

Legal Update: ACLU of Mississippi Settles Federal Class Action Lawsuit in Biloxi

BY CHARLES IRVIN, LEGAL DIRECTOR



The ACLU of Mississippi brought national attention to the Mississippi Gulf Coast when it sued the city of Biloxi in October 2015 for its exercising of modern-day debtors' prisons. Now, five months later, the ACLU of Mississippi along with our national partners in the Racial Justice Program have reached a major settlement agreement for the plaintiffs and spearheaded the adoption of policy reforms that will serve as a national model.

The federal class action lawsuit against the City of Biloxi, JCS Incorporated, Chief of Police John Miller, and Judge James Steele was filed on behalf of indigent people who were arrested and jailed on warrants charging them with nonpayment of fines and fees. The ACLU of Mississippi charged Qumotria Kennedy, Joseph Anderson and Richard Tillery were denied their constitutional right to counsel, an indigency hearing, and freedom from unreasonable seizures were violated.

The city of Biloxi has initiated policies that both parties agree are a model for courts in Mississippi and across the country. These sweeping reforms protect the rights of people who cannot afford to pay fines and fees imposed by Biloxi's municipal court for traffic and other misdemeanor offenses, to include that:

- Private probation companies will not be used to collect fines and fees after June 1, 2016.

- A full-time public defender has been hired to represent indigent people charged with nonpayment.
- No additional fees will be imposed on people who enter payment plans or are required to perform community service.
- A "bench card" detailing municipal court procedures will be used to protect constitutional rights in the fine/fee collections process. The card explains how the municipal court will conduct additional ability-to-pay hearings and lists the legal alternatives to jail.

Such unconstitutional practices exist not just here in Mississippi, but across the nation. The efforts of the ACLU of Mississippi and the willingness of Biloxi to see the problems and provide meaningful solutions serve as a roadmap for how to protect all citizens. If you know of other jurisdictions that have similar policies and/or practices, please contact our Legal Department.

Two of our clients explain how being sent to prison for small fines and fees can dramatically alter people's lives for the worse without any public benefit. Read their accounts below.

QUMOTRIA KENNEDY

I was a passenger in a car with a friend one day in July when a police officer pulled us over. The officer ran my name for warrants, made me step out of the car, and put handcuffs on me.

From there he took me to the Biloxi police station and then to jail. At the police station, they told me I would have had to pay \$1,001 in cash to get out. That was what I owed in traffic fines and fees that I hadn't been able to pay. They didn't bring me to court, give me a lawyer, or even tell me that I had a right to one.

I didn't have the money. I was sad, upset, and crying. I'm a single mom, so I knew I'd have to be in jail and leave my daughter with my friend. My daughter didn't even know where I was or what happened for an entire night.

No one told me how long I'd be in jail. Each day, I was wondering when I would see my daughter or be brought to court. In the end, I was locked up five days.

When I was in jail, I lost my part-time job. Now I'm just on call as a cleaning person, so I only go to work once or twice a week. I'm struggling on so little.

Now they want me to pay hundreds of dollars a month for my fines and fees. But I just don't have the money. I asked the probation officer if I could do community service instead, but she said there was nothing she could do.

I owe so much money that I can't pay. Every day, I worry that I could get arrested and sent back to jail.

I decided to bring a lawsuit against Biloxi because I don't like what the city is doing to people. All it cares about is money. Biloxi locked me up for being poor. But it costs them money to keep me in jail. So this system doesn't even make any sense.

I hope that everybody knows that the system is trampling on poor people, and it's not fair.

JOSEPH ANDERSON

When I got a \$200 traffic ticket, I knew I wouldn't be able to pay it. I made a payment or two from my disability checks, but I was living on so little, I couldn't pay any more. The Biloxi police issued a warrant on me, but I didn't know. The police knocked on my door, reached inside, and grabbed me.

LEGAL UPDATE CONTINUES, PAGE 5

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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, . . ."

