

The St. Paul RNC, One Year Later



RNC Day 4. Photo from RNC08Report.org

**Information and resources for the media from the
Community RNC Arrestee Support Structure (www.RNCaftermath.org)**

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One year after the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minn., the aftermath remains newsworthy. **The RNC was for many of us our first taste of a police state**; the astounding violence against protesters, bystanders, journalists and others directed by Sheriff Bob Fletcher and other authorities shocked and radicalized many of us. We have since come to realize that **these instances of raids, intimidation and violence play out regularly in our society**, particularly in communities of color and working class communities, and will almost assuredly replay themselves at upcoming summits such as the G20 in Pittsburgh later this September. **Thus, keeping the RNC in our collective consciousness is critical.**

About CRASS: The Community RNC Arrestee Support Structure (CRASS) was formed two days after the September, 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, MN as a precedent-setting arrestee-led coalition. Including community allies such as [Coldsnap Legal Collective](#), [the RNC 8 Defense Committee](#), [National Lawyers Guild – MN](#), [Communities United Against Police Brutality](#), [Anti-War Committee](#), [Twin Cities Indymedia](#), and Veterans for Peace, as well as arrestees themselves, CRASS continues to provide multifaceted support to those who resist state repression.

As last September becomes a distant memory for some, **CRASS continues to fight for justice amidst the resulting political charges and official coverups.** On an as-needed basis, CRASS aids arrestees, their witnesses and families returning to the Twin Cities for court dates with travel costs, housing and other resources; aids and facilitates civil suits; promotes court solidarity strategies to support those at trial; facilitates aid to arrestees unjustly imprisoned; and more.

Courtwatch: Arrestee Statistics



Medic arrested at RNC. Photo by [Aveye Alexandres](#).

The CRASS Courtwatch Working Group has been hard at work attending court appearances and keeping track of everything happening to our comrades within the various courthouses.

The Twin Cities Daily Planet recently published an "RNC scorecard" that we find to be fairly accurate. You can read it at their website here: <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/article/2009/08/19/rnc-scorecard.html>. Below are statistics from the CRASS databases:

Total Arrests

818 people were arrested during the RNC protests, most of whom were arrested in St. Paul, although 134 were arrested in Minneapolis following the Rage Against the Machine concert on September 3. Many of the arrestees were not protesters. They were journalists, medics, legal observers, bystanders, concert-goers, picnic-ers and people going to their cars. One was an RNC delegate.

The majority of arrestees faced no legal consequence due to their arrest (although a few were targeted for precedent-setting prosecutorial harassment). Notably, of the 396 people mass-arrested on the Marion Street bridge on September 4, 323 had their charges declined for prosecution on February 20, 2009. Of the remaining 74, almost all had their charges evaporate by other means.

39 arrested journalists also had their charges entirely dismissed by St. Paul City Attorney John Choi on September 19, 2008, due to pressure from the public, other journalists and first-amendment advocates.

Ramsey County (felony) and City of St. Paul (misdemeanor) Cases

- 153 Ramsey County/St. Paul closed cases are in the CRASS database
- 10 Bench Warrants outstanding
- 81 Dismissed by Prosecutor (before trial): 2 felonies and 79 misdemeanors
- 14 Continued for Dismissal (Misdemeanors)
- 7 [Dismissed by Judge mid-trial](#) (Misdemeanors)
- 3 Acquitted by a Jury (Medics) (Misdemeanors)
- 37 Guilty pleas (Felonies and Misdemeanors together): 6 Felonies and 31 Misdemeanors
- 2 Convicted by a Jury (Felony)

The vast majority of prosecutions are of people who live outside the Twin Cities. It is expensive and time consuming for them to return to St. Paul again and again to fight their charges. The prosecutors wear them down until poverty and exhaustion force them to take a plea deal. Most of the people who took plea deals were guilty of nothing whatever; they simply couldn't continue to fight the legal system. Most of the people who fought their charges - often with aid from CRASS funds - won.

