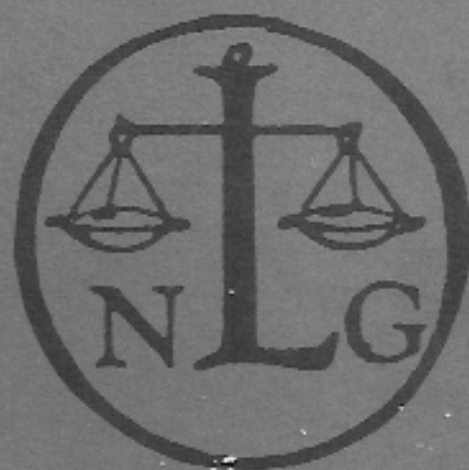


DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CHAPTER

National Lawyers Guild



First Annual Community Justice Awards Dinner

Honorees

Selma Rein

Brint Dillingham

Thursday, February 28, 1985

The Awards

The National Lawyers Guild Service Award



Selma Rein justly deserves to be the first recipient of the District of Columbia Chapter's service award. Selma has long been active in the Guild even before the organization expanded its membership to include non-lawyer legal workers. She was instrumental in bringing the chapter back into existence in 1969. She was the first non-lawyer on the chapter's Executive Board and was a member of the Board until she died. During those years she provided the chapter with her energy and enthusiasm which never faltered. She was the spirit of the chapter and she will always remain so.

The David and Selma Rein Community Justice Award



This award is dedicated to two members of the District of Columbia Chapter whose activism in the D.C. community spanned over forty years, David and Selma Rein.

David was a forceful advocate who never wavered from the principles of justice and liberty. Along with his law partner Joe Forer, he took on the causes and clients when most others in the profession of law were too timid and afraid of being ostracized by the legal establishment. With his energy and skill more often than not he brought justice to his clients and their cause.

Selma brought the fire of her indignation at social injustice to the struggle. Enough to share and energize the rest of us when the cause seemed hopeless or the task insurmountable.

Neither of them ever retired from the fight for justice. We miss them both and will remember them each year this award is presented.

Brint Dillingham is a fitting first recipient for this award. To the struggle for justice he brings his dedication and perseverance, tempering it with his humanity and humor. In saluting Brint we honor the memory of David and Selma.

Selma Rice Rein

IT IS EMBLEMATIC of Selma Rein's life that the month before her death—at age 72 on January 17, 1985 after a long bout with cancer—she was picketing the South African Embassy to protest that government's racist apartheid policies.

For half a century, dating back to her days at Brooklyn College, Selma Rein walked countless picket lines, marched in scores of demonstrations, and attended hundreds of meetings called to deal with the central issues of her time—war and peace, civil rights, nuclear weapons proliferation, the treatment of workers.

Selma would sometimes tell people—despite all the activities she had been involved in—that she was “no big deal” because she always felt that there was so much more to accomplish in fighting against injustices both here and abroad.

But the enemies of the principles Selma Rein stood for have long thought otherwise: the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) denounced her a quarter of a century ago; the Federal Bureau of Investigation for years monitored the activities of Selma and her late husband, prominent civil rights and civil liberties attorney David Rein; in more recent years, when the nuclear freeze movement began to accelerate, since-deceased Rep. Larry McDonald, a John Birch Society Member of Congress, entered into *The Congressional Record* the names of people in the nuclear freeze movement he considered especially sinister—and right in there, along with all the nationally known leaders of the movement was the name of Selma Rein.



Selma demonstrating at the White House in 1981 to protest Reagan budget cuts. Photo by JEB.

Selma Rice, as she was known before her marriage to David Rein, was born and grew up in New York City. After attending the city's public schools, she went on to graduate from Brooklyn (N.Y.) College in the mid-1930s.

Soon thereafter, Selma came to Washington, D.C. to work as an economist for the National Labor Relations Board. Even though she supervised a number of employees at the agency, Selma characteristically didn't think of herself in the bosses' class—and to show it, she became active in organizing a federal employees' union which was affiliated with the old Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

Selma's passionate sense of social justice and a fierce determination directed her activities. She assumed a strong role in the founding of the Progressive Party after World War II. Later, she was one of the organizers of Women Strike for Peace and a founding member of the Paul Robeson Society. She worked tirelessly for civil rights, against the war in Viet Nam and against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The decline and ultimate abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities can be attributed in great measure to Selma's efforts.

In recent years, Selma devoted her efforts to the work of the National Lawyers Guild, serving with distinction on its executive board. As a staunch supporter of women's rights, she suited her actions to her beliefs. At one NLG National Executive Board meeting in the District of Columbia, Selma openly—and in no uncertain terms—criticized one of the speakers for what she believed was his sexism. She then up and stalked out of the meeting in righteous indignation.

Selma often could be toughest on those closest to her politically because she expected a higher standard from them. One of her frequently used sentences, stated in a stinging tone, was "you (or he, or she, or they) should know better." It was a rebuke reserved not for the hopeless Ronald Reagans of the world, but for her allies or former allies who had slipped from the high standard Selma set.

Another striking feature of Selma was her fearlessness. "She was someone who never had any hesitation about doing things she believed in," says long-time activist Helen Gurewitz. "I don't remember her backing away from anything on any occasion. She believed in putting her body on the line for what she was fighting for."