This quote from Charles Dickens' "The Tale of Two Cities" is very reflective of the times in which we are currently living in Mississippi and across this nation.

The best of current times are made the worst of current times when every stride toward equality is met with dark and vicious attempts to take two leaps backward. The U. S. Supreme Court has ruled that warrants are needed for law enforcement to search cell phones. Incredibly, now lawmakers are tackling another challenge to Fourth Amendment protections by examining whether law enforcement's access to details of where someone has gone or will go, as recorded by phones and other devices, should require a search warrant and "probable cause."

In Mississippi, we applauded the Secretary of State's legislative proposals to increase access to the voting polls by allowing early voting and online voter registration. And, yet, we had to stand in the same halls and rail against the introduction of bills proposed by the Attorney General, which would cloak pharmaceutical companies providing lethal injection in secrecy and which articulated alternative barbaric means of execution to include the electric chair and firing squads.

While the nation has recognized marriage equality and upheld adoption by a same sex couple, Mississippi legislators are attempting to modernize and reutilize Jim Crow Era laws with the introduction of HB 1523 – the "Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act."

Women are now recognized as capable of defending this nation in combat positions equal to men, and yet in Mississippi and across this nation, legislators are refusing to recognize that these same women are capable of making their own reproductive healthcare decisions. We are once again fighting back against legislation meant to bar access to reproductive healthcare in the form of HB519 - the "Mississippi Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act" - designed to criminalize and, therefore, deter doctors from providing services.

Charles Dickens' novel is cast in a period of time which led up to the French Revolution. The people portrayed in the story were impoverished and uncared for. Their concerns and issues impacting their lives and the lives of their families were not the concerns of the nobility as legislative forums passed laws in favor of aristocracy. There was civil unrest and a demand for change. Like the people in the novel, which was telling of the times in Britain as well as France, today in Mississippi and in the United States, "we ha[ve] everything before us, we ha[ve] nothing before us". The decision of which path we take is ours.

As the Executive Director of the ACLU of Mississippi, I am proud to lead an organization that continues to stand for equality and serve as the advanced guard against tyrannical "foolishness". Nothing before us will deter us from the belief that we are all created equal and, therefore, should be treated equitably.

We are able to continue in this fight only because of you, our members and supporters. I thank you for all you have done and ask that you continue to stand with us as vanguards against this "season of darkness". The ACLU of Mississippi is determined that our state will not be fraught with a tragic end and that our legacy will be a better Mississippi.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Riley-Collins

Upcoming Meetings of the Board of Directors:

June 5, 2016, September 17, 2016*

*Annual Meeting of the Membership, Annual Meeting of the Board, ACLU Jazz Brunch 2016

Social Justice Challenged This Legislative Session

BY ERIK R. FLEMING, DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY AND POLICY

The 2016 Mississippi Legislative Session has been a challenging one for social justice and transparency. Our efforts to pass legislation addressing reform needed in our beloved state that would lay a stronger foundation for the next 200 years were soundly defeated. However, the ACLU of Mississippi believes our lobbying efforts have made an impact that we hope will lead to success in future sessions.

Supportive legislative sponsors introduced a total of 12 bills concerning our legislative agenda, including The Mississippi Civil Rights Act - HB 624 and SB 2738; Written Consent to Search - HB 589 and SB 2656; Body Cameras Policy for Law Enforcement - HB 669 and SB 2490; Ending Debtor's Prisons - HB 1314 and SB 2620; School Resource Officers Training - HB 1001, HB 1061, SB 2337 and SB 2383. The ACLU of Mississippi appreciates the courageous leadership of those lawmakers for their cooperation in standing up for equity and inclusion.

The ACLU of Mississippi has remained vigilant during this legislative session to defend the U.S. Constitution, ensuring there is a clear balance between individual liberties and the general welfare.

Below is a breakdown of some key bills we actively supported or opposed.

