



HB 1523, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, & Mississippi's Next Move

BY PALOMA WU, LEGAL DIRECTOR

It can be ahistorical, anti-intellectual, inaccurate, or simply insensitive to compare the struggle for racial equality with the struggle for LGBTQ equality or gender equality. Critical factual differences make the movements more different than meaningfully analogous in many ways. But in one way at least, a comparison is useful: the constitutional law applied is the same.

On street corners and in federal court, the arguments for and against racial integration and LGBTQ non-discrimination have been indistinguishable. The debates are around principles enshrined in the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause, the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process Clause, the First Amendment Free Exercise of Religion Clause, the First Amendment Establishment Clause, and the clauses in the constitution that give governments different types of authority to act (federal v. state and local).

House Bill 1523 – the “Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act - fits into these arguments in an interesting way.

The “public accommodations” integrated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 include most private businesses permitted to serve the public, including restaurants, hotels, retail stores, and entertainment venues. Those now racially-integrated places are, a half century later, again the location of a blistering public debate—most recently around HB 1523. One central



Attorney Oliver Diaz, ACLU-MS Executive Director Jennifer Riley-Collins, Stephen Thomas and Nykolas Alford (pictured l-r) exiting the U.S. Federal Courthouse after filing suit against HB 1523.

point of debate: whether a business owner is entitled to serve the public in one particular way, which may reflect a deep moral or religious belief, or whether serving the public is a privilege that requires a practice of non-discrimination on the basis of innate characteristics.

The requirement of non-discrimination in public accommodations is not altogether different from the requirements instituted

“We need to make laws that protect all Mississippians within a just, reasonable, predictable, and forward-looking framework.”

by an army of hundreds of regulations of general applicability to which businesses are already subject. These rules enshrine affirmative obligations to benefit the health, safety, and welfare of the general public. However, when it comes to something as simple as a non-discrimination requirement, some people balk.

“Most people are going to say the heart of the matter was the rights of black people. The real heart of the matter was, now wait a minute, the federal government can’t come in and tell us what to do.

“We’re a local business.” That is how Ollie McClung, owner of a racially-segregated, family-owned barbeque restaurant in Alabama, explained why he famously sued the United States in a failed attempt to strike down The Civil Rights Act of 1964. He argued it was an unconstitutional overreach of federal government power.

In Bob Jones University, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the school’s claim that its sincere religious belief in racial segregation required, pursuant to the Free Exercise Clause, the IRS to grant it a tax break reserved for educational institutions. The IRS argued that no institution that enforced racial segregation could by definition be an educational institution. The Court agreed with the IRS. And so do we. Public accommodations that have ceased to serve the public at-large in favor of discriminating should likewise cease to reap the many benefits granted to such institutions; if not, they should be subject to suit.

The fight against HB 1523 is a fight for the Constitution of the United States of America, which we will continue to wage through our lawsuit, Alford v. Moulder. The next challenge we are taking on is a fight for the future: to pass a legal framework whereby Mississippians set forth reasonable rules for non-discrimination in public accommodations in service and employment.

We cannot simply react to bigotry by suing to stop unconstitutional legislation. We need to make laws that protect all Mississippians within a just, reasonable, predictable, and forward-looking framework. That is why we are leading the fight for the passage of The Mississippi Civil Rights Act of 2017. We hope you are with us.

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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Proof is in the Pudding

Robert Greene's 9th Law of Power states, "Win Through Your Actions – Not Argument". The ACLU of Mississippi has done just that this quarter. We took necessary actions to protect the rights of Mississippians.

The dynamics that are at play in Mississippi today evidence the reality that having respectful dialogue and meaningful debate about critical issues impacting our state require more. Understanding this actuality, the ACLU of Mississippi took action.

We filed suit when the state's leadership refused to hear from its people and insisted on the passage of a law inviting discrimination. We are fortunate that Former Justice Oliver Diaz joined us, and declared that we will not stand by and watch a separate and unequal Mississippi. Even before litigation became necessary, our legislative action pushed forward proposals that would ensure all Mississippians are protected.

We have been relentless in our efforts to protect school children against the utilization of restraint and seclusion. As a direct result of our efforts, the state Department of Education developed a state policy with community input. Because of our action, Mississippi is no longer counted among the handful of states that has no law, regulation or policy guiding public schools to focus on prevention rather than harm. We persist in this effort as we know that children of color and children with disabilities are more likely to be impact. We will always take action to protect the most vulnerable. In doing so, we continue to advocate alongside community partners for systems change in the Mississippi Delta.