Over the years, Selma and David Rein (and, after David's death in August 1979, Selma alone) unselfishly turned over their residences for countless fundraisers and meetings. Selma's older activist colleagues remember dancing on the lawn at the Reins' house in 1948 at a party for Henry Wallace's presidential candidacy on the Progressive Party ticket; in more recent years, Selma's apartment has been the scene of fundraisers for the National Lawyers Guild, for various cases involving government spying and harassment of political activists, and for D.C. statehood, among other things.

Although David's death and her own illness forced Selma to curtail many of her activities in recent years, she continued to serve, as activist Sam Pizzigati put it, as a "mentor for a younger generation." In this connection, in the late 1970s, she helped a group of Italian Americans launch a new organization, the Committee for a Democratic Foreign Policy Toward Italy. To



David the Marine and Selma in 1945.

*In Memory of Selma
from sisters Rose and Frances,
and her brother Murray.*

In Memory of Selma Rein
from current and former staff
members of the

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW REPORTER

*We will
remember her always
as one of us.*
The Executive Board

Selma and David,
fighters and friends.

Eleanor Stein
Philip Stein
Jeffrey Jones
Carol Arnel

Selma Rein was, for me, that most evocative image: a rainbow, spanning the generations of Washington activists; joining my parents (beside whom Selma struggled) and myself (and we struggled a lot!). The list of organizations which united Selma and my family are too numerous to list, but included: the Washington Book Shop, the Anti-Poll Tax Committee, Spanish War Relief, Home Rule for the District and Women Strike for Peace. How we will miss Selma!

Barbara Bick, Lillian & Sam Lichtenstein

SELMA REIN
DEVOTED SECRETARY-TREASURER
WASHINGTON AREA MILITARY AND DRAFT LAW PANEL

A Project of the National Lawyers Guild, the American Civil
Liberties Union and the National Conference of Black Lawyers

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many of the younger people in the group, it came as a great revelation to hear Selma describe how the U.S. government had subverted the 1948 elections in Italy to keep the political left out of the Italian government.

On the lighter side, Pizzigati recalls, the organization often held dinner meetings, and Selma didn't let her New York Jewish background prevent her from putting away plates full of spaghetti and lasagna with the best of the Italian-American eaters.

Although Selma was deeply involved in national and international issues, she always found time to devote to local matters. She was a key figure in the successful effort in the late 1940s to desegregate the city's restaurants (while David Rein handled the legal end of things, Selma and a number of other activists picketed, leafleted and otherwise called attention to the restaurants' discriminatory treatment of blacks); she helped organize the first racially integrated day-care service in the federal government;



Selma in New York City in 1944.

she was a founding member of the D.C. Statehood Party.

As a long-time resident of the District of Columbia, Selma railed against the second-class citizenship bestowed upon District residents by a Congress intent on maintaining the city as its personal fiefdom rather than granting its citizens the same rights that all other Americans have. Home rule by itself was not enough, in Selma's view: Statehood was the answer.

Selma worked in developing the platform for the Statehood Party and

*The accomplishments
of Selma Rein
and Brint Dillingham
have been an inspiration for
all who struggle for justice.*

*With appreciation from the
Women of D.C. Chapter*

for Selma

Whose love and need for justice was
so deep that she never lost her capacity
for outrage.

Judy Mead



Selma at the Jefferson Memorial, taking time out from organizing federal workers in the 1940s.

served as treasurer for the party for a number of years. As Statehood Party Chairperson Josephine Butler says, "Selma was the moral conscience of whatever activity she put her mind to do."

In addition to her activism, Selma's interests were legion. She loved opera, the ballet and classical music in all its forms. She was knowledgeable in the fields of art and the theater. One of the joys of her life had been her garden when she, David and their son, Richard, had lived on MacArthur

Boulevard before moving to Crescent Place N.W. in later years.

One of Selma's favorite haunts was the public library. She would check out four or five books at a time, read them all and then critique them for anyone who shared her interest in writing. She had an insatiable interest in expanding her knowledge of history, economics, politics, and any number of other areas. She also enjoyed good fiction, believing that a well-crafted novel or short story could reveal every bit as much how the world works as could any piece of non-fiction.

This passionate belief in good writing carried over to Selma's last job as a proofreader for the Environmental Law Reporter. Selma made it clear that she would not permit any article to leave her desk until every comma was in place, all words correctly spelled, all citations checked and double checked, and all clumsy phrases made graceful.

*I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along.
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

MARGE PIERCY

In Memory of Selma Rein.

New York City Chapter
National Lawyers Guild

Selma, her daughter-in-law, Gloria, and her grandchildren, Gabriel, and Shanelle, in recent times. (Not pictured is granddaughter Faith.) Like any good grandmother, Selma delighted in telling of the exploits of her grandchildren.



As was evident to all who knew her, Selma Rein lived her life in accordance with her principles and her beliefs. For that, she should be admired and honored—and even more, emulated.

At a memorial service for David Rein in 1979, one of the songs that was sung was Si Kahn's "People Like You." Some of the lyrics of that song bear repeating here because they sum up what Selma Rein's life was all about—and what it means to us honoring her here tonight:

Old fighter, you sure took it on the chin
Where'd you ever get the strength to stand
Never giving up to giving in
You know I just want to shake your hand

Because people like you
Help people like me
Go on, go on
People like you
Help people like me
Go on, go on

We are proud to join in honoring Selma Rein who had a vision of humanitarian goals and continuously acted to implement them.

**Howard Myer
Morton Stavis**



Selma and her son, Richard, in a recent photograph.