GUARANTEE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

We proposed HB 972, which would have set a reform policy for restraint and seclusion of our children in public schools, met its demise this session, but opened the door for more constructive administrative action with the Mississippi Department of Education.

PROMOTE COMMUNITY POLICING, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Supported SB 2477 – This bill would create



The ACLU of Mississippi had the pleasure in hosting both the Conservative Caucus and the Democratic Caucus of the Mississippi State Legislature this session. During both meetings, Director of Advocacy and Policy Erik Fleming presented the ACLU of Mississippi 2016 Legislative Agenda and answered questions concerning our proposed legislation.

a task force to address the transparency and possible reform of Mississippi's Civil Asset Forfeiture program. Written consent and forfeiture both complement our overarching advocacy for privacy rights, which we can use to defeat bad drone policies.

Opposed SB 2237 - This legislation seeks to provide immunity for, and protect the identity of, those who supply drugs to be administered in an execution and those individuals assigned to an execution team. Those who violate this law will face criminal and civil penalties.

PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS

The ACLU of Mississippi is pleased that recommendations from a previous election task force our organization participated in are making its way towards the governor's desk. House Bill 796 allows early voting for Mississippians, and HB 809 creates an online voter registration system.

Opposed HB 868 - This legislation changes the makeup of Mississippi's 1st Supreme Court District by adding another majority white county into the district. This will dilute the Black Voting Age Population in the district, thus making it harder for Blacks to have representation on the Supreme Court, the Transportation Commission, and the Public Service Commission.

EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL PEOPLE

Opposed HB 1523 – This bill opens the

door to discrimination of the LGBT community and is a negative response to the U.S. Supreme Court's Obergefell decision declaring same-sex marriages constitutional. It allows denial of goods and services, public and private, to certain members of society in the name of exercising religious freedom. This legislation would have a devastating effect on our state's reputation and economy, as history has previously indicated in other states.

Opposed SB 2306 - This legislation prohibits municipalities in Mississippi from designating themselves as sanctuary cities for undocumented immigrants, thus compelling them, through an unfunded mandate, to detain persons on behalf of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service.

PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Opposed SB 2238 - Originally designed to keep the Mississippi Department of Medicaid from paying for abortions, this bill was amended to prohibit the reimbursement of family planning services to Planned Parenthood. This only cost the state \$800 per year.

Opposed HB 519 - This legislation is designed to criminalize doctors who perform an abortion.

For continued legislative updates, visit us online at aclu-ms.org, on Facebook at [ACLU of Mississippi](https://www.facebook.com/ACLUofMississippi), and on Twitter @[aclu_ms](https://twitter.com/aclu_ms).

The ACLU of Mississippi, Inc. is holding legislators accountable and encouraging them to push for progress with our 2015 Legislative Score Card and 2016 Equity Agenda. These tools serve those inside and outside our state's Capitol to ensure we defeat prejudice and support equality. Find them at aclu-ms.org.

Criminal Justice Reform Update

BY BLAKE FELDMAN, ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY... EXCEPT FOR EXECUTIONS?

When it comes to the expenditure of taxpayer funds for government projects and contracts, there is no accountability without transparency. The fundamental necessity of transparency is even more important when the subject matter is the planned execution of a U.S. citizen. Therefore, the ACLU of Mississippi is zealously opposing the lethal injection secrecy bill, SB 2237, which has passed the Senate and at the time of this writing is now in the House. As originally introduced, SB 2237 would have prevented the condemned and his counsel from accessing this information, in clear violation of Due Process under the Fourth Amendment.

If Mississippi continues to sentence and execute death row prisoners, the process must remain transparent and the government accountable to the people of this state in whose name it is carrying out this ultimate and irreversible punishment. The state should not be allowed to hide behind a curtain of secrecy when carrying out executions, preventing the general public and the press from obtaining basic details about the execution process.

