

HANDS OFF D.C. OUR FIGHT FOR LOCAL AUTONOMY AND PUBLIC SAFETY



For the first time in over 30 years, the federal government denied D.C. residents the right to govern ourselves when they overturned the District's Revised Criminal Code Act (RCCA) in March.

The local bill that Congress and President Biden blocked had been overwhelmingly approved by the D.C. Council and was supported by 83% of District residents.

The 700,000 people living in D.C. are students, veterans, nurses, families, and neighbors. Like people in every state, we deserve to govern ourselves, as a matter of democracy and self-determination, but also because we know our communities better than anyone else.

To overturn our democratic will, opponents of the RCCA spread misinformation about a law that would have significantly improved public safety in the District. The present-day criminal code was created in 1901, an era before women or many Black people even had the right to vote. The RCCA was created after a decade-long, nonpartisan, and

public process to fix an outdated and unclear code. With the RCCA in place, the District would have clear and realistic criminal codes that would create a safer community.

Instead, members of Congress – where we have no vote – overturned this critical local law. Ahead of the vote to disempower District residents, we rallied on March 8th as part of the Hands Off D.C. Coalition. Speaking at the rally, ACLU-D.C. Executive Director Monica Hopkins offered a history lesson about how the ongoing denial of statehood to D.C. residents is rooted in racism. She explained that Congress disenfranchised the District in the 19th century in order to stop the Black political power that was growing in D.C.

Though we lost the fight for the RCCA, we turned our experience into power. After blocking the RCCA, some House Members set their sights on a local law meant to protect residents from police misconduct. Bolstered by lessons from the RCCA, we mobilized to educate, organize, and advocate, and successfully defended the common-sense police accountability bill from this latest attack.

We should not have to fight for laws that the D.C. Council has already passed. The 700,000 people of D.C. supposedly live in a representative democracy, yet we are routinely denied our basic right to self-govern because D.C. is not considered a state. While conversations about the need for statehood for D.C. can sometimes sound vague or theoretical, this interference makes the harm of denying full citizenship to the people of D.C. loud and clear. The residents of D.C. must be allowed to update our own local laws that can help make D.C. safer.

“Today, rather than rising to the occasion to end the segregationist history of disenfranchisement,” said Hopkins, “Congress and the President are continuing the history of segregation with the racist idea that D.C. can’t be trusted to govern ourselves.”

Learn more about D.C. statehood at DCStatehoodNow.org.



RACIAL JUSTICE DEMONSTRATOR SUES THE GOVERNMENT FOR HELICOPTER ATTACK

On March 14, we sued the U.S. government to hold it accountable for conducting a low-flying military helicopter attack against racial justice protestors, including our client Dzhuliya Dashtamirova, in 2020 in downtown D.C.

On June 1, 2020, Ms. Dashtamirova traveled from Baltimore to join demonstrators in the District who gathered to protest the racist systemic injustices perpetrated by law enforcement against Black people in the United States, exemplified by the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

Just hours after federal officers brutally attacked civil rights demonstrators across the street from the White House, the D.C. National Guard hovered military helicopters above racial justice protestors, including Ms. Dashtamirova, at Gallery Place and again at Judiciary Square. One helicopter descended as low as approximately 45 feet above the protestors. Demonstrators crouched and protected their heads as gale-force winds hurled dirt and broken glass at them, tore signs from buildings, and ripped branches off trees.



“My eyes and skin stung from debris. I couldn’t hear anything over the extremely powerful winds,” said Dashtamirova. “For weeks afterward, I had horrible migraines and lost sleep. I kept trying to figure out why the military attacked us, and I kept worrying that it would happen again.”

The U.S. military has used this helicopter maneuver in international conflicts as an intimidation and dispersal tactic that causes immediate harm and threatens greater force to come. Ms. Dashtamirova filed an administrative complaint with the National Guard in 2020, which the Guard failed to resolve. Having waited over two years for a resolution, Ms. Dashtamirova has now gone to court to seek accountability for the 2020 attack.



“This helicopter attack was a dangerous and shocking show of force against Americans exercising their First Amendment rights,” said Michael Perloff, Staff Attorney for ACLU-D.C. “We hope that this lawsuit holds our government accountable for the injury and terror they caused and helps prevent another similar attack against people demonstrating in the Nation’s capital.”

NEED LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR A CIVIL RIGHTS OR CIVIL LIBERTIES VIOLATION?



If your civil liberties or civil rights were violated, the best way to request help from the ACLU-D.C. is online at www.acludc.org/help. You may also leave a voicemail at 202-601-4269, although response times are slower for voicemails.

