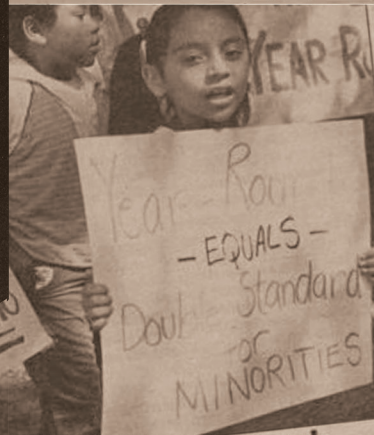


Promises  
to Keep  
and Miles  
to Go



aclu



# THE OPEN FORUM

Opposed to nothing that is good; afraid of nothing that is true.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 6, 1924

No. 1



# 2023 CENTENNIAL REPORT

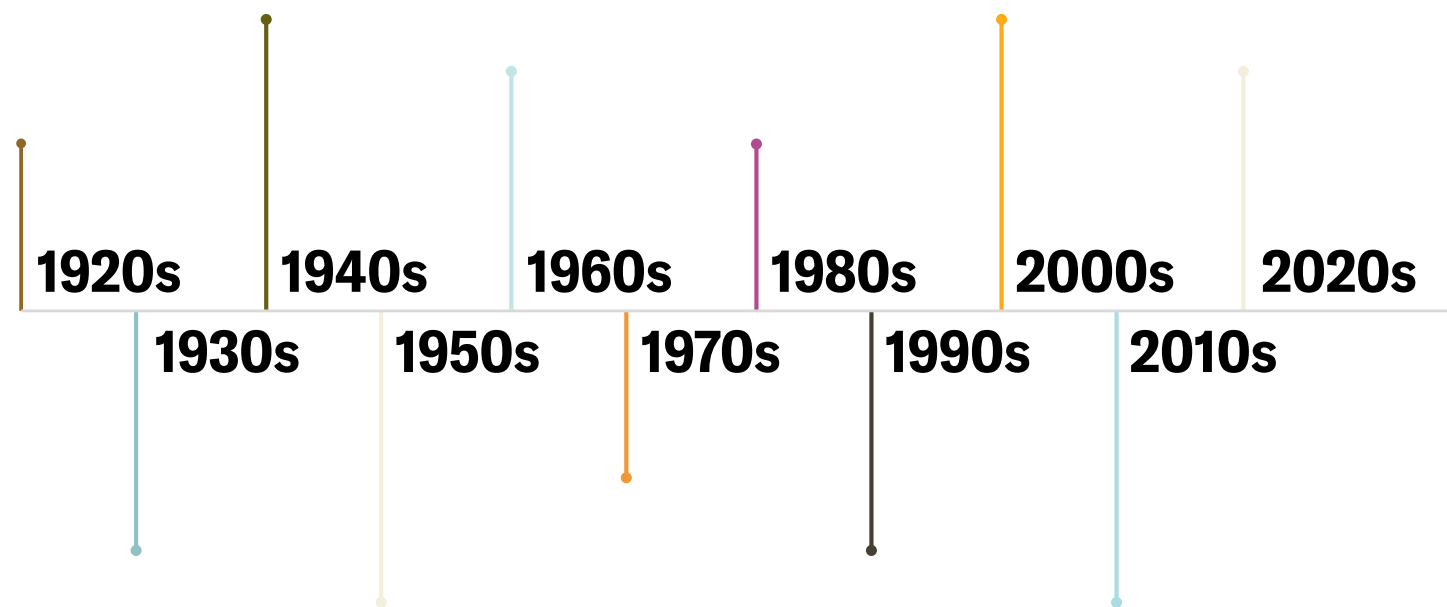


# 100

Only through taking affirmative actions can each and every person has the opportunity full potential, whether in the classroom or field, and only through doing so can we



# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS



To learn more about the ACLU SoCal's advocacy over the last 100 years, explore our interactive digital timeline at [aclusocal100.org](https://aclusocal100.org).

The ACLU of Southern California is celebrating its centennial anniversary, marking 100 years of relentless, trailblazing advocacy in the courts, in legislative chambers, and in our communities.

Author Upton Sinclair and a small but brave cadre of activists founded our organization in 1923. The era was characterized by anti-immigrant sentiment, entrenched white supremacy and segregation, pervasive sexism, and violent police crackdowns on labor unions and dissidents. Most of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution had not been upheld by the courts and were frequently ignored by the authorities at the time, making them largely meaningless for many.

Since then, thanks to our partner organizations, community activists, and supporters like you, the ACLU has played a pivotal role in the expansion of civil rights and liberties in the United States—with Southern California often leading the way.

In the last century, we fought back against the incarceration of people of Japanese descent during World War II, won the nation's first successful school desegregation lawsuit on behalf of Mexican-American students in Lemon Grove, convinced the California Supreme Court to become the first court in the land to strike down an abortion ban, and became among the first to support the rights of people with HIV.

Year after year, the ACLU SoCal is powered by the courage of our clients, the talent and tenacity of our staff and volunteers, and the steadfast support of our members and donors.

The last few years have demanded much from all of us, and we know there are many battles left to fight. We met the challenges posed by the Trump administration's attacks on rights.

Through a global pandemic, we worked to protect the human and civil rights of vulnerable people and communities—from low-income students, to unhoused people, to immigrants and asylum-seekers in ICE detention centers. As our country experienced a national reckoning over racism and police violence, we defended the right to protest.

After years of advocacy, we have begun to see success in our efforts to secure citizenship for deported veterans, and are calling on Congress to pass the Veteran Service Recognition Act. In Los Angeles, home to the largest jail system in the country, we secured a groundbreaking settlement that will create 1,925 community mental health beds as an alternative to jailing people with mental illness.

As we have done since our founding, we continue to break new ground in our ongoing fight to defend and expand civil rights and civil liberties.

We will continue to show up whenever people's rights are in jeopardy, holding the line for democracy while seizing every opportunity for proactive change.

As you read our 2023 Centennial Report, we hope you feel proud to play a role in an institution as central to our democracy as the ACLU SoCal.

The stories in this report, and many more which are unpublished, represent critical moments in the ACLU SoCal's history—and the history of Southern California itself. Not all our fights ended successfully. Other fights were lonely until we got involved. But all illustrate our unwavering commitment to the cause of justice.

