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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **SYMPOSIUM ADDRESSING CHALLENGES OF BRINGING JUSTICE TO LONGSTANDING VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATION TO FEATURE 2009 GRUBER JUSTICE PRIZE RECIPIENTS**

### **Bryan Stevenson and European Roma Rights Centre to Receive Prestigious Gruber Justice Prize in Birthplace of U.S. Civil Rights Movement Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham Hosting Ceremony and Panel Discussion**

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September 21, 2009, New York, NY – “Access to Justice for Underserved Populations” will be the theme of a discussion led by Judge Bernice Donald, US District Court, Western District of Tennessee. 2009 Gruber Justice Prize recipients **Bryan Stevenson** and the **European Roma Rights Centre** will share the \$500,000 Justice Prize and recount their experiences of how victims of discrimination view the legal system, impediments to providing access to justice to the underserved, origins of these obstacles, and the means of addressing some of these issues. Representatives of the European Roma Rights Centre, Managing Director Rob Kushen and Deputy Director Isabela Mihalache, will also discuss the effect that expanding EU membership has had on access to justice for the Roma. Mr. Stevenson will discuss providing access for a reasonable cost in capital cases. The 2009 Gruber Justice Prize will be presented to the two recipients in a ceremony prior to the symposium, which will be held at the Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, Alabama on September 24 at noon. Video of the ceremony and symposium will be available for viewing on the Gruber Foundation website on Tuesday, September 29 at

[http://www.gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/Justice\\_LaureateOverview.php?awardid=52](http://www.gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/Justice_LaureateOverview.php?awardid=52)

“To redress the arbitrary use of power was Peter Gruber’s motivation when we established the Justice Prize,” said Patricia Gruber, president of the foundation that bears their names. “Dedicated to bringing justice to those who have historically been denied a fair hearing, the outstanding efforts of Bryan Stevenson and the ERRC provide an invaluable blueprint for working with challenges and for expanding the possibilities of those who have been denied.”

The event participants will include:

**Bryan Stevenson** - Executive director of Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), which represents indigent defendants, death row inmates, and juveniles who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system. With his staff, Stevenson has largely been responsible for reversals and reduced sentences in more than 75 death penalty cases. He has provided an effective training and consulting resource for counsel representing death row inmates and is spearheading litigation in 19 states to get a fair review of sentencing and parole-eligible re-sentencing. Stevenson has been consistently recognized by the National Law Journal as one of the 100 most influential lawyers in America. A complete biography is available at

[http://www.gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/Justice\\_LaureateBio.php?id=85&awardid=52](http://www.gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/Justice_LaureateBio.php?id=85&awardid=52).

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**Robert Kushen** - Managing director of the European Roma Rights Centre, a public interest law organization defending the rights of persons of Roma origin throughout Europe (see below). Kushen has served as executive director of the Harvard PEPFAR Program, an HIV treatment program operating in three countries in Africa and serving 75,000 patients, and has been director of International Operations at the Open Society Institute. He has also been executive director of Doctors of the World, an NGO that addresses healthcare problems caused by human rights abuses, and has served as an attorney-adviser to the Office of the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Department of State. He has a BA from Harvard College in Russian and Soviet Studies and a JD from Columbia.

**Isabela Mihalache** – Deputy director of the European Roman Rights Centre. She was involved previously with the Roma Initiatives at the Open Society Institute where she designed and supported advocacy strategies for European and state policies in the social inclusion of Roma, leading and supporting major regional and international Roma mobilization. She works in partnership with European and international institutions – including the European Parliament, European Commission, EU institutions, UN bodies, and the World Bank – on behalf of the integration of Roma. She serves also as a Board member of the European Roma Grassroots Organization of the Spolu International.

**European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)** is an international public interest law organization that combats anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma in Europe. ERRC has set in motion more than 500 court cases in 15 countries to bring to justice state and non-state actors who have discriminated against Romani individuals in education, housing, employment, healthcare and other areas, or have committed violence against them. It has secured over 2 million euro in compensation for Romani individuals for the abuse they suffered and the subsequent failure of their respective governments to ensure justice. A complete organizational summary is available at [http://www.gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/Justice\\_LaureateBio.php?id=84&awardid=52](http://www.gruberprizes.org/GruberPrizes/Justice_LaureateBio.php?id=84&awardid=52).

