

West Milford School District to Take Corrective Action After Providing Teacher Training Based on Sexist Stereotypes

The national ACLU received an alarming phone call from a science teacher in West Milford, New Jersey in 2017. She reported that her school district held a mandatory training for all teachers in the district premised on harmful gender stereotypes. The name of the seminar? “Boys and girls learn differently.”

The ACLU warned the school district about the discrimination in early 2018, notifying the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights at the same time.

This August, the West Milford Township School District pledged to take expansive corrective action in an agreement with the New Jersey Attorney General’s Division on Civil Rights and the ACLU-NJ.

“West Milford Township School District acknowledged that teaching children based on gender stereotypes can lead to divergent and often discriminatory treatment of students,” said ACLU-NJ Legal Director Jeanne LoCicero, who signed the agreement. “The Division on Civil Rights deserves praise for its thorough effort in responding to the alarming trainings through this agreement, which sends a clear message to every school district in New Jersey: students should



West Milford Township School District agreed to take steps to repair the harm from a mandatory teacher training it imposed that perpetuated gender stereotypes. The agreement — which the school district signed with the ACLU-NJ and the Division on Civil Rights — came after the ACLU-NJ and ACLU warned of potential legal action in response to the discriminatory training.

be taught based on their individual needs and abilities, not stereotypes.”

After learning of the science teacher’s troubling accounts in 2017, the ACLU of New Jersey joined forces with the national ACLU Women’s Rights Project to investigate West Milford Township School District

(WMTSD). The ACLU-NJ sent a letter to the West Milford district in March 2018 warning of potential legal action if it didn’t end its involvement with the Gurian Institute, the organization that provided the discriminatory training as part of the district’s professional development

workshops. At the same time, the ACLU of New Jersey sent a copy of the letter to the Division on Civil Rights (DCR), prompting the group to conduct its own investigation, and leading to the signing of the agreement with West Milford.

The mandatory training instructed staff to teach students differently solely based on their gender, which perpetuated outmoded stereotypes and erased LGBTQ+ and non-binary students.

As a result of the agreement, WMTSD will take action on several fronts, including requesting that teachers return any materials from the training, holding antidiscrimination trainings and bias trainings for employees with trainers approved by DCR, and submitting reports about future trainings.

“Stereotypes have no place in the classroom. All school districts should be looking for ways to support students, not making assumptions about their learning styles based on their gender. We are happy to see that the West Milford school administrators will quickly take steps to undo the harms of the earlier training,” said ACLU-NJ Staff Attorney Elyla Huertas. [ACLU](#)

An ACLU-NJ Cameo on the National Debate Stage

On Aug. 1, the work of the ACLU-NJ took a place on the national stage when the topic of reforming the Newark Police came up during the Democratic primary debates.

When Senator Cory Booker and former Vice President Joe Biden discussed Booker’s record on police accountability in Newark, Senator Booker pointed to the ACLU-NJ as a bellwether for civil rights and sound policy.

In October 2010, during Booker’s time as mayor, the ACLU-NJ petitioned the Department of Justice to investigate civil rights abuses in the Newark Police Department. In its petition, the ACLU-NJ documented more than 400 allegations of police abuse during a two-and-a-half-year period, and a series of important events followed:

- In 2011, the Department of Justice (DOJ) opened an initial investigation to determine whether a full investigation was warranted.
- In 2012, the DOJ opened a larger investigation into the civil rights practices of the Newark Police Department.
- In 2014, the DOJ confirmed the ACLU-NJ’s findings and reached an agreement mapping out reforms, which a federal monitor would oversee.
- In 2016 the City of Newark and the DOJ signed a legally binding consent decree to formally begin the oversight process.

Although then-Mayor Booker initially balked at the ACLU-NJ’s petition in October 2011, he came to realize the value of an investigation and federal intervention in 2012. As a senator, he publicly credited the ACLU-NJ with shaping his perspective on criminal justice reform, a cause he has championed in the Senate.

Newark’s moment on the national debate stage signaled an important shift in the movement for police accountability nationwide. It also revealed the ACLU’s enduring legacy as a guiding influence to protect civil rights in the face of police abuse.

