

Get REAL!

Andre Walton

Center R.A., and Project REAL Executive Co-Director

In recent decades, there has been increasing concern regarding the number of Americans who are disengaged from civic and political institutions. Low voter turnout is one obvious sign, but there is increasing lethargy regarding involvement in the democratic process in general, and a lack of understanding about public issues and the law.

If we believe that involvement is an important component of a democracy then law-related education and civic learning have never had a more important role in preparing young Americans to become thoughtful and active participants in society. For young people to accept these challenges they need not only a thorough understanding of the principles of democracy but also a sense of empowerment regarding their role in achieving social change.

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The Foundation for Relevant Education about the Law is a new non-profit foundation funded by Las Vegas philanthropist Irwin Molasky and attorney Sam Lionel. The initial mission of the Foundation is to design and implement specific law-related and civic education projects in Clark County, with later dissemination throughout the State. The Foundation will be jointly managed by Center R.A., Andre Walton, and civic education expert, Judith Simpson. Project R.E.A.L. (Relevant Education About the Law) will complement the work already being done both in the schools and outside the educational system, and will offer four new programs to students from primary grades through high school:

- A visual arts program (R.E.A.L. Theater) introduces stu-

dents to how democracy works through the law using drama. In a partially-scripted, partially improvisational, reenactment of a Nevada-relevant legal case, community college drama students will bring home important judicial issues to middle and high school students.

- An elementary school program is geared towards first and second graders to introduce them in a fundamental and enjoyable way to the concepts of justice and citizenship and how they are applied in the courts.
- Docent programs. Working closely with the Eighth Judicial District Court in Las Vegas, Project R.E.A.L. will develop classroom tours of the county court system. Participating teachers will receive an informational packet to enable them to prepare their students for a meaningful educational experience
- A Web-based program comprises two web sites designed to help introduce students to the law. One site, lawforkids.org, is designed for use by elementary and middle school students; and the other, relevantlaw.org, is for young adults of high-school and college age and above (check them out!)



Some Members of the Project REAL Team (Left to Right): Chief Federal Judge Philip Pro, Exec. Dir. Judith Simpson, Project Sponser (front) Irwin Molasky, Clark Co. Bar Assn. Exec. Dir. Eric Mann, Co-sponsor Sam Lionel Esq., Exec. Dir. Andre Walton