

ACLU to Host 2013 Northwest Civil Liberties Conference

6.5 continuing legal education (CLE) credits pending (including 1 Access to Justice credit)

<http://www.aclu-or.org/2013nwconference>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Portland, OR – On September 26 and 27, the Lewis & Clark Law School ACLU Student Group will bring together legal professionals and law students from around the region at the **2013 ACLU Northwest Civil Liberties Conference**. This year's conference will feature keynote speaker **Vanita Gupta**, Deputy Legal Director of the ACLU and Director of the ACLU's Center for Justice. The conference will also feature three panel discussions on timely issues: marijuana reform, privacy and surveillance, and police accountability.

Vanita Gupta will open the conference on Thursday evening with the conference keynote presentation **Mass Incarceration: Race, Justice, and Jim Crow**. Ms. Gupta's talk is particularly well-timed in light of Attorney General Eric Holder's recent announcements that the federal government would no longer seek the "one-size-fits-all" mandatory minimum sentences for low-level, non-violent drug offenders. It has long been apparent that the War on Drugs is one of the largest factors contributing to mass incarceration.

Ms. Gupta is the **Deputy Legal Director of the ACLU** and **Director of the ACLU's Center for Justice**, which houses the organization's criminal justice reform, prisoner's rights, and capital punishment work. Currently, Ms. Gupta is leading the ACLU's National Campaign to End Overincarceration. Prior to joining the ACLU, Ms. Gupta worked with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where she successfully led the effort to overturn the wrongful drug convictions of 38 individuals in Tulia, Texas. Ms. Gupta also served on the legal team that won freedom for renowned prison journalist Wilbert Rideau in his fourth retrial, ending Mr. Rideau's 44 years of incarceration. From 2006–2010, Gupta was a staff attorney with the ACLU's Racial Justice Program, where she focused on systemic criminal justice reform, immigration detention, and education litigation. Ms. Gupta is also an adjunct clinical professor at NYU School of Law, where she teaches and oversees a racial justice litigation clinic.

Marijuana Reform and the War on Drugs (Panel)—The aggressive enforcement of marijuana possession laws needlessly ensnares hundreds of thousands of people into the criminal justice system and wastes billions of taxpayers' dollars. It is also carried out with staggering racial bias. Despite being a priority for police departments nationwide, the War on Marijuana has failed to reduce marijuana use and availability and diverted resources that could be better invested in our communities. Panelists will discuss recent successes in Marijuana reform and the continued failure of the "War on Drugs."

Fourth Amendment and Privacy: Big Brother is Watching (Panel)—The world has recently been exposed to how the United States Government has violated its citizens' constitutionally protected right to privacy. In light of this, the need to fight against unwarranted government snooping has never been greater. This panel will look at various types of surveillance and what can be done at the state and local level to restore the privacy protections guaranteed by our Constitution.

Can We Have Police Accountability (Panel)—Can we hold police accountable? Police are given extraordinary powers to keep communities safe and a great deal of discretion in exercising that authority. We expect police to respect the civil liberties and civil rights of all individuals. And, as public servants, police officers have the right to unionize and bargain collectively for job benefits and working conditions. However, there are times when the interests of the police officer and the public are in conflict. How do we hold police accountable when police power or discretion is abused?