

## STIAVETTI V. CLENDENIN: STATE SUPREME COURT HOLDS CALIFORNIA ACCOUNTABLE FOR A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

BY SARAH HOPKINS

California's county jails  
continue to serve as  
warehouses for people  
in need of mental  
health treatment.

In August 2014, Stephanie Stiavetti was trying to contact her brother. She had struggled to keep track of him after he was arrested and incarcerated in the Contra Costa County Martinez Detention Facility. Her brother, referred to as “N” in court documents to protect his privacy, had been living with a severe mental health condition, and without stable shelter, when law enforcement picked him up and put him behind bars.

“It wasn’t easy to get a hold of him,” Stiavetti recalls. “He was a person with mental illness in jail, lost in the system, going back and forth between court and jail. They were trying to figure out what to do with him.”

A public defender assigned to N’s case got in touch. She informed Stiavetti that, in the rigid, violence-ridden environment of jail, N’s mental health condition had worsened.

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## HEALTH CARE RIGHTS FOR ALL: UC REGENTS ANTI-DISCRIMINATION VOTE A LEAP FORWARD

BY TAMMERLIN DRUMMOND

When the UC Medical Centers initially proposed a significant expansion of its existing partnerships with Dignity Health, a hospital chain with a long history of denying people health care based on Catholic religious doctrine, the ACLU spearheaded a campaign to prevent increased denials of care. UC claims it has placed its medical students and doctors in Dignity Health and other Catholic hospitals to broaden its reach. But as a result, patients are denied access to essential reproductive and gender-affirming care, because their UC providers are practicing in hospitals where care is limited based on what the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops deems morally appropriate.

UC Health has long been a leader in providing comprehensive reproductive and LGBTQ-inclusive care. Yet in its contracts with Catholic hospitals, it willingly agreed to require its providers to follow religious guidelines that prohibit or limit a

range of basic and essential reproductive health care services, including contraception, standard treatments for miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy, and abortion.

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# ACLU LAUNCHES GOLD CHAINS PODCAST, DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF A "FREE" CALIFORNIA


BY TAMMERLIN DRUMMOND

Many schoolchildren are taught that California came into the Union as a “free” state and never had slavery. But as we previously documented in our 2019 public education project “Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California,” that story is a lie. This year, Gold Chains, takes a new form—a podcast.





The podcast is a continuation of our work to educate Californians about our state’s little-known past and how the racist foundations that our state was built upon, left a toxic legacy of white supremacy that infects our institutions and our culture to this day. Our pilot episode, “California Fugitive Slave Law,” launched in August. The episode examines a law that allowed white slaveholders to recapture formerly enslaved African Americans and terrorized the Black community. It can be found at [www.goldchainsca.org/podcast](http://www.goldchainsca.org/podcast).

“There was always that fear of a mob coming to take you away in the middle of the night,” said Taylor Bythewood-Porter, an assistant history curator at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles, and a guest on the show. “Enslaved and free African Americans who arrived in California could easily fall victim to fraud and kidnapping.”

The pilot episode tells the story of three formerly enslaved Black gold miners, who months after securing their freedom, were living their California Gold Rush dreams. Robert Perkins, Carter Perkins and Sandy Jones had built a lucrative mining supply business and had earned the equivalent of what would be about \$100,000 today. But one cool Spring night in 1852, an armed posse of white men burst into their cabin and arrested them, claiming that they were fugitive slaves.



A podcast about the Hidden History of Slavery in California, where we unearth the stories that were deliberately left out of the "free" state’s official history. And we connect that dark past to today’s calls for justice.

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Their case went all the way to the state Supreme Court, which issued a ruling that would make a mockery of the California constitution’s ban on slavery.

“This history has been erased from the schoolbooks,” said Candice Francis, communications director at the ACLU of Northern California. “People who live in California and are raised and educated here, do not learn this history.”

The Gold Chains podcast is especially timely. Last year, California passed AB 3121, a bill authored by now-Secretary of State Shirley Weber, which created a new task force to 1) study California’s role in the enslavement of Black people and 2) to develop proposals for reparations. The 9-person task force began meeting in June 2021 and will present its final report to the legislature in June of 2022.


According to Weber, one of the goals of AB 3121 is to help educate Californians about the state’s slavery history so that people can make the connections between the past and demands today for reparations.

“We cannot separate the things that people are crying for in the streets in terms of justice from what has happened in the past,” Weber said, addressing the task force at its first meeting in June.

Stacey L. Smith, a guest on the pilot Gold Chains episode, wrote a book about slavery in California and is acting as a consultant to the California Department of Justice as it supports the work of the California reparations task force.

“What we really need to think about here is the role of California in perpetuating and benefiting from enslavement,” Smith said. “California is an outlier in that it is one of the only free states that is so friendly to the interests of pro-slavery southerners.”

We invite you to listen to the podcast at [www.goldchainsca.org/podcast](http://www.goldchainsca.org/podcast). Be on the lookout for future episodes. If you appreciate what you’ve heard, please share it with others. We also invite you to explore more stories about California’s hidden slavery past at [Goldchains.ca.org](http://Goldchains.ca.org).

Thank you again for the generous support from our ACLU of Northern California members, which continues to make this important work possible. 

*Tammerlin Drummond is a communications strategist at the ACLU of Northern California.*

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This history has been erased from the schoolbooks. Listen at [www.goldchainsca.org/podcast](http://www.goldchainsca.org/podcast).

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# EXPLORING THE ACLU NEWS ARCHIVE: THE FIGHT AGAINST HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IN CALIFORNIA IS A STORY OF PROGRESS AND BACKLASH

BY BRADY HIRSCH

*This article is part of a series looking back at the work of ACLU NorCal over the past 85 years, through the ACLU News archive from 1936 to 2020, available at [www.aclunc.org/CHS](http://www.aclunc.org/CHS). It's an excerpt from a longer article published on the ACLU NorCal blog on July 13, 2021.*



The *ACLU News* archive recounts the various forms of legalized housing discrimination leveled at Black people in Northern California, and charts severe backlash to progress, whenever it was made. It provides a snapshot of the ways that businesses, the state, and individuals partnered to exclude Black people from the accumulation of wealth through dispossession and the denial of their means to secure a home.

## SCHEMES OF DISCRIMINATION

The archive illustrates how policies of racial discrimination in housing were systematically challenged in California, and eventually struck down. But no sooner had a practice been outlawed, than the offending parties would concoct schemes to continue their methods of racial exclusion.

For instance, in 1948 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial housing covenants could not be enforced in court without running afoul of the Fourteenth Amendment. Later that year, realtors in the East Bay city of Hayward attempted to circumvent this ruling by pushing for property owners to require the approval of a "special corporate committee" to sell, lease, or rent their property. The function of this committee was to deny applications from Black people.

Perhaps the most notorious example of backlash to efforts to secure fair housing were the attempts to repeal the 1963 California Fair Housing Act, also known as the Rumford Act. Named after its champion, Assemblymember William Byron Rumford, the first Black person elected to state public office in Northern California, the act prohibited racial discrimination in the sale or rental of public housing and most private housing. Notably, this law was passed five years before the federal Civil Rights Act of 1968, which outlawed housing discrimination and aimed to reverse housing segregation.