**The Honorable Bernice Donald** will be the panel's moderator. Judge of the U.S. District Court, Western District of Tennessee, she is currently serving as secretary of the American Bar Association, the first woman of color ever to serve as an officer of that organization. She has long been a strong advocate for diversity both inside and outside the legal profession. She has served as president of the National Association of Women Judges, president of the Association of Women Attorneys, chair of the Memphis Diversity Institute, and chair of the Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Legal Profession.

In addition to the shared cash award of \$500,000, recipients receive a medal of honor and a citation, which reads:

*The **2009 Justice Prize of The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation** is proudly presented to **Bryan Stevenson and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)** for advancing human rights and the cause of justice.*

***Bryan Stevenson's** commitment to skillfully defending the marginalized and youth facing capital charges, and to recruiting and training others to do so, is an emphatic rejection and response to policies in Alabama and elsewhere, of prosecuting such defendants without providing them with effective representation. It demonstrates a passionate commitment to justice for all, and has resulted in more than 75 death sentences being overturned.*

*The **ERRC** has been an indefatigable advocate of human rights for Romani victims of discrimination of all forms, persecution, and violence in Europe. Through precedential litigation before national and regional courts and innovative policy proposals, the ERRC has ensured substantial justice in the face of often indifferent and complicit governments and public opinion in the 13 years since its formation.*

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"Through their extraordinary courage and passion, this year's prize recipients have made justice under law a reality for many who have been historically and systematically denied their rights," said Judge Bernice Donald. "Their work breathes new life into the law and its potential to serve as a tool for justice. Each recipient's work thereby provides hope to the oppressed and inspiration to their champions."

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## Members of the committee that selected the 2009 Justice Prize recipients:

- **Carmen Maria Argibay**, Supreme Court of Justice of Argentina
- **Giuseppe Bisconti**, Studio Legale Bisconti
- **Arthur Chaskalson**, Constitutional Court of South Africa (Ret.)
- **Param Kumaraswamy**, Barrister-at-law at Inner Temple, London; Advocate and Solicitor in Kuala Lumpur
- **Bernice Donald**, U.S. District Court, Western District of Tennessee
- **Martin Lee**, Office of Mr. Martin C.M. Lee, QC., SC

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## Laureates of the Gruber Foundation Justice Prize:

- **2008: Judge Thomas Buerghenthal and Jerome J. Shestack**
- **2007: Judge Carmen Argibay, Judge Carlos Cerda, and Mónica Feria.**
- **2006: The Honorable Aharon Barak**
- **2005: Dató Param Kumaraswamy**
- **2004: Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson, and Deputy Chief Justice Pius Langa**
- **2003: Madame Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella and Madame Justice Bertha Wilson**
- **2002: Fali Sam Nariman**
- **2001: The Honorable Justice Anthony Roy Gubbay, and the Law Society of Zimbabwe**

## Additional Information

**The Gruber International Prize Program** honors contemporary individuals in the fields of Cosmology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Justice and Women's Rights, whose groundbreaking work provides new models that inspire and enable fundamental shifts in knowledge and culture. The Selection Advisory Boards choose individuals whose contributions in their respective fields advance our knowledge, potentially have a profound impact on our lives, and, in the case of the Justice and Women's Rights Prizes, demonstrate courage and commitment in the face of significant obstacles.

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. For more information about Foundation guidelines and priorities, please go to: <http://www.gruberprizes.org>

**For more information on the Gruber Prizes** email [media@gruberprizes.org](mailto:media@gruberprizes.org) or contact the Gruber Foundation at 340-775-8035 or by mail 140 W 57th St Suite 10C New York, NY 10019.

Media materials and additional background information on the Gruber Prizes can be found at **our online newsroom**: <http://www.gruberprizes.org/Press.php>

## NOTE TO MEDIA: PRIZE RECIPIENTS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

To schedule a one-on-one interview with any of the 2009 Gruber Foundation Justice Prize recipients or to attend and cover the symposium event, contact Alyson O'Mahoney at +1 (914) 241-0086, ext 13, or email [aomahoney@robinleedyassociates.com](mailto:aomahoney@robinleedyassociates.com)

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