Unfortunately, our office has limited resources, so we cannot take every case we are contacted about, even if a grave injustice has occurred.

We take cases that we think will help clarify the law, so that civil liberties are better protected across the board. For examples of cases we do not take, please visit

www.acludc.org/help.



SCAN TO SEEK
LEGAL HELP

If we cannot help you, we will do our best to suggest a different organization or law firm that might be able to assist. *(Note that we cannot guarantee that they will be able to take your case.)*

If you have a case not involving civil liberties or civil rights, please see our resource guide for help with other legal problems in the D.C. area: www.acludc.org/resource-guide.

Also, visit our website to learn more about your constitutional rights! Check out ACLU-D.C.’s easy-to-use resources: www.acludc.org/kyr.

ACLU-D.C. LAUNCHES NEW ORGANIZING DEPARTMENT

ACLU-D.C. launched our Organizing Department in 2022 to advance civil liberties and civil rights in the District by centering the most impacted and vulnerable community members, providing material wins, and building political power.

The department focuses on issues such as police accountability, community oversight of surveillance, D.C. statehood, and decriminalizing sex work. As part of the Street Vending Coalition, the team recently celebrated a victory when the D.C. Council voted to remove harmful penalties by decriminalizing street vending. 🎉

MEET OUR DYNAMIC TEAM



MAXINE DAVIS
(SHE/HER)
ORGANIZING DIRECTOR

Maxine is a fourth-generation native Washingtonian with deep roots in Ward 4. She leads the organizing team and manages strategic outreach and coalition building. Maxine comes to us with 10+ years in public health advocacy focusing on Black and maternal health. In her downtime, you can find Maxine traveling to a new country, trying a new recipe, or being creative with the arts.



NATACIA KNAPPER
(THEY/THEM)
SENIOR ORGANIZER

Natacia is Black, queer, and nonbinary and has lived in Washington D.C. for over a decade. They lead and conduct sustained organizing campaigns that build civic engagement and social power among D.C. community members. They deeply believe in restorative justice, Black liberation, and the importance of not throwing people away. Originally hailing from San Diego, CA, Natacia loves the beach, tacos, sunshine, margaritas, and camping.



VERONICA MOSQUEDA
(SHE/HER)
CAMPAIGN ORGANIZER

Veronica is an immigrant, abolitionist, and committed community organizer with ten years of experience in housing and migrant justice. She works to co-create and support campaigns to mobilize D.C. residents around civil rights and civil liberties issues and to help facilitate public education efforts. Veronica is originally from Chihuahua, Mexico and grew up in Texas. She is a death doula, a certified yoga instructor, and a lover of cats, nature, and the community.



KT BECKMAN-GOTRICH
(THEY/THEM)
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
ASSOCIATE

KT models their values—to love unconditionally and build power by centering each relationship's stories. They work to co-create and support campaigns aimed at mobilizing D.C. residents around civil rights and civil liberties issues, and they help facilitate public education efforts. In off hours, you can find them canvassing in their community, playing with friends at local parks, tending their garden, or in the kitchen baking.

ACLU-D.C. is always looking for volunteers across all eight wards to help build a more just and free D.C. Our Organizing Department launched an online Volunteer Hub this spring, where anyone can check out upcoming volunteer opportunities and events. Whether you have one free hour or many, have specific skills or are just discovering your talents, volunteering with ACLU-D.C. can make a real difference in our communities and our fight for a better future for all.

Volunteers can sign up to watch the courts with Courtwatch DC, learn and share advocacy skills, start a student club, or join an upcoming event by visiting www.acludc.com/volunteerhub.



D.C. CRISIS RESPONSE: A SEASON FOR CHANGE



Charnal Chaney needed help on the day in 2019 that she survived a domestic violence attack, during which she was choked until she passed out. Instead, when she woke up, D.C. police aggressively questioned her until she had a panic attack. The police then grabbed her hands and legs, dragged her kicking and screaming to the squad car, and drove her to United Medical Center, where she was sedated against her will.

Chaney, founder of Bold Yoga LLC, shared her powerful story this spring as part of the D.C. Crisis Response Coalition's effort to create a mental health crisis response system that provides care, not punishment, to people going through a mental health crisis.



“We need mental health professionals who can show up and can de-escalate the situation, not police who escalate the problem.”

In Chaney's words



**D.C.
Crisis
Response
Coalition**

ACLU-D.C. helped found the D.C. Crisis Response Coalition because we believe that everyone deserves safe and equal treatment, especially when they are in crisis. In these vulnerable circumstances, people need trained professionals to provide support and care — not police officers to escalate the situation. D.C.'s current crisis response system relies heavily on police, which is ineffective and unsafe for people with mental health disabilities.