Cases Still Pending at the First Anniversary

- Keith Smith: This juvenile misdemeanor case is being pursued solely to keep Keith's mother from filing suit. Smith, the man laying in front of storm troopers in an iconic photo by the Minnesota Independent, was later beaten by the police, also as reported by the Independent: <http://rnc08report.org/archive/609.shtml>
- Vets for Peace: the eight defendants from this group face misdemeanor trespassing charges stemming from [breaching the security perimeter by civil disobedience](#) (which was erected on public property) on August 31. The defendants intend to explicitly make this case into a political trial. It begins Sept. 14.
- [Karen Meissner & Christina Vana](#): conjoined cases, felony charge of aiding and abetting assault -- currently set to go to trial on August 31.
- Bradley Crowder: related to the Meissner & Vana cases but being handled separately. Pre-trial hearing was on July 31. Trial is expected soon.
- The [RNC 8](#): 2 felony charges, each. It is unknown when their case will go to trial.

Rage Against the Machine Arrests

29 of the 134 mass-arrestees after the Rage Against the Machine concert in Minneapolis on September 3 were given court dates. 27 of those cases are closed and 2 are unaccounted for. CRASS does not know of any Rage Against the Machine cases that are still pending.

Of the known cases that went to court:

- 7 didn't show up and were issued bench warrants. Nothing further is known about them.
- 2 took guilty pleas. These are individuals who didn't show up for arraignment. Bench warrants were issued for them. They were caught, spent the weekend in jail, took guilty pleas, and paid fines or did community service.
- 8 were C-WOPs (Continued Without a Plea). They paid a fine, but admitted no guilt. The record will disappear from their files within a year.
- 10 fought the charges and had their cases dismissed.

New Charges

The City of St. Paul has recently filed charges in four new cases. Some of these charges appear to be in response to notice of claims forms filed by the defendants against the City for police brutality. As such, they are probably completely bogus and an example of prosecutorial misconduct. The four defendants were arraigned on August 25th. They are:

- Elliot Hughes - man tortured at Ramsey County jail on September 1st who has publicly declared an intent to sue ([More info on Hughes](#))
- Jason Falk
- John Slavin
- Matthew Connell



Bike cops pepper spray a crowd, including journalists.

Felony Cases Updates



Demonstration outside Susan Gaertner fundraiser, Dec. 2, 2008. Photo from RNC08Report.org

(Information as of August 26, 2009)

In addition to hundreds of misdemeanor charges, the 2008 RNC has resulted in lasting felony charges against 24 individuals. Ten are still facing charges, including the "RNC 8," who are all being charged under the same complaint. Originally facing one charge, then four, and now two (conspiracy to riot in the second degree and conspiracy to commit property damage in the first degree), the 8 were the first ever individuals charged with terrorism under the MN PATRIOT Act, although the terrorism charges were dropped in the spring of 2009 due to political pressure. The 8 have a support site here: <http://RNC8.org>; the RNC 8 Defense Committee holds public meetings on a regular basis.

This is the breakdown of the "RNC Others"

One hundred fifty-nine people were booked into Ramsey County jail with probable cause felonies during the RNC. Two weeks later, the count of 159 was reduced to merely 19, though in the coming year Ramsey County Attorney Susan Gaertner charged three more individuals (one of whom was already imprisoned on federal charges). Three individuals were also charged in federal court. Given the history of vindictive prosecution, it's entirely possible that more felony charges are to come.

Ramsey County

- Two people had their felony charges dropped entirely due to political pressure, a lack of evidence, or both.
- One person successfully had their felony charges reduced and pled guilty to disorderly conduct - a misdemeanor - in January 2009 and was sentenced to a fine and credit for time served.
- One person successfully had their felony charges reduced and pled guilty to unlawful assembly/disorderly conduct - a misdemeanor - in May 2009 and was sentenced to a fine and community service.
- Joe Robinson pled guilty to first degree criminal damage to property and was sentenced to three years probation on December 12, 2008. [Thanks in large part to court solidarity](#), he received community service and credit for time served with no additional jail time. Upon successful completion of the sentence, the felony will be reduced to a gross misdemeanor.
- Dustin Matchett-Morales of California pled guilty to first degree damage to property and [was sentenced to 60 days in jail](#) and five years probation on February 5th, 2009, and taken directly into custody at the Ramsey County Workhouse. With 4 days credit from his initial arrest and the guideline of serving 2/3 of one's sentence in the workhouse with good behavior, he was released after 36 days. For more information, visit his support site: <http://supportdustin.wordpress.com>
- Glenn Dyer of New York pled guilty in March 2009 to first degree criminal damage to property and [was sentenced to 30 days in jail](#) on May 28, 2009. He was released 17 days later. Upon completion of five years probation, the felony will be reduced to a gross misdemeanor.