This bill is part of Attorney General Hood's legislative agenda because he claims members of the "execution team" receive threats. The Senate blindly accepted those allegations without any substantiation. No one is free from criticism, and that includes governmental agencies and officials, especially when they are procuring and injecting fatally toxic cocktails into a citizen's veins.

If someone threatens Mississippi pharmacies or Parchman staff, they should be prosecuted, but imposing prior restraint to free speech here is an unacceptable government overreach.

GUARDIANS, WARRIORS, OR FOR-PROFIT AGENCIES?

Police brutality was thrust into the forefront of mainstream media attention with the 2014 killings of Tamir Rice and



Eric Gardner constantly shown on social media. The crisis of police-community relations remains unresolved, and the Mississippi State Legislature has once again dismissed the issue. The ACLU of Mississippi pushed for legislation that would ensure police body-worn cameras actually provide the accountability and transparency departments claim they will provide. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that law enforcement agencies are using the technology in a manner that actually restores community trust.

Use of force is not the only causal factor of the gulf of mistrust when it comes to law enforcement officers. In too many jurisdictions, sheriffs' offices and police departments are more concerned with generating revenue than protecting and serving. Very much related to the municipal court culture highlighted by our debtors' prison litigation, law enforcement officers have perverse incentives to aggressively police minor offences. Moreover, civil asset forfeiture laws have encouraged for-profit policing.

Often times, when an agency boasts of a large seizure, we learn that money or property was discovered and seized during a "consensual search." Many people are unaware of their right to refuse consent, terminate the encounter and continue about their lives. We will continue to push for legislation that requires officers to acquire written consent after clearly communicating a person's right to refuse. In addition, we are also preparing to advocate for reforms to civil asset forfeiture laws that currently allow departments to profit from seizure without even convicting the owner of a crime. Taxpayers have trusted government officials with immense authority and

power to keep us safe, not patrol the streets with the goal of making money.

SENTENCING REFORM MUST BE ACCOMPANIED WITH REENTRY REFORM

Mass incarceration won't be solved by simply lessening the term of incarceration for nonviolent crimes. An indispensable component of comprehensive criminal justice reform is making sure our jails and prisons don't have revolving doors. There are innumerable collateral consequences of criminal justice involvement, and recidivism will remain a problem as long as formerly incarcerated people face impossible hurdles to successful reentry.

The ACLU of Mississippi is thrilled to share with you some good news. Since our last newsletter, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been executed between the Social Security Administration and the Department of Corrections (MDOC), providing that SSI eligible inmates will be able to qualify for benefits prerelease. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility would also lead to Medicaid eligibility. By providing SSI funding and Medicaid coverage to formerly incarcerated people with mental health issues, they will have resources to access mental health treatment and get their medications. The Social Security Administration has informed the Reentry Council (established by HB 602 in 2015) that it is training MDOC personnel for full implementation of this MOU. The ACLU of Mississippi introduced and tirelessly advocated for this reform.

There are provisions of HB 585 that require MDOC to provide parole eligible inmates with case plans, and the department's failure to comply hinders effective reentry. An MOU is not as legally enforceable as a statute, so the ACLU of Mississippi will closely monitor the implementation of prerelease SSI and Medicaid enrollment.

We are also preparing to launch a local campaign to ban the box in the Mississippi Delta. Expect an update on this important project in our Summer Newsletter!

Mississippi Will Thrive When Hospitality Becomes Real

BY TODD ALLEN, ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

It is fairly common to hear a business person say “the only color that I see is green.”

Perhaps, in a perfect world, we would all be colorblind when we do business. But far too often, bias affects business deals and personal prejudice influences important decisions. Skin color and gender affect transactions every day. Racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia often determine who is trusted or who is not trusted. Prejudices affect which person is considered suspicious on the street. It is racial prejudice that keeps prisons disproportionately populated with people of color.

