



## RANDALL CHALLEN BERG JR

January 17, 1949 - April 10, 2019

Randall (“Randy”) C. Berg, Jr., passed away on April 10, 2019, at 70 years old. Randy co-founded the civil rights nonprofit Florida Justice Institute (FJI) in 1978 and served as its Executive Director for 41 years until his retirement in 2019. During that time, he litigated civil rights cases for people in prison, victims of housing discrimination, and Florida’s poor and disenfranchised residents. His work transformed Florida’s prison system, helping to ensure that people in prison were treated with humanity, dignity, and respect. He was a giant in the civil rights world, and the legal community at large.

Randy Berg was born in 1949 and grew up in Jacksonville, Florida. He graduated from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill in 1971, then served as an officer in the United States Navy during the Vietnam War. He received his law degree from the George Mason University School of Law in 1978. Immediately after graduation, he co-founded FJI along with Rod Petrey, FJI’s current board chair, with a small grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

Randy immediately launched into what would be the first of many achievements. He began with a statewide case about Florida’s failure to maintain safe and sanitary jails, which resulted in the improvement of every jail in the state, so that people awaiting trial could be treated with dignity and respect. Recognizing the enormous need for recruiting lawyers to help the many clients who could not afford them, he established a pro bono program called the Public Interest Law Bank, which was later renamed Put Something Back, which still operates today. He published five editions of the Older Floridians Handbook, a guide to programs, benefits, and services available to older people living in Florida. He helped create the nation’s first Interest on Lawyer Trust Account (IOLTA) program, shepherding the process through trips to the Florida and United States Supreme Courts, the IRS, and various state bar associations. Randy’s work resulted in the establishment of IOLTA programs in every state, which have raised over \$3.5 billion to fund legal services for the poor.

Randy represented countless incarcerated people and their families in civil rights cases,

winning victory after victory and establishing landmark precedents that are still relied on decades later. His efforts brought widespread change to the prison system for people with disabilities, people in need of medical and mental health care, people in solitary confinement, people who had been subjected to degrading and abusive treatment, and family members wishing to maintain contact with their loved ones. He recently won a \$2.1 million settlement for prisoners who had been denied hernia surgeries, and also secured a preliminary injunction requiring the state to provide treatment to thousands of prisoners with Hepatitis C.

He represented victims of housing discrimination, helping to ensure that they were allowed to live in the home of their choice, regardless of their race, national origin, or abilities. And he helped ensure the fairness of the electoral process through various voting and election-related cases.

He helped create, and then administered from 1993 to 2014, the Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Southern District of Florida, which helped secure pro bono counsel to litigants proceeding without a lawyer in federal court.

Randy won numerous awards, including the Jane Curran Distinguished Service Award from the Florida Bar Foundation, the Steven Goldstein Award for Excellence, and the Daily Business Review's Most Effective Public Interest Lawyer for 2018, 2017, and 2016.

Randy was an avid North Carolina basketball fan, and never missed an opportunity to discuss the current state of UNC sports. He was also an experienced cyclist, spending many early mornings biking over the Rickenbacker causeway with his friends.

He was a mentor, friend, colleague, leader, and confidant to the many lawyers, paralegals, law students, and clients who passed through FJI's doors. He was a deeply inspiring figure who devoted his life to helping people facing oppression, hardship, and loss. He was a tireless advocate for poor and disenfranchised Floridians, and he passionately believed that everyone deserved justice—no matter who you were or what was in your background. And he was always devoted to his family.

He is survived by his wife Carol, their son Randall, and daughter-in-law Julia. Memorial services will be held on April 24, 2019 at 4pm at St. Philips Episcopal Church, 1121 Andalusia Ave, Coral Gables, Florida. His family asks that, in lieu of flowers, a donation be made to the Florida Justice Institute, [www.floridajusticeinstitute.org](http://www.floridajusticeinstitute.org), 100 SE 2nd Street Suite 3750, Miami, FL 33131.

In lieu of flowers Donate to [Florida Justice  
Institute]<https://www.floridajusticeinstitute.org/donate>

# Cemetery

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## Van Orsdel Crematory

3333 NE 2nd Avenue

Miami, FL,

# Events

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APR

24

Memorial Service

04:00PM

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St. Philip's Episcopal Church

1121 Andalusia Avenue, Coral Gables, FL, US