- One person pled guilty to first degree criminal damage to property and was sentenced to 60 days in jail on July 16, 2009 and upon completion of probation the felony will be reduced to a gross misdemeanor.
- [David Mahoney originally faced two charges](#), which were gradually increased to ten counts of assault and terroristic threats, stemming from an alleged incident in which a sandbag was thrown onto a highway off-ramp in front of a delegate bus. Prosecutor Richard Dusterhoft called Mahoney the "poster boy of the RNC." Despite the hype, Mahoney struck a plea deal on June 1, 2009 reducing the ten counts to a single count of second degree assault. Under the deal, Mahoney received 90 days in jail - reduced to 56 with good behavior and time served - and, importantly, after his release will be able to return to his native England rather than serving probation in the United States. He is expected to be released from jail September 2, 2009. For more info on his case, go to: <http://helpdavemahoney.blogspot.com>
- One person stood trial before a jury on June 26, 2009 and was found guilty of aiding and abetting the obstruction of an arrest (a misdemeanor), guilty of escaping from custody pending a felony arrest (a felony), and not guilty of aiding and abetting an assault on a police officer (a felony). He was the first conviction at either a misdemeanor or felony trial stemming from the RNC nearly 10 months prior. The charges stemmed from an incident in which he went limp - a classic civil disobedience tactic - while being arrested by a lone renegade officer, and then was unarrested by the supportive crowd. On August 4 he was sentenced to 30 days in jail - 17 days counting time served plus good behavior - plus five years probation. He is expected to be released from jail September 3, 2009.
- Jesse Forrey of California was charged with first degree criminal damage to property and [found guilty by a jury](#) on August 6, 2009, despite the contradictory statements of the two state witnesses and no photographic or video evidence. His sentencing will be on September 17, 2009. Jesse, like some other felony arrestees, has been stuck in the Twin Cities away from home since September 2008. He is in need of financial support both for his lawyer and the many witnesses and friends who traveled from California to join him at trial; more information and ways to help can be found at <http://www.supportjessejames.wordpress.com>
- Christina Vana and Karen Meissner, both of Milwaukee, were charged along with Bradley Crowder (see below) on January 16, 2009 with aiding and abetting assault in the second degree. They turned themselves in to St. Paul Police two days later. They were released on bond later that day and are in need of funds. Their trial is scheduled for August 31, 2009. Visit their support site: <http://helpmkethree.blogspot.com>