There is a direct correlation between the amount of racism and bigotry that is tolerated in Mississippi and the state’s inability to make significant economic progress. All of us suffer when private prejudice corrupts public policy. Intolerance, even in the name of religion, is hatred and should never be disguised as moral and never written into law.

When it comes to equality, most corporations that operate in Mississippi show greater hospitality through diversity policies for their employees than our leaders are willing to put into state law. These corporations have learned that when discrimination decreases, people and businesses thrive. The Mississippi economy will grow exponentially as we show greater hospitality toward each other.

So, how do we measure hospitality?

LEGAL UPDATE FROM PAGE 1

My stepson was there, and it felt embarrassing. I felt ashamed because I was always preaching to him about staying out of trouble and here is this police officer who knocks on my door, handcuffs me, and arrests me.

When he put handcuffs on me, it really hurt. My health was really bad. Just a few years before, I had multiple heart attacks and a stroke in just a couple of months.

When Biloxi police arrested me for fines



The ACLU of Mississippi held its Legislative Advocacy Day at the State Capitol on February 23, 2016 with a press conference to announce this year’s legislative priorities, which focused on criminal justice reform and equality for all Mississippians. In support of the Mississippi Civil Rights Act, we launched our “We are All Mississippi” campaign with a special video that showcases the importance of having statewide protections for all. Our Legislative Advocacy Day provided the opportunity to publicly connect with legislators and the community at-large on our major issues. See the video and join the We Are All Mississippi movement at aclu-ms.org.

Economists use hard numbers to look at economic indicators to give an overall view of how we are doing and where we need to improve. One way to determine Mississippi’s hospitality is measure the number of incidents of inhospitable behavior. With no statewide civil rights protections, we have little way to monitor or to measure whether or not we are actually hitting the hospitality indicator.

Supported by the “We are ALL Mississippi” campaign, the Mississippi Civil Rights Act removes the barriers that many marginalized communities continue to face. The law would provide a tangible way to measure the reduction in discriminatory behaviors. The state legislature may have missed the opportunity to implement civil rights protections for Mississippians this time around, but we know that the fight is far from over.

and fees, I wasn’t well. After the heart attacks and stroke, I became physically disabled. I can’t work because my mobility and strength are not what they used to be. Before, I was working at Best Western doing maintenance and mechanic work. Now I’m just living one day at a time.

I get my Social Security check and pay my bills, and what I have left of that I try to buy gas. It’s hard making ends meet.

When the police took me to jail, they said

While no legislation will eliminate hatred from people’s hearts, our laws and policies are intended to hold us all to the highest standards of hospitable behavior. If our leaders’ are committed to doing justice, they will not write laws that consider some people better than others.

Until non-discrimination policies are made law and until these laws are followed, the system will continue to favor one skin color and one gender over others. The time is now to elevate Mississippi from its dark past and from last place.

The ACLU of Mississippi will continue its statewide movement to manifest a culture shift that dismantles barriers and promotes equity for ALL Mississippians.

Learn more and share your story at aclu-ms.org/weareallms.

I could pay \$220 in cash for my release. I felt bad because I didn’t have anyone to call who could lend or give me the money. I had just gotten off walking on my crutch, and I really wasn’t functioning right. The food was disgusting. There was a blanket with holes in. They kept me in jail for seven nights.

Do I want to help other people by suing Biloxi? Heck yeah. It’s terrible here. I’m not afraid to go public with how the city is trying to get money from people who just don’t have it.

Keeping Our Students Safe Remains Top Priority

BY L. RENE HARDWICK, ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

Increased incidents across the state surrounding the use of aversive practices in school continues to be a priority for the ACLU of Mississippi. Our objectives to restrict and reduce the use of restraint and seclusion in Mississippi schools continues, but our deliberate efforts to ensure that schools are safe places have been met with much resistance by the state department of education and others.



hosted “Keeping Our Students Safe: Addressing School Discipline” town hall meeting on December 17, 2015 in the Mississippi Public Broadcasting Auditorium. The meeting served as an opportunity to learn about the importance of School Resource

Officers training and the need for policy around the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and learning environments. Community stakeholders heard from a panel of professionals on best practices for addressing school discipline. Discourse around this issue and solutions for keeping our students safe proved to be informative and solution-oriented.

