

ACLU news

DISSENT IS PATRIOTIC

SUMMER 2017

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THE ACLU FIGHTS BACK AGAINST DANGEROUS PLAN TO SWIFTLY EXPAND BORDER PATROL

By Leslie Fulbright

President Trump has repeatedly vowed to expand his deportation force and take the “handcuffs off” of the officers that patrol the border. Part of the plan includes hiring an additional 5,000 Customs and Border Protection officers. This is cause for alarm.

Apart from the fact that these new officers aren't licensed peace officers and don't receive comparable training, it's impossible to hire that many people without relaxing the training requirements. And the standards are already pretty low based on the abuses we've seen.

Even with current training, CBP officers are not held to the standards of professional police practices. The agency has a troubling and extensively documented history of human rights abuses at the border, as well as a lack of accountability that results in high rates of sexual assault, excessive force, and racial profiling.

Imagine bringing on thousands more people, and hiring them quickly in an attempt to fulfill a campaign promise to deport every undocumented person. When you rapidly expand a law enforcement force—with increasing numbers of heavily armed, poorly trained agents who believe they answer to no one—civil rights violations will undoubtedly escalate.

The ACLU has long been representing victims of CBP abuse. Our most recent work is on behalf of two teenage sisters who were sexually assaulted by a CBP officer in July of last year.

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATES: PROTECTING IMMIGRANT & MUSLIM COMMUNITIES, REFORMING MONEY BAIL

By Natasha Minsker

The ACLU Center for Advocacy & Policy is our voice on California legislation. The staff review every bill, help amend and fix hundreds, and advance priority reforms. In the current context, that means resisting the Trump administration's policies, advancing proactive reforms, and engaging communities.

Protecting California's Immigrant & Muslim Communities

On Monday, April 3, the same day that nearly 400 ACLU members and supporters descended on the state Capitol for the ACLU of California's annual Conference and Lobby Day, the state Senate approved two

key bills that will honor everyone's common humanity, dignity, and fundamental rights.

SB 54, the California Values Act, will curtail the use of state and local resources to fuel mass deportations that separate families. The bill would also keep schools, hospitals, and courthouses safe and accessible to all Californians.

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AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION of NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1: PROTECTING IMMIGRANT & MUSLIM COMMUNITIES, REFORMING MONEY BAIL

With the state's unique population, the stakes are high as the federal government implements its new immigration enforcement guidelines, which put millions of Californians at risk of deportation. SB 54 will prevent the entanglement of aggressive federal deportation agents and local police and sheriffs—an entanglement the Trump administration is banking on to carry out its reckless and inhumane mass deportation plans. It was exciting for so many ACLU members to watch the Senate approve the bill. It is now being considered by the Assembly.

From the airports to the statehouse, Californians have shown that they fully reject the federal government's assault on our civil liberties and core values. That was apparent on April 3, when the Senate also approved SB 31, the California Religious Freedom Act. The bill, a proactive measure to ensure the federal government never uses California's state and local governments to create a Muslim registry, is now in the Assembly.

On the campaign trail, then-candidate Trump repeatedly proposed a Muslim registry. Although he has not followed through with this threat yet, he continues to spread fear by demonizing and scapegoating the Muslim community. California must make sure that the Trump Administration never uses our state and local resources to spread fear and intolerance, or to single people out based on religion,

race, or national origin. The passage of both bills is a step in the right direction to protect our core values and the inalienable rights everyone is born with.

Reforming California's Money Bail System

That same day, ACLU members and supporters also rallied and lobbied on behalf of important legislation that will make justice a reality for every Californian, not just people who can afford it. Every year, California's money bail system keeps thousands of people in jail before they get their day in court—all because they cannot afford to post bail and buy their freedom. This costly, unfair, and ineffective system fuels poverty and racial disparities in the criminal justice system. AB 42 (Bonta) and SB 10 (Hertzberg) are identical measures that will protect the wellbeing and safety of communities.

