

Laudatio John Blad, RJ award

Leiden, 22 June 2016

Dear all,

For the award we got several interesting suggestions. From different European angles and groups as well as individuals were nominated by fellow colleagues or country mates. One person was mentioned several times and that is why this years award is for..... **John Blad!**

A Dutch winner while we are in the Netherlands. I am proud to hand over this award to you John as I think you are the first and foremost RJ man in our country. You are respected so much for your academic contributions with much eye for practise, looking beyond borders in many ways. Your articles and books that have it origins in the Loek Hulsman period at your university, but you developed your own way which became very much a restorative one.

Recently you said good bye to your formal career at Erasmus University where you worked for 35 years. I got some useful information from your colleagues Rene van Swaeningen and Michiel van de Wolf. Even though you were a fantastic associate professor and inspiring for students, we regret that you never became the first Dutch professor of RJ. By this award we do want to give you even a much more international oriented honour. Because not only you are a national hero, you were able to look beyond borders. Working together with colleagues in Leuven, the UK (Martin Wright and David Cornwall for example) and elsewhere. At your farewell party you had Shadd Maruna among the presenters.

Your career started as a social worker and became more academic later on. The activism you had in that time (*note for the audience: yes he had a beard and looked like a hippie ;)* is still in you. You have taken the initiative to found the Dutch Forum for RJ back in 2000 and the Dutch/Flemish Journal on Restorative Justice, you have drawn up the Manifest on Mediation in Criminal Cases. Next to your intellectual work, you have always supported and initiated practical initiatives, e.g. the projects on neighborhood mediation and currently still on mediation in detention, supporting structural change in this setting. For your initiatives and actions you got in 2015 the Bianchi award that is named after Herman Bianchi whom also inspired many of us and who was still with us at that occasion.

For me you are a pioneer, an ideologist with indepth knowledge about humans and law and context, you are also a very warm person who likes to enjoy live and share that with others (I recall some nice parties, also with your wife Cora),

you are a singer and a performer and a warm family man.

Congratulations, but before I give you the award itself I do want to share some quotes that colleagues gave me about you (you may want to guess whom said what – but now worries I will give you this speech on paper too):

- He's a very upright academic and a very gentle, modest person who strongly believes that the criminal justice system needs to be civilized in order to meet the ethical standards which should underly human relationships;
- The one thing that upsets John is when he feels that individuals are treated with disrespect;
- He's a family man and a very proud father;
- He never ceased to show a genuine interest in his students;
- John's academic profile is unique, within the Dutch discourse he has build a body of thought that on the one hand respects the work of true abolitionist as Hulsman and Bianchi, but who - on the other hand – he has been capable to modify the underlying assumptions. In doing so, he created an entrance to implement these RJ related thought in to dates criminal justice discourse, notwithstanding the mainstream instrumentalists perspective (Renee Kool, University Utrecht)

The RJ-award for John Blad is very much deserved. His moral commitment, his theoretical reflection and his engagement in all sorts of practice has made him one of the leading European pioneers in the search for a better and more civilized way of doing justice. I am especially impressed by his very intelligent reflection on the juridical framing of restorative justice, and his remarkable leadership in organising "Het Tijdschrift voor Herstelrecht". It is a true pleasure and honour to have John Blad as a very wise, intelligent and pleasant "compagnon de route" with great integrity." (Lode Walgrave).

He is a passionate contributor to RJ, both in theory and in practice. He is one of the few scientists that is able to bridge the gap between science and practice. He is a very good systemic RJ thinker. One example are his ten principles for a system of restorative detention (Gert Jan Slump, Restorative Justice NL)

He is a sharp thinker and a committed academic with an edge for details. He helped pointing lawyers at their own morality: "bekennen is de politie verwennen". (Janny Dierx, mediator)

An original thinker, a die hard, a builder (there are enough breakers is the world), some one who is nuanced, but also dares to think beyond the horizon, but above all an amiable and good human. (Jacques Claessen, Maastricht University)

John has always been an excellent academic, very much committed to, and concerned about, his research work and his students. I have always known him as a very honest person, who is thinking and acting in a very consistent way, in all modesty, and with a lot of understanding towards colleagues and other people generally. Most important: he has always followed his deep beliefs and convictions, and did not 'move with the wind' when new and more easy topics appeared on the academic horizon. His role in the Low Countries – and beyond – has been considerable (see list René). He has been the driving force of the Dutch-Flemish journal on restorative justice for many years, and he is an active Editorial Board member of Restorative Justice: An international journal (see his editorial last year, where he proposed to create an international (worldwide) organisation on RJ). His modesty, his ideas, the consistency in his thinking and acting, and his understanding of people make him a great human (Ivo Aertsen, KU Leuven).

We are happy that on Friday you will share some of your thoughts on RJ and where we should be heading to in the plenary, together with Christa Pelikan, the previous winner. Congratulations again on behalf of the whole EFRJ board and team. We will toast together now: cheers!

Annemieke Wolthuis, vice-chair European Forum for Restorative Justice