

Leaders of the Private Bar Join ACLU of Louisiana Litigation Campaign Against Racist Policing Practices

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NEW ORLEANS – Joining a nationwide movement to combat racist policing practices in the wake of the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and far too many named and unnamed others, 18 leading private law firms have joined the ACLU of Louisiana’s litigation campaign to challenge racially discriminatory policing practices. The law firms include Akerman LLP; Barrasso Usdin Kupperman Freeman & Sarver LLC; Boies Schiller Flexner LLP; Cohen & Gresser LLP; Cooley LLP; Covington & Burling LLP; Durie Tangri LLP; Foley Hoag LLP; Holwell Shuster & Goldberg LLP; King & Spalding LLP; Kuchler Polk Weiner LLC; Morgan, Lewis & Brockius LLP; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP; Reid Collins & Tsai LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; Stoptoe & Johnson LLP; Susman Godfrey LLP; and Venable LLP.

The initiative, called “Justice Lab: Putting Racist Policing on Trial,” seeks, over time and in a sustained fashion, to bring up to 1,000 cases in Louisiana challenging racially-motivated stops and seizures under the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments and any other applicable laws. Louisiana has the highest incarceration rate in the world and the ratio of police officers to residents is the highest of any state in the country. By focusing intensive efforts on a single state, Justice Lab aims to test the impact that litigation has on police conduct.

“Covington has a long tradition of combatting racism and promoting social justice through our pro bono efforts, and we are proud to partner with the ACLU of Louisiana to ensure racially motivated injustices are challenged within the Louisiana legal system. We hope this effort will provide a blueprint to ensure fair and equitable law enforcement across the country,” said **Kelly Voss of Covington & Burling LLP**.

“As a law firm, we are participants in the system of justice in this country,” said **Daralyn Durie of Durie Tangri LLP**. “All too often, for Black and Brown communities, that system is one of injustice. Condemning racism is the easy part. It is also not enough. We must act. The murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and too many others did not occur in a vacuum. They grew from, and were fed by, countless unconstitutional stops, seizures, and uses of excessive force. We must attack this epidemic at its root. We stand with the Justice Lab’s mission to enforce police accountability through coordinated litigation, and are thrilled to partner with the ACLU of Louisiana in this effort.”

“The unjustified use of force by police against people of color violates the Constitution and erodes public trust in the notions of equality and due process that are fundamental to our justice system. Our firm and its lawyers are committed to using our talent and resources to combat the systemic racism that too often imbues policing. We are thrilled to be part of an initiative that allows law firms to use their litigation expertise to help tackle this social challenge,” said **Neal Manne, Managing Partner of Susman Godfrey LLP**.

“Across the country, people and organizations are coming together to meet this moment and confront the systemic racism that has claimed the lives of countless Black Americans and left a community in fear of the people who should protect them,” said **Daniel H. Tabak and Sri Kuehnlencz of Cohen & Gresser LLP**. “We are honored to be taking part in an initiative that matches the clear need for this type of sustained litigation campaign with law firms that have the skills, talent, and expertise to make a difference.”

“As lawyers, we have an obligation to take action to address the type of systemic discrimination in police practices we are challenging in Louisiana,” said **Rene Kathawala, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP’s Pro Bono Counsel**. “This is the right moment to partner on an initiative like the Justice Lab to carry out our long-standing commitment to making an impact in the areas of social and racial justice.”

“Brutal incidents of police violence against people of color violate the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments, yet too many of them have gone unchallenged,” said **Cooley LLP Partner Maureen Alger**. “We are grateful to be part of this initiative, and we look forward to helping establish a blueprint for challenging racist policing nationwide.”

“We are proud to partner again with the ACLU to combat racially-motivated policing tactics, using the law to benefit communities of color and help dismantle systemic racism,” said **Nihara Choudhri of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP**.

“Our unified effort through Justice Lab will help Louisiana reshape policing practices,” said **Kenneth Polite, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP Partner and former US Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana**. “Our partnership will serve as one of the ways we will bring change to a system that is in such desperate need, and in a state I personally care deeply about, with the goal of taking best practices learned from this initiative and applying them nationwide. We at Morgan Lewis will put our full strength behind this fight for racial equality and justice.”

“At this defining moment for our country, when we have an opportunity to confront and dismantle racist practices in policing in America in a systemic way, it is incredibly heartening and critically important to see the best law firms in the country, if not the world, step up to this challenge and wield their top-tier talent in a significant way,” said **Alanah Odoms Hebert, ACLU of Louisiana Executive Director**. “Since launching this initiative two weeks ago, we’ve already received an overwhelming response from law firms across the country that are eager to bring their legal talents and vast resources to bear on challenging these abuses and saving Black and Brown lives.”

“Justice Lab will incentivize anti-racist policing practices by imposing a systematic accountability check on the brutalizing of Black and Brown communities within the state,” said **Nora Ahmed, ACLU of Louisiana Legal Director**. “I applaud and am humbled that so many leading national law firms are putting their weight behind the idea that it makes sense to use Louisiana as a model for what police accountability looks like.”

The ACLU of Louisiana is still accepting new participants in Justice Lab. Law firms, law schools, community organizations, groups, and activists can email Nora Ahmed at nahmed@laaclu.org with the subject line: “Justice Lab Inquiry” to receive more information.

More about the Justice Lab can be found here:

https://www.laclu.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/justicelabfactsheet.pdf

This release is online at: <https://www.laclu.org/en/press-releases/leaders-private-bar-join-aclu-louisiana-litigation-campaign-against-racist-policing>