White realtors were outraged that they could no longer profit off people's prejudices, and the next year they organized a campaign to codify their right to discriminate into state law. The California Association of Realtors sponsored Proposition 13, an initiative to nullify the Rumford Act and amend the California Constitution to allow housing discrimination to continue unabated. In

response, the ACLU helped organize the opposition campaign to convince the public to oppose the measure.

Our initial efforts didn't work. Arguments for racial justice and fair housing proved less persuasive to the California public than the California Association of Realtors' message that the Rumford Act was a violation of people's property rights. Proposition 13 passed with 65 percent of the vote. A supermajority of Californians chose to create a constitutional right to discriminate.

Thankfully, the proposition never took root. A flurry of civil rights organizations, including the ACLU, challenged it in court, and eventually, in *Reitman v. Mulkey*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the measure violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION'S ONGOING IMPACT

When viewed through the lens of progress and backlash, the story we like to tell ourselves about our state's steady march toward progress becomes unsettled. Any victory that was achieved was hard-fought, and not the end of the tale. Discrimination was reinforced or its lasting damage covered up, with consequences that linger today.

California's policies of housing discrimination prevented the accumulation of generational wealth and were part of the systemic racism that drained Black communities of opportunities and resources. According to the Public Policy Institute of California Black people are "two times more likely to be earning at low income levels than at high income levels." White families, by contrast, are more than twice as likely to be earning at the highest income levels. The racial disparities are even greater when you measure wealth instead of income. According to a report by the Federal Reserve Bank, Black households in the L.A. metro area have about 1 percent of the household wealth as white households.

## THE LEGACY OF HOMELESSNESS

The impact of housing discrimination is also evident in the racial disparities in our state's homeless population. Today, U.S. Census data shows that while 6.5 percent of California is


Black, they account for 40 percent of homeless people in the state. In the San Francisco Bay Area, U.S.-born Black residents are three times more likely to live in poverty than white residents. And once forced onto the street due to a lack of housing, Black people are more at risk of discriminatory and potentially deadly interactions with the police.

In nearly any decade of the ACLU Archive, you can find numerous examples of cities abusing their unhoused residents. In 1994, San Francisco pursued a program to ban homeless people from sleeping in public parks or any public property. The city had 1,400 shelter beds but 11,000-16,000 homeless people, so those who couldn't find a bed had nowhere to rest or live without being targeted by the police. The result was, as one advocate described it, to "outlaw everything but walking for homeless people."

Roughly 10 years later, the ACLU sued Fresno and CalTrans for their rampant violation of homeless people's rights. Police regularly conducted sweeps that indiscriminately destroyed people's life necessities, including wheelchairs, medications, photographs, personal papers, tents, and other crucial items, while providing no alternative shelter for people. In the words of one of our clients, Al Williams, "when the police look at you as a homeless person, they think you have no way of defending yourself legally. I'd stand up and I'd get the gun in my face. You back off and you just watch. You feel helpless." But Al did stand up, and had his day in court—and won.

The criminalization of the houseless continues to this day. We have seen a resurgence up and down the state: in Chico, in Lancaster, and in Pacifica. Wherever these policies are passed, they cause great harm: attacking people's dignity, jeopardizing people's health, and keeping those most in need of support and stability living on the edge.

Decades of racist policies and discrimination have spawned racial disparities in California's housing crisis and homeless population. The damage that these policies caused has never been addressed—which is why neighborhoods are so segregated and the racial differences in wealth so stark. In June, the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans convened for the first time and made it clear that housing must be central to the conversation about reparations. The Task Force was created as a result of legislation championed in 2020 by Assembly Member Dr. Shirley Weber, who is now California's Secretary of State.

As we comb through the ACLU archives it's likely that it will provide additional evidence in support of this vital work. Housing is a human right that has been withheld along racial lines. This history must be acknowledged, and the fault lines repaired. 

*Brady Hirsch is an associate communications strategist at the ACLU of Northern California.*

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

BY KEVIN BAKER

Thanks to your tireless advocacy, many of our key bills were signed by the governor as this issue went to press.

## SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR

**SB 2, the Kenneth Ross Jr. Police Decertification Act** was signed by the governor. After two years of advocacy by the Let us Live Coalition and with your help, this bill will bring California in line with the 46 other states that have a process to decertify police officers who commit serious misconduct. The bill also updates state civil rights laws to provide a legal remedy for victims of police misconduct and their families.

Another important measure to reimagine policing, **AB 118, the Community Response Initiative to Strengthen Emergency Systems (CRISES) Act**, was signed by the governor. AB 118 will create a pilot grant program for community-based response to local emergencies, including: public health crises, unhoused people in crisis, people exposed to intimate partner or community violence, people with a substance use disorder, and people impacted by natural or climate disasters.


The governor also signed **AB 367**, our menstrual equity bill, which puts free menstrual products in college campuses. We’re hopeful that the governor will affirm that menstrual products are a necessity—not a luxury.

## OTHER BILL UPDATES

The Debt Free Justice California, a coalition of which the ACLU is a member, succeeded in repealing many of the remaining criminal administrative fees and assessments imposed on people in our criminal justice system. This advanced to the governor for signature in **AB 177**.

**AB 339**, which would mandate remote participation in open and public hearings and meetings for city councils and boards of supervisors in jurisdictions with populations over 250,000, also passed, but was vetoed by the governor.

Our bill to eliminate California’s outdated “loitering with intent” law, also passed the legislature and will be sent to the governor’s desk in January. **SB 357, the Safer Streets for All Act**, would eliminate an overbroad section of the penal code that has allowed people to be arrested and charged without evidence, simply based on an individual officer’s often biased determination that they intended to engage in sex work. This vague and subjective law has impacted countless lives with targeted criminalization of our Black and trans communities, particularly women of color.

Unfortunately, **AB 256, the Racial Justice for All Act** was made a two-year bill but we remain committed to ensuring that all who have experienced racial bias in California’s court system are given an opportunity to pursue justice. The work will continue in January. 

*Kevin Baker is the legislative director for the ACLU of California Center for Advocacy & Policy.*

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**You can continue to stay involved on these bills by going to [ACLUCalAction.org](https://aclucalaction.org) to find out how you can take action and help us advance our legislative priorities.**  
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# UC REGENTS ANTI-DISCRIMINATION VOTE A LEAP FORWARD

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Certain gender-affirming care, which U.S. Catholic bishops have labeled “collaborating with and promoting a mental disorder,” is also banned.

With the U.S. Supreme Court increasingly willing to license discrimination based on religion, as well as to restrict access to reproductive health care, it is more important than ever that California’s state entities uphold our values.


Over the past two years, we mobilized a broad range of stakeholders and engaged our ACLU of Northern California members to join us in actions to turn up the pressure on the UC Board of Regents. And we continued our complementary fight in court on behalf of people who had been refused reproductive and gender-affirming care in Catholic hospitals.