This April, the D.C. Crisis Response Coalition launched a policy platform that shows how the District can begin building an effective, care-based crisis response system. **We aim to ensure that District residents with mental health disabilities receive the care they deserve with:**



Someone to Talk to:

A crisis call center separate from 911 staffed with mental health professionals who respond to and triage mental health emergency calls.

D.C. has such call centers but too few people know about them, the services they provide are inadequate, and the 911 operators who handle the vast majority of mental health emergency calls don't have the authority to route many calls to them.



Someone to Respond:

Mental health professionals who can respond to emergencies without police and can address crises that the call center cannot resolve over the phone.

D.C. employs some specialists who provide these services, but not enough. As a result, calling them results in unacceptably long waits.



A Place to Go:

Community homes outside the hospital setting where people can regain a sense of stability after a crisis.

D.C. has few community beds where people can recuperate during a crisis, which causes many people to go to psychiatric ERs that can exacerbate trauma rather than alleviate it.

Addressing these challenges is long overdue. A 2016 publication found that disabled individuals make up a third to half of all people killed by law enforcement officers. A 2017 article in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that more than half of Black people with disabilities have been arrested by the age of 28, twice the rate compared of their white peers with disabilities.

For more information and to get involved with the D.C. Crisis Response Coalition, please visit www.dccrisisresponse.org.



LITIGATING FOR D.C.'S LIBERTY,

2016-2022

The ACLU-D.C. legal department recently issued a comprehensive report analyzing our litigation efforts between 2016-2022.

This report shows how ACLU-D.C. has responded to a time of great change, including a historically anti-civil liberties presidency, the murder of George Floyd and the protests that followed, the rightward shift of the federal judiciary, and the COVID-19 pandemic. We litigated cases in major issues areas where we saw both the greatest need for our advocacy here in D.C. and the greatest opportunity to have a significant impact.

Here are some highlights of how, over the past seven years, ACLU-D.C. and our clients have protected and expanded civil rights and liberties in the D.C. federal and local courts.



Criminal Legal Reform

Significant settlements in three cases challenging sexually invasive searches by D.C. police; one of the cases led to the firing of the abusive officer and a training officer

A ruling striking down a D.C. statute permitting police to search without a warrant any person found in a location that police are searching pursuant to a warrant covering only the place

An injunction requiring the D.C. police to collect comprehensive stop-and-frisk data as required by D.C. law

A year-long injunction followed by a settlement requiring conditions improvements and independent monitoring, in our challenge to the D.C. jail's failure to take COVID-19 precautions



Immigrants' Rights

A series of cases enjoining aspects of the federal government's use of the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to keep migrants out of the country and deny them the ability to seek humanitarian protections from removal

An injunction against the Trump administration's policy of denying non-citizens serving in the U.S. Armed Forces the expedited path to citizenship that such patriots have had since at least the Civil War

An injunction blocking a Trump Administration rule barring asylum for migrants who passed through another country on the way to the United States

An injunction blocking the Trump administration's blanket policy of denying parole to asylum seekers fleeing persecution, torture, or death in their countries of origin



Equal Protection and Anti-discrimination

Significant changes to transgender housing and shackling policies at the D.C. jail

Significant changes to the way AmeriCorps treats applicants with disabilities

A landmark ruling by then-Judge (now Justice) Ketanji Brown Jackson that the D.C. jail was required to accommodate a deaf person in custody



First Amendment

Significant policy changes to U.S. Park Police and U.S. Secret Service rules for policing demonstrations, as a partial settlement of our lawsuit over the attack on civil rights demonstrators at Lafayette Square during the George Floyd protests of 2020

An injunction against the federal government's prohibition of administrative employees in the judicial branch from engaging in basic acts of political participation

\$605,000 in damages, plus changes to arrestee processing procedures, to settle our suit over D.C. police abuses against demonstrators on Inauguration Day 2017

A successful First Amendment challenge to the Library of Congress's firing of an employee for his outspoken criticism of the government's Guantanamo detention policy

Read the full report at
acludc.com/litigationreport



Thanks for attending our 2023 BILL OF RIGHTS

CELEBRATION

Thank you to everyone who joined our Bill of Rights Celebration this May! Together, we enjoyed an evening emceed by the legendary Rayceen Pendarvis, with music from Dupont Brass and drag queen story time with Tara Hoot.