The legislative landscape has also presented its own set of challenges. Representative Steve Hopkins introduced HB 972 - Mississippi Student Safety Act - to the House Education Committee. However, it failed, yet again, to make it out of committee. Senator Gray Tollison attempted the same in 2014 by introducing SB 2594. These



Director of Programs Nita Rudy for Parents for Public Schools served as moderator for the “Keeping Our Students Safe: Addressing School Discipline” panel consisting of Jed Oppenheim, JPS School Board Member; Principal Willie Killins, Wingfield High School; Selena Merrell, State Coordinator with REACH MS; and Gerald Jones, JPS Campus Enforcement Director.

proposed bills would have reduced and restricted the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and learning environments. Mississippi remains one of only five states without a law or policy regulating the use of restraint and seclusion.

We will continue to seek the adoption of protections within the proposed MDE draft Policy 4013.

The ACLU of Mississippi stands firm in its opinion that proposed draft Policy 4013—Restraint and Seclusion is not as comprehensive as necessary. Recommended expansions include stressing prevention at the foundation of the document, data collection/public reporting, trained personnel, uniform definitions, the exclusion of references to the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and the inclusion of best practices and evidenced research based practices.

To that end, the ACLU of Mississippi

Making Progress in Sunflower County for Young Men and Boys of Color with California Model, Website BY AISHA CARSON, ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

The ACLU of Mississippi embarked on a systems change project last year to create positive pathways for young men and boys of color (YMBOC) in Sunflower County. The school district there has been plagued with too many cases of black male students being pushed out of the classroom and into the juvenile justice system. With its Sunflower County Systems Change Project (SCSCP), the ACLU of Mississippi is working to change the narrative for black male students to improve their outcomes.

The SCSCP team traveled to Oakland, California for a first-hand look at a unique model for YMBOC. The African American Achievement Model (AAMA) applies a culturally competent style of learning that increases positive outcomes and seeks to dismantle the school to prison pipeline for boys in that district. By collaborating with the community and the school district, AAMA creates a space for YMBOC to be supported and encouraged to reach their full potential.



SCSCP Team stand here with an AAMA facilitator in Oakland, CA. Pictured left to right are: ACLU Advocacy Coordinator Aisha Carson, Mississippi Center for Justice Advocacy Coordinator Jacorius Liner, SCCSD Asst. Supt. Miskia Davis, AAMA Facilitator, SCCSD Supt. Debra Dace, and Attorney Kimberly Merchant also with Mississippi Center for Justice.

“What I witnessed at the AAMA project far exceeded [my] expectations,” said Mrs. Miskia Davis, assistant superintendent for the Sunflower County Consolidated School District. “The focus was not on modifying the external appearances of the young men, but more so on cultivating and encouraging

the spirits of these young brothers.”

Experiences like this introduces school district leadership to national models of engagement that work. As the SCSCP continues, AAMA will help to provide a roadmap for helping to impact positive change and implement policy recommendations.

This work is important to the ACLU of Mississippi because it furthers our aim to impact criminal justice reform. Discipline policies, negative perceptions fueled by false narratives, and missed opportunities for community engagement all contribute to the perpetuation of criminalizing YMBOC, which feeds into the school to prison pipeline. By engaging these systems to impact policy changes, not only do we dismantle the school to prison pipeline in Sunflower County, but we also support the entire community in a way that encourages students to be better educated and productive citizens.

Learn more at www.sunflowercountysystemschange.com.