Now we have cautious cause for optimism. In June, the UC Regents voted almost unanimously to tighten the rules on affiliations with hospitals that refuse to permit UC providers to offer the full range of care. The new policy requires all hospitals that UC contracts with to allow UC doctors to provide medical procedures to all people on a non-discriminatory basis. This requirement should mean that UC cannot contract with Dignity Health and other hospitals if they refuse to provide care to certain patients based on religious reasons: for example, permitting hysterectomies to cisgender women but refusing to permit them for

transgender men or permitting tubal ligations only for some women, who the hospitals deem morally worthy. The hospitals have until Dec. 31, 2023 to abide by the new rules or their contracts must be terminated.

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This unfortunately won’t affect how hospitals with religious restrictions on care operate beyond their relationship with UC, but it is still a blow to Catholic health care providers that have steadily increased their footprint across the country, imposing their discriminatory practices on ever-

increasing numbers of patients. “We have seriously changed the path that UC was on and this is really something to be celebrated, not just for California but for the nation,” said Elizabeth Gill, senior staff attorney for the Gender, Sexuality & Reproductive Justice Program at the ACLU of Northern California. “This achievement represents years of advocacy by patients who had been denied reproductive and gender-affirming care, UC faculty, students, reproductive rights and LGBTQ organizations, as well as elected officials to bring about these much-needed changes.” While we are a long way from where we were two years ago when we first learned of these partnerships that place religious restrictions on UC-provided health care, our work is not done. The ACLU and our community partners will continue advocating for health care rights for all. We must see to it that UC, a public entity, adopts the broadest possible definition for what constitutes discrimination in its oversight of hospital contracts. And that must be consistent with California law. We will continue to fight for the day when patients will no longer be denied or delayed the care they need because their healthcare providers are practicing in a facility whose policies discriminate. 



# LANDMARK SETTLEMENT PROTECTS DUE PROCESS RIGHTS FOR IMMIGRANT YOUTH

BY STAN YOGI

In January 2021, after more than three years of litigation, a federal judge approved a landmark settlement that the ACLU Foundation of Northern California reached with the U.S. government to ensure basic due process rights for unaccompanied immigrant minors.

The lawsuit, *Saravia v. Sessions*, was filed in June 2017 in collaboration with the national ACLU’s Immigrants’ Rights Project, the New York Civil Liberties Union, the Law Offices of Holly Cooper and the law firm of Cooley LLP after the government imprisoned, without hearings, dozens of undocumented immigrant youths who were accused, based on flimsy evidence or hearsay, of being gang members. The case was featured in an episode of PBS’s Frontline called “The Gang Crackdown” on Feb. 13, 2018, which is available for streaming.

“This settlement is important because it ended one of the worst of Trump’s immigration policies,” explained Bill Freeman, a senior counsel at ACLU NorCal. “These kids were locked up with no due process because the administration was trying to make a political point.”

The minors were victims of “Operation Matador,” a highly-publicized Trump program purportedly targeting gangs. In reality, it swept up young Latinx immigrants, like Percy (a pseudonym), seeking protection in the U.S. When Percy was 7, his mother left him in El Salvador while she sought work in the U.S. Gangs threatened to kill him. So, at 14, Percy crossed the border. Under U.S. law, he was placed with his mother in Long Island while awaiting an Immigration Court hearing.

Percy adjusted well to his new community. But while he was rough-housing with a friend, police arrested him and turned him over to ICE. The government transported Percy to a detention facility near Sacramento, and held him there without a hearing, on the vague charge of “gang affiliation.”


“Agents picked up kids off the streets without informing their parents or lawyers, and transported them in secret far from their homes. Frantic parents didn’t know what had happened to their children until days later,” said Freeman.

In November 2017, Judge Vince Chhabria issued an injunction establishing a nationwide class of children like Percy and requiring the government to provide prompt court hearings and present evidence justifying their arrests. In over 90 percent of the subsequent hearings, including Percy’s, the government failed to prove that the arrests were justified, and the youths were released. Soon after, the government reached out to settle the lawsuit.

The settlement that Judge Chhabria approved in January expands the protections won in the court’s injunction. It applies to all unaccompanied immigrant minors whom the government released to their families but seeks to re-detain based on allegations of gang affiliation. It requires that ICE promptly explain specific alleged acts or conduct

prompting the arrest. The government must provide an Immigration Court hearing within 10 days of re-arrest, and must prove that re-detention is justified because the minor is a flight risk or a danger to the community. The government cannot use unsubstantiated gang allegations to deny class members a broad variety of immigration benefits, including asylum eligibility, visas, and special status, which can lead to obtaining a green card.

Commenting on the successful result, Freeman observed,

“Winning cases like this is a long and arduous process. It requires concentrated effort to stop a cruel policy in its tracks, and sustained attention to negotiate proper standards for government conduct.” 

*Stan Yogi is a former ACLU of Northern California staff member who now writes about civil liberties history.*



*Saravia v. Sessions* garnered nationwide news coverage when this landmark case was filed. For years, the ACLU worked for justice for Percy and others like him. The case illustrates how long it can take for change to occur—but it does happen.

## WANT TO TAKE ACTION?

Join our email list to stay informed about current issues and campaigns, upcoming events, and opportunities to get more involved in the fight to protect and expand civil liberties.

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# LEGAL AND POLICY UPDATES

## ***CRISWELL ET AL V. BOUDREAUX: CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND COVID-19***

BY BRADY HIRSCH

Over the course of the pandemic, Tulare County Sheriff Michael Boudreaux demonstrated a gross indifference to the health and safety of the approximately 1,900 people incarcerated in his facilities.

While he publicly extolled the benefits of masks in his “Good Neighbor” campaign, inside his jails he banned them. There was no consistent COVID-19 testing to monitor and prevent outbreaks among staff and those imprisoned. Social distancing was inadequate, as were sanitation supplies.

The ACLU Foundation of Northern California filed suit in July 2020 to compel the sheriff to release those who were medically vulnerable and implement basic safety policies, like providing people with hand soap, masks, and testing. In February 2021, the ACLU filed a supplemental suit arguing that the sheriff continued to mismanage COVID-19 outbreaks. Two months earlier, 80 percent of a housing unit tested positive for Covid; the full extent of the outbreak is unknown, as the sheriff refused to conduct widespread testing. Despite this outbreak, Sheriff Boudreaux did not implement social distancing protocols. Instead, he locked people in their cells for 23 to 24 hours a day. This policy created a mental health crisis, and as the lawsuit argues, violated the Constitution’s protection from cruel and unusual punishment.

In August 2021, we reached a preliminary settlement agreement with Sheriff Boudreaux that required him to provide masks, testing, vaccinations, more extensive out-of-cell time, and transparent data about the impact of COVID-19 in Tulare County jails. We are now waiting for approval of the settlement by the court.

## **HIGH-RISK PREGNANCIES IN TULARE COUNTY JAILS**

BY BRADY HIRSCH

While investigating COVID conditions in the Tulare County jails, the ACLU Foundation of Northern California discovered three women with high-risk pregnancies who were

receiving dangerously inadequate prenatal care. Alex was 16 weeks pregnant and Jennifer was 14 weeks pregnant. Both were diagnosed with placenta previa, a condition that can cause premature delivery, excessive bleeding, or require emergency C-section surgery. A couple of months later, we met Janielle, who was eight months pregnant with a similar condition. If any were to deliver while still incarcerated, it could amount to a death sentence for the mother and child.