Specifically, the bills will reduce the number of people locked up because they are unable to pay to get out of jail while their cases move forward. The bills also prioritize services to help people make their court appearances. The reforms proposed under the bills build upon common-sense solutions adopted by other local and state governments that have significantly reduced their use of commercial bail. The bills draw upon best practices and lessons learned from places like Kentucky, New Jersey, and Santa Clara

County in California to adopt reforms specifically tailored for the state.

Both bills passed their first hurdle and were approved by the Public Safety Committees. A floor vote on the bills was expected at press time.

While these bills have not yet made it to the finish line, we at the ACLU remain fully committed to continuing the fight. We firmly believe that, today and always, the single most powerful thing we can do is to believe that change and progress are not only possible, but inevitable—and that we the people hold the power to create that change. Our Conference and Lobby Day was just the beginning.

Support at Conference & Lobby Day

"We must stop linking wealth to liberty. A person's ability to post bail is not an indication of their guilt, innocence, danger to the public, or flight risk. It's time to restore fairness and add greater public safety to our system by individually assessing the person's ability to be safely released from custody pretrial. We must safely reform our money bail system now."
—Assemblymember Rob Bonta (D-Oakland)

"I believe in the American justice system, and I believe the law should treat everyone the same. The present money bail system lets the rich go free but forces the poor to stay in jail before a court determines guilt or innocence. That's not right, and that's not fair. It's time to take money out of the bail equation and determine if people should be incarcerated pretrial based on the size of their risk, not the size of their wallet."
—State Senator Bob Hertzberg (D-Van Nuys)

"I'm proud to be a card-carrying member of the ACLU since 1989—keep up your efforts."
—California Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (D-Paramont)


"The California Legislature is committed to protecting the civil rights and liberties of all those who call the Golden State home regardless of race, ethnicity, who you love, or who you worship. We will never surrender the very values that make California and our nation great no matter who sits in the White House."
—Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) 



PHOTO BY STACY ANTONOPOULOS

ACLU of California Conference & Lobby Day keynote speaker Rashad Robinson, Executive Director of Color of Change.

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BAIL REFORM HIGHLIGHTED AT THE ACLU OF CALIFORNIA'S CONFERENCE & LOBBY DAY: MELODIE HENDERSON'S STORY

By Natasha Minsker

Reducing incarceration is a top nationwide priority of the ACLU. The Eighth Amendment prohibits the federal government from imposing excessive bail, but that promise isn't being met. Eleven years ago, Melodie Henderson, a part-time student and San Diego resident, was arrested. Her bail was set at \$50,000—before the judge ever laid eyes on her.

At the time, she was working while also taking care of her grandmother, who was undergoing chemotherapy, and her 6-year-old sister. Her grandparents, who were on a fixed monthly income, faced the decision to either go into debt to get Melodie released as her case moved forward or let her sit in jail, lose her job, and fight her case in custody. They decided to go through a bail bondsman to get Melodie out of custody, but that required making a down payment and monthly payments to the bail bondsman, with interest.

Although Melodie was able to work while out on bail, her income was not enough to cover her monthly bail payments and rising interest. Her case was resolved—she completed community service and a period of probation. But her debt to the bail company continued. For a period, Melodie and her grandparents were unable to make their monthly payments to the bail company and she was eventually sent to collections. She tried to make bail payments a priority, but that meant that other bills went unpaid.

At 22 years old, her life seemed to be falling apart. Melodie faced continuing financial challenges, saw her credit ruined, and was falling into a deep depression. Years later, she was finally able to pay off her bail debt, reenroll in college, and eventually open up her own business.

