



*Guild member Arthur Kinoy being removed from a hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)*

## ***A Brief History of the National Lawyers Guild***

Founded in 1937 as an alternative to the conservative and racially segregated ABA and to assist the emerging industrial labor movement, the National Lawyers Guild was the first integrated national organization of lawyers. Since then, the Guild has been at the forefront of the legal and political struggles of people to end oppression and discrimination in our society.

**1940s:** Guild members aided workers in union organizing, fought against the poll tax, and investigated race riots. Following WW II, Guild members participated in the Nuremberg trials and the founding of the United Nations.

**1950s:** During the "McCarthy Era" the NLG played a central role in the defense of labor leaders, political activists and other targets of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Guild members represented the Hollywood Ten, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg and many other victims of government led anti-communist witch-hunts of

those times. The Guild filed briefs in opposition to the Smith Act, the Loyalty Program, and to the deportation of aliens or denial of citizenship based on political beliefs.

**1960s:** In the early 60s, Guild members represented the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and others in the Civil Rights movement and were among the founders of the Center for Constitutional Rights, the National Conference for Black Lawyers, and the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute.

During the Vietnam War, the Guild offered legal assistance to people who opposed the war for political, religious or moral reasons, draft resisters, anti-war activists and represented members of the Chicago 8. In 1967, the New York chapter sponsored the nation's first conference on draft law.

**1970s:** The Guild continued to provide legal counsel to draft resisters and antiwar activists. In 1971 the Guild opened offices in Southeast Asia to provide defense to GIs resisting the Vietnam War. Members of the Guild defended FBI targets; members of the Black Panther Party, the White Panther Party, the American Indian Movement and the Puerto Rican independence movement.

The Guild continued its fight for the rights of women in society, law schools and the legal profession. Guild attorneys pioneered litigation in support of women's reproductive rights and later in defending abortion clinics from the attack of anti-abortion activists.

**1980s:** The Guild provided legal support for the anti-nuclear movement, represented Central American refugees and asylum activists, protected pro-choice and gay rights activists from attacks from the government and the far right. The Guild published the first major work on the law as it applies to sexual orientation and the legal issues raised by AIDS. In addition, the Guild challenged restrictions on artistic expression supported by the National Endowment of the Arts.

**1990s:** The Guild was active in defending the rights of Haitian refugees, opposing the US embargo of Cuba as well as providing legal advice and support to activists challenging the growing anti-poor and anti-immigration sentiment in this country.

**2007:** Today the Guild continues to work against war, injustice, and the newest assaults on civil liberties, immigrants, communities of color, labor, and the environment. It continues to play a vital role in various progressive movements.