Tulare jail officials brushed off these womens’ symptoms and denied them the treatment prescribed by their OB-GYN. The jailers refused to conduct bloodwork, delayed providing the women their required diet, failed to make appointments with specialists they needed to see, and ignored their complaints of cramping, swelling, and bleeding. Alex was explicitly told that the jail wouldn’t do anything unless she was “gushing out blood.”

Our team worked tirelessly to get all three women out of jail and into facilities that could safely treat them. We collected depositions from each of them, as well as their OB-GYNs, and worked with their criminal defense attorneys to petition the judge to approve supportive alternatives to incarceration.

Thanks to this advocacy, Alex and Jennifer were released on probation, and Janielle was transferred to a long-term rehabilitation facility. All three safely delivered their babies.

“These women’s lives were put at risk by a criminal legal system that incarcerates first and asks questions later,” said Jenna Kwak, legal-policy assistant at the ACLU of Northern California. “Yes, the prenatal medical care in jails is abysmal and must be improved, but we also should not be imprisoning pregnant people.”

“Our job now is to make this work systematic instead of going case by case,” said ACLU NorCal Investigator Dylan Verner-Crist. “Tulare County is failing to meet the standard of prenatal care required by state law, but they are by no means alone.” ACLU has worked in California and nationwide on passing—and enforcing—laws to ensure reproductive justice for people who are detained, whether in immigration facilities, county jails, or state and federal prisons. Now, our work is focused on making sure that these new laws are more than words on paper by holding correctional authorities to them.

## **POLICING ADVOCACY UPDATES**

BY SARAH HOPKINS

Advocates from our Criminal Justice Program continue their work to lift the veil of secrecy that California police forces have long operated behind.

Allyssa Victory (Villanueva), staff attorney, has been working in partnership with a law firm on litigation that aims to enforce SB 1421—the state law that makes police misconduct records accessible by Public Records Act (PRA) request—in jurisdictions with high numbers of officer-involved killings and excessive use of force cases.

The ACLU Foundation of Northern California sued one of those jurisdictions, Fresno County, in March after officials refused to comply with PRA requests and charged the office fees in violation of the PRA’s terms. Officials have since begun to produce police misconduct documents. Policy analysts and legal assistants at our partner firm Munger, Tolles & Olson have begun a deep-dive review, with the goal of pushing for policy changes based on the data revealed.

“The goal is to preserve the public’s right to view the records and use them to further the work of criminal justice reform across the state,” said Victory.

January 2021 saw the enactment of AB 1185, a law allowing county boards of supervisors in California the option to create sheriff oversight commissions: civilian-led regulatory bodies that work to increase the transparency and accountability of sheriff’s offices.

By May 2021, Marshal Arnwine, Jr., advocate at ACLU NorCal, helped to ensure the establishment of one such commission in Sacramento—no small feat, given the Sacramento sheriff’s history of hostility toward oversight. (He barred a former inspector general from overseeing his department, for example.)

Arnwine served as a policy expert for the Board of Supervisors, educating them on the technical aspects of AB 1185, and he worked closely with community members to champion their needs to the Board. “There’s always resistance when there’s a disruption to the status quo,” said Arnwine, referring to three board members he had to work hardest to convince. “But the overall result was positive.”

The Board approved the establishment of the commission in early May and will now begin a process of appointing members and establishing responsibilities. Arnwine said that one of the key victories in his advocacy push was the Board’s granting of subpoena power for the commission. This means that members will have access to police records, and the ability to conduct full and transparent investigations.



# CITY OF SACRAMENTO V. HENRY: A STORY OF FREE SPEECH INTIMIDATION

BY SARAH HOPKINS

In early June, Sacramento City Councilmember Katie Valenzuela hired a local housing justice and police accountability advocate, Skyler Henry, to work as her representative on constituent services and communications. But just before Henry was set to start at city hall, Sacramento city officials filed restraining order petitions against him, alleging that some comments he had made on a political podcast, which were critical of government officials, constituted threats to the city manager.

In July of 2021, the ACLU Foundation of Northern California joined a local legal team to defend Henry against the spurious charges, and to send a strong message to city officials across the state: “If government is allowed to


sideline and punish people whose opinions it doesn’t agree with, the First Amendment has no meaning,” said Chessie Thacher, senior staff attorney from the ACLU of Northern California’s Democracy & Civic Engagement project.

At issue in the city’s petitions were comments that Henry had made about U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, for what he considered to be the disrespectful way in which she had employed a “thumbs down” gesture to vote against a proposed \$15 minimum wage. Henry argued for peoples’ right to protest politicians’ decisions when those decisions feel detrimental to their communities. He called on local government officials, citing the mayor and city manager, to act with integrity and accountability, and to honor peoples’ right to make their demands through protest.

The city attempted to connect these comments to Sacramento-area protests, citing news stories regarding two protests that had occurred in front of the city manager’s house. But there was no evidence that Henry was ever

at the city manager’s house, or that he had planned or participated in the protests there.

In July, Henry prevailed against the city. The Sacramento County Superior Court issued a tentative ruling stating that Henry had met his burden to show his comments were protected, while the city of Sacramento had failed to show its petition had any merit. In a remarkable turn of events, the city’s counsel called Henry’s legal team to say that it would not object to the tentative ruling. In other words, the city decided it could no longer defend its unlawful position, and the tentative ruling will stand as the final ruling of the court.

“The court correctly recognized that the city failed to demonstrate why these restraining orders were necessary, or even appropriate,” said Thacher. “We believe that this was a shameful example of local government lashing out to punish valid political speech. The First Amendment demands better—especially from our state’s capital.” 

# ACLU JOINS LOCAL INDIGENOUS LEADERS TO CHANGE RACIST NAME

In March of 2021, the ACLU of Northern California joined local Indigenous leaders and residents to amplify the call for immediate action by the Fresno Board of Supervisors to change the name of Sq\*\*w Valley, an unincorporated community in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

For 200 years, the word “sq\*\*w” has been used to degrade and objectify Native women. This dehumanizing depiction excuses and perpetuates violence against them. Today, more than four in five Indigenous women reports having experienced violence, and more than one in two have experienced sexual violence.

The Rename Sq\*\*w Valley Coalition, led by Roman C. Rain Tree, member of the Dunlap Band of Mono Indians and Choinumni people, has worked for many months to engage in constructive dialogue with the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and drafted a resolution to rename Sq\*\*w Valley. “The restoration of our humanity begins with changing the name of our homeland,” said Mr. Rain Tree’s mother, whom he credits for inspiring him to start this campaign.

In June, the ACLU and the Rename Sq\*\*w Valley coalition hosted a webinar in which

local residents shared the impact of the name and voiced support for a change. Between the Change.org petition and the ACLU NorCal petition, more than 21,000 people have signed on.