Now 32 years old, a small business owner, mother and caretaker of her two younger sisters,



STILL FROM A VIDEO BY JOEL WANER


Melodie Henderson speaking at the ACLU of California's Conference & Lobby Day. Looking on, left to right: Yannina Casillas (Council on American-Islamic Relations), Ronald Coleman (California Immigrant Policy Center), and Natasha Minsker (ACLU of California's Center for Advocacy & Policy).

she is still dealing with credit issues. The thought of what could have happened to her had her grandparents not been able to help her still haunts Melodie to this day. During her court hearings, she

"CALIFORNIA'S CASH BAIL SYSTEM ALLOWS THOSE WITH MONEY TO CONFRONT THEIR CRIMINAL CHARGES WHILE OUT OF CUSTODY, BY VIRTUE OF THEIR WEALTH. THE PROBLEM IS, IF YOU'RE POOR, YOU'LL STAY IN JAIL. TO MAKE MATTERS EVEN WORSE, **BAIL AMOUNTS ARE APPROXIMATELY 35% HIGHER FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN AND 19% HIGHER FOR HISPANIC MEN, COMPARED TO THE BAIL AMOUNTS FOR WHITE MEN.**"
—ASSEMBLYMEMBER REGGIE JONES-SAWYER

remembers having seen many mothers and young women like herself, unable to make bail. She knew everything they were about to lose—if they had not already.

The road for Melodie was long and difficult. Her story could have been much different if she wasn't expected to buy due process. She hopes California lawmakers will see her story and understand that California's current money bail system doesn't

promote justice and public safety, but rather injustice and harm to the people, families, and communities ensnared by this system. 

Natasha Minsker is the Director of the ACLU of California's Center for Advocacy and Policy.



PHOTO BY EMERY JONES

Democracy in action. A rally at the steps of California's Capitol building on April 3.

LEGAL UPDATES

By Bethany Woolman

SANTA CLARA COUNTY V. TRUMP

SUIT CHALLENGING TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDER ON SANCTUARY CITIES

This March, the ACLU of Northern California filed a motion to intervene in a lawsuit challenging President Trump's threat to withhold federal funding from so-called "sanctuary cities." The ACLU represented the YWCA Silicon Valley, a local nonprofit that depends on federal funding to deliver critically important services. Siding with Santa Clara County, San Francisco, and groups like the ACLU and the YWCA, U.S. District Court Judge William Orrick issued a nationwide preliminary injunction blocking the executive order in April. "The President's attempt to exercise unconstitutional powers posed a profound danger to our democracy," said William Freeman, a senior staff attorney with the ACLU of Northern California. "Our local governments will not be coerced into becoming agents of federal immigration enforcement."

MINTON V. DIGNITY HEALTH

SUIT TO PROTECT TRANSGENDER PATIENTS' RIGHT TO MEDICAL CARE

This April, the ACLU of California filed a lawsuit against a taxpayer-funded hospital network associated with the Catholic Church for denying care to a transgender patient. ACLU client Evan Minton is a transgender man who was scheduled to receive a hysterectomy at Mercy San Juan Medical Center, a hospital in the Dignity Health chain. Two days prior to the appointment, a nurse called to discuss the surgery and Minton mentioned that he is transgender. The next day, the hospital canceled the procedure. "Hospitals exist to provide care," said Elizabeth Gill, senior staff attorney at the ACLU of Northern California. "Cancelling a medical procedure because of a patient's gender identity is unacceptable, and it violates California's Unruh Civil Rights Act."

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CALIFORNIA V. KELLY

LAWSUIT TO PROTECT CALIFORNIANS' VOTING RIGHTS

In May, the ACLU filed a federal lawsuit against California's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for its failure to offer federally mandated voter registration opportunities to millions of Californians. The lawsuit seeks to force the DMV to comply with federal law that requires states to



Evan Minton, whose medical procedure was canceled after he told a nurse at Dignity Health he was transgender.

incorporate voter registration into DMV forms. "Registering to vote should be simple and accessible," said Michael Risher, a senior staff attorney with the ACLU of Northern California. "The freedom to vote is the most critical component of our nation's democracy."