**Here's to another 100 years of defending and advancing liberty and justice for all.**

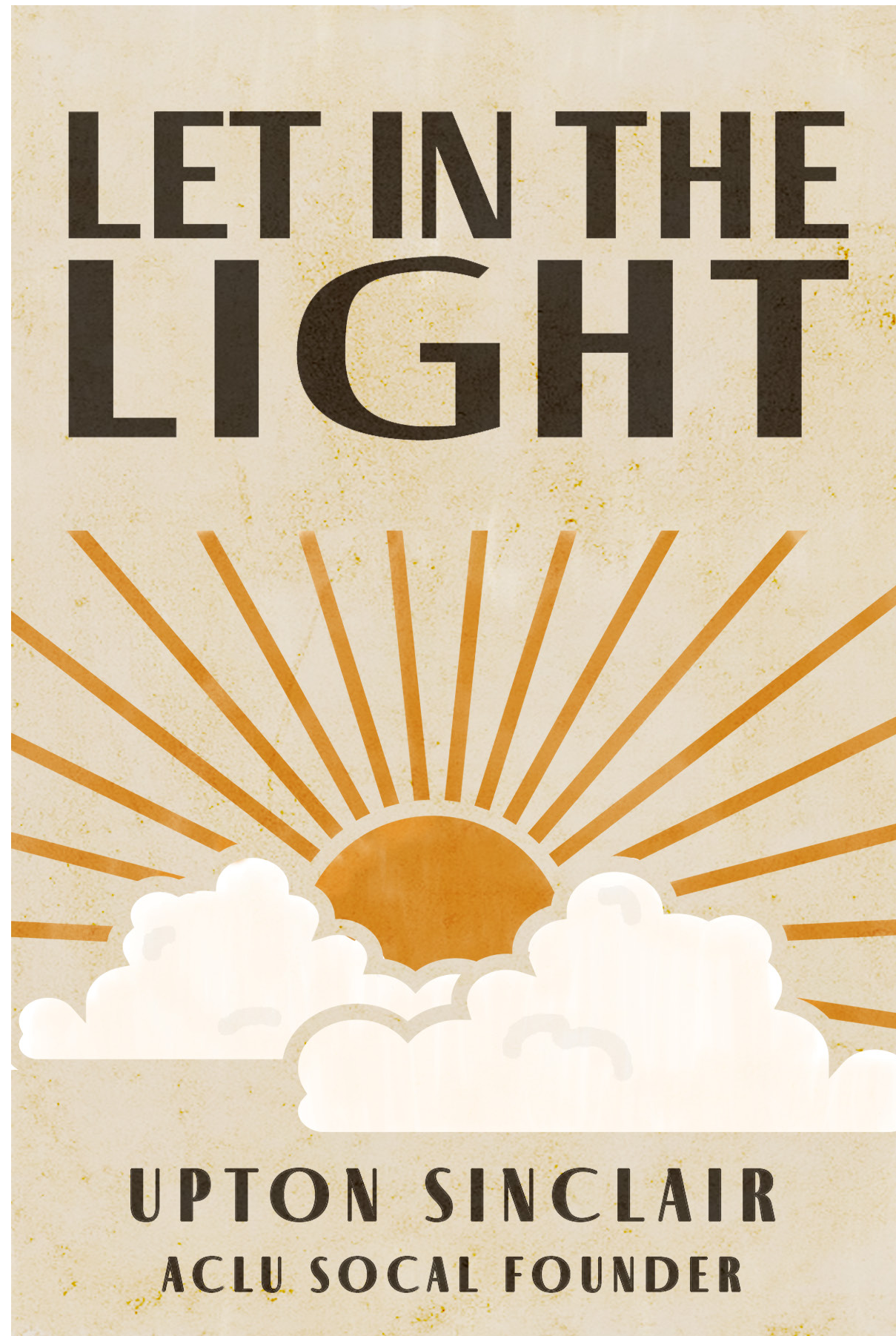
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The ACLU SoCal's centennial series captures historic milestones and facts as documented in the "Open Forum," our newsletter published between 1924 and 2004. In partnership with the California Historical Society, the ACLU SoCal has published and digitized the "Open Forum" in its entirety. Visit [aclusocal.co/open-forum-archives](https://aclusocal.co/open-forum-archives) to explore more.

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## 1920s

# A MOMENT INSPIRED A MOVEMENT

**On May 15, 1923**, activists gathered on "Liberty Hill" in the San Pedro, California harbor to champion the rights of striking longshoremen to assemble and speak freely.

Author Upton Sinclair was among them and began to read the workers their rights directly from the U.S. Constitution. Though the rally was held with the property owner's written permission, Los Angeles police still broke up the meeting.

Before Sinclair could read the first three lines of the First Amendment, the police chief told him to "cut out that Constitution stuff." Sinclair and fellow activists were detained, stuffed into a police car, and driven around to evade the press before landing at the jail in nearby Wilmington.

Once in jail, they were denied access to their attorneys—their rights dismissed under the pretense that they had been "encouraging revolution." By the time they were transferred to the L.A. County jail, the police court had conveniently just closed, prolonging their stay.

Upon his release, Sinclair was determined to leverage his public stature to create a test case for strikers' free speech rights. He published a letter addressed to the police chief, stating:

**"I intend to do what little one man can do to awake the public conscience... I know that our liberties were not won without suffering, and may be lost again through our cowardice."**

Sinclair's resolve laid the foundation for a movement to defend the Bill of Rights. At the invitation of the newly formed American Civil Liberties Union in New York, he began speaking at crowded meetings in Los Angeles. From those gatherings, the first ACLU affiliate was born.



Courtesy Photo

### *Yetta Stromberg*

Our young organization earned national attention in 1931 following our Supreme Court victory in *Stromberg v. California*, which struck down a California statute that outlawed radical symbols like the red flag.

In 1929, 19-year-old Yetta Stromberg (pictured, left) was a teacher at the Pioneer Summer Camp in San Bernardino County. She had the responsibility of raising a red flag every day as camp attendees recited allegiance "to the workers' red flag." She faced the terrifying prospect of imprisonment for doing so.

The ACLU SoCal took on her case and argued that the state's attempts to suppress Stromberg's symbolic speech violated the First Amendment. **Our case is a landmark in the history of First Amendment law.**



1930s

# FOUNDED ON WORKERS' RIGHTS

ACLU SoCal Attorney A.L. Wirin, one of the nation's first civil rights lawyers, was among the first to pioneer "pro bono" legal work.

At a time when union organizers worked covertly under threat of brutal police violence, Wirin and the ACLU SoCal openly confronted the oppressive Criminal Syndicalism Act, which criminalized union membership and suppressed political speech.

In 1934, Wirin drove to the Imperial Valley (pictured below in 1939) armed with court orders to stop growers and businesspeople from breaking up the meetings of Mexican farmworkers.

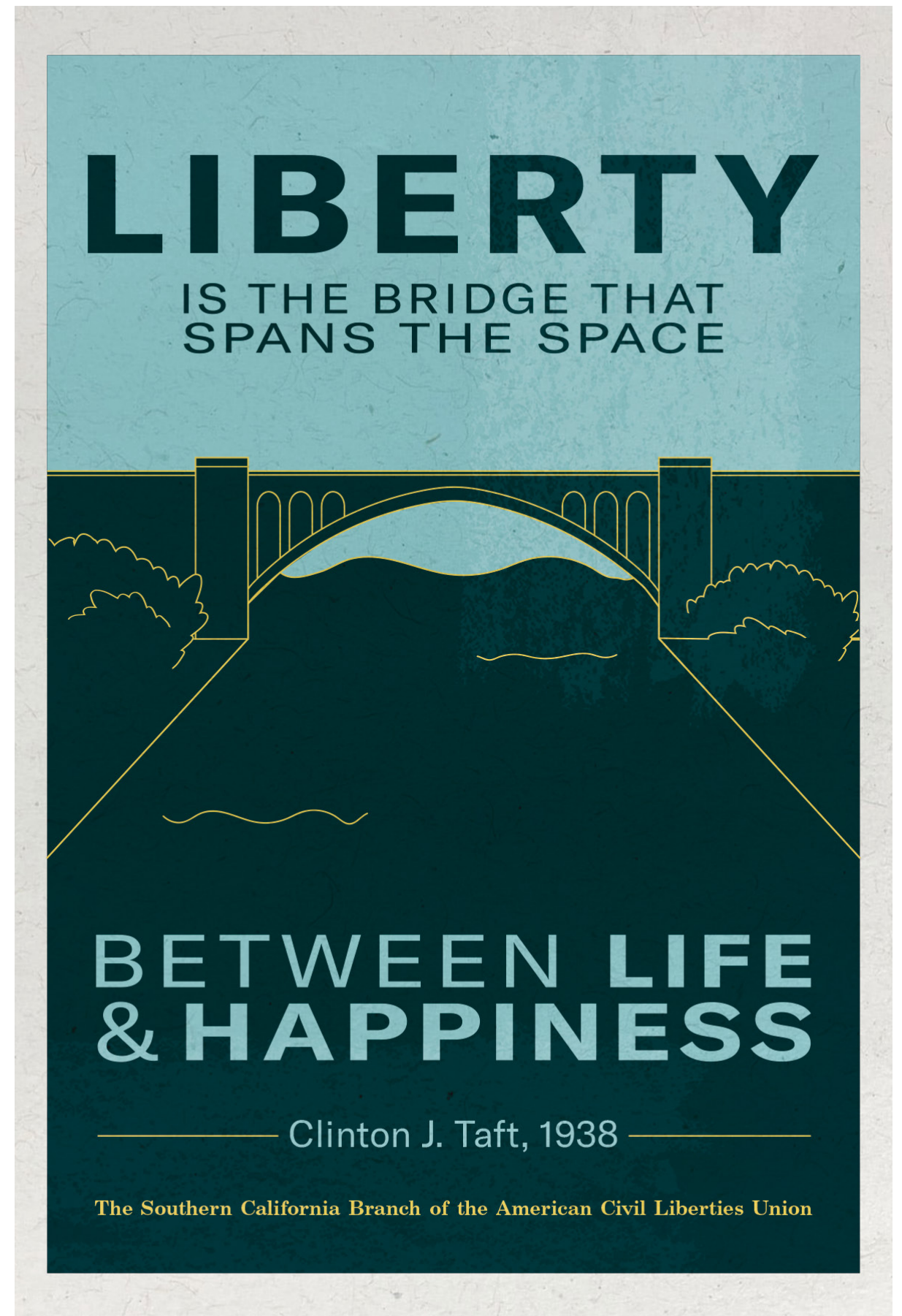
He was seized by a vigilante mob and—with the aid of police—taken to the desert where he was beaten, robbed, and threatened with murder. Undeterred, Wirin responded with a lawsuit naming high-ranking officials.