Despite broad community support, the Fresno County Board of Supervisors has refused to work with the coalition and has taken no action to change the name.

Across the country, localities, schools, and even a ski resort and professional football teams have realized the damaging impact of racist mascots and place names on Indigenous communities. It’s past time for Fresno County to catch up.

The ACLU of Northern California recognizes that Indigenous people continue to suffer from historic injustices as a result of colonization and the dispossession of their lands. We must not celebrate or whitewash that history with derogatory place names or ignore the impact that such names have on Native communities living in California today.

Get involved: [www.aclunc.org/ChangeTheName](http://www.aclunc.org/ChangeTheName)

## What if I told you

there is one common word people use to demean and objectify Native American women?

An entire community is named after this word.

**That word is squaw.** The community is Squaw Valley.

**The word epitomizes the racism, sexism, and dehumanization Native American women face.**

## CHANGE THE NAME

Join the movement: [aclunc.org/ChangeTheName](http://aclunc.org/ChangeTheName)

Names are powerful. Tell the Fresno County Board of Supervisors you want the name changed NOW.



Newspaper ads in the local region have helped educate the public about the harm in keeping the existing community name. The above ad ran in the Fresno Bee.

# STATE SUPREME COURT HOLDS CALIFORNIA ACCOUNTABLE FOR A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

He had trouble understanding the rules. He had become confused and depressed. He was repeatedly placed in solitary confinement—a profoundly distressing environment that set off a cycle of agitation and altercations with staff, and more punitive action against him by jail officials.

In September 2014, a month after his arrest, N’s mental health condition had grown so disabling that a court-appointed expert determined he was unable to understand his court proceedings and therefore was incompetent to stand trial (IST). This meant that, under state and federal law, N could not be tried or sentenced. The law required him to be promptly transferred out of jail and into California’s Department of State Hospitals (DSH) so that he could be treated, and, if possible, returned to court with the ability to understand and address the criminal charges.

But N continued to languish in jail. A month after he was declared IST, a judge threatened to hold state officials in contempt of court for failing to admit N for treatment. He was admitted to DSH a couple of weeks later, where he remained for a month, only to be transferred back to jail and again declared unable to understand his court proceedings.

In court documents, Stiavetti recounts that the conditions of the county jail, N’s periods of solitary confinement, and his indeterminate wait for adequate mental health treatment “amounted to forms of torture” that further degraded her brother’s mental health.

Stiavetti is one of five individual plaintiffs represented by the ACLU Foundations of Northern and Southern California and the law firm Sullivan & Cromwell LLP under the lawsuit *Stiavetti v. Clendenin*. It was filed in 2015 against the Department of State Hospitals and the Department of Developmental Services on behalf of family members of people who endured prolonged incarceration in California county jails despite having been declared IST.

In March 2019, the Superior Court ruled that the state’s extended incarceration of IST patients violates their constitutional right to due process, and that the state must admit them for treatment within 28 days after the court provides it with the relevant documents. The California Court of Appeal rejected the government’s appeal and, on Aug. 25, 2021, the California Supreme Court handed down a major victory in the case: it denied review of this decision, meaning that the Superior Court ruling will stand.

This ruling has profound implications for the thousands of people who remain detained in county jails every year, unable to stand trial or pursue their defense without adequate treatment for their disabilities.

The Supreme Court ruling comes at a significant moment of crisis: the waitlist for IST admission to DSH has soared exponentially. In July 2013, there were 262 people on the admission waitlist. By February 2021, there

.....

“The state tried to minimize the brutality of what happened to my brother. The state’s argument was, essentially, ‘We’re doing the best we can.’ But if that’s the best you can do, you really need to revisit your standards.”

—Stephanie Stiavetti

.....

were 1,687—a 500 percent increase in less than eight years.

According to the most recently available annual data, approximately 4,000 people per year are incarcerated in California county jails, declared IST, and placed on a waitlist for admission to DSH and DDS.

Michael Risher, counsel for ACLU NorCal and one of the lead architects of the case, said that there are most likely multiple reasons behind the continuing waitlist increases at DSH, including “bigger failures in the criminal legal system and the social safety net.”

“What we do know is that wait times have fluctuated far beyond what is constitutional and have spiked during the pandemic,” said Risher.



Plaintiff Stephanie Stiavetti helped to hold California accountable for its extended incarceration of IST patients, in violation of their right to due process. She views the lawsuit as part of a larger fight to create a society where people with mental illness are cared for and empowered.


“There’s a clear failure to keep up with demand. And the state hasn’t done all it can do to mitigate the crisis. It’s a travesty of justice that this has been allowed to go on for too long.”

In an attempt to address the growing number of IST patient referrals, the state added 870 beds to its state hospital system, and to jail-based and community-based treatment programs. But the waitlist has continued to grow, and California’s county jails continue to serve as warehouses for people in need of mental health treatment, particularly for those without access to stable shelter. Approximately 89 percent of DSH patients are transferred from the criminal legal system. And half of IST patient referrals are people who were homeless at the time of their arrest.

Multiple cases, including *Stiavetti*, have rejected the state’s claim that the waitlist crisis is beyond its control. The *Stiavetti* order now in effect requires California to start providing IST defendants with treatment within one month after the court notifies the state agency of a commitment. If the government fails to do so, the Superior Court may compel the state to comply. But we’re not there yet.

The ACLU contends that the state won’t be able to address its shortage of IST treatment beds by simply adding more beds to jails and state hospitals: it must focus on community-based treatment. “Just as it’s clear that California could not build its way out of its prison overcrowding crisis, the state can’t build its way out of this mental health crisis,” said Risher. “We can’t keep putting people away in locked facilities. Research shows that outpatient treatment is just as effective and far, far less expensive than inpatient treatment. So the state could get a whole lot more people treated if it focused on connecting them to community-based care.”

Stiavetti is now a graduate student at Sonoma State University, where she is training to become a clinical counselor. She views her studies as part of a larger fight to create a society where people with mental illness are cared for and empowered. Part of that work lies in litigation like the one that bears her family’s name, she says. But another part of that work will depend on “everyday people standing up and being outraged, and advocating for people like my brother who aren’t in a position to advocate for themselves.”

“The state tried to minimize the brutality of what happened to my brother,” said Stiavetti. “The state’s argument was, essentially, ‘We’re doing the best we can.’ But if that’s the best you can do, you really need to revisit your standards. People who are incarcerated still have rights. And when you add the secondary dimension of mental illness to that, the state’s excuses aren’t any better; they are infinitely worse and less acceptable.” 

*Sarah Hopkins is a communications strategist at the ACLU of Northern California*




# THANK YOU TO ROSEY AND MAYA, YOUNG SOCIAL JUSTICE DONORS AND ARTISTS

In April, we found a colorful surprise among the plain donation envelopes we usually receive in our San Francisco office: A gift from the Community Foundation of San Carlos. There was a heartfelt, handwritten letter from a UC Davis senior named Rosey Morearty, and a brightly colored card covered in crayon drawings from a third grader named Maya Olsen.