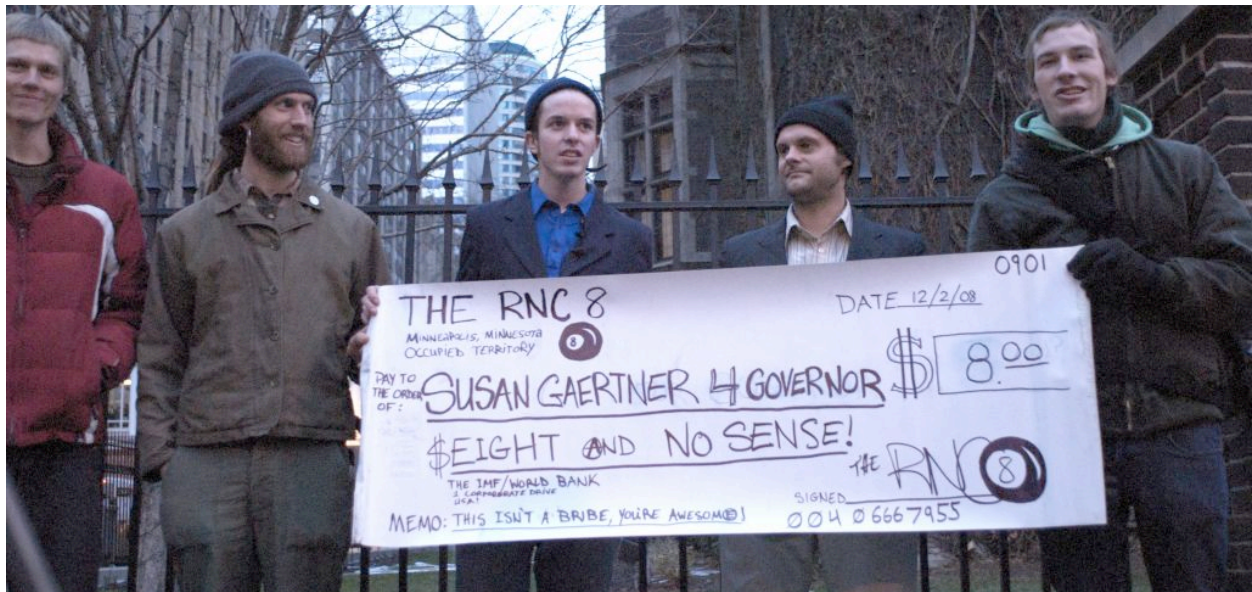
Federal Court

- [Matt DePalma of Michigan](#) took a plea agreement in federal court, admitting to unlawful possession of destructive devices, a federal crime. He was sentenced on March 11, 2009 to 42 months in prison followed by three years supervised release. It is widely believed DePalma was entrapped by [FBI Informant Andrew Darst](#) (who later faced his own assault charges in Hennepin County, MN). [Matt DePalma's Plea Agreement](#)
- [Bradley Crowder and David McKay](#), both of Texas, faced federal firearms charges for allegedly manufacturing molotov cocktails. Bradley Crowder, held in custody since the RNC like McKay, plead guilty on January 8, 2009. His plea agreement can be seen [here](#). David McKay had trial the week of January 26 which resulted in a mistrial due to hung jury. McKay's lawyer argued that McKay had been entrapped by [FBI informant Brandon Darby](#). McKay was released on bond and was scheduled to begin a retrial on March 16, but preempted it by pleading guilty to three charges. His decision to plead guilty was, we guess, based on the prosecution's underhanded tactic of compelling his friend Crowder to testify against him in the second trial. He was taken back into custody at that time. McKay was later sentenced to four years in prison; Crowder to two years. Brad and David have a support site here: <http://freethetexas2.com>. The six people previously subpoenaed to a related grand jury have all had their subpoenas withdrawn. For more info, see the [Grand Jury page](#). (Crowder was charged on January 16, 2009 with an additional felony charge of aiding and abetting assault in the second degree, along with Christina Vana and Karen Meissner.)

Ramsey County court appearances are all at the Ramsey County Courthouse at 15 W. Kellogg Blvd in St Paul. Sign up for the [CRASS announcements list](#) or watch [TC Indymedia](#) to be apprised of upcoming opportunities for court solidarity!

It is a common law enforcement practice to create trumped up charges in the wake of a massive police action like what occurred at the 2008 RNC. The point is to distract from the real issues--e.g., lack of police accountability, and especially the institutionalized prioritization of corporate interests over human life and the lack of government accountability to the people--and to justify the use of taxpayer money (\$50 million in federal security grants, this time) to crush popular dissent.

Individuals with felony charges are facing protracted and expensive legal battles, and the possibility of years in prison. In order to fight their charges and win, they need our support.



Members of the RNC 8 outside a Susan Gaertner fundraiser, December 2008. Photo from [RNC08Report.org](#)



Riot Cops surround Mickey's Diner on day 2. Photo by flickr user [Vet for Peace](#).

Civil Litigation Information: Pending Suits



Mick Kelly's RNC injuries caused by police violence/projectile at short range on Sept. 4. Still from [Terrorizing Dissent](#).

With most of the criminal cases almost over, civil lawsuits are now being filed to take the offensive against the massive police misconduct and civil liberties violations that occurred during the RNC. Within the first 6 months, several individual lawsuits were filed, such as the [seven plaintiffs filing cases in February 2009](#). However, this was only the tip of the proverbial rubber bullet as many other cases are likely in the works and will be filed in the near future.