He didn't stop there. Five years later, in 1939, Wirin's advocacy led to the release of 142 farmworkers who were detained for demanding fair wages.

Throughout the 1930s, the ACLU SoCal continued to fight—both in court and the public eye—for the rights of workers to organize and to strike.



Photo by Dorothea Lange, 1939





**BELIEVE IN AND  
FIGHT TO IMPROVE**



**Democracy**

**ELEANOR  
ROOSEVELT**

Official Organ of THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, Southern California Branch

1940s

## DEMANDING HUMAN RIGHTS

With the onset of World War II came grave threats to civil liberties and minority rights. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the unjust incarceration of 120,000 people of Japanese descent. Ernest Wakayama, a World War I veteran born in Hawaii, and his wife, Toki, sought the ACLU SoCal's help.

Our legal director A.L. Wirin took on their case. In addition to an uphill battle in the courts, Wirin faced objections from the National ACLU, where some board members argued that national security concerns took precedence over individual rights in wartime. Others maintained that they could impact federal policy behind the scenes through private discussions with the Roosevelt administration.

Unfortunately, the Wakayamas were coerced by government officials to give up their citizenship before their case could be heard, and were eventually deported.

Fred Korematsu's case, brought by our sister affiliate in Northern California, along with two other cases brought by ACLU attorneys in Portland on behalf of Minoru Yasui, and in Seattle on behalf of Gordon Hirabayashi, eventually reached the Supreme Court. Though the cause was just, all three cases lost.

It wasn't until the 1980s that a nationwide movement for redress would prompt President Reagan to sign the Civil Liberties Act, apologizing and offering reparations. Fred Korematsu was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1993; Minoru Yasui and Gordon Hirabayashi were given the same honor posthumously in 2015. In 2013, California became the third state to ban indefinite detention.

### *Desegregating California Schools*

*Mendez v. Westminster* challenged the segregation of 5,000 Mexican American students a decade before *Brown v. Board of Education*. A.L. Wirin authored the ACLU SoCal's brief in support of 8-year-old Sylvia Mendez (pictured, right), who was denied admission to a white public school in Orange County. Together, we made strides towards dismantling racial segregation in California's public education system.

Sylvia's actions and her determination to break down racial barriers furthered the broader struggle for civil rights when a unanimous Ninth Circuit Court decision declared school segregation unconstitutional. This victory influenced legal battles in Texas and Arizona, and culminated in the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* decision.

Sylvia's mother's poignant words captured the heart of our fight:

**"We weren't fighting so you could go to that beautiful white school. We were fighting because you're equal to that white boy."**



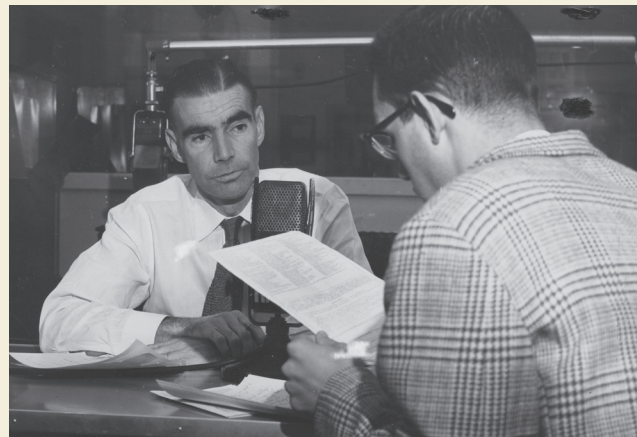


1950s

# DEFENDING CIVIL LIBERTIES

In the 1950s, the ACLU SoCal took strong exception to loyalty oaths. We represented government employees, teachers, and college professors pushed out of the classroom. One such case was that of our imminent director, Dr. Eason Monroe (pictured below), who lost his position at San Francisco State College for refusing to take what he called an “un-American oath.”

Under Monroe’s leadership, we expanded our fight against loyalty oaths and for civil liberties. We pursued a five-year legal battle on behalf of a Mennonite conscientious objector who refused to take an oath to bear arms. When 36 local public housing tenants were evicted because they refused to sign a loyalty oath required by federal law, we took their complaints to court and won.



In this climate of fear, we also began taking on a number of issues that remain central to our work today. We secured a precedent-setting legal victory against the LAPD prohibiting the use of public funds for dictograph and bugging devices.

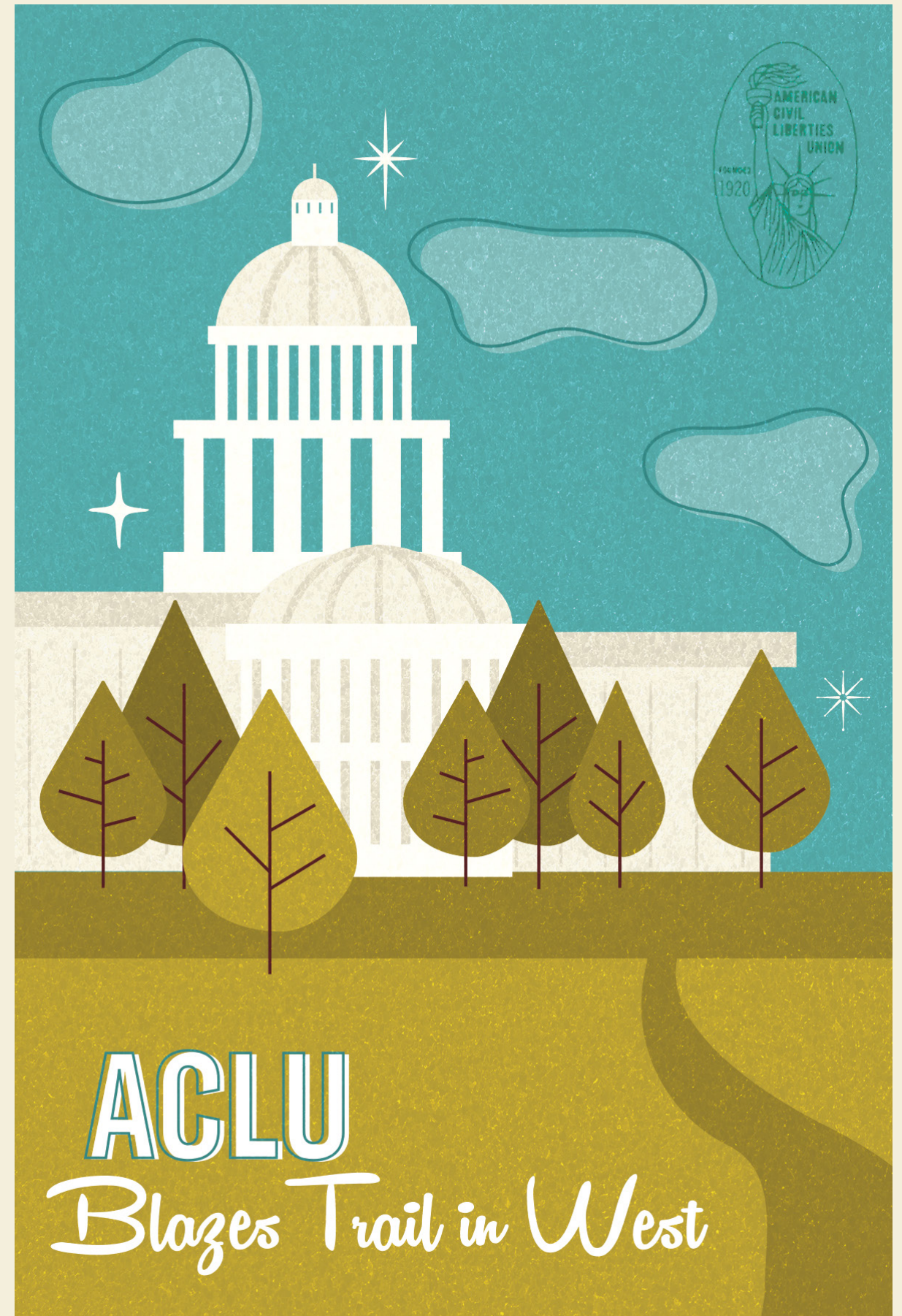
In a case with obvious parallels to recent news, we fought against book bans in the City of Burbank in 1951: When news surfaced that the city had hired a consultant to vet library books, not just in schools but in the public library, we took action. Our phone call to Burbank’s mayor immediately sidetracked the plan.