“Our city, our state, and our country have miles to go in our shared effort to achieve racial justice and accountability in law enforcement, and the ACLU-NJ has been and always will be on the front lines of the fight,” said ACLU-NJ Executive Director Amol Sinha. “Although civil rights advocacy changes over time, one element of the ACLU-NJ’s work is unchanging: we will work with any decision-maker who aims to further the cause of liberty.” [ACLU](#)



It’s important to look at how conversations on police reform have evolved. The fact that police accountability is a now national conversation worthy of the presidential debate stage demonstrates how crucial this work is. But, it should have been a conversation for a long time.

Amol Sinha @AmolSinha · 7/31/19
Newark’s role in the police reform conversation epitomizes the national fight for accountability. The @ACLUNJ worked to reform Newark police w @CoryBooker, collaborating & challenging him to do the right thing. We’re committed to a fair...

Nominated Candidates for the ACLU-NJ Board of Trustees

The ACLU-NJ Nominating Committee presents candidates for six open, uncontested positions for three-year terms on the organization’s Board of Trustees. Because this year’s election was uncontested, we did not ask members to submit a ballot.

The ACLU-NJ depends on strong, quality leadership and encourages its members to serve on its Board of Trustees. Interested members may contact the ACLU-NJ at 973-642-2086 or email: nominations@aclu-nj.org.



Marc Beebe

I’m honored to run for my sixth three-year term on the ACLU-NJ Board of Trustees. These are interesting times for the ACLU of New Jersey. At the federal level, we have many important challenges fighting back against severe attacks on civil liberties. At the same time, in NJ, we have great opportunities to really move things forward. I’m currently the President of the ACLU-NJ Board. In addition, while I’m no longer on the National ACLU Board, I still serve as the chair of the National ACLU

Governance Committee. In the past, I’ve been Vice-President, chaired the Budget and Finance Committee, and served as Treasurer. Being on the ACLU-NJ Board of Trustees is an important responsibility, and I take the responsibility seriously. I’m currently in charge of Strategic Research, Humanitarian Activities, and Corporate Development for another large non-profit, and I’m a Certified Association Executive. I look forward to continuing to work hard to protect the civil liberties of all New Jerseyans.



Peggy Brooks

I am pleased to stand for election to another term on the board of the ACLU-NJ. I am currently on the personnel committee. For almost two decades, I was a civil rights lawyer working on prison brutality, employment discrimination, and privacy cases. It took our country over 200 years to develop the rights we enjoy today, but officials in Washington continue to tell us that we must surrender our rights so that they can protect us from things they can’t tell us about. Often, the ACLU is the only organization willing

to fight back. It is critical that the ACLU continue to challenge policies that threaten our liberty. The ACLU-NJ also plays an important role in New Jersey, educating the public on issues, urging government to do the right thing, and going to court when necessary. I hope to bring my years of legal and managerial experience to strengthen the ACLU-NJ.



Frank Corrado

I would be honored to continue as a member of ACLU-NJ Board. I know of no more important work today than defending the constitution’s guarantees of individual liberty. As a civil rights attorney in South Jersey, I have handled numerous civil rights cases both in my own practice and as a cooperating attorney for the ACLU-NJ, focusing in the area of free speech. I have taught the First Amendment at Rutgers School of Law in Camden and at Richard Stockton University. I am the board’s past president, and believe I bring a useful

historical perspective to the board. Over my years representing civil rights plaintiffs, criminal defendants, and even municipalities, I have developed a good deal of knowledge and expertise. By working with the ACLU-NJ, I can put my abilities to their best possible use. Thank you.



Alexis Karteron

As a former attorney at an ACLU affiliate, I have a deep appreciation for the work of the ACLU and would relish the opportunity to be of service to my local affiliate. Throughout my career, I have dedicated myself to protecting civil rights and civil liberties. As a law professor, I both train clinical law students how to be advocates in constitutional rights cases and teach doctrinal courses on policing and education law. The ACLU of New Jersey may be the only organization in the state that tackles all of these issues, along with

other critical rights issues, with an eye toward how they impact marginalized communities. It actively tries to make New Jersey a fairer and more just place for its diverse population. Becoming a member of the Board of Trustees would be a true labor of love. I would be thrilled to join its ranks.



