

LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR

**CIVIL  
RIGHTS**

OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

ADVANCING CIVIL RIGHTS, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES AND TOUCHING LIVES



**The year was 1968, one of the most tumultuous years in civil rights history.** The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in April rocked the nation. In the San Francisco Bay Area, sixteen prominent members of the San Francisco Bar were motivated by these troubled times and pondered how attorneys in private practice could support civil rights advocacy and ensure the enforcement of new civil rights laws. To this end, they formed the San Francisco Lawyers' Committee for Urban Affairs, now known as the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR).

LCCR has since grown in breadth and size. We work in three core priority areas—**Racial, Immigrant, and Economic Justice**.

We advance civil rights law through:

- direct services
- impact litigation
- policy advocacy
- community outreach and education.

Combining these strategies, we provide leadership and expertise in identifying legal issues and cases that are critical to the advancement of people of color and low income, and immigrant communities.

## Confronting Challenges

In the ensuing decades, the demand for equal treatment under the law has not ceased. The Lawyers' Committee has had to remain vigilant as challenges to civil rights have persisted. We acknowledge that some optics have changed — we elected an African American President twice; people of color are represented at all levels of the public and private sector; and, the blatantly obvious vestiges of discrimination and racism have largely been relegated to historical archives.

## LAWYERS' COMMITTEE PRIORITY AREAS

However, in all the sectors on which we are focused — **Racial, Immigrant, and Economic Justice** — huge challenges remain and our mandate to affect structural change is clarified by real-life, real-time examples:

- The epidemic of unarmed African Americans murdered by law enforcement, who are sworn to protect and serve, gives rise to the #BlackLivesMatter movement forcing all to confront hard truths about the deadly impact of racial and implicit bias.
- The displacement of people of color and low-income in housing and small businesses throughout the Bay Area is detrimentally changing the tenor of the Bay, creating a toxic “haves and have-nots” culture.
- The mistreatment of the immigrant community continues in myriad ways, including efforts that disregard basic constitutional values and principles.
- Recently codified challenges to federal voting rights laws threaten to reverse a half-century of gains to secure the franchise for all, regardless of race.



## Racial Justice

Advancing racial justice is essential to achieving civil rights for all. The history of racial injustice in this country is long, complex and emotionally charged. Although decades of struggle, determination, litigation and advocacy have removed the most egregious and blatantly racist laws from local, state and federal governments, systemic and structural racism still exists. We are committed to challenging policies or abuses of power that disproportionately impact communities of color. Issues of focus include:

- Ensuring Education Equity
- Protecting Voting Rights
- Creating Equal Opportunity for Minority-owned Businesses
- Removing Legal Barriers for Formerly-Incarcerated Individuals

We accomplish this work through impact litigation and policy advocacy. We also provide individual direct services through our **Second Chance Legal Clinic**, which removes barriers for formerly-incarcerated individuals, and our **Education Advocacy Project**, which matches *pro bono* attorneys with youth needing advocacy to assert their rights to educational opportunities.

## Immigrant Justice

Meeting the legal needs of immigrant communities is central to the broader mission of civil rights for all. Immigrants in the United States, and more specifically in the Bay Area, have been historically marginalized and continue to face various legal obstacles in an increasingly punitive immigration system. The Immigrant Justice Program aims to empower immigrants who face significant barriers to fair treatment and civic engagement by challenging particularly unjust systemic processes. Issues of focus include:

- Advocating For Asylum-Seekers
- Ensuring Education Equity for Immigrant Youth
- Pursuing a Right To Counsel for Immigrants Facing Deportation

In addition to policy advocacy and impact litigation in these areas, we offer individual direct services through our **Asylum Program**, which matches *pro bono* attorneys with refugees in need of representation. Through our **Immigrant Post-Conviction Relief Project**, we also provide legal representation to individuals who have been unlawfully convicted, to secure effective post-conviction relief for immigrants who would face deportation without it.



## Community Empowerment & Economic Justice

The Lawyers' Committee is committed to empowering communities of color and low-income by increasing economic opportunities to help overcome barriers to advancement and enable individuals to control their livelihoods. We know that a strong economy fuels a community and, without it, the disparities that result can last for generations. Issues of focus include:

- Advocating to mitigate the negative impacts of gentrification
- Pursuing access to equal opportunity for small businesses, particularly those that are owned by people of color and/or immigrants
- Challenging economic injustices that thwart the civil rights of an individual or a group based on race, gender or immigrant status.

Through our signature direct services program, Legal Services for Entrepreneurs (LSE), we provide free transactional legal services to low-income individuals who want to start or develop businesses committed to investing in economically distressed communities, including those hiring people with arrest and conviction records, and “mom and pop shops” located in areas where gentrification is a force for displacement.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Our success is made possible with the support of the *pro bono* community and other volunteers.

