

FRIENDS of the BARNES FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2012

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BARNES FOUNDATION PRESERVATION ADVOCATES SLAPPED WITH \$25,000 FINE FOR SEEKING JUSTICE

Citizen Activists Stunned Over Unusually Heavy-Handed Ruling

MERION STATION, PA, U.S.A. – March 12, 2012) **Friends of the Barnes Foundation** (the "Friends") and citizen petitioners who tried last February to have new evidence of wrongdoing in the Barnes case heard in Montgomery County Orphans Court have been assessed with a \$25,000 fine by Judge Stanley Ott. The Order, dated March 7, 2012, references Judge Ott's Memorandum Opinion of October 6, 2011 dismissing the Friends for lack of legal standing.

Attorney for the Friends, Samuel C. Stretton, argued in Objections to the Sanctions and in Court on February 2, that there is no legal basis for sanctions. Stretton emphasized in the objections that the Friends' Petition brought new information and serious legal issues to the Court's attention concerning the role of the then-Pennsylvania Attorney General in the case.

The Petition brought to light threatening statements made by former Attorney General D. Michael Fisher toward Lincoln University's Board of Trustees, the only party other than the Barnes Foundation with full legal standing to intervene. Lincoln subsequently dropped its Court Petition opposing the Barnes Foundation's Petition to expand its Board and move the collection to Philadelphia.

Jenkintown resident Suzanne Hunter, a member of the Friends of the Barnes Foundation Steering Committee, said that Judge Ott's assessment only "reinforces the impression that those responsible for moving the Barnes art collection to Philadelphia will stop at nothing to cloak the shady facts behind the move."

Steering Committee member Evelyn Yaari, of Bala Cynwyd, said "The Barnes administration and their powerful friends have done things that our value system teaches us to

oppose: withholding vital evidence from a court of law, deceiving the public, orchestration of misleading media coverage, and now ruthlessly using financial punishment against citizen advocates for preservation and justice. It is so very wrong, and so very typical.”

Mr. Stretton can be reached for comment at his West Chester office at 610-696-4243.

Friends of the Barnes Foundation is an organization of citizen advocates working for permanent preservation of the Barnes Foundation in Merion, Pennsylvania as an intact, integrated cultural site bequeathed by Dr. Albert C. Barnes. For more information, visit the group’s website at www.barnesfriends.org

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