SOCIAL MEDIA MONITORING SOFTWARE

ADVOCACY AGAINST DISCRIMINATORY & UNCONSTITUTIONAL SURVEILLANCE

This March, Facebook and Instagram updated their policies to prohibit the use of company data for surveillance. This broad shift in policy came after the ACLU of California publicized findings from a massive Public Records Act request which revealed that law enforcement across California had acquired powerful social media monitoring software with the capacity to target activists. "We are now pushing these companies to establish robust systems to ensure these policies are enforced," said Matt Cagle, a technology and civil liberties policy attorney with the ACLU of Northern California.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

While environmental devastation affects all Californians, it doesn't affect everyone equally. Communities of color are often the hardest hit, and the agriculture-rich Central Valley faces especially harsh challenges. The ACLU of Northern California is working to address these inequities because we believe everyone has a right to clean water to drink and clean air to breathe.


1,2,3 TCP TOXICITY IN WATER

ADVOCACY BEFORE THE STATE WATER BOARD

Millions of homes across the state are connected to water sources contaminated with a cancer-causing chemical called 1,2,3-Trichloropropane (TCP). 1,2,3-TCP leached out of pesticides and into California's groundwater decades ago and still lingers. It can have serious health consequences when consumed over a lifetime. This April, the ACLU of California sent a letter to the State Water Resources Control Board and testified at the Board's hearing on adoption of a statewide regulation to protect the public from this contaminant. "No one should have to turn on their tap and wonder if the water is safe to drink," said Kena Cador, Equal Justice Works Fellow, sponsored by Apple Inc. and O'Melveny & Myers, at the ACLU of Northern California.

PESTICIDES NEAR SCHOOLS

LETTER TO DEPARTMENT OF PESTICIDE REGULATIONS

In December, the ACLU of California sent a letter to the California Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR) on behalf of a Central Valley coalition for pesticide reform, Coalition Advocating for Pesticide Safety (CAPS), requesting improvements to proposed policies on the use of pesticides near schools. Pesticide exposure is linked to childhood health harms, and Latino students are nearly twice as likely as white students to attend a school near the heaviest pesticide use. In March, DPR released new and improved draft regulations that included many ACLU recommendations. "Schools can no longer opt out of receiving notification of pesticide use, and the new regulations include a host of other protections," said Abre' Conner, a staff attorney with the ACLU of Northern California. "Young minds should be filled with knowledge, not chemicals." 

Bethany Woolman is a Communications Strategist at the ACLU of Northern California.

ANTI-IMMIGRANT POLICIES: OUR RESPONSE

In response to the current administration's anti-immigration policies, the ACLU has been hard at work. We're creating a rapid response network, filing lawsuits challenging unconstitutional orders, and teaching people in targeted communities about their constitutional rights. Here are some of the specific ways we're fighting back.

IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Rapid Response to Raids: We're working with partners throughout the state to build a rapid response legal network that will provide referrals to people arrested in immigration raids, and regional triage centers to respond to raids in communities. We want this network to protect immigrants throughout the state, including hard-to-reach rural communities, small towns, and unincorporated areas. We will work with partner organizations, community leaders, and volunteers to achieve this goal.

The Muslim Ban: When the administration issued the unconstitutional and discriminatory Muslim ban, we filed a lawsuit on behalf of three students from the affected countries and Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay (JFCS-EB), an organization serving refugees, challenging its establishment and enforcement. Then, along with 50 other ACLU affiliates, we filed a Freedom of Information Act request to expose how Trump officials were interpreting and executing the ban.

We're demanding government documents about the on-the-ground implementation of the executive order.


Sanctuary Cities: On behalf of the YWCA of Silicon Valley, we argued in favor of a preliminary injunction that prevents the federal government from implementing the executive order that would deny funds to so-called "sanctuary cities." A U.S. district judge recently issued that injunction nationwide.

Know Your Rights Trainings: Since Trump's inauguration, we've also hosted approximately 40 Civic Education in Action webinars and events and Know Your Rights trainings. These offer legal advice and representation to immigrant and Muslim communities who may be targeted by federal policy, law enforcement actions, and discrimination. Collectively, thousands have participated.