Board Member Spotlight

Meet the ACLU of Mississippi Board of Directors President

Cassandra Overton-Welchlin is an advocate, organizer and agent of change whose work spans more than two decades influencing public



policies impacting women of color, low income families and communities of color. Currently, she serves as the co-founder and director of the MS Women's Economic Security Initiative (MWESI), a project of MS Low Income Child Care Initiative. As director of MWESI, she works to

develop and push a policy agenda to create better opportunities and outcomes leading toward economic security for low-income women and their families.

An experienced policy advocate, Cassandra has led and been a partner on a number of local, statewide, and national initiatives to advance racially equitable policies for low-income women and their families and communities of color. Using her skills as an organizer, she has served as a strong voice for justice. She has also equipped many economically disadvantaged people with tools allowing them to use their power at the policy making table and at the ballot box.

"Mississippians depend on the ACLU to protect their freedoms. I'm honored to

be part of carrying out this important and necessary duty," Welchlin said. "The current program of work is leading the way to ensure that everyday people can live a life free from fear and oppression and deliver the promise that our Declaration of Independence grants us all – to live in the pursuit of happiness."

Cassandra is a wife and mother of three children. She holds an undergraduate degree from Jackson State University and is a licensed social worker. In 2005, she received a Master's from Brandies University at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

She is a Fellow of both the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Ms. Foundation Public Voices.

Welcome Zakiya Summers

Zakiya joined the ACLU of Mississippi as the Director of Communications in September 2015. Prior to joining the ACLU of Mississippi, she served as Events



and Communications Director for One Voice, a policy advocacy organization that works for the benefit of marginalized populations in partnership with the Mississippi NAACP. Zakiya also represented Mississippi's back yard jewel – the Jackson Medical Mall Thad Cochran Center – as Public Relations Manager and Internal Relations Coordinator after working as the morning news producer at the NBC affiliate, WLBT-TV 3.

In March 2015, the Board of Supervisors appointed Zakiya to Hinds County District 3 Election Commissioner, where she served a brief stint before an unsuccessful run at the unexpired term.

She is a board member for the Mississippi Sickle Cell Foundation, secretary for the Jayne Avenue Neighborhood Association, and member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., Women for Progress, NAACP, and Jackson Association of Black Journalists.

Zakiya is a Broadcast Journalism graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Intern Spotlight

Jauan Knight Legislative Intern



Jackson State University

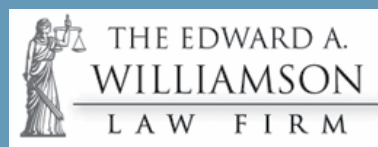
Jauan Knight has been keeping an eye on the State Senate, tracking bills under the leadership of Director of Advocacy and Policy Erik Fleming.

Jauan is a sophomore, majoring in political science with a concentration in legal studies. He serves as president of the JSU Blue Ambassadors, Vice President of the newly chartered JSU Chapter of Phi Alpha Delta Law

Fraternity, parliamentarian for the JSU Political Science Club, Parliamentarian of the JSU Chapter of Young Democrats of America, and member of the Political Science Research Lab and The Fannie Lou Hamer Pre-Law Society. On top of maintaining his school life, Jauan is highly involved in his church, proudly serving in various capacities whenever needed.

Upon graduating from Jackson State in 2017, Jauan plans to obtain his Juris Doctorate at Mississippi College School of Law. As an attorney, he says he wants to focus his practice on litigating on behalf of those who have been in some way disenfranchised or denied their civil liberties. Ultimately, his goal is to serve as a judge, and later appellate or supreme court justice.

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**SHAKA
SENGHOR**



CRIMINAL JUSTICE
ADVOCATE AND
AUTHOR

Join us at the ACLU of Mississippi 2016 Jazz Brunch featuring **Shaka Senghor**, criminal justice advocate and author. His story has inspired thousands and serves as a powerful testament to the power of hope, compassion, and unconditional love.

September 17, 2016 | 11 AM

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TICKETS \$75
PLEASE RSVP BY SEPTEMBER 2, 2016