By marshalling the resources of the private bar, we help affect change by introducing and/or supporting new laws and policies that will protect those who suffer the consequences of unfair treatment. A dedicated corps of volunteers from throughout the legal community and other agencies donate their time and effort but, most importantly, their dedication to equal justice knowing that access to sound legal representation is critical to the civil rights struggle. Mentors and training is available.

We welcome:

- Attorneys
- Paralegals
- Interpreters
- Translators

If you are interested in supporting any of our core priority areas, please contact us at: [admin@lccr.com](mailto:admin@lccr.com) or call 415-543-9444 x200.

## OUR VICTORIES ARE MANY

Over the decades the Lawyers' Committee has achieved many key victories. Following are a few examples from each priority area.

**2015** The report “**Not Just a Ferguson Problem – How Traffic Courts Drive Inequality in California**”, which examines the practice of suspending drivers licenses for the inability to pay traffic fines, is released to critical and public acclaim. Copious media coverage leads to a unanimous vote by California’s court system to end requirements that people pay the fines before being allowed to challenge them. California Governor Jerry Brown introduced a traffic ticket amnesty program that will reduce some of the overall fines owed by people with eligible tickets. It will also reinstate drivers licenses that were suspended for failure to appear in court and/or failure to pay ticket fines. **(Racial and Economic Justice)**

**2014** In **Scott v. Bowen**, an Alameda County Superior Court Judge ruled that Secretary of State Debra Bowen illegally stripped tens of thousands of people of their voting rights, holding that people on Post Release Community Supervision (PRCS) and mandatory supervision under California’s Criminal Justice Realignment Act are eligible to vote. **(Racial Justice)**

**2014 Uelian de Abadia-Peixoto, et al. vs. United States Department of Homeland Security, et al.** – Settlement reached in class action lawsuit between immigration authorities and immigrants held in custody during their civil immigration proceedings in San Francisco. The settlement ended the federal government’s practice of forcing detained immigrants to go through their civil immigration painfully shackled at the waist, wrists, and ankles in every hearing before the immigration court, regardless of individual circumstances. **(Immigrant Justice)**

**2013 The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals** affirmed the California Department of Transportation’s outreach program to promote fairness and equity in its federal contracting. LCCR represented minority and women-owned businesses in the case. **(Racial Justice/Economic Justice)**

**2013** Enactment of the Reentry & Employment Opportunities Act (**AB 651**). Under this state law, people sentenced under Realignment will have the opportunity to clean up their records upon a showing of rehabilitation. **(Racial Justice)**



**2011** The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) ordered California's **High-Speed Rail Authority** (CHSRA) to open up its closed contracting system to resolve a civil rights complaint filed by small minority-owned businesses. Citing evidence of insular bidding practices and misrepresentations regarding receipt of federal funds, the FRA ordered far-reaching reforms to CHSRA's system for awarding contracts to private businesses. **(Racial Justice/ Economic Justice)**

**2011 The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals** struck down as unconstitutional an ordinance in a southern California town that prevented day laborers on public sidewalks from soliciting work from passing drivers. **(Immigrant Justice)**

**2007** In first suit testing constitutionality of the **California Voting Rights Act**, California Court of Appeals upholds the Act and U.S. Supreme Court declines to reverse ruling. **(Racial Justice)**

**2003** Settlement provides damages to airline passenger who was a victim of racial profiling for looking "Middle Eastern" – first ever cash payout in a post-September 11th airline profiling matter. **(Racial Justice/Immigrant Justice)**

**2002** Enactment of state legislation (**AB540**) entitling undocumented immigrant students and others at California higher education institutions to obtain waiver of non-resident tuition fees. **(Immigrant Justice)**

**1996** U.S. Supreme Court orders California's governor to implement the federal "Motor Voter" law requiring states to provide voter registration opportunities to people seeking licenses and other state social services. **(Racial Justice)**

**1994** San Francisco Superior Court restraining order blocks implementation of Proposition 187 in schools. Prop. 187 would have denied access to public education to undocumented immigrant children. **(Immigrant Justice)**

**1987** U.S. District Court injunctive orders and consent decree result in the hiring of the first San Francisco women firefighters and hiring and promotional goals for minorities and women within the San Francisco Fire Department. **(Racial Justice)**





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## ABOUT THE LAWYERS' COMMITTEE

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area works to advance, protect and promote the legal rights of communities of color, low-income persons, immigrants, and refugees. Assisted by hundreds of *pro bono* attorneys, LCCR provides free legal assistance and representation to individuals on civil legal matters through direct services, impact litigation and policy advocacy.

## WE BELIEVE:

- Injustice must be rooted out
- Equal access to justice depends on access to quality legal services
- Neither race nor immigration status should affect a person's success or failure
- Economic empowerment is key to the civil rights movement
- The true needs of the community must be central to any litigation or advocacy agenda

## CONTACT US

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