The next major lawsuit filing will occur exactly 1 year after the date of the Shepard Road arrests on September 1. At that mass arrest, concert-goers and bystanders were herded into a Mississippi River park and arrested without warning. Quipped one arrestee: "I'm being charged with a felony... for dancing?" A press conference will be held at 12:30 p.m. that day at the location of the mass arrest to announce a pending class action lawsuit. For September 4 arrestees, plans are in the works for a meeting on potential civil litigation for the Marion Street Bridge mass arrests, coming up later in September. Contact CRASS for details.

If the [Mardi Gras-themed "Notice of Claims" parade hosted by CRASS](#) earlier this year (at which over 60 claims totaling over \$20 million were filed) is any indication, there may also be pending litigation regarding other incidents, such as the mass arrest at 9th and Temperance, the Minneapolis arrests after the Rage Against the Machine concert and additional individual cases arising from raids or other cases of misconduct. What we do know is that the civil litigation has only just begun.

A small selection of possible pending civil litigation:

- Shepard Road 9/1 Mass Arrest
- Marion Avenue Bridge 9/4 Mass Arrest
- Mass arrests at 9th/Temperance and 7th/Jackson on 9/1
- Betsy Raasch-Gilman: [suing over Sheriff Bob Fletcher's noncompliance with statutes](#)
- Keith Smith: juvenile beaten by police 9/1
- Michelle Gross: president of [Communities United Against Police Brutality](#) illegally strip-searched after videotaping inside raid on convergence center, 8/29
- Mike Whelan: owner of house at [951 Iglehart](#), raided with improper warrant
- Elliot Hughes: beaten unconscious in jail, 9/1 ([video of Hughes' testimony](#))
- Mick Kelly: [shot with rubber bullet from 10 feet](#) on 9/4
- Wendy Binion: journalist arrested by riot police on 9/2 ([text of civil complaint](#))
- Jason Johnson: [tased while held on the ground](#) on 9/2
- Glass Bead Collective: [filmmakers harassed, equipment seized by Minneapolis Police](#) upon arrival in Minneapolis 8/27

Support Sites and Other Resources

Community RNC Arrestee Support Structure | <http://RNCAftermath.org>

Friends of the RNC 8/RNC 8 Defense Committee | <http://RNC8.org>

Help Dave Mahoney | <http://helpdavemahoney.blogspot.com>

Help Milwaukee 3 (Dave Mahoney, Christina Vana, Karen Meissner) | <http://helpMKEthree.blogspot.com>

Support Jesse James Forrey | <http://supportjessejames.wordpress.com>

Dustin Matchett-Morales | <http://supportdustin.wordpress.com>

Free the Texas 2 | <http://freethetexas2.com>

RNC '08 Report: a citizen's archive | <http://RNC08report.org>

Multimedia Content: Still Images and Video for Media Use

The following videos are free to use in whole or in part with credit as noted.

Videos Related to Civil Litigation

Police shoot activist Mick Kelly with rubber bullet from 10 feet: (0:39, credit to Glass Bead Collective)
<http://blip.tv/file/1808587>

15 riot police arrest journalist Wendy Binion while trying to leave for the bathroom at Poor People's March, Sept. 2. Includes interview with Binion. Also includes footage of activist Jason Johnson tasered repeatedly while being restrained on the ground. (4:45, credit to Glass Bead Collective)
<http://blip.tv/file/1808487>

Police raid on journalists and others at 951 Iglehart in St. Paul, August 30, 2008. Includes footage from inside the house as it is being raided by St. Paul Police and interviews with the journalists while in handcuffs. <http://blip.tv/file/1808637>

More Videos

Terrorizing Dissent: a 4-part documentary released in October 2008 with footage from dozens of independent and volunteer videographers. Much of the film was played in a St. Paul courtroom during the trial of arrestee Sean McCoy, whose charges were later dismissed. The footage forced a St. Paul Police Commander to admit police used pepper spray inappropriately. (approx. 2 hours; Credit to Twin Cities Indymedia and Glass Bead Collective)

download: <http://www.terrorizingdissent.org/downloads.php>

Part 1: September 1, footage of permitted march, civil disobedience and anarchist resistance

Part 2: September 2, footage of Poor People's March, undercover infiltrators

Part 3: Footage of pre-emptive raids, interviews with RNC 8

Part 4: September 4, footage of mass arrest during John McCain speech

RNC 8 Town Hall Gathering, January 2009: Speeches by anti-RNC organizers about the RNC 8 case and the repression of dissent. (58 minutes, credit to Our World in Depth TV)
<http://ourworldindepth.blip.tv/file/1819331/>