Visit WWW.ACLUNC.ORG for local details, and WWW.ACLU.ORG for info on our nationwide work.

ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

The Muslim Ban: On May 8, Omar Jadwat, director of the ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, argued before the full Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. "President Trump's Muslim ban violates a fundamentally important constitutional principle—that our government cannot condemn, denigrate, and disfavor a religion and its adherents," Jadwat said. "The courts have been correct to enforce the Constitution by blocking the ban. We now await the Fourth Circuit's ruling in this case."

Travel warning over immigration law: The ACLU issued a "travel alert" on May 9, informing anyone planning to travel to Texas in the near future to anticipate the possible violation of their constitutional rights when stopped by law enforcement. The alert comes amid the passing of a Texas law known as SB4. The law gives a green light to police officers in the state to investigate a person's immigration status during a routine traffic stop, leading to widespread racial profiling. 

THE ACLU FIGHTS BACK AGAINST DANGEROUS PLAN TO SWIFTLY EXPAND BORDER PATROL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The teens were traveling to the United States after fleeing Guatemala in search of a more peaceful life. After crossing the border in Texas, they walked for several hours before they realized they were lost. Out of desperation, they flagged down a car with two CBP officers and asked for help.

The teens, then 19 and 17, were taken to a field office and placed in a holding cell. Once there, they were taken by a federal officer into a closet-like room one at a time, told to remove all of their clothes, and sexually assaulted.

"The officer took me into what seemed like a closet. The room had no windows or furniture and had food in it," one of the sisters told us after the incident. "It seemed like a pantry which made me wonder why he brought me here."

The teens reported the abuse shortly after it occurred to another officer who found them crying. An investigation was launched by the Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General. The sisters were interviewed and asked to draw a depiction of the closet where the assault occurred. But to date, federal authorities have not pursued criminal charges against the officer nor is it clear whether the officer has faced

WHEN YOU RAPIDLY EXPAND A POLICE FORCE OF HEAVILY ARMED, POORLY TRAINED AGENTS WHO BELIEVE THEY ANSWER TO NO ONE, CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ESCALATE.

any disciplinary actions for the assaults.

The sisters, who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation, came forward because they were scared this would happen to others and want to make sure the officer doesn't continue the abuse. They said they thought they were coming to a country where human rights were protected. They never imagined that they would be assaulted.


"We can't tolerate these abuses of power, and these officers who think they can commit sexual assault with impunity," said ACLU of Northern California staff attorney Angelica Salceda, who filed administrative claims on behalf of each sister. "CBP has repeatedly

refused to own up to its actions and doesn't reveal if officers are disciplined."

The Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) allows people to sue the federal government and seek monetary damages. Filing an administrative FTCA claim is the first step in this process.

Justice has yet to be served for many of the victims of abuse at the hands of Customs and Border Protection. Adding thousands more officers who are not adequately vetted will mean even more people will be at risk of these types of rights violations.

CBP's resistance to basic 21st century police reforms has produced rampant abuses. This agency has had problems before and Trump's anti-immigration policies will make this worse. Left unchecked, these officers continue to threaten our safety and freedom. They must be held to higher standards.

The sisters, who were referred to the ACLU by an immigrants' rights advocate, are living in Fresno with their mother. 


Leslie Fulbright is a Communications Strategist at the ACLU of Northern California.

**IN MEMORIAM:
DARLENE ANN NICGORSKI,
NATIONAL SANCTUARY LEADER**

Darlene Ann Nicgorski, a former nun who was convicted of sheltering Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees in a landmark trial, died in Pomona, Calif. on Feb. 28 at the age of 73.

“She lived her life to the fullest, filled with compassion for others and speaking out against injustice wherever and whenever it appeared,” said her spouse Chris Blackburn.

The ACLU of Northern California honored Nicgorski’s courage and passionate commitment to social justice with the Earl Warren Civil Liberties Award in 1986.

Throughout her life, she spoke out on refugee and immigration issues and declared over and over again, “no human being is illegal!” Just weeks before she died, she was at a demonstration at the Ontario California International Airport challenging President Trump’s immigration ban. 

