

# ACLU OF OHIO IMPACT REPORT

SUMMER 2020



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INSIDE: DISMANTLING  
SYSTEMIC RACISM •  
COVID-19 RAPID-  
RESPONSE • SECURE  
AND FAIR ELECTIONS

## SINCE OUR LAST REPORT:

15	ACTIVE LEGAL CASES
PUBLICATIONS	33
OVER 5,000	ACTION TAKERS
LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY LETTERS SUBMITTED	18



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### FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BEN


Decades of work and grassroots organizing – led by impacted communities, African Americans and other people of color – to address the systemic racism in our policing and criminal justice systems have laid the foundation for this powerful moment we are in today. The ACLU recognizes that the current challenges demand bold, new approaches to dismantle these long-standing systems.

We need to fundamentally reimagine the role police play in our society, and that role has to be smaller and more circumscribed. We need to reinvest our tax dollars in constructive, rather than destructive, forces.

Police in America have been empowered through ever-increasing government resources to act as an occupying force in low-income communities and communities of color. Black people live under a persistent fear of being killed by the police.

The ACLU of Ohio is committed to, and stands in solidarity with, the Movement for Black Lives, as we support imperative efforts to divest in policing, while reinvesting in African-American communities.

Thank you for standing strong for racial justice.

  
J. Bennett Guess  
Executive Director

Please  
consider a gift  
to the ACLU of  
Ohio Foundation  
to support this  
crucial work.  
(click here)



## YOUR GIFTS IN ACTION:

### DISMANTLING SYSTEMIC RACISM

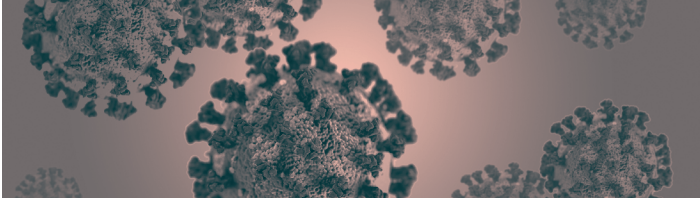
The ACLU of Ohio stands with protesters who have risen up to demand justice in the name of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and countless other Black and Brown people who have been senselessly murdered by police officers across jurisdictions, across states, across decades. Until we address the systemic issues of racism, implicit bias, white supremacy, and white privilege in our criminal legal institutions – especially police departments – we will not have peace. We demand that the long shadow of American slavery be examined in the context of the protests of 2020 and the unrelenting brutality of U.S. police practices. [▶▶▶](#)

### COVID-19 RAPID-RESPONSE WORK

As history reminds us, during times of social uncertainty, political opportunism often leads to attacks on civil liberties. The COVID-19 public health crisis continues to expose many of the cracks in our society that pre-date the virus. From Ohio’s mass incarceration crisis, to our outdated election laws, to systemic racism and health disparities, to abusive treatment of asylum seekers and immigrants, to abortion access – we are experiencing battles on all fronts.

#### Since the start of the pandemic, the ACLU of Ohio:

- Created an email hotline for people with incarcerated loved ones to report issues occurring in state prisons, jails, and youth detention centers. [▶▶▶](#)
- Issued an action alert urging Ohio officials to publicly denounce discrimination, harassment, and violence against Asian-American communities. [▶▶▶](#)
- Sued Ohio for attempting to prevent access to abortion during the COVID-19 crisis; and won the legal battle in the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals! [▶▶▶](#)
- Ran a series of TV ads with heavy saturation in the Columbus markets, urging Governor DeWine to release elderly and medically vulnerable people from Ohio prisons and jails. [▶▶▶](#)
- Sued ICE on behalf of medically-vulnerable immigrants detained in crowded jail facilities in Butler, Geauga, Morrow and Seneca counties. To date, 21 of our clients have been released! [▶▶▶](#)
- Filed a lawsuit on behalf of elderly and medically vulnerable people at Elkton FCI, received a favorable order in federal court that required the Bureau of Prisons to expedite the transfer and release of the 800+ members of our class action, but ultimately lost in the Sixth Circuit which struck down the district court’s order. The court failed us in this instance, but we’ll never stop fighting for incarcerated people. [▶▶▶](#)



### OHIOANS FOR SECURE AND FAIR ELECTIONS SUSPENDS CAMPAIGN

While COVID-19 ultimately ended our year-long effort to place a suite of election modernization reforms before Ohio voters on the November 2020 ballot, we remain incredibly proud of everything we have accomplished, including a 6-1 victory at the Ohio Supreme Court finding our initiative qualified as a single issue. The bottom line is that the COVID-19 pandemic hit right at the beginning of Ohio’s precious signature-gathering months, making it impossible to collect the signatures necessary to qualify for the ballot. [▶▶▶](#)



The ACLU of Ohio and its partners will continue to fight for widely popular, common sense election modernization through all means necessary. The strong, broad-based coalition we assembled over the last year remains committed to staying in the fight for election reform, under the same name, Ohioans for Secure and Fair Elections. Be assured – there’s more to come.



### DONOR PROFILE

“ I am a member of the ACLU of Ohio because of our commitment to the criminal justice reform that impacts Black and Brown people disproportionately.

We are taking a stand against the current bail system that keeps people in jail because they cannot afford to get out. Bail reform is just one example of the transformative work the ACLU of Ohio is doing to impact future generations of Black and Brown families.

Also, our dedication to diversity, inclusion, and equity goes beyond mere lip service. We were the first affiliate in the country to hire a director of equity and inclusion.

The ACLU of Ohio is a trailblazer that ensures people of color have a seat at the table.

Our advocacy efforts motivate me not only to renew my annual membership but to donate to the tremendous work. [▶▶▶](#)



Rev. Dr. Ebony Speakes-Hall  
Liberty Township

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- Want to impact change for generations to come? Include the ACLU of Ohio in your estate plan and commit to fighting for freedom and defending democracy with a strong legacy. Please email [contact@acluohio.org](mailto:contact@acluohio.org) and our Development Department will follow up with more information.
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to the ACLU of  
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to support this  
crucial work.  
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