RNC 8 Supporters Mobilize: footage of petition delivery to prosecutor Susan Gaertner, March 2009 commemorative bike ride event, and continued police harassment. (9:56, credit to *Twin Cities Indymedia*)
download: <http://tcimc.blip.tv/file/1935758/>

Chicago, August 1st: Footage of protest against prosecutor Susan Gaertner at American Bar Association conference in Chicago. (5:31, credit to *Chicago Indymedia*)
<http://rnc08report.org/archive/1063.shtml>

Press Conference with members of RNC Welcoming Committee (anarchist logistical organizing body) on day 4 of the RNC. Police attempted to prevent journalists from attending the press conference. (approx. 90 min., credit to *Bay Area Indymedia*)
<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2008/09/05/18533336.php>

Hi Res Photos

- Riot police pepper spray "MN Peace Team"
<http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/pepperspraypeaceteam.jpg>
- Riot police arrest medical workers <http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/medicarrests.jpg>
- Pepper spray/tear gas/police herding crowd
http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/funcked_presentation_18.jpg
- Crowd evading gas canister http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/funcked_presentation_14.jpg
- Line of riot police aims pepper spray at camera
http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/funcked_presentation_12.jpg
- Police pepper spray woman holding flower in the face from three feet
http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/funcked_presentation_11.jpg
- Bike police spray crowd including journalists
<http://rnc8.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/copspepperspray.jpg>

Other Photos

RNC '08 Report Archive of photographs from RNC '08 protests and aftermath events: <http://rnc08report.org/archive/photographs/index.shtml>

Upcoming Dates

Saturday, August 29: First anniversary commemoration - Re:activism Twin Cities. Noon; Black Dog Cafe, 308 Prince St., Lowertown St. Paul. <http://www.reactivismtc.tumblr.com>
From their website: "Re:Activism is a game. And a scavenger hunt. And a history lesson. And an expression of solidarity across struggles. And street theater. And disruption. Participants visit sites of local struggle and resistance, performing challenges at each to earn points. These could be historical re-enactments relevant to the site, interviews with passersby, or staged protests, among other possibilities. The point is to draw parallels between struggles, to unearth moments of local radical history, and to theatrically subvert business-as-usual. Oh, and to run around in the street."

Monday, August 31: Christina Vana & Karen Meissner begin their felony trial on this day. Check out their support page for more info: <http://helpmkethree.blogspot.com>.

Tuesday, September 1: Shepard road press conference 12:30 p.m. regarding the filing of a class action civil lawsuit @ Shepard Road mass arrest site (east of Shepard/Eagle St.) in St. Paul.

Tuesday, September 1: National Call-in Day to support the RNC 8. More information:
<http://rnc8.org/2009/08/susangaertner-call-in-state-fair/>

Monday, September 14: The eight Vets for Peace defendants are scheduled to start their trial on this day.

Thursday, September 17: Jesse James Forrey will be sentenced. Supporters are still busy at his defense by writing to the judge in support, signing a petition to be delivered to the judge, donating to his defense fund and hosting benefits. Visit his support space (<http://supportjessejames.wordpress.com/>) for more information.

Contacts for the Media

Community RNC Arrestee Support Structure (CRASS):

Jude Ortiz, 612 655 6904; Melissa Hill, 612-250-7178; rnc08media@gmail.com

RNC 8:

For interviews with the defendants and their lawyers, contact the RNC 8's press officer at 612.886.4565 or press@rnc8.org

Civil Litigation: David Shulman, 612-870-7410 or davidshulman@a-d-law.com

Communities United Against Police Brutality: (RNC Copwatch, Ongoing Advocacy)
Michelle Gross, 612-703-1612

Anti-War Committee: (Sept. 1 March, Sept. 4 Protest/Mass Arrest)
Katrina Plotz, 651-769-4474

Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign: (Sept. 2 Poor People's March)
Cheri Honkala 267-439-8419

National Lawyers Guild-MN:

Bruce Nestor, President, 612-991-9488

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rnc08media@gmail.com | RNCaftermath.org