Because we recognize that the issues impacting Mississippi are as diverse as the people and the places, we refused to be stagnant. We set up a series of Town Talks and engaged community where community lives. What we are hearing directs our work.

Together, you and I are the ACLU of Mississippi. We know this because we see that our action is your call to action, and your action is our call to action. Please continue to stand with us as we leverage power by winning through actions that impact change and make Mississippi better.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Riley-Collins



Welcome New Legal Director

Paloma Wu, Esq. joined the ACLU of Mississippi as the Legal Director in June 2016, after working as an attorney and Policy Associate at the ACLU of Pennsylvania. She has represented clients in civil liberties and civil rights matters involving free speech, criminal defendants' due process rights, racial discrimination in police hiring, the cruel and unusual punishment

of prisoners, and discrimination against persons with disabilities. She currently represents plaintiffs challenging statewide anti-LGBT legislation, racial bias in law enforcement, and a plaintiff class of defendants being denied appropriate treatment and housing in jail while mentally incompetent to stand trial (*J.H. v. Dallas*).



Mississippi Establishes Restraint & Seclusion Policy

BY L. RENE' HARDWICK, PH.D., ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

Mississippi is no longer one of five states lacking a policy regulating the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and learning environments.

This spring, the ACLU of Mississippi was successful in reigniting stalled efforts to push for guidelines on the minimum standards for restraint and seclusion in public schools. As a result, the Mississippi Department of Education established policy 4013 as Rule 38.13 Restraint and Seclusion. This is in large part due to our advocacy and collaborative efforts with a number of organizations across the state, including the Concerned Citizens Group and others.

The updated policy regulates when and how public school employees can use force to handle student behavioral issues. It

emphasizes prevention as the foundational framework by incorporating the data-driven Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports approach. In addition, it clarifies training requirements for employees, establishes statewide data collection and public reporting mechanisms, but still allows for the use of seclusion.

While it is not the ideal policy in regards to ensuring the safety, respect, and dignity of all children and school personnel, it is a step in the right direction. The progress that has been made is a direct result of the effective leadership of state Superintendent Dr. Carey Wright and likeminded individuals working together for a common goal and purpose.

Moving forward, we maintain our defense

position. The ACLU of Mississippi will continue to be watchful in ensuring the effective implementation of Rule 38.13. As we look ahead to the 2017 legislative session, we will work towards establishing mandates to ensure further regulations and protections against the disproportionate use of restraint and the prohibition of seclusion to keep all children safe.

It has always been the goal of the ACLU of MS to ensure the safety and the rights of all students and school personnel when seeking to manage even the most challenging and disturbing behaviors in schools and learning environments. This is our task and in Mississippi, today, we are a step closer to reducing and restricting the use of restraint and seclusion - a step higher towards positioning all of our children to rise!

SUNFLOWER COUNTY SYSTEMS CHANGE PROJECT UPDATE

The R.O.O.T.S. of Sunflower: Story-Telling Plays Key Role in Disrupting the School-To-Prison Pipeline

BY AISHA CARSON, ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

An African Proverb says, "Until the story of the hunt is told by the Lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

This sentiment was beautifully articulated by Vonkerius Jackson, one of 19 participants in the Sunflower County Systems Change Project (SCSCP) Story for All group, which is leading the Project's narrative change efforts through story-telling and oral history. "The opportunity to tell my story as a young, Black man from Sunflower County is going to impact my life and my community forever."

SCSCP has partnered with Story For All, an Oakland, California-based organization that addresses perceptions of young men and boys of color (YMBOC) by harnessing the power of story to heal. Entitled, "The R.O.O.T.S. of Sunflower: Reclaiming Our Origins Through Stories," this special project allows the young men to create their own stories that will spark narrative change. The results of the project will be on exhibit

at the B.B. King Museum in Indianola, Mississippi with hopes that it will travel throughout the state, and provide a life changing experience for the young men in Sunflower County.



The young men convened this summer to receive a week-long training from Story for All's Angela Zusman and videographer Andre Lamberston. Through lessons learned and their story capturing experiences, they are learning why storytelling is a critical tool in improving

education outcomes, camera and video recording techniques, how to conduct interviews, and more.