Rosey and Maya were winners of their respective age categories in the Community Foundation of San Carlos's first annual Racial Justice Poster Art Contest, which was held in March. As part of their prize, winners were invited to choose a nonprofit with a focus on racial justice to receive a \$500 grant from the Community Foundation of San Carlos. We are honored that Rosey and Maya each chose to direct their grants to the ACLU Foundation of Northern California.

Rosey Morearty's winning poster in the adult category is a memorial to Chinedu Okobi, a Black man who died following a violent encounter with San Mateo County Sheriff's deputies in Millbrae in 2018—a stark reminder that killings of Black and Brown people at the hands of law enforcement are something that happens not just in Minneapolis or Ferguson, but also here in Northern

California. Rosey's message is simple: "Fight For Racial Justice. Your Community Needs It."

We would like to thank the Community Foundation of San Carlos, Rosey Morearty, and Maya Olsen for joining with the ACLU of Northern California in the fight for racial justice in our communities. 



Dear ACLU,

My name is Rosey Morearty and I am 22 years old. I am privileged to be able to donate \$500 through a poster contest I entered through San Carlos.

My dad told me about the ACLU when I was a small child. He told me about how you fight for the civil rights of everyone. I was moved by this goal and have been following your story since.

The Black Lives Matter movement is something that I strongly stand behind. I love that the ACLU has also been tweeting about #StopAsianHate as well as trans issues. It warms my heart that you strive to protect my transgender girlfriend. Keep doing what you're doing, I will keep fighting for social justice!

Rosey Morearty

Above, a letter from UC Davis senior Rosey Morearty.

At left, a card from third grader Maya Olsen.

## IN MEMORIAM: ACLU VOLUNTEER AND CHAPTER LEADER RON MOORE

*"I sit in a crowded room.*

*I hear voices, the intonations of  
encapsulated*

*thoughts, expressions, dreams.*

*I feel warmth of shared humanity,*

*Joined in an epiphany of life,*

*-it's energy,*

*connectedness,*


*-even its uncertainties.*

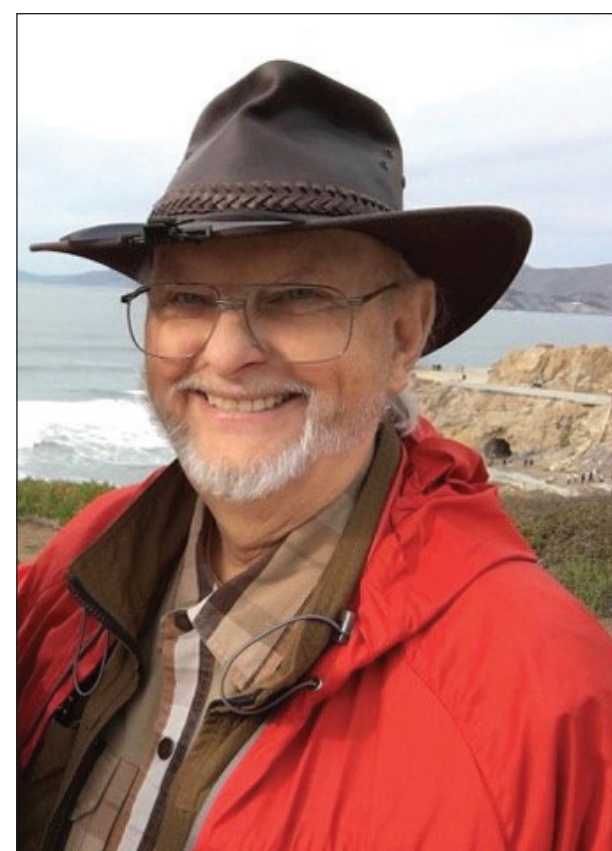
*To experience the wonder of us ... it  
comforts me."*

This was an unnamed poem written by beloved ACLU volunteer and chapter leader Ronald Stuart Moore, who passed away in April 2021.

Ron was born in 1941, and spent his life dedicated to the ministry and bettering his community. In the 1960s, he served at a Lutheran church in Compton, CA, an experience which energized his commitment to leveling the playing field and helping those in need.

Ron became an active member of the Alameda County–Paul Robeson Chapter of the ACLU of Northern California in 2013. As a chapter leader, he was deeply committed to reforming the policing and criminal legal systems, and for years he represented the ACLU on the Alameda County Justice Reinvestment Coalition. Ron helped ensure the ACLU could work in close partnership with other organizations to increase police transparency and hold local law enforcement accountable.

We remember Ron as a friend whom we looked forward to seeing at ACLU trainings and events, a generous person always ready to jump in and help out, and an inspirational leader who contributed new thinking that helped those around him to grow. His spirit helped build the kind of inclusive and kind community that we envision. We miss his smile, his ideas, and the poetry and writings he shared with us. Above all, we hope to pick up the torch of his knowledge and activism, and continue to lead our community down the trails of truth that he blazed for so many of us. 



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION VOTING INFORMATION

## WHO CAN VOTE

The bylaws of the ACLU of Northern California call for directors to be elected by the membership. The label affixed to this issue of the *ACLU News* indicates on the top line if you are a current member and thus eligible to vote. Your label states “VOTE” if you are eligible to vote or “INELIGIBLE” if you are not eligible to vote.

If your label states that you are ineligible to vote, but you have recently renewed your membership, please send in your ballot with a note that includes your name and phone number, so we can verify your status. If you are ineligible because you have not renewed your membership but would like to do so at this time, please enclose your membership renewal check in the same envelope as your ballot. (Please note that it is your membership dues payable to the ACLU, not tax-deductible donations to the ACLU Foundation, that make you eligible to vote.)

## HOW THE CANDIDATES WERE NOMINATED

As explained in the Summer 2021 issue of the *ACLU News*, our bylaws specify two methods for nominating candidates for directorships. Candidates may be nominated by the current board of directors after the board considers recommendations from its nominating committee. Candidates may also be nominated by petition bearing the signatures of at least 15 of our members in good standing.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR VOTING

The candidates are listed in alphabetical order. We have 21 candidates running to fill 21 vacancies on our board of directors. You may vote for up to 21 candidates.

You cannot cast more than one vote for any candidate. That applies even if you vote for fewer than 21 candidates. If you share a joint membership with another member, each of you can vote for 21 candidates. Do so by using both of the two columns provided for that purpose.

After marking your ballot, clip it and enclose it in an envelope along with your address label (on the front of this newsletter), which is used to ensure voter eligibility.