This year, we honored Dr. Philippa Strum with the Spitzer Lifetime Achievement Award for her decades of research, activism, and stewardship. An author of celebrated books on civil rights and liberties, Dr. Strum spent her career making persistent strides toward equity, diversity, and inclusion at the ACLU.

We presented Courtwatch DC with the Barth Volunteer Award for challenging injustice in D.C. courts. In its first year, Courtwatch DC trained more than 100 people

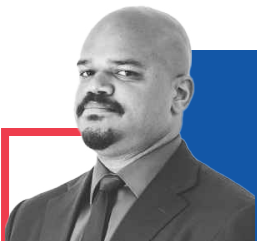


to watch the courts every week, built a community of support for loved ones facing charges, and tracked patterns of injustice across nearly 1,000 court cases.

Finally, we presented the Edgerton Civil Libertarian Award to Sgt. Deon Jones of the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, a gay man who endured years of pervasive harassment at work based on his sexual orientation and who is bravely fighting in court against anti-LGBTQ discrimination.



Learn more about our honorees on our blog, check out photos from the event on our Instagram, and be sure to join us next year!



MEET POLICY DIRECTOR DAMON KING

Damon King joined the ACLU-D.C. team as the Policy Director in December 2022.

He leads the ACLU of D.C.'s policy team and programs and sets the overall strategy to advance a broad civil liberties policy agenda before the D.C. Council, other local government bodies, and administrative agencies. Prior to joining ACLU-D.C., Damon served as the Director of Policy Advocacy at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, where he was a Senior Policy Advocate before that. He also worked as a Senior Policy Attorney at the

Children's Law Center. In these roles, Damon collaborated with colleagues, the D.C. Council, and District agencies to improve the lives of residents with low incomes. Damon's policy successes include protecting D.C. residents from losing their homes, healthcare, and utilities during the COVID-19 pandemic; strengthening protections for District workers struggling with debt; and improving policies for youth in foster care. Damon holds a B.A. in Government from Harvard University and a J.D. from Harvard Law School, where he served as a member of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau.

SHARE YOUR STATEHOOD STORY AND D.C. LOVE



Hey, D.C. residents! It's long past time to make D.C. the 51st state.

We, the 700,000 residents of D.C., have been denied full voting rights for over 200 years because of racism and voter suppression. It's time to make our stories heard and demand the statehood that we deserve! Let's show the country why granting D.C. statehood is needed, constitutional, and the only way to enfranchise the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have been wrongly denied our full voting rights.

Visit www.acludc.com/statehoodstory to share a video about why you love D.C. and why statehood matters to you.



“I GAIN STRENGTH FROM THE TRANSFORMATIVE WORK OUR COMMUNITY DOES TO MOVE D.C. TOWARD JUSTICE AND FREEDOM.”



When the federal government blocked the District’s revised criminal code this March, I felt it like both a gut punch and a renewed call to action. In less than sixty days, members of Congress used misinformation and fearmongering to bolster their re-election campaigns on the backs of disenfranchised D.C. residents. With his signature on the congressional resolution, President Biden, who has said he supports D.C. statehood, reinforced the racist idea that D.C. residents can’t be trusted to govern ourselves.

Between assaults on our autonomy, a Supreme Court that has stripped away essential rights, and baseless “tough-on-crime” rhetoric that has been gaining traction, a just and free D.C. can seem out of reach.

But throughout these storms, I gain strength from the transformative and creative work our community does to move D.C. toward justice and freedom. Our last six years of litigation and policy work have significantly moved us in this direction, and launching our new Organizing Department has created a home for the unique skills that organizers and impacted communities bring to the table. This collaborative work across all eight wards has culminated in the policy platform we launched as part of the D.C. Crisis Response Coalition this spring. We are now actively co-creating a crisis response system that relies on mental health professionals, not police, to provide the care residents deserve during moments of mental health crisis.

Our community is why there was magic in the room on May 2 when we came together at our Bill of Rights Celebration to recognize and lift a glass to all the brave and generous people who make our work possible. It is an honor to continue building a just and free D.C. alongside each of you.

Monica Hopkins
Executive Director

ACLU

District
of Columbia

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With a gift of stock or for wiring instructions.

Please contact development@acludc.org for our account and DTC number.



By phone.

Call our Donor Services at (212) 549-2543.



With a gift through a bequest or charitable trust.

Visit www.aclu.org/legacy to see how gifts through your will, retirement plan, life insurance, or trust can provide for both your loved ones and ensure our ability to fight for civil liberties in the future.



Through the mail. Please note that mail is delayed by at least 4 weeks and receipt may be delayed. Mail may be sent to:

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Via mobile device.

Access our donation page here via QR code or at acludc.org/give

