



# ANNUAL REPORT

American Civil Liberties Union  
of Texas  
FY 2015-2016



## A MESSAGE FROM KURT SCHWARTZ, BOARD PRESIDENT, AND TERRI BURKE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Throughout our nation, immigrants face closed doors, cold stares, jackbooted raiders, and endless detentions. Our poor are punished for their poverty. Women watch as their power over their own bodies is chipped away, statehouse by statehouse. Law enforcement invades privacy, seizes property, imprisons for too long, and kills too often. And everywhere legislators, business owners, school officials, and religious leaders argue over just how equal they'll allow the members of our LGBT communities to be.

Every civil rights battle the ACLU fights in this country has a bitterly contested front line somewhere in Texas, whether at the border, the prison cell, the abortion clinic, or the school bathroom. The opposition is fierce, and the stakes are high.

And we're ready. In the last 10 years we've tripled our budget, quadrupled our number of offices, and grown from a staff of eight to nearly 30. Our voice and our reach extends throughout the state of Texas. We continue to build our presence and political power. And we are poised to use it to ensure the liberty and dignity of all Texans are respected.



# LGBT Equality

It's been a turbulent year for LGBT equality in the Lone Star State. Our victories at the legislature prepared us for a smooth implementation of the historic marriage equality decision...but we faced a bitter defeat in the fight for Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance, which set the stage for the struggles to come.



## ANTI-LGBT BILLS

Extremist legislators proposed more than 20 anti-LGBT bills and constitutional amendments in the 2015 session. We knew this was coming. We were prepared for it. And we beat them all.

## MARRIAGE RULING

When the marriage equality ruling came down, we were euphoric. And then we launched a full-court press to make sure the decision was understood and respected in Texas. We set up a hotline. We sent lawyers to county clerks' offices. We distributed resources and know your rights materials statewide. And we celebrated with newly-minted civil rights icon and ACLU client Jim Obergefell on the steps of the Capitol.





## HOUSTON EQUAL RIGHTS ORDINANCE

A surprise ruling by the Texas Supreme Court gave us only 83 days to mount a \$3.4 million campaign to preserve HERO. As the only Houston Unites coalition member based in Houston, we opened our homes and offices to the campaign, and contributed our staff, money, space, blood, sweat, and tears. It was a hard loss to take.

But the battles we fought in Houston were not in vain. The struggle against the “religious refusal” laws that seek to discriminate against the LGBT community is now under the national spotlight. That spotlight is harsh; a previously indifferent public is now seeing the hatred behind these laws for what it is.



**Houston Unites partners included American Unity Fund, Equality Texas, Freedom for All Americans, Gill Action, Human Rights Campaign, NAACP-Houston, and Texas Freedom Network.**

# Reproductive Rights

For three years the nation awaited the Supreme Court's decision on Texas's strict anti-abortion law H.B. 2, and for three years our campaign to protect the reproductive rights of Texas women has continued unabated.





## **JUDICIAL BYPASS**

During the 2015 legislative session, we managed to stop most of the anti-choice bills that came to the floor, but, unfortunately, we weren't able to prevent the passage of a "judicial bypass" bill that cruelly and specifically targets young women who are victims of abuse and neglect.

## **MARLISE'S LAW**

Our work on "Marlise's Law" allowed us to show the terrible harm inflicted when politics interfere in the doctor-patient relationship. A documentary on the tragic story of Marlise and her family will be released soon.



## OUR GROUND GAME

We've been working hard on our ground game, recruiting allies throughout the state. We're especially proud of our work with our allies in the medical community, as we seek to reposition abortion as healthcare--and of our work to reduce the shame and stigma surrounding a woman's deeply personal decision to end a pregnancy.

New research we commissioned shows that most people aren't aware of how hard extremist state legislatures have been working to roll back abortion protections. When they're made aware, they get angry. Some of the members of the focus groups used for the research even became activists as a result of what they'd learned.