As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum nationwide, we initiated a major push for a Fair Employment Practices law in California to combat discrimination. We challenged racial segregation in a suit against El Centro Unified School District.

In Pasadena, we represented Susan McClain, a young Black girl who was denied entry to a public swimming pool. When realtors were expelled for selling properties to people of color, we confronted a realty board and won. In Oxnard, we sued police for deploying 50 tear gas bombs in a crowd of Mexican Americans at a church bazaar.

Monroe’s vision also encompassed support for emerging movements. In the early 50s, he secretly met with members of the Mattachine Society, a pioneering gay rights group, to discuss constitutional rights. He was later hailed for his foresight in championing LGBTQ rights long before they gained broader recognition. His two-decade tenure as Executive Director concluded with his passing at age 66.

With so much at stake, our affiliate significantly expanded its membership, staff, and geographic footprint. We continued to be called the ACLU’s “Southern California Branch” until October 24, 1957, when a board meeting formally declared us the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.







# Freedom is on the march.

Demonstrators pour out of First A.M.E. Church at Eighth and Towne Sts. on June 24 to begin walk up Hill St. to the Los Angeles Board of Education Building to protest de facto segregation in the L.A. public schools. Approximately 1,000 people joined the demonstration sponsored by the NAACP - United Civil Rights Committee as part of the campaign for civil rights.

## 1960s

# WE SHALL OVERCOME

Amid the groundbreaking social movements of the 1960s, we worked alongside leading activists to champion the rights of anti-war and racial justice protesters, abortion rights and LGBTQ rights, free speech, and more.

and anti-war demonstrators at Century Plaza. We took on punitive draft boards, protected the right to speak freely against the Vietnam war, and objected the constitutionality of both the draft and the war itself.

In the aftermath of the 1965 Watts Rebellion, we mobilized volunteer attorneys to provide legal counsel for all 4,000 people who were arrested. We undertook similar efforts for student demonstrators at California State Northridge

In 1966, a year before the Stonewall uprising, our Committee on Sex advocated for privacy rights in consensual sexual relations.

### *Sir Lady Java*

Sir Lady Java's case is an early example of our fight to expand LGBTQ rights. In the 1960s, you could find Lady Java performing in nightclubs. That is until the fall of 1967, when Los Angeles police cracked down on Lady Java by threatening club owners to shut down her performances.

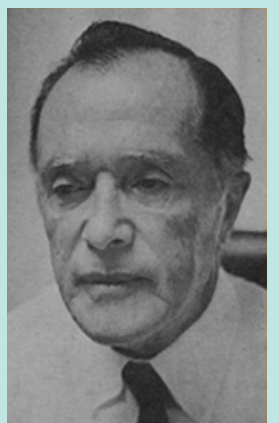


Police invoked a city ordinance that made it illegal for performers to wear a costume or "dress as a person of a different sex." We took her case to the California Supreme Court and persisted, although we weren't successful at first.

In 1969, a ruling in a separate cabaret licensing case nullified the city ordinance. This case let it be known that we would take on LGBTQ cases. Over five decades later, the ACLU SoCal still maintains one of the largest dockets of cases seeking to secure and further LGBTQ rights.

### *Dr. Leon P. Belous*

In the 1960s, California criminalized most abortions, permitting them only to save a pregnant person's life. When Dr. Leon P. Belous faced arrest for allegedly conspiring to perform an abortion, we took his case to the California Supreme Court—and won. Our victory in *People v. Belous* was a vital precursor to the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.



Our commitment to reproductive justice endures today. In 2022, we helped pass California's Proposition 1, enshrining reproductive rights in the state constitution, expand abortion access, provide financial assistance for medical and travel expenses for people seeking abortions in California, and more.

In the post-*Roe* era, we are pushing for legislation to block law enforcement from seeking sensitive information from tech companies—such as location data, which can be used to target people seeking abortion or gender-affirming care.



1970s

# 50 YEARS OF THE ACLU SOCAL

The spotlight was firmly on civil rights and civil liberties as we approached our 50th anniversary. 1971 was our year of students', activists', and prisoners' rights—we emphasized *integración y excelente educación* or “real integration and quality education,” which appeared on a banner at a march.

This commitment translated to our voting rights work, where we focused on language accessibility. And in the case of Rigoberto Ayala, we won a state appellate court ruling that disability benefits should not be denied based on immigration status.

We continued our longstanding fight against government surveillance and secrecy, earning national attention when we challenged President Nixon and the FBI on behalf of actress-activist Jane Fonda, forcing the government to admit to unlawful spying.

As the women's rights movement gained prominence nationwide and Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933-2020) founded the ACLU Women's Rights Project in New York, Ramona Ripston became the ACLU SoCal's first woman Executive Director, and Joyce Fiske our first woman Board President. Under their visionary leadership, our women's rights advocacy expanded. In what sounds outrageous now but was a true victory then, we won a court order specifying that women could use

their own surnames, rather than the surnames of their husbands, in legal and business proceedings.

Alongside women's rights, we also increased our advocacy for LGBTQ rights, establishing a Gay People Committee to advocate for LGBTQ rights, reexamine criminal codes, secure employment opportunities, and earn recognition for gay student unions.

The 1970s also marked the beginning of our work on jail conditions. Our 1975 class-action lawsuit, *Rutherford v. Pitchess*, resulted in a federal court decision finding that conditions of confinement in L.A. County jails violated the constitutional rights of incarcerated people, including by amounting to cruel and unusual punishment.

We also brought and won a class-action lawsuit on behalf of women incarcerated at the Sybil Brand Institute, L.A. County's sole women's jail, challenging the unequal treatment of women in the jail system.

Meanwhile, our police accountability work continued apace. In Kern County, we compelled the Sheriff's Department to admit to police violence and implement deputy trainings and screenings for emotional fitness, and in Los Angeles schools, we blocked the practice of deploying undercover police without court orders.



## Ramona Ripston

Ramona Ripston (1927-2018) was a pioneering civil rights activist. As our Executive Director from 1972 to 2011, she became the first woman to lead a major ACLU affiliate. Ripston's leadership spanned all aspects of the organization's efforts—litigation, policy, lobbying, and education. She expanded the ACLU SoCal's civil rights initiatives to explicitly cover economic matters, education equity, police reform, reproductive justice, and combating racial discrimination. Her legacy continues to exert influence here in Southern California and beyond.





AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION  
60 SECONDS



1. BURT LANCASTER: I'm Burt Lancaster and I have a confession to make.



2. I'm a card-carrying member of the ACLU.



3. Now you know the kind of people who support the ACLU.



4. Radicals like Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower, Harry Truman.



5. Listen to what John Kennedy said about the ACLU:



6. "The American Civil Liberties Union has played a significant role in defending our basic democratic freedoms."



7. America is a stronger nation for their uncompromising efforts."



8. The ACLU represents everyone.



9. From a mother who thought it was wrong to send her child to a segregated school, to Oliver North.



10. That's right, Oliver North.



11. The ACLU is there to protect everyone's rights.



12. To be sure, no one agrees with everything they've done, but I can't imagine a single American.



13. Who would disagree with the principle that's the heart and soul of the ACLU of...America.



14. Liberty, justice, for all.



15. (SILENT)

1980s

LIBERTY, JUSTICE, FOR ALL

In our first effort to combat the so-called Moral Majority, we printed a full-page advertisement in the *L.A. Times* to raise funds for public education about the growing threat from the New Right. ACLU SoCal Board member and actor Burt Lancaster also took to the screen to tell America he was proud to be a card-carrying member of the ACLU.

