reporting on the lawsuit against The Times? – or will it continue the *status quo* of suppression? The lawsuit is a powerful test of the integrity of our endeavors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan Rula" followed by a stylized flourish.