**NEW ALLIES**



**FOCUS GROUPS**

## SUPREME COURT VICTORY

On the morning of June 27, our entire staff awaited the Supreme Court's ruling on H.B. 2 with bated breath. When the Court ruled that the law imposed an undue and therefore unconstitutional burden on women seeking abortion care, cheers rang out through all our offices. And then we knuckled down and went back to work. While it was both gratifying and an unbelievable relief to see that three-year battle end in a victory, a great deal of damage had already been done. Moving forward, not only do we have to work to repair that damage, we must also prepare for our opposition's next attempts to deny Texas women their constitutional rights.

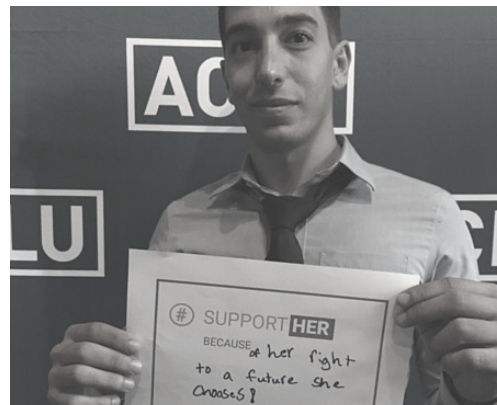
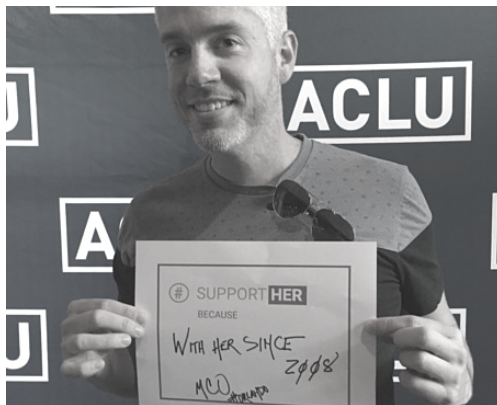




## SUPPORT OVER JUDGMENT

The #SupportHer initiative asks people to imagine how they would react to a woman in their lives who had decided to have an abortion. We want to inspire people to show their support for a woman's decision about whether or when to become a parent. And hopefully we'll be able to turn that into direly needed policy reforms in Texas.

In June 2016 we hosted our #SupportHer soft launch parties in Houston, Dallas, Austin, and Brownsville. Over the coming months, we'll continue to expand the #SupportHer campaign and redefine the way we think about abortion. We believe that a woman deserves respect and support once she's made her decision to have an abortion, not judgment.



# SMART JUSTICE

Criminal justice reform attracts allies from across the political spectrum. But whether we're acting alone or with our partners, we have made, and will continue to make, great strides toward bringing fair justice to Texas.