In partnership with Mississippi Center for Justice, the Sunflower County Consolidated School District (SCCSD), and its P-16 Council, we have developed the SCSCP Advisory Council with significant community input. Formed in January, the Advisory Council is tasked with building capacity to inform school discipline policy reform decisions and ultimately create positive pathways for YMBOC. A youth court counselor, local newspaper editor, school administrators, and three incredibly bright young men are among those on the council.

The ACLU of MS and our partners are on track to achieve our goal of impacting YMBOC through the SCSCP, and creating a statewide model for school discipline. Stay tuned to www.sunflowercountysystemschange.org for continued updates.

Moving Toward Equality: In the Streets and On the Road

BY TODD ALLEN, EQUALITY ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

Just over a year ago on June 26th, the U.S. Supreme Court granted marriage equality to LGBTQ couples in Mississippi and across the nation. In the months that followed, there have been setbacks and advances in the move toward greater equality for all Mississippians.

Soon after the Supreme Court decision and before the regressive decision by our Governor to codify discrimination into state law against the LGBTQ community with HB 1523, the ACLU of Mississippi along with a team of local leaders began meeting regularly to develop strategies for the passage of local and statewide non-discrimination policies. Our efforts crafted “The Mississippi Civil Rights Act,” which we proposed during the 2016 Legislative Session.

Now named We Are All Mississippi (WAAM), this coalition consists of representatives from more than 20 local and grassroots organizations. Working across the board and at all levels of government, the WAAM Coalition advocates for policies to protect all people, including LGBTQ people, from discrimination at work, at school, in housing and in all shared public spaces.

Earlier this year, the Mississippi Legislature and Governor took a step backward with the passage of the anti-LGBTQ law known as HB 1523. Instead of moving civil rights forward by passing the comprehensive civil rights act, these leaders used state power to try to push back the hands of time. This law was not only a distraction from our larger problems, it was also a clear attempt to give state support to those who chose to discriminate against the LGBTQ people.

The WAAM Coalition responded to the clear attempt to put hate in our state by participating in a number of rallies and organizing a series of community conversations in towns and cities across the state.



About 500 people from across the state participated in the first rally on April 4, 2016 at the Governor’s mansion, demanding him not to sign HB 1523. Those efforts were not enough as he signed it into law the next day.

It wasn’t long before the nation and the world responded with an outcry against the Mississippi Governor, the state legislature, and the blatantly discriminatory HB 1523. Several cities throughout U.S. banned official business travel to Mississippi, and event Great Britain sent out a travel warning.

WAAM took our message of ‘equality for all’ to the people of Mississippi, hosting a total of seven Town Hall meetings in Biloxi, Hattiesburg, Holly Springs, Tupelo, Meridian, Jackson, and Greenville. During these community conversations, we discussed civil liberties, the impacts of HB 1523, ways to implement non-discrimination policies locally and at the state level, and efforts to take down the state flag. These community conversations were lively and engaging as people shared concerns about persistent racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia in Mississippi.

A Hattiesburg participant stated that although he was a fiscal conservative, he believed that discriminatory policies were bad for the Mississippi economy. His comments were a clear reminder that civil rights are human

rights and not limited to any particular political affiliation.

In Biloxi, one town hall participant expressed little hope that the current political leaders would ever pass non-discriminatory laws. Another Gulf Coast resident said that the people of Mississippi “got along” much better than she thought they would before she moved to the state.

Although most of the audiences at the town hall meetings closely mirrored the diverse racial demographics of the community, the audience in Tupelo was practically all-white and the audience in Holly Springs and Jackson were practically all-black. Of the 50 people who gathered in Tupelo, only one community member identified as black. One attendee stood up to express her frustration and sadness over the inability of the Tupelo community to address and overcome racial division and inequality.

In Jackson, the town hall focused on race. The event gave people a chance to voice their exasperation at persistent racial discrimination in Jackson and with the regressive race-baiting politics of a “Confederate History Month” and the refusal to remove the confederate battle emblem.

At each town hall, people had the opportunity to sign a petition for a referendum to remove the confederate battle flag from the state flag of Mississippi. Gulf Coast Organizer Lea Campbell, Tougaloo College Professor Dr. Edelia Carthan from Jackson, and actress Aunjanue Ellis from McComb each gave impassioned pleas for removing the Confederate flag from the Mississippi flag.

In the midst of our town hall tour, WAAM crossed two important milestones in the move toward equality. The first was when the city of Jackson passed the non-discrimination ordinance in the state of Mississippi to include protections for all people, including

LGBTQ people. Then on June 26th, the Mayors of three Mississippi cities joined municipalities across the country in recognizing LGBTQ community members by proclaiming and/or acknowledging LGBTQ Equality Day.