Joseph Parsons

I have been a longtime member of the ACLU, and an ACLU-NJ Board member since 2009. In 2011, I became the Treasurer and have worked on various financial and policy projects. I termed out of being the Treasurer this year, and I remain on the Finance Committee and support our financial needs. I seek to continue my work on the board to promote and protect civil liberties, both locally in New Jersey and across the nation. It is, of course, a troubling and confusing time, during which I will do everything in my power

to protect and promote our legal and human rights. After graduating from college, I moved from the Northeast to Houston, Texas, where I began my career. My experience in the multicultural environment produced a particular interest in immigrant rights and economic justice, which I continue to advocate for. I am retired, having had previous positions as an executive at fashion apparel and accessories companies and a large public accounting firm. I have an undergraduate degree from Eisenhower College and a Master of Accountancy from the University of Houston.



Jeff Wild

I am a longtime litigation partner at Lowenstein Sandler LLP, an NJ firm of approximately 300 lawyers with a commitment to pro bono service. I am Chair of the firm’s Trust-and-Estate Litigation Group, a partner in the Business Litigation Group, and a leading partner in the firm’s pro bono practice. For more than 30 years, I have represented individuals incarcerated at a federal mental hospital; advocated for the rights of children in foster care through Columbia Law School’s Child Advocacy Center; worked on death-

penalty appeals and other civil-rights cases at the Paul, Weiss law firm; secured the release of an individual who had been in debtors’ prison in New Jersey; helped obtain a landmark settlement in a case involving HIV-positive discrimination in the context of adoptions; and am currently advocating for the rights of the homeless in New Jersey through the NJ Coalition to End Homelessness, of which I am President. I am thrilled to be a candidate for another term on the Board of Trustees, which is a natural extension of my personal dedication to justice and civil liberties.



PROFILE IN LIBERTY

Amardeep Singh
ACLU-NJ BOARD MEMBER

Amardeep Singh knows there’s only so much the courts can do. That’s why he went to law school – to learn how to achieve social change beyond the bounds of what arguing before a judge can accomplish.

Against the backdrop of an idyllic, suburban New Jersey childhood, Singh heard harrowing stories from refugees he knew from the Sikh temple in Glen Rock. With few avenues for redress after the Indian government’s 1984 campaign of terror against Sikhs, those who fled to America lobbied the U.S. government to act.

Singh saw a community whose survival relied on people a continent away making their voices heard. That lesson stayed with him, and it informs his work as a senior program officer for the Open Society Foundations U.S. program and as a member of the ACLU-NJ Board of Trustees today.

“Sikh immigrants started going to the halls of Congress and to local officials – anyone who would hear them – trying to raise awareness of the human rights abuses happening against Sikhs in India,” Singh said. “Children like me, with families from Punjab – they’re expected to help their parents. So, I helped.”

His parents, along with other Sikh Americans, became accidental activists, and Singh joined the cause. Sometimes, he translated for community elders. Sometimes, he recounted the traumas he’d heard to officials. He continued his activism through high school, college at Rutgers, and law school at Case Western Reserve University.

Then Sept. 11 happened, and Singh’s life changed. The night of the attacks, he and other Sikh advocates, bracing themselves for a backlash against members of their faith in addition to Muslims, issued a statement calling on leaders to protect communities of color from hate crimes.

Less than a month later, that ad hoc group filed papers of incorporation in New Jersey, and the Sikh Coalition began.

“I had been getting my master’s in international human rights law, intending to focus on India – but once 9/11 happened, there were few attorneys in the Sikh community who had civil rights experience.”

He took a leave of absence from school and never went back, essentially holding two full-time jobs: one at Human Rights Watch, where he authored a report on U.S. human rights abuses post-9/11, and another co-leading the Sikh Coalition, unpaid.

He became the first full-time Sikh Coalition staffer in 2003. When he left in 2014, the organization that started in his apartment was now the largest national Sikh organization dedicated to civil rights, going from an all-volunteer workforce to a staff of 12. But he needed a change.

“There wasn’t much space in my life to do anything other than