**ADDRESS THE ENVELOPE TO**

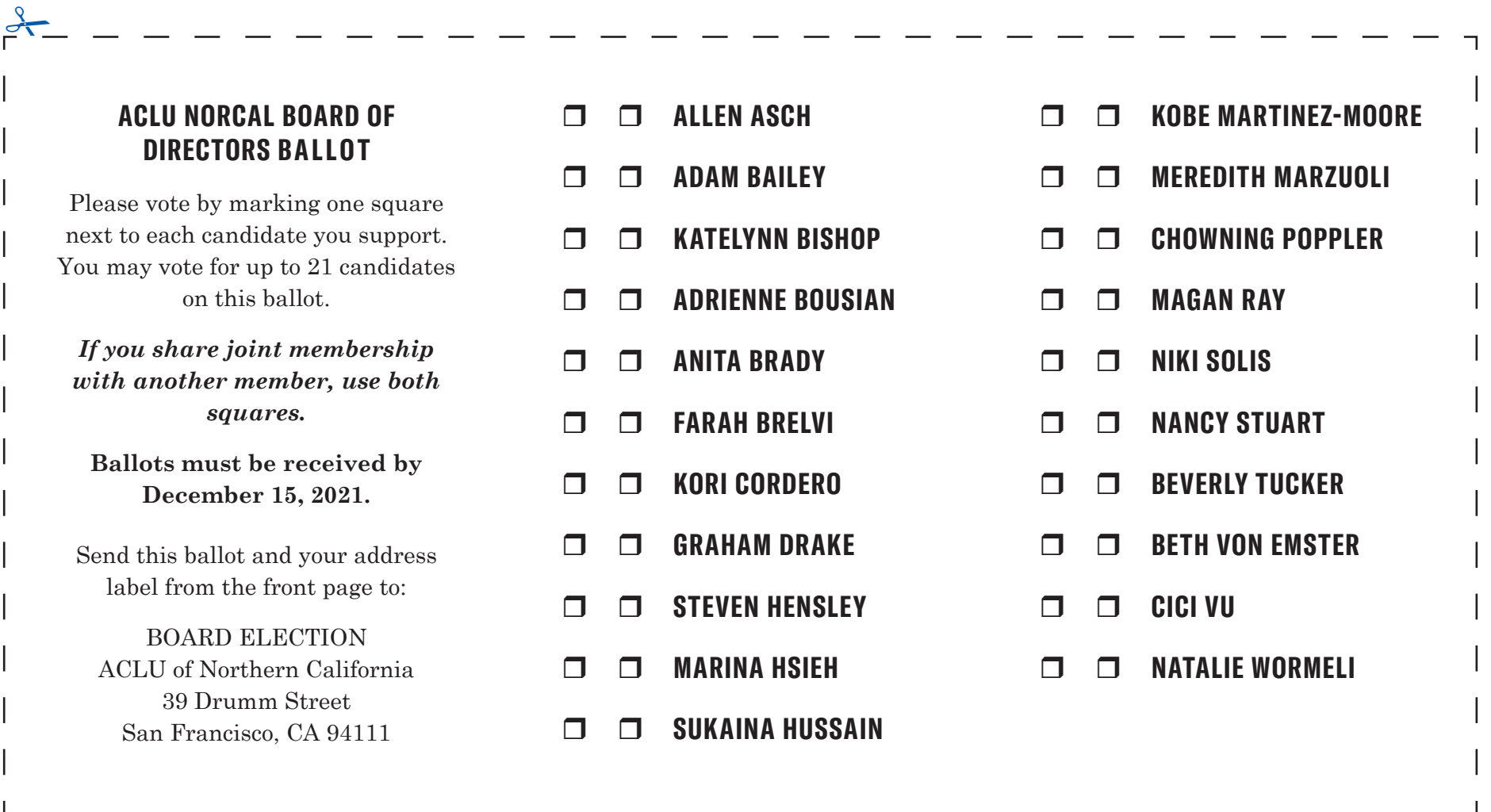
BOARD ELECTION  
ACLU of Northern California  
39 Drumm Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111

If you prefer that your ballot be confidential, put your ballot in one envelope, then insert that envelope plus your address label in a second envelope and send to the address indicated above. In that case, we will separate your envelopes before we count your ballot.

In order for your ballot to be counted, we must receive it at the address shown above by December 15, 2021.

As required by our bylaws, in order to have a quorum for our election, we need at least 100 timely returned ballots from our members.

To help you assess this year's candidates, we're including brief statements submitted by the candidates (see opposite page).





# ACLU NORCAL BOARD STATEMENTS

*Please see the opposite page for information on how to vote in this board election.*



**ALLEN ASCH**

*he/him/his*

I'm honored to be nominated as an ACLU "super fan" who joined in the 1980s, worked as a volunteer ACLU attorney in the 1990s, and helped found the Sacramento ACLU chapter in 2007. As a chapter activist, I've given "know your rights" presentations, helped implement the TRUST Act, and helped get community-based sheriff oversight.



**ADAM BAILEY\***

*he/him/his*

I am grateful to have been able to serve as an affiliate Board member since 2019 to support our staff and volunteers' incredible work, especially regarding Indigenous justice, race and economic justice, and our ever-growing outreach to the Central Valley and rural areas. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve another term on the Board of Directors.



**KATELYNN BISHOP\***

*she/her/hers*

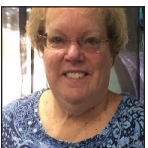
I would be honored to continue my board service. I live in Merced and teach within the community college system. I was previously active in the Yolo County ACLU chapter and am now a member of Merced's emerging chapter. I currently serve on the Personnel Committee and would look forward to continuing to contribute here.



**ADRIENNE BOUSIAN**

*she/her/hers*

I would be honored to serve on the Board. I've partnered with the ACLU throughout my career, which has been dedicated to advancing democracy and social justice through philanthropy, public policy and communications. I'm a mom, philanthropy advisor, Armenian-American, and Berkeley resident who's proud to have worked on behalf of all 58 California counties.



**ANITA BRADY\***

*she/her/hers*

As a resident of far northern CA, I have seen civil rights of marginalized groups trampled on for decades. My chapter involvement and current board term have reinforced to me the importance of ACLU. As a disabled, retired schoolteacher, I have the dedication and time to devote to the Board.



**FARAH BRELVI\***

*she/her/hers*

It has been an honor to serve as Board Chair and I would be delighted to continue for an additional year\*.

Currently I am the Interim Co-Executive Director of Muslim Advocates and have a long history working for the full spectrum of international human and civil rights. I live in Palo Alto with my family.

*\*Farah Brelvi, in her capacity as an officer (Board Chair) is eligible to serve an additional year on the Board.*



**KORI CORDERO**

*they/them/theirs*

It is an honor to be considered to serve on the Board. I've enjoyed a legal career in public service and currently serve as an Associate General Counsel for the Yurok Tribe. I've dedicated my volunteer time to advancing Native and LGBTQ2+ issues and look forward to the opportunity to contribute to the chapter's work.



**GRAHAM DRAKE**

*he/him/his*

Hello, I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Board! I have worked on numerous social justice issues in both my professional career and in my personal time. Currently, I work as a policy director for a think tank focused on improving tech policy for governmental entities.



**STEVEN HENSLEY**

*he/him/his*

I'd be honored to serve on the Board of Directors for the ACLU. As co-chair of the Fresno County ACLU Chapter, I'm helping lead an initiative focused on the decriminalization of poverty. Additionally, I'm the co-founder of a non-profit organization that provides diversion and reentry services to justice-impacted youth.



**MARINA HSIEH**

*she/her/hers*

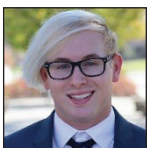
I am a law professor and currently sit on the ACLU NorCal Legal Committee. In the 22 years since I last served on this Board, I've been on the Maryland and National ACLU boards, and chaired the Trustees of Deep Springs College. I would be honored to return to our critical local issues.