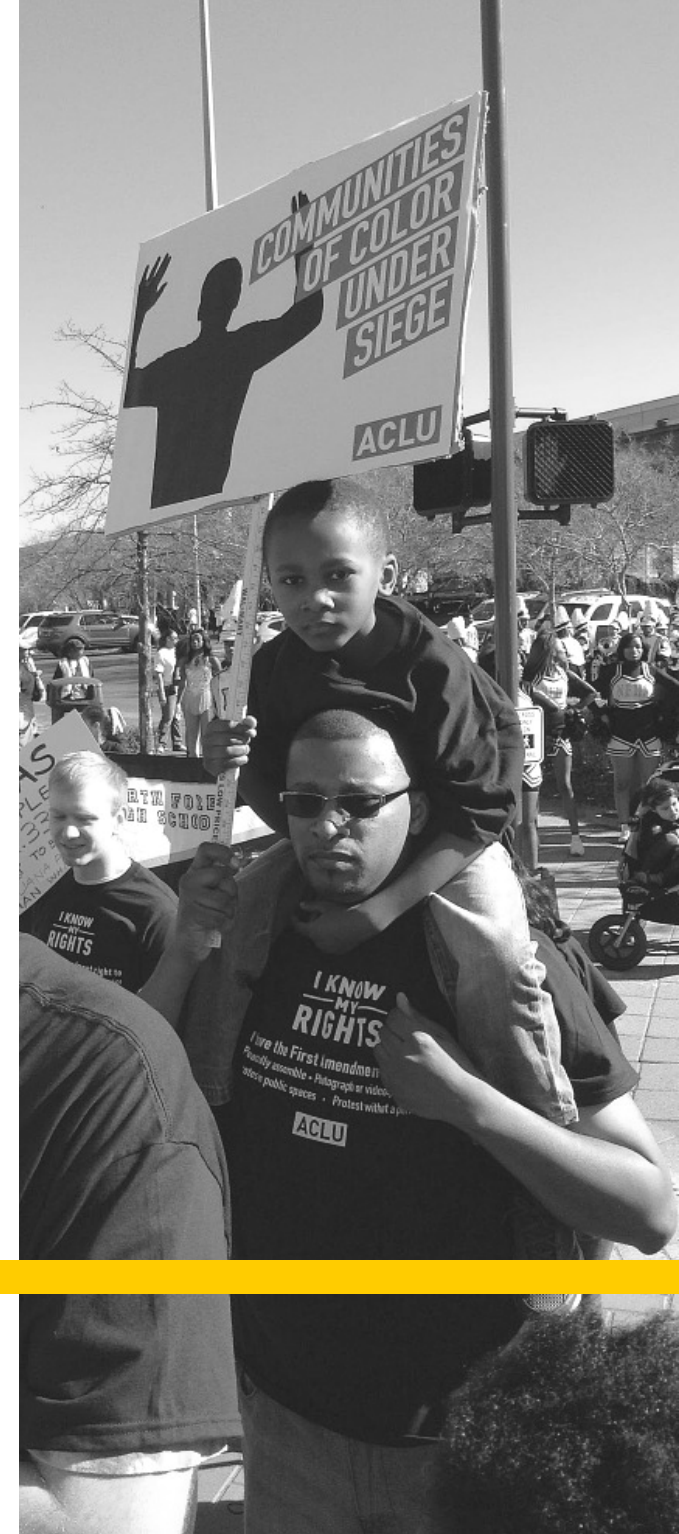


## STATEWIDE ABUSES

There remains much to be done. Texas has followed the same pattern of racial bias, excessive use of force, over-militarization, and lack of transparency in law enforcement as the rest of the nation. Throughout the year we elevated their stories. Teens in McKinney were manhandled. Sandra Bland died tragically, and senselessly, in a Waller County jail cell. An inventive Muslim kid was frog-marched out of school in handcuffs. And Antronie Scott and David Joseph lost their lives to police abuse.

## PUNISHING THE POOR

Sandra Bland's senseless death also called attention to a Texas justice system that punishes the poor for being poor. For want of a \$500 bond, she would likely be alive today. And Sandra's terrible tale is a symptom of a larger problem: courts that are used to generate revenue by exploiting the economically disadvantaged.



A group of approximately 15 people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are posed for a group photo. They are dressed in professional business attire, such as suits, blouses, and dresses. The background shows a building with large, arched windows and a brick facade. The image is in grayscale, with a semi-transparent blue text box overlaid in the center.

**Criminal justice reform is the one issue that induces across-the-aisle partnerships. Yet we still have our work cut out for us. We will continue to work with our partners in the left-right Smart On Crime coalition, and expect to make more progress during the 2017 legislative session.**



# IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

It's a hard time to be an immigrant in America, and especially in Texas. But we're fighting to get families out of private prisons, to ensure that refugees keep their right to settle here, and to see that law enforcement treats the residents of our border communities with respect.





## STILL DREAMING

At the legislature, we helped keep in-state tuition for DREAMers, defeated a sanctuary cities bill, and fought off Texas's unconstitutional attempts to wrest immigration enforcement authority from the federal government.

## PRISON ISN'T CHILD CARE

Texas and the Obama administration colluded to license two private prisons as "child care facilities" so they could keep asylum-seeking women and children behind bars. We publicized their calculated facade.

## CPB EXPOSED

We also exposed the Customs and Border Protection agency's constant dodges of transparency and accountability in its enforcement practices and protocols.