While we are excited about the momentum building for equality and inclusion, the ACLU of Mississippi knows there is much work to be done in order to create a better Mississippi. We will continue standing in the gap for all Mississippians.



ACLU-MS Advocacy & Policy Director Erik Fleming sits with Civil Rights Veteran Hollis Watkins, Nation of Islam's Bro. Abram Muhammad, actress Aunjanue Ellis, Civil Rights Activist Cynthia Newhall (picture l-r) at Jackson's Town Hall, hosted by Tougaloo College Professor Dr. Edelia Carthan.

We want to thank these individuals for their support of our "Community Conversation" Town Hall Tour:

Ja'Leasa Walden, Steps Coalition; James Crowell, Biloxi NAACP President; Kathy Egland, Gulfport NAACP; Lea Campbell, Mississippi Rising Coalition; Natalie Offiah, Mississippi Safe Schools Coalition; Deborah Delgado, Hattiesburg City Council; Clarence Magee, Forrest County NAACP President; Nathan Martin, The Spectrum Center (Hattiesburg); Dr. David Beckley, Rust College President; Mayor Kelvin Buck, Holly Springs; Rev. Carlton Elton Smith, Holly Springs; Melanie Deas, Link Center (Tupelo) and ACLU of MS board member; Rev. Paul Stephens, All Saints Episcopal Church; Dr. Edelia Carthan; Representative Charles Young; Harry Hawkins, Human Rights Campaign; Pam Junior, Smith Robertson Museum (Jackson); Hollis Watkins; Cynthia Newhall; Aunjanue Ellis; Representative John Hines; Mayor Errick Simmons, Greenville; and Dr. Temika Simmons, ACLU of MS board member.

Justice For Ricky Ball

BY BLAKE FELDMAN, CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

Ricky Ball was a 26-year old Black man in Columbus, Mississippi, who was shot and killed from a gunshot wound by city Police Officer Canyon Boykin on October 16, 2015. It is a story that is becoming more frequent in communities across the country and right here at home.

Between June 25, 2015 and June 25, 2016, law enforcement officers in the U.S. killed 1,122 people – 14 of whom were killed in Mississippi. It has been reported that an officer brutalized Mr. Ball's body and took his life on that fateful day in October. Since then, more than 750 people have been killed by police, including ten in Mississippi.

On June 25, 2016, protestors marched the streets from Mt. Zion Church to Sims Scott Park in Columbus, MS to demand Justice for Ricky Ball. The ACLU of Mississippi was on the scene, primarily to educate the community on how to safely invoke their rights during police encounters, but to also explain why excessive use of force – especially lethal use of force – is of serious concern. This is why it is important that we exercise our right to film the police.

Mr. Ball's case is eerily similar to that of Walter Scott in South Carolina. Last April, a police officer was arrested hours after a bystander's video of a deadly police encounter was released. You may remember the video showed the officer shooting a man in the back as he ran, dropping a taser by his body, handcuffing the dying man and failing to provide CPR. All of this conflicts with the officer's version of events – particularly the claim that Walter Scott actually engaged in a physical altercation with the officer and gained possession of the officer's weapon.

Ricky Ball, like Walter Scott, was shot after fleeing a traffic stop, but we have no video in Mr. Ball's case. We do have the officers' version of events, which sound a lot like the version proven to be a lie in North Charleston.

Although the Columbus Police Department had provided officers with body cameras, the officer who shot Ricky Ball did not have his camera turned on.

As body cameras are becoming more commonplace, shortcomings in body camera policies are becoming more apparent. There is nothing as revealing as bystanders exercising their First Amendment right to film the police. From the LAPD's brutal beating of Rodney King to the unjustified murder of Walter Scott, video recordings have been transformative in our struggle for police accountability.

In the wake of police killing someone, we often hear the district attorney, police chief, sheriff, and mayor repeat buzz words such as "transparency" and "justice," but after months of silence we consistently receive news that there will be no public trial. We go through the motions of an "independent investigation" and often times a secret presentment to a grand jury. Yet, even though it is said that a prosecutor could persuade a grand jury to indict a ham sandwich if that's what he wanted, law enforcement officers consistently have their actions deemed justified behind closed doors and beyond public scrutiny. The District Attorney for Lowndes County has received the completed MBI investigation into the Columbus Police Department regarding the Ricky Ball shooting, and he has expressed the possibility of requesting a special prosecutor for the case. With that said, it is unclear exactly who would be appointed and who would decide.