**SUKAINA HUSSAIN\***

*she/her/hers*

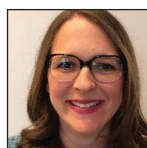
I am honored to be nominated for another term on the Board. I currently serve as the Deputy Executive Director for the Sacramento Valley/Central California office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. As AEO residing in Fresno, I hope to help increase engagement on DEI initiatives and continue uplifting the needs of the Central Valley.



**KOBE MARTINEZ-MOORE**

*he/him/his*

With great enthusiasm, I would welcome the opportunity to serve on the Board. As the social media and outreach coordinator for the Fresno County ACLU Chapter, I help pilot the effort to rectify injustices and educate the community on their rights. I'm also a co-founder of the youth services organization Youngsters for Change.



**MEREDITH MARZUOLI\***

*she/her/hers*

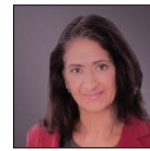
I'd be honored to serve a second term as a member of the Board. I'm an attorney with a background in criminal defense work. I currently investigate complaints of police misconduct in Oakland. I've been involved with my local ACLU chapter for six years and am passionate about standing up for the rights of others.



**CHOWNING POPPLER\***

*she/her/hers*

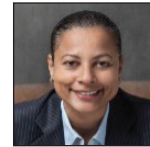
It has been a privilege to help safeguard civil rights for all Northern Californians. On the Development and Community Engagement and Policy Action committees, I've applied my skills as a lawyer and a North Peninsula Chapter leader. I would be honored to serve a second term to broaden and deepen my engagement with this inspiring organization.



**MAGAN RAY**

*she/her/hers*

It would be an honor to serve on the Board again. The daughter of a refugee, first-generation immigrant, mother of three, and a practicing attorney, I am deeply committed to immigrant rights, criminal justice reform, voting rights, ensuring equal protection for all, and cultivating diverse and multi-generational civil libertarians.



**NIKI SOLIS**

*she/her/hers*

I am humbled and honored to be nominated to serve on this esteemed board. I've been a public defender for 25 years where I currently chair the SF Public Defender's Racial Justice Committee. I served on the State Bar's Criminal Law Advisory Commission and look forward to being of service working with our guardians of liberty.



**NANCY STUART**

*she/her/hers*

I am thrilled to be nominated to serve as an ACLU NorCal Board member. Having spent my professional life in pursuit of social justice as a public interest attorney and as a clinical law professor, I am eager to support the amazing staff and critical work of the ACLU in my retirement.



**BEVERLY TUCKER**

*she/her/hers*

I welcome the opportunity to serve on the Board. I have participated in ACLU NorCal activities since the early 1990s, including committee member, board member, and board chair and I remain committed to its mission and goals. I have retired after practicing labor, employment, and civil rights law for 30 years.



**BETH VON EMSTER**

*she/her/hers*

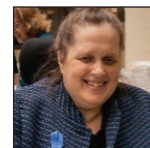
I have volunteered with the ACLU-North Peninsula Chapter for five years and serve as its Co-chair. I am involved in projects focused on immigrant rights and changes to the criminal legal system. Professionally I am a retired attorney. I am excited to deepen my involvement with the ACLU and serve in new ways.



**CICI VU**

*she/her/hers*

I have a long history with the ACLU family, at the Affiliate and National levels and am thrilled for the opportunity to be back in service of the ACLU NorCal community. I look forward to continuing my life's work in advancing social justice, civil liberties, and antiracism as an ACLU ambassador.



**NATALIE WORMELI**

*she/her/hers*

I am delighted to serve on the ACLU NorCal Board. As a 30-year volunteer member of my local chapter I have participated in local ACLU work. By serving on the Board, I will help strengthen the foundation of the ACLU NorCal and support the affiliate's superb staff's impactful advocacy and activism.

**\*INCUMBENT BOARD NOMINEES**

# A LETTER FROM ACLU OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ABDI SOLTANI

One of the favorite aspects of my job at the ACLU is that I am part of a national organization, while focusing deeply on the region and state that I call home. This fall, I have been thinking about both aspects of what drew me to the ACLU in the first place 20 years ago: national impact and local presence.

As you have read this newsletter, I hope you felt incredible pride in the impact of your support in your home region and state, from the front-page articles on detention of people with significant disabilities in jail to the advocacy with the University of California health systems, to the passage of legislation to decertify police officers who commit serious misconduct. There is no shortage of civil liberties and civil rights issues close to home to address and no small task to make each step in this path of progress in California.

Meanwhile, the national ACLU and ACLU affiliates throughout the country are hard at work defending civil liberties nationwide. In Georgia, the ACLU is suing to stop the voter suppression laws. In Florida, the ACLU is going to court to stop the anti-protest law. In Arkansas, we went to court to stop the anti-trans law.

Reflecting the broader polarization of the country, while we can make progress on civil rights in California, we are in full defense of those rights in many other states. As an ACLU member and supporter, your support has that kind of reach and impact.

Perhaps there is no state right now that is as much the epicenter of civil liberties battles as the state of Texas. There, the ACLU of Texas is fighting a trifecta of battles: the human rights crisis on the US-Mexico border issues, the voter suppression law, and the anti-abortion law. And that's just this month.

When thinking about California and Texas, there are three lessons I think are instructive.

First, California and Texas have a lot in common, both in our history and currently.

.....  
**In California in the  
1990s and early 2000s,  
hateful attacks on civil  
rights and civil liberties  
were catalysts for  
civic engagement and  
building power today.**  
.....

Both are states that were formed through the US conquest in the Mexican-American War and their entry were catalysts in the path to the Civil War. They are both republics with a strong independent streak, populations that grew rapidly and are racially diverse.

That may be where the similarities stop—which is the second key point. Each state is governed with all state officials and supermajorities of their legislatures from one party. But in one state we are making further gains in civil liberties and civil rights, in another, basic rights are being turned back.

And that brings me to the third lesson. California was once that national epicenter of the attacks on civil rights. In the 1990s and early 2000s a series of ballot measures tapped into racial resentment to increase criminal sentences, deny basic services to immigrants, and end affirmative action. Concurrently, there were calls to prohibit same-sex marriage. In California,



ACLU of Northern California  
Executive Director Abdi Soltani

PHOTO BY BETHANIE HINES

these attacks were catalysts for civic engagement and building power. When I graduated from college in 1995, that is the path that I and countless others committed ourselves to. It was our collective response to those attacks that set the stage for the progress we are making today in California. It will take time for the change to unfold in Texas, but how we respond now in Texas matters. How we respond in Georgia, Florida, and Arkansas matters. How we respond to the Capitol insurrection matters. How we respond in California matters.

Thank you for how you have responded already—through your support of the ACLU and everything else you do for equality and justice. It matters. Thank you.

Abdi Soltani, Executive Director  
ACLU of Northern California

## GET THE LATEST ACLU UPDATES VIA EMAIL AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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