## STANDING FOR TEXAS BORN KIDS

And we supported efforts to ensure that children born in Texas are guaranteed their constitutional right to a birth certificate and American citizenship.



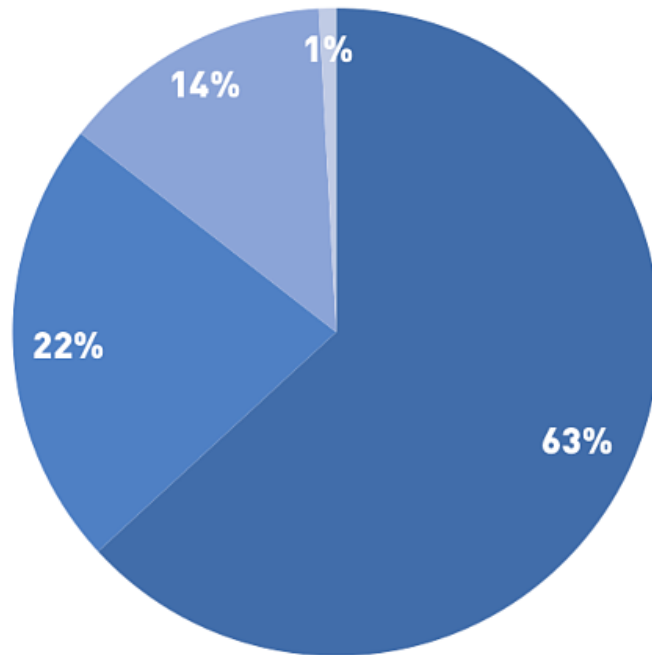
# 2017

**Texas lawmakers are giving every indication that the 2017 Legislative Session may be the worst yet for anti-immigrant, anti-LGBT, and anti-abortion proposals. We will give 'em hell every step of the way and fight to beat back harmful laws that make all Texans less free.**

**JOIN US FOR A TEXAS YOU CAN BELIEVE IN.**

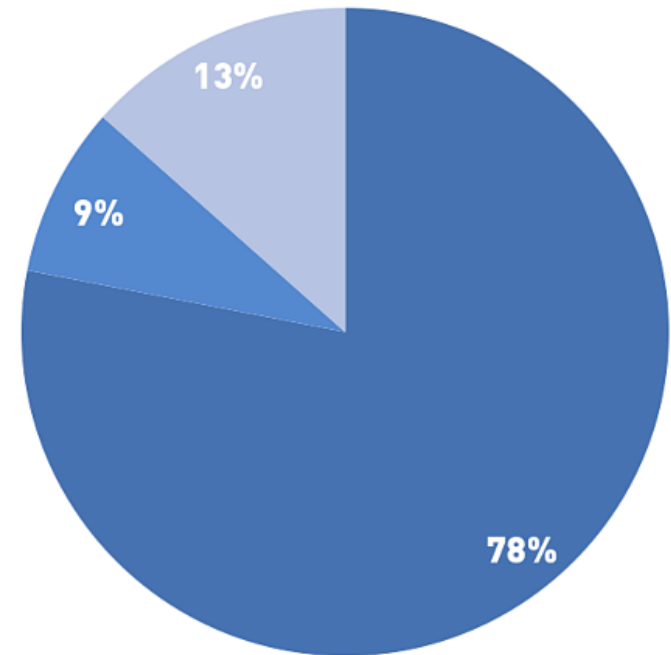
**FY16 CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT, AS OF MARCH 31, 2016**  
AUDITOR: CARR RIGGS AND INGRAM LLP. AUDITED STATEMENT AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

- Contributions - \$1,443,577
- Grants - \$510,705
- Memberships - \$311,639
- Other Revenues - \$19,504



**REVENUES**

- Program Services - \$2,089,447
- Management & General - \$227,419
- Fundraising - \$360,227



**EXPENDITURES**

# Board of Directors FY16

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# Learn more about our work.

We look forward to working with you to build a Texas you can believe in.

[WWW.ACLUTX.ORG](http://WWW.ACLUTX.ORG)

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