BOARD ELECTION NOTICE


The ACLU-NC Board of Directors, in accordance with changes adopted in the bylaws in 2003 (Article VI, Section 3 and Article VI, Section 4), have an election schedule as follows:

Nominations for the Board of Directors will now be submitted by the September Board meeting; candidates and ballots will appear in the Fall issue of the ACLU News; elected board members will begin their three-year term in January.

As provided by the revised ACLU-NC bylaws, the ACLU-NC membership is entitled to elect its Board of Directors directly. The nominating committee is now seeking suggestions from the membership to fill at-large positions on the Board.

ACLU members may participate in the nominating process in two ways:

1. They may send suggestions for the nominating committee’s consideration prior to the September Board meeting (Sept. 14, 2017)—submitting suggestions as early as possible is much appreciated. Address suggestions to: Nominating Committee, ACLU-NC, 39 Drumm Street, San Francisco, CA 94111. Include your nominee’s qualifications and how the nominee may be reached.
2. They may submit a petition of nomination with the signatures of 15 current ACLU-NC members. Petitions of nomination, which should also include the nominee’s qualifications, must be submitted to the Board of Directors by Oct. 4, 2017 (20 days after the September board meeting). Current ACLU members are those who have renewed their membership during the last 12 months. Only current members are eligible to submit nominations, sign petitions of nomination, and vote. No member may sign more than one such petition.

ACLU members will select Board members from the slate of candidates nominated by petition and by the nominating committee. The ballot will appear in the Fall issue of the *ACLU News*. 

ACLU-NC MAILING PREFERENCES

To Our Members:

Mailings to our members and the general public provide opportunities to describe complicated legal and political issues in ways not possible in other media and to describe strategies we plan to use for future actions. They enable us to explain, in detail, the benefits and provisions of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the ways our rights can be protected in today’s world, and the costs of preserving those rights. We use the mail to inform people of the importance of our legal work and to solicit funds that enable us to continue our litigation, public education, and legislative lobbying.

Sometimes, as part of our program to find and recruit members, we exchange or rent our list of members’ names to like-minded organizations and publications. We do this so that we will be able to send our membership letters to their lists.

The ACLU never makes its list available to partisan political groups or those whose programs are incompatible with the ACLU’s mission. Whether by exchange or rental, the exchanges are governed by strict privacy procedures, as recommended by the U.S. Privacy Study Commission. Lists are never actually given into the physical possession of the organization that has rented them or exchanged for them. No organization ever possesses our list and no organization will ever see the names of the members on our list unless an individual responds to their mailing.

While mailings—under strict privacy guidelines—form the basis of our new member acquisition program, and are key to our growth, we understand some members do not wish to receive solicitations from other groups and we gladly honor requests from our members to be removed from the process. Once you make this election, you do not need to do so again unless you wish to change your preference back.

If you do not wish to receive materials from other organizations, please complete this coupon and send it to:

ACLU Membership Department
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004

I prefer not to receive materials from other organizations. Please eliminate my name from membership exchange/rental lists.

Member # _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

THANK YOU to all of our members, whether this is your 1st year or your 77th!

DR. JOHN KERNER: CARD-CARRYING ACLU MEMBER FOR SEVEN DECADES



Interview by Jessie Seyfer

Dr. John Kerner has been an ACLU member for 77 years. But that's just one of the astounding achievements the 98-year-old Bay Area resident has under his belt, and a passion for service and justice underpins them all. Kerner served as a combat medic in World War II, and later became the chief of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the University of California-San Francisco's Mount Zion hospital, delivering an estimated 2,000 babies over his career. In 2007, the government of France awarded him the Legion of Honor in recognition of his WWII service. He recently attended a post-election ACLU house party. The ACLU of Northern California recently talked with Kerner:

Why did you become an ACLU member in 1940?