**“That’s the heart and soul of the ACLU, of America: liberty, justice, for all.”**

BURT LANCASTER,  
Actor & ACLU SoCal Board Member

As the profile of the organization continued to rise, we met the demands of the moment to address injustice. We sued L.A. police to stop the use of chokeholds on suspects and took the LAPD to court to end the deployment of battering rams. We did not waver in supporting individual rights for intersectional issues, too.

In one case, we defended Joanna Clark, whose army enlistment was unjustly voided due to her transgender identity. We secured a settlement and an honorable discharge on her behalf.

In the early 80s, we mounted a legal challenge against the Budget Act's threat to terminate Medi-Cal funding for abortions, ensuring the protection of reproductive rights for low-income communities.

Recognizing the rights of working parents before the Ninth Circuit, we won an appeal, that secured leave and job security for pregnant workers. We also sought justice for underpaid workers—predominantly women and minorities—in a class action lawsuit against L.A. County.

Decades after our advocacy in the 40s, we called for reparations for 120,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly incarcerated during World War II.

We made strides for disability rights, winning a case alongside the Greater Los Angeles Council of Deafness to redirect federal funds from public television until regulations ensured accessibility for the deaf community.

Finally, we secured bilingual voting assistance and a Spanish facsimile for voters in 1984 and firmly opposed language proposed by Stanley R. Mosk that aimed to amend the California constitution and undermine affirmative action.



1990s

## OUR BILL OF RIGHTS

With more than 75 cases on our docket, close to 200 civil rights and civil liberties bills before the legislature, and numerous public education campaigns at the turn of the decade, our impact resonated across the region. During this time, a few themes emerged at the forefront of our work; above all rose our commitment to the Bill of Rights and its realized possibilities.

### Police Accountability and Racial Justice

March 3, 1991 was a pivotal moment for the police accountability movement. Rodney King, a Black motorist, faced unspeakable brutality at the hands of LAPD officers.

The ACLU SoCal took out a full-page ad in the *L.A. Times* demanding the resignation of LAPD Chief Daryl Gates, and our Executive Director Ramona Ripston personally delivered Gates boxes of 10,000 signed petitions calling for him to step down. The acquittal of the officers involved ignited the city, and we kept pushing.

We called for a federal civil rights prosecution and launched a statewide campaign against racial profiling. We set up hotlines after Governor Pete Wilson vetoed a bill that would have required law enforcement to collect and report racial data on police traffic stops. Over three decades later, we are still exposing racist violence at the hands of police, curbing abuses of power, and demanding accountability.

### Expanding Access to Democracy

In 1991, our collaboration with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) resulted in a major voting rights victory when we successfully challenged redistricting plans that aimed to weaken the power of the Latine vote. Our victory led to the creation of new district boundaries and the election of Gloria Molina as L.A.'s first Latina county supervisor.

Our work to expand democracy included lawsuits against Governor Pete Wilson for his refusal to implement the National Voter Registration Act, also known as the Motor Voter law. We knew democracy demands every voice.

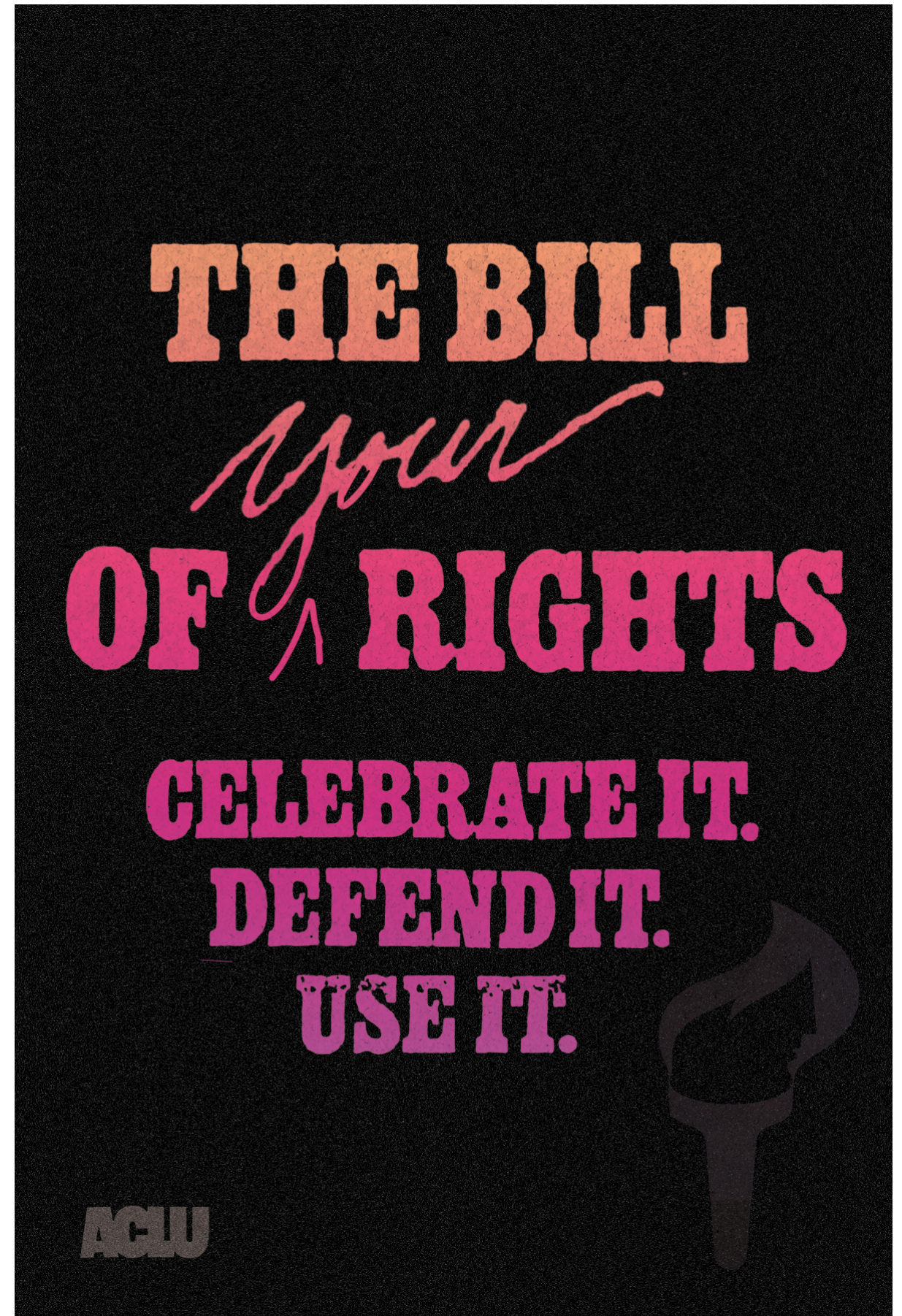
### Challenging Regressive Forces

California's 1990s were marked by "tough on crime" policies and backlash against our growing immigrant population. We fought unconstitutional gag orders, and boldly opposed decisions that threatened equal protection under the law.

We joined coalition partners to thwart Proposition 174, an ill-conceived 1993 ballot initiative introducing a voucher system for private and parochial schools, which threatened to unravel progress on school desegregation by diluting public education funds. At the turn of the millennium, we defeated another voucher proposal.

We joined broadcasting partners to uphold freedom of the press during the O.J. Simpson murder trial when we secured camera access to monitor courtroom proceedings.

When Clarence Thomas was nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court, we took a principled stance in opposition.





# protest

**an engine of  
social change**



**a fundamental right**

ACLU

>>>take ACTION!  
BUILD FREEDOM. MAKE HISTORY.

2000s

## NEVERTHELESS WE PERSISTED

Post 9/11, our nation experienced an erosion of basic rights under the guise of security. Through the decade, the ACLU was a leading voice in opposition to dragnet arrests of immigrants, expanded surveillance, and torture. Towards the end of the decade, our excitement over our nation's first Black president was paired with sober resolve to confront the legacy of the Bush era. We were not immune to the 2008 financial crisis, suffering layoffs and budget cuts.

Still, we remained one of the busiest public-interest institutions in Southern California.

The ACLU SoCal was among the first organizations to denounce domestic spying. We held Verizon and AT&T accountable for sharing private data with the National Security Agency. We were also the first ACLU affiliate to pass a resolution condemning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We strongly opposed indefinite detention at Guantanamo Bay and challenged the government's assertion of the "state secrets" privilege when they sought immunity from litigation over torture-related claims.