While an independent investigation and prosecution is usually preferable, a policy in which MBI investigates and Attorney General Jim Hood's office prosecutes might be the recipe for accountability. The ACLU of Mississippi will remain on the case to ensure that Justice for Ricky Ball is secured.



ACTION DOCKET

2016 Legislative Roundup

In our Spring 2016 issue, we told you about some key pieces of legislation that promoted social justice and transparency. Here is an update.

PROMOTE COMMUNITY POLICING, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SB 2477 – Created a Civil Asset Forfeiture Task Force – initially died in Committee, but was brought back up in the House and passed as **HB 1410**. This bill was signed by the Governor.

SB 2237 – the execution secrecy bill, provides immunity for and protects the identities of those who supply drugs for executions and the execution team – signed by the Governor.

PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS

HB 809 – aimed at creating an online voter registration system, but was amended to only allow voters to change their information online – signed by the Governor.

HB 868 – would have changed the makeup of Mississippi's 1st Supreme Court District by adding another majority white county into the district – died in committee.

EQUAL TREATMENT OF ALL PEOPLE

HB 1523 – targeted the LGBTQ community and codified discrimination – was signed by the Governor and has had a great impact on the state's reputation and economy. See Highlights from the Courts for an update on this legislation.

SB 2306 – prohibited municipalities from designating themselves as sanctuary cities – died in committee.

PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

SB 2238 – prohibits reimbursement of family planning services to Planned Parenthood – signed by the Governor.

HB 519 – the “Mississippi Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act,” criminalizes doctors who perform an

abortion – signed by the Governor.

The ACLU of Mississippi is preparing for the 2017 Legislative Session, and we will need you – the power of our members – to ensure equity and inclusion, hold our lawmakers accountable, and establish a clear balance between individual liberties and the general welfare.

Highlights from the Courts

Our judicial system made some key decisions this summer that have major impacts on Mississippi. Here's an update.

LGBTQ

A federal judge struck down House Bill 1523 hours before it was slated to become law. HB 1523 would have allowed public officials and businesses to refuse to serve LGBTQ individuals. Judge Carlton Reeves ruled HB 1523 unconstitutional in a huge victory for the state of Mississippi and the nation. The two cases that were considered were *Barber v. Bryant* and *Campaign for Southern Equality v. Bryant*, brought by the Campaign for Southern Equality and the Mississippi Center for Justice.


The ACLU and the ACLU of Mississippi challenged the constitutionality of HB1523 in a separate lawsuit, *Alford v. Moulder*. Our suit targeted the Registrar of Vital Records and was filed on behalf of ACLU of Mississippi members Nykolas Alford and Stephen Thomas, a couple who are engaged to be married and face discrimination as a result of this law.

IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In a 4-4 ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court deadlocked in the case of *United States v. Texas*. It left in place a lower court order preventing the president from shielding millions of people from deportation via the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans program. Many immigrants were hoping the decision would allow them to come out of the shadows and be fuller members of our community. The ACLU of Mississippi will continue to defend the constitutional rights of immigrants, regardless of their status.

MISSISSIPPI EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, MISS. CODE § 71-11-3

In May of 2016, twelve men were arrested, jailed, and charged with felonies under a Mississippi Employment Protection Act (MEPA) provision that makes it a felony to work while undocumented. The crime carries a punishment of up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. On June 29, 2016, Nathan H. Elmore of Elmore & Peterson successfully obtained dismissals of all MEPA charges against their clients. The ACLU and ACLU of Mississippi were proud to provide support to argue the unconstitutionality of the MEPA charge. Elmore & Peters reports that their clients are currently out of jail and reunited with their loved ones. The ACLU of Mississippi is committed to ensuring that this MEPA provision—which unconstitutionally criminalizes immigration status—is never enforced again. It is preempted by federal immigration law and therefore violates the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution.



“We must not pretend that the countless people who are routinely targeted by police are ‘isolated.’... They are the ones who recognize that unlawful police stops corrode all our civil liberties and threaten all our lives. Until their voices matter too, our justice system will continue to be anything but.”

—Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Dissent in *Utah v. Strieff*

Photo: Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States, Steve Petteway

FOURTH AMENDMENT

We were deeply disappointed in the U.S. Supreme Court's 4th Amendment decision in *Utah v. Strieff*, which ruled that in some cases evidence of a crime can be used against a defendant even if police obtained it illegally. Typically, evidence found during illegal searches cannot be used in court under the 4th Amendment's exclusionary rule. The 5-3 decision drew “heated dissents from liberal justices who warned that the outcome would encourage police to violate people's rights,” according to the Associated

Press. In a powerful dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said, “Respectfully, nothing about this case is isolated.”

RACIAL JUSTICE

In a 4-3 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the race-conscious admissions program at the University of Texas at Austin in *Fisher v. UT*. The ruling means the school will be able to continue using race as one of multiple factors in admissions decisions. This decision reaffirms the value of diversity in higher education and preserves the ability of colleges and universities to further that value through well thought out admissions plans.

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

The U.S. Supreme Court struck down two Texas laws in a resounding victory for women’s health and women’s liberty. The 5-3 ruling takes away two abortion restrictions: the mandate that abortion providers have admitting privileges at local hospitals and the requirement that abortion clinics be outfitted as mini-hospitals.

A day later, the Supreme Court announced that it would not review two lower court decisions in Mississippi and Wisconsin to block abortion restrictions similar to Texas. Instead, the court decided to let stand the lower court rulings that preliminarily blocked restrictions that would have required abortion providers to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. This law would have shut down Mississippi’s only abortion clinic.

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Being Poor Is Not A Crime

BY BLAKE FELDMAN, CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY COORDINATOR

We were reminded this summer that no city is immune to modern-day debtors’ prisons – the arrest and jailing of poor people for failure to pay legal debts they can never hope to afford, through court procedures (or lack thereof) that violate their most basic rights.

In June, the City of Jackson settled a federal lawsuit brought against it for jailing poor people who couldn’t afford to pay court fees and fines. That same week, Hinds County entered into an expansive settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice concerning the county jail – including detention for failure to pay fines if the individual is unable to do so. These developments come three months after the ACLU of Mississippi settled a federal lawsuit with the City of Biloxi under the agreed upon condition that the city implement sweeping reforms to protect the rights of people who can’t afford to pay fines imposed by the city court.

Those reforms address every issue raised in a letter the U.S. Department of Justice addressed to court administrators and state chief justices in every state concerning constitutional collection of fines and fees. Additionally, they serve as a model for courts across the state of Mississippi to end these practices once and for all.

Local courts throughout the state have increasingly attempted to supplement their budget deficits by aggressively policing minor traffic violations – disproportionately against its poor citizens of color. These courts have



In June, the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission invited the ACLU of Mississippi to present our concerns of violations similar to those in Biloxi, MS.

ordered the arrest and jailing of people who fall behind on their payments, creating a racially-skewed, two-tiered system of justice. Not only are debtors’ prisons unfair and insensible, they are also illegal.

The ACLU of Mississippi is urging statewide leaders in the justice system and local officials to pursue equitable and constitutional approaches to fine and fee collection. The Office of the State Public Defender invited the ACLU of MS to participate in a training specifically concerning representation in municipal court concerning fine and fee collection, later this summer. We will also serve on a panel regarding fine and fee collection at the Access to Justice for All Summit in August.

As we advocate for local and state-wide administrative reform, we will simultaneously lay groundwork to pursue legislative reform in the 2017 session.

How much do you know about debtors’ prison? Take our quiz at aclu-ms.org.

Author and Criminal Justice Reform Advocate Headlines Jazz Brunch

BY ZAKIYA SUMMERS, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

The ACLU of Mississippi is thrilled to announce that Shaka Senghor will serve as this year’s Jazz Brunch keynote speaker. He is the leading voice in criminal justice reform, and appeared on Oprah Winfrey’s Super Soul Sunday earlier this year. Oprah has referred to her interview with Senghor as “one of the best I’ve ever had – not just in my career, but in my life... his story touched my life.” His story will surely touch the lives of Mississippians at our Jazz Brunch, scheduled for September 17, 2016 at the Hilton Garden Inn, located in downtown Jackson. The event will kick-off with our annual membership meeting at 10 a.m. followed by the program at 11 a.m.

Tickets are available for purchase on-line at www.aclu-ms.org, and includes entry into the VIP Reception and Book Signing held on Friday, September 16th at Parlor Market. Book purchase is separate. For sponsorship and ticket information, please visit aclu-ms.org.



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