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THE ACLU CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION

## Personal Stories of Domestic Surveillance

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACTS: ACLU Press Office/DC (202) 675-2312**

**[media@aclu.org](mailto:media@aclu.org)**

**ACLU Press Office/NYC (212) 549-2666**

**[media@aclu.org](mailto:media@aclu.org)**

**A.J. Brown**

**College Student Accused of Having “Anti-American” Materials**

Late one Friday afternoon last October 27, when she was a college freshman at Durham Tech in Durham, North Carolina, A.J. Brown got a knock on the door. It was two agents from the Raleigh office of the U.S. Secret Service and an investigator from the Durham Police Department. They said they'd gotten a report of “Anti-American” materials in her apartment. It was a poster of President Bush on her wall, depicting the President holding a rope against a backdrop of lynching victims with the words: “We hang on your every word. George Bush: Wanted, 152 Dead.” The poster actually referred to the number of people executed in Texas while President Bush was governor.

The three carried no warrant. A. J. Brown showed them the poster and was interrogated for about 45 minutes. That included being asked if she had anything about Afghanistan or the Taliban such as maps. (She didn't.) They also asked her to fill out a form that insisted was “mandatory” with her name, race, address, phone number and other identifying information. They said they had to investigate every reported threat to the President.

A. J. Brown, now a 20-year-old sophomore, is still a student activist who does anti-prison reform work and attends local marches.

**Virgine Lawinger  
Peace Activist Detained at Airport**

On April 19, 2001, Sister Virgine Lawinger was on her way from Milwaukee to Washington, D.C. to learn how to lobby against U.S. aid for Colombia and to join in a national movement against invading Iraq. But like many other members of the Peace Action group, she didn't make it onto her Midwest Express flight. Instead, she spent two hours answering questions and waiting for sheriffs to check out the names that came up on a “No Fly Watch List.”

*(More)*

Twenty of 37 group members were put in a room for questioning. None of the authorities could answer why they were detaining the peace activists or who was responsible. It may have been that one or more names on the group's list matched names of terrorists. Or it could've been racial profiling. "I guess we're looking for Hispanic names," *The Progressive* magazine reported one of the deputies as saying.

Most of the group members missed their plane and an entire day of activities in Washington. Sister Virgine, who is 75, was upset by the incident and said that she felt it was "profiling a particular group without a basis – a peace group. The abuse of power was so obvious."

**Danny Muller**  
**Peace educator questioned by police after requesting stamps**  
**Without American flags at Post Office**

For the past three years, Danny Muller, 25, has been working with Voices in the Wilderness, a Chicago-based campaign to end the economic sanctions against the people of Iraq. Last November, on a regular visit to the post office, he and a colleague sought to buy 4,000 stamps for a mass mailing. They asked for stamps without the American flag and added that they were more than willing to take Statue of Liberty stamps. Instead of selling them the stamps, the clerk called the police, who questioned both men. They were denied stamps that day and told to meet the next day with the Postal Inspector. Ironically, the stamps were for a mailing promoting a march from the Pentagon to Ground Zero led by relatives of Sept. 11 victims who oppose military action in response to terrorism.

When Danny's colleague returned the next day, the Postal Inspector told him that in the future they would have to provide advance notification to send out mailings. The official later contacted the group to say that an investigation had determined that they were not "dangerous" and that advance notice was no longer required.

Muller, a native New Yorker, has traveled on three delegations into Iraq, most recently in September 2002 with Reps. Jim McDermott (D-WA) and David Bonoir (D-MI).