In our landmark 2004 *Williams v. California* lawsuit and settlement—among the largest in ACLU SoCal history—we created legal guidelines for the quality of public school learning environments. Our settlement established basic standards for teachers, textbooks, and facilities, and we have continued to enforce the agreement to keep California schools in check when they fail their students.

Not once, but twice in the 2000s, we were at the center of statewide coalition campaigns pushing back against ballot initiatives attempting to erode reproductive rights, defeating Proposition 73 in 2005 and Proposition 85 in 2006.

The lessons and strategies we learned then proved valuable when we and other ACLU affiliates helped enshrine reproductive rights in state constitutions after the fall of *Roe* in 2022.

California ACLUs, together with the National Center for Lesbian Rights and Lambda Legal, opposed Proposition 8, which passed by a slim majority and removed the constitutionally protected right to marry in California.

Together with partners in the LGBTQ rights movement, we put defeating Prop 8 at the forefront of our civil rights agenda, sparing no effort to try to halt the initiative, and later to challenge its passage. We also supported countless LGBTQ students who experienced threats, harassment, intimidation, and hostile school environments at this highly charged time.

Same-sex marriage is legal, yet Prop 8's language banning same-sex marriage still exists in our state constitution even when it is not enforced. Now, under a regressive U.S. Supreme Court, California legislators have introduced ACA 5, a constitutional amendment that will go before California voters in 2024 to decide whether to repeal Prop. 8 language and enshrine marriage equality in the California Constitution.



2010s

# DISSENT IS PATRIOTIC

In 2011, a question appeared on the cover of TIME magazine: Does the Constitution still matter?

If you asked us today, our answer would be identical to our answer then: communities we advocate for can confirm how much constitutional rights still do matter—if we remain committed to securing them.

Many states took the reelection of a Black president as a call to arms and took pains to prevent millions from voting. We saw states enact onerous voter identification requirements and restrict or eliminate early voting periods. Even in California, the ACLU SoCal charged the state with unconstitutionally stripping 60,000 formerly incarcerated people of their right to vote.

More than 300 anti-abortion restrictions were introduced in state legislatures as we rang in our 90th anniversary. The year prior, we helped pass two historic reproductive justice bills in California—one expanding access to abortion by increasing the pool of authorized qualified providers and another protecting medical privacy.

In our work to curb abusive police practices and prevent government overreach, we expanded our focus to facial recognition systems, license plate readers, gang injunctions, racial profiling, and illegal spying. We also struck down the government's procedures for placing people on the No Fly List.

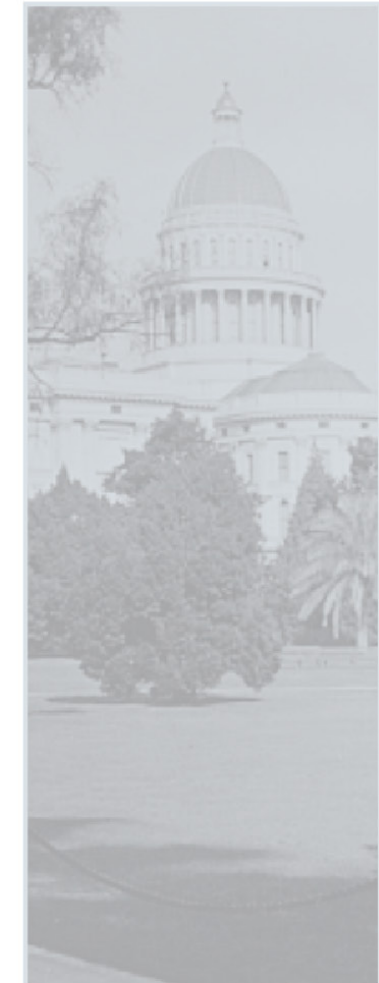
In 2011, we embarked on a still-ongoing case with the Council On American-Islamic Relations of Greater Los Angeles (CAIR-LA) in which we are suing the FBI for infiltrating Orange County mosques and targeting members based solely on their religion.

In 2015, we reached a federal court settlement in *Franco v. Holder*, a landmark class-action lawsuit on behalf of immigrants with mental disabilities forced to represent themselves in court. The agreement cleared the way for hundreds of immigrants who were ordered deported while the lawsuit was pending to reopen their cases.

The day after Donald Trump's election, the National ACLU took out ads and posted messages directed at Trump: "See you in court." And, true to our words, the ACLU proceeded to file over 400 legal actions against the Trump administration over the course of his presidency—nearly half of which addressed immigrants' rights.

Among those cases, the ACLU SoCal represented Ali Vayeghan, an Iranian man who flew from Tehran to Los Angeles to visit family. Under the Trump administration's Muslim ban, he was detained at LAX and placed on a flight back to Iran. While he was in the air, we scored a historic victory against the ban to allow him back into the U.S. Upon his return, Vayeghan was greeted at the airport by tearful family members, members of the media, Mayor Eric Garcetti, a crowd of cheering protestors—and his ACLU SoCal attorneys.

**Though our mission is far from complete, we remain proud of our accomplishments in defense of democracy and fundamental rights.**



**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION  
of SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**





2020s

# WE THE PEOPLE MEANS ALL OF US

**“It is far easier to celebrate  
civil liberties than to defend them.”**

HECTOR O. VILLAGRA,  
ACLU SoCal Executive Director

For 100 years, the ACLU SoCal has remained true to the courageous spirit of our founders.

In the 20s and 30s, we defended the right of workers to organize, strike, and picket. In the 40s we defended the human rights of people of Japanese descent. We led the opposition to loyalty oaths enacted during the McCarthy era.

We struggled for civil rights in the 60s, reproductive rights and LGBTQ rights in the 70s, and joined the long effort to desegregate Los Angeles public schools. We struck down a statute preventing a woman, with the advice of her doctor, from having an abortion, and we contested the Briggs initiative, which would have banned LGBTQ people from working in public schools.

At the height of our nation’s racial reckoning in 2020, we filed an emergency lawsuit on behalf of Black Lives Matter - Los Angeles challenging unconstitutional curfews that would have prevented protests against police violence. In less than 24 hours, the curfews targeted by the lawsuit all ended.

We recognize that the struggles we faced decades ago bear an uncanny resemblance to the challenges we confront today. We continue to fight against racial profiling and abuses of power by law enforcement, and for the human rights and dignity of incarcerated people. Our affiliate has led some of our nation’s most aggressive

decarceration lawsuits, especially with respect to immigration detention at the height of the pandemic.

In the wake of *Roe*, we rallied hundreds and thousands of voters to help enshrine the rights to abortion and contraception in our state constitution. And, even in California, we are responding to attacks on accurate and inclusive public school education.

In recent years, the ACLU SoCal has also been at the forefront of protecting and expanding the rights of unhoused people, training and empowering youth activists, securing citizenship for deported veterans, and so much more. Our relentless advocacy continues to shape life across Southern California and our country.

We know this to be true: at the heart of all that the ACLU has accomplished lies the extraordinary courage of ordinary individuals.

While the individuals or groups in need of legal protection and even our issues may change, our work remains vital. The most precious rights are not self-executing; they acquire substance and meaning only when individuals stand up for them. Our strength lies in our clients and partners in the movement for human rights and human dignity.

**Until "We the People" encompasses  
each and every one of us, we  
pledge to bend the arc of history  
towards justice.**



# Grand Marshal

## L.A. PRIDE PARADE

In 1970, we worked alongside L.A. Pride parade organizers, helping them secure a permit for the first permitted Pride parade in the nation after the LA Police Commission initially denied it.

This year, in honor of our centennial anniversary, we served as the 53<sup>rd</sup> Los Angeles Pride Parade Community Grand Marshal—a role we accepted with profound honor and joy.

On June 11, 2023, the streets of Hollywood Boulevard echoed with the voices of over 250 activists, supporters, and former ACLU clients as they marched, chanted, and rejoiced with us in the largest L.A. Pride parade contingent we've ever mustered.

### Protect Trans Youth

From "Don't Say Gay" legislation and other bills designed to erase and harm trans people, this year the ACLU tracked nearly 500 bills endangering LGBTQ equality across the country. Many of these bills overwhelmingly target trans youth. Here in California, we successfully defeated AB 1314, a bill that would have required school staff to out trans and nonbinary children to their parents—and which would have put at risk the lives of countless young people who do not feel safe coming out at home. Our history is intertwined with the very roots of the Pride movement—both then and now.