I was going to school at UC Berkeley, and the group I associated with there was beginning to talk about free speech and so it got me interested in the ACLU. It continued through the McCarthy era, but probably the time that I was most involved was when I was a medical student in 1941. At the time, all the Japanese were being put in internment camps, and I had in my class, four or five Japanese, and they were being taken out of the medical school class even though we needed doctors. I thought that was outrageous because these kids were citizens, and one had been in school with me in high school and college and med school. I protested.

Can you tell me about the issues that led you to change your last name?

This was related to my time in the army. My name was Kapstein. And I'm sure that I got the worst job that a doctor could get in the army because of my assumed religion. Even though I was qualified for different and better positions, nobody ever gave me the positions. So I changed my name so that when my kids grew up,

they wouldn't be prejudged by their name. I grew up in San Francisco, and I didn't remember experiencing any anti-Semitism, but at one point my family moved to Boston ... and that was the first time in my life I was ever disparaged for being a Jew. That was probably one of the things to get me interested in the ACLU to begin with.


I WAS A MEDICAL STUDENT IN 1941. AT THE TIME, ALL THE JAPANESE WERE BEING PUT IN INTERNMENT CAMPS, AND I HAD IN MY CLASS, FOUR OR FIVE JAPANESE, AND THEY WERE BEING TAKEN OUT OF THE MEDICAL SCHOOL CLASS EVEN THOUGH WE NEEDED DOCTORS. I THOUGHT THAT WAS OUTRAGEOUS.

—DR. JOHN KERNER

As an obstetrics and gynecology specialist, what do you think about the attacks on women's health that are happening right now?

One of the things that the Republicans want to do is make abortion illegal. When I started in California it was illegal, and the ACLU has been helpful in that fight. It's just absurd that the government is ruling on personal life decisions about what to do with women's own bodies.

Why has your support for the ACLU never wavered through the years?

Well I have been a member for a long time. Sometimes my financial support for it has varied according to the times. But I just think it's so important. I have always recommended it. It's maybe even more important now than it's been before. 

Jessie Seyfer is a guest writer with the ACLU of Northern California.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There are a lot of words that could well sum up my state of mind these days. Anger. Outrage. Incredulity. But there's one that I don't express often enough: gratitude.

Gratitude for the long-term supporters of the ACLU, many of whom who have been with us for years and even decades.

Gratitude for the new supporters and volunteers who have joined us the last several months to provide the additional support and resources we need for the fights ahead.

Gratitude for the clients and others directly in the crosshairs of the Trump administration's policies who have the courage to speak up for justice.

Gratitude for our many community partners who do their part providing direct legal services and organizing the most-impacted communities.

I am also grateful for the years of struggle that preceded us, providing the foundation of our rights today. I am grateful for the Constitution and its provisions for the separation of powers. I am grateful for

the First Amendment and its full-throated protection of the freedom of religion and the separation of church and state.

And these days I am most grateful for the Fourteenth Amendment, secured as part of the struggle to abolish slavery, which provides for equal protection and due process, and which makes clear that *these rights are provided to all people, and not just to citizens.*

For almost a century, working alongside many other organizations and courageous individuals, the ACLU itself has been part of the struggles to make these principles meaningful in our lives. Your support of the ACLU today enables our efforts at the national level as well as here in California. Your generosity allows us to resist the policies that trample on our rights, and to advance positive reforms for civil liberties wherever possible, especially here in California.



PHOTO BY JASON DOIY

ACLU of Northern California
Executive Director Abdi Soltani.

We have a lot of work to do. And for your support and participation in this struggle for our democracy, I hope you hear just that—gratitude.

Abdi Soltani

Executive Director of the ACLU of Northern California



PHOTO BY EMERY JONES

ACLU-NC Organizer Raquel Ortega.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We have work to do here in California. Join the ACLU of Northern California in supporting that work by signing up to volunteer. There are a range of opportunities available, from phone banking or canvassing your local farmers' market to volunteering your professional skills or joining a local chapter.

Find out more and sign up at www.aclunc.org/volunteer.

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