

ATLANTA LETS STREET MUSICIANS PLAY ON

After an ACLU of Georgia lawsuit, the City of Atlanta today agreed to revise its vending ordinance to respect the rights of street musicians.

In 1993, the City of Atlanta adopted Ordinance 92-O-1306 a comprehensive vending ordinance which regulated street musicians and required them to hold a business license, limit their playing to a single location, and barred them from vast areas of the City. In September 1999, the ACLU filed suit challenging the law as violating the free speech rights of two street musicians Yusuf M. Sharif and John T. Bancheri who were repeatedly threatened with arrest and jail for simply playing their music in the streets.

Gerald Weber, Legal Director of the ACLU, described the settlement this way, "The City of Atlanta will no longer muzzle street musicians. The revised law frees street musicians, who simply accept donations, from the Byzantine requirements of the vending law."

Yusuf Sharif, a 60-year-old classical saxophonist, composer and music instructor says of the settlement, "

Adds John T. Bacheri, a student and amateur musician, "

Atlanta's agreement stands in sharp contrast to the recent decision of Savannah, Georgia to pass its own street musician law. Said Weber, "While Atlanta has wisely seen that street musicians are an asset to it's culture and friendliness, Savannah has yet to see the light."

The ACLU was assisted by attorneys Joel Silverman and Hannibal Heredia.