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Special Assistant to the  
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**Hermelinda Calderón**  
Legal/Advocacy Assistant

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Policy Advocate & Organizer

**Jonathan Contreras**  
Equal Justice Works Fellow

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Family Attorney for  
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Senior Policy Counsel

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## Pro Bono

# LEGAL PARTNERS

In recent decades, the ACLU SoCal significantly deepened our impact thanks to co-counsel law firms supporting pro bono cases. Attorneys and staff at law firms have, at no cost to the ACLU SoCal, helped us in conducting legal research, developing strategies, filing critical impact litigation, and providing generous means of support.

Many of our pro bono supporters gain valuable litigation and transaction skills while working on our projects. Each year, we are heartened to hear that ACLU SoCal projects have been some of the most meaningful legal work for pro bono attorneys. We remain deeply grateful for these ongoing partnerships.

### Thank you to our trusted pro bono partners who are helping us ring in our centennial anniversary this year:

Altshuler Berzon LLP	Kaye, McLane, Bednarski & Litt LLP	Outten & Golden LLP
Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP	Kirkland & Ellis LLP	Paul Hastings LLP
Ballard Spahr	Lakin & Wille LLP	Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP
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### Our pro bono legal partners helped us accomplish the following over the last year:

<b>1</b> Amicus brief	<b>2</b> Events and projects sponsored	<b>7</b> Administrative legal matters
<b>12</b> Individuals provided with direct legal representation	<b>3</b> Freedom of Information Act and California Public Records Act requests	
<b>8</b> Impact litigation cases filed as co-counsel	<b>11</b> Litigation and policy research memos	



## YOUR 2022-2023 INVESTMENT

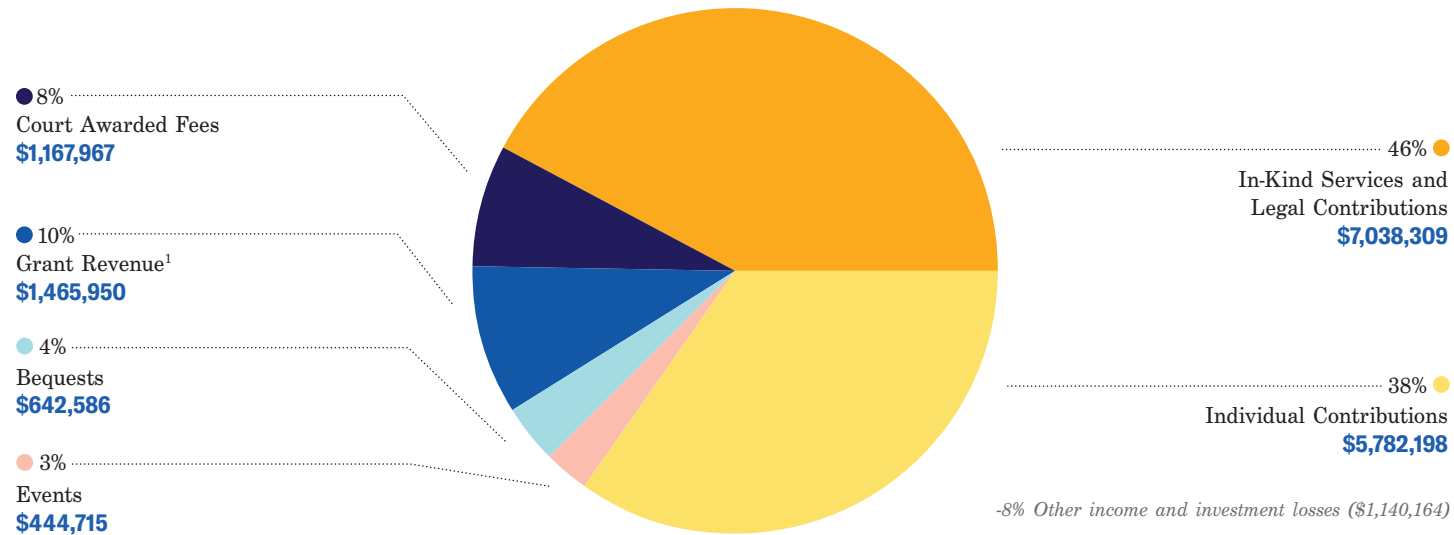
### ACLU of Southern California

We are grateful to our philanthropic partners in Southern California whose generous contributions create significant impact for millions of people nationwide. The following pages reflect summaries of financial figures reported on an accrual basis and audited at the time of publication.

In order to follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, the ACLU SoCal revenue also includes in-kind services, such as legal services and contributions. One key strategy we use to carry out our mission is partnering with law firms who provide pro bono services for our impact litigation. In FY23, we reported more than \$7 million in in-kind revenue—a value which is reflected in both our revenue and expenses for a total net change of zero. Visit [aclusocal.org/annualreport](https://aclusocal.org/annualreport) to access full audited financial statements.

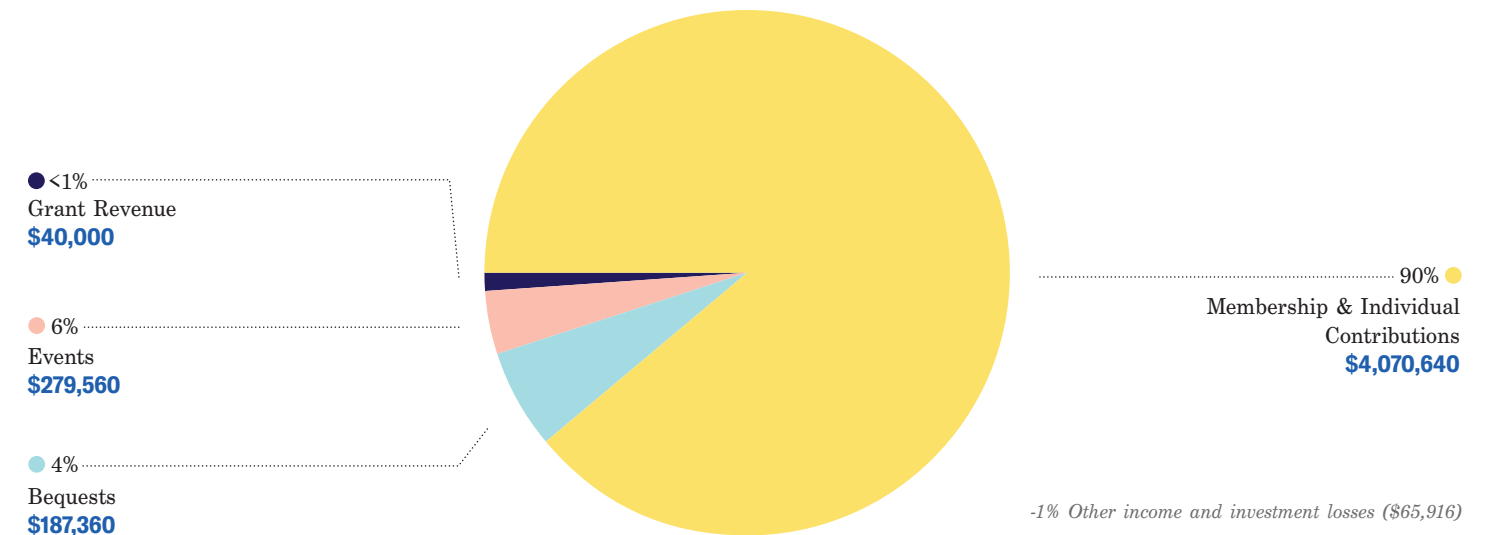
#### ACLU FOUNDATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT & REVENUE

**\$15,401,561**  
(100%) TOTAL REVENUE



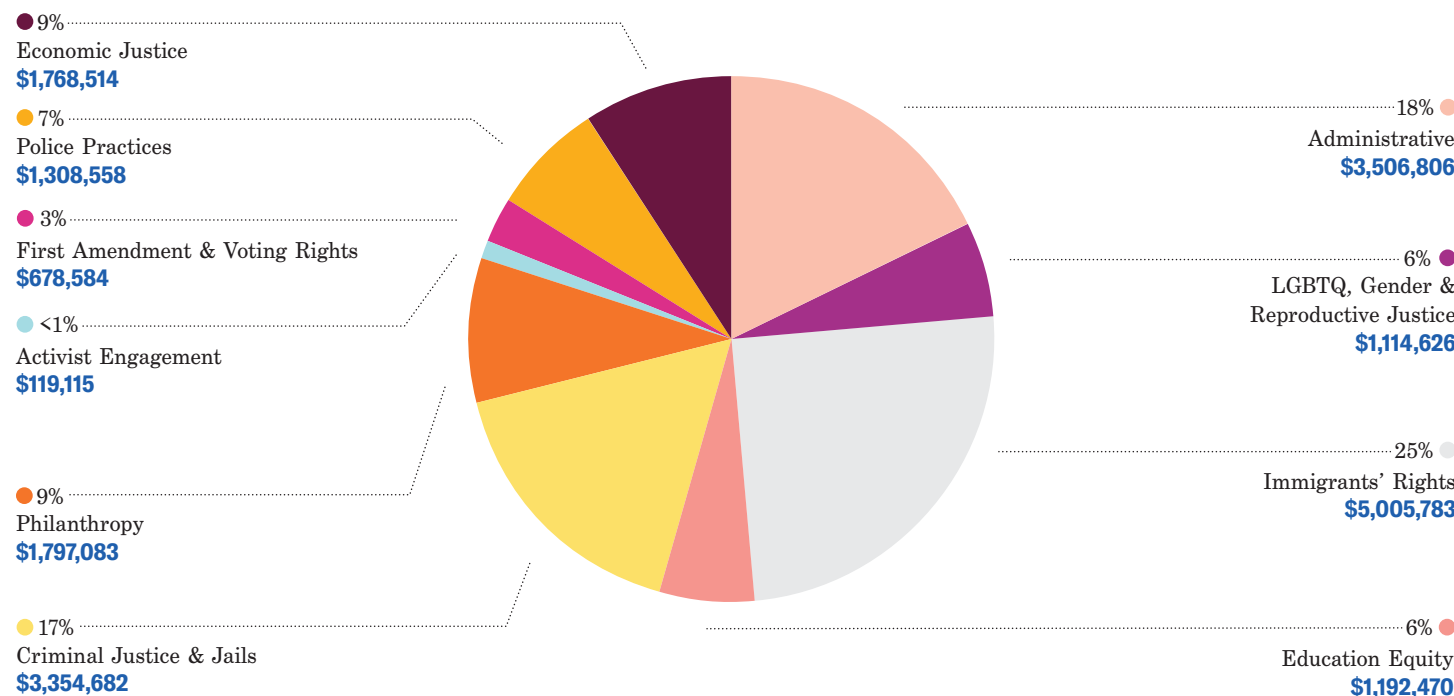
#### ACLU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT & REVENUE

**\$4,511,644**  
(100%) TOTAL REVENUE



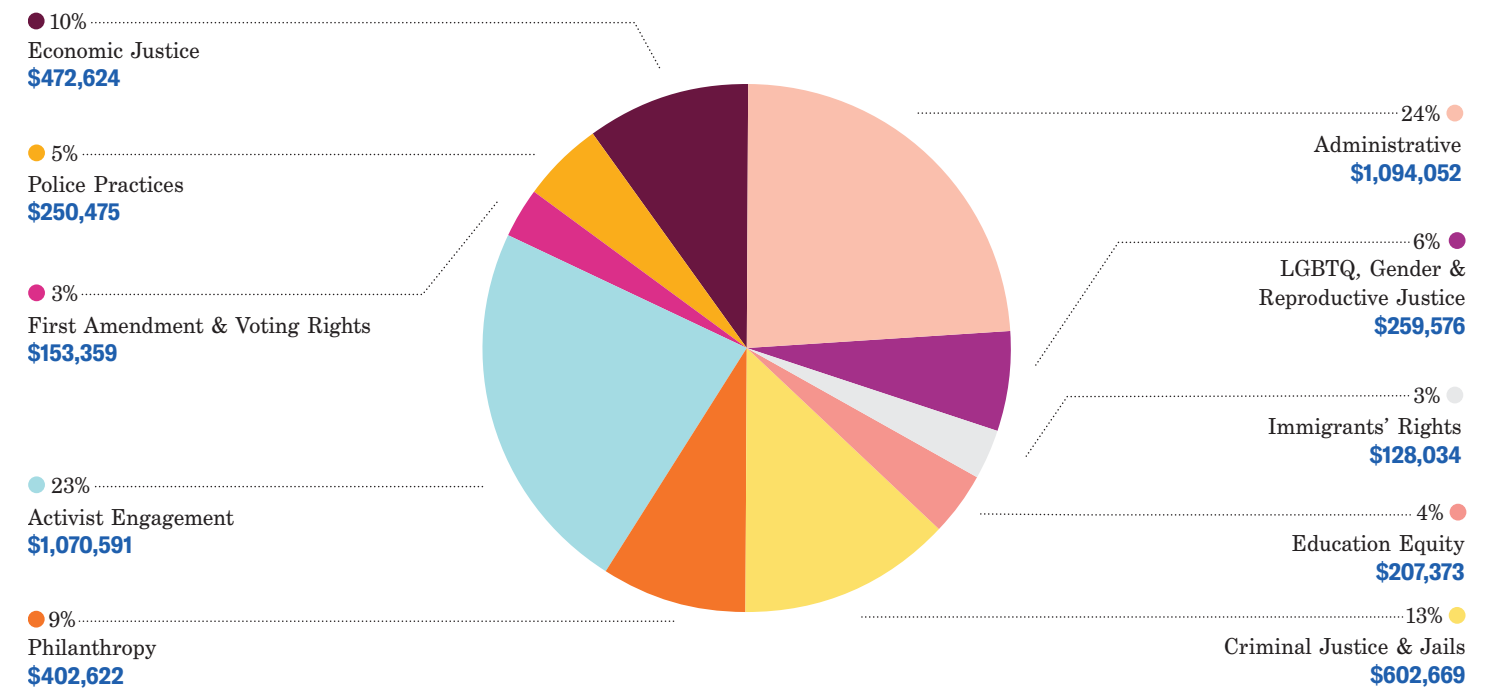
#### ACLU FOUNDATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EXPENSES

**\$19,846,221**  
(100%) TOTAL EXPENSES



#### ACLU OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EXPENSES

**\$4,641,375**  
(100%) TOTAL EXPENSES



<sup>1</sup> Grants awarded to the ACLU Foundation are restricted and earmarked for specific purposes.





*Today,*

as torchbearers of this legacy of liberty, we invite you to join us in honoring our centennial anniversary.

**With your support, we can continue to let in the light and ensure that the spirit of those who stood on Liberty Hill lives on.**





# Philanthropy

## A POWERFUL FORM OF ACTIVISM

Your generosity fuels the ACLU's vital impact in Southern California and nationwide. Thank you for your partnership.

Your investment in the ACLU Foundation of Southern California supports litigation, public education campaigns, and community engagement in Southern California and throughout the country. We do not receive government funding and do not charge clients for legal representation. We rely entirely on private donations, foundation grants, bequests, and court-awarded legal fees from successful cases.

Explore tax-deductible giving options to defend civil rights and civil liberties:

<b>GIVE ONLINE</b>	Visit <a href="https://aclusocal.org/donate">aclusocal.org/donate</a> .
<b>GIVE BY PHONE</b>	Call our office at 213-977-5216.
<b>GIVE BY MAIL</b>	<b>PAYABLE TO</b> ACLU Foundation of Southern California <b>MAIL TO</b> ACLU SoCal, Attn: Development Dept., 1313 W. 8th St, Suite 200, Los Angeles, CA 90017
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<b>BECOME A MEMBER</b>	Visit <a href="https://aclusocal.org/join">aclusocal.org/join</a> to become an official card-carrying member of the ACLU—one of the largest advocate networks in Southern California and the nation. <i>Contributions to the American Civil Liberties Union are not tax deductible.</i>



This report features illustrations by Caylin Yorba-Ruiz, a graphic artist from Victorville, California. They are available for purchase as a postcard set and 2024 calendar.

Shop our online store at [shop.aclusocal.org](https://shop.aclusocal.org).





# BILL OF RIGHTS AWARDS

FEBRUARY 18, 2024  
WESTIN BONAVENTURE HOTEL

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**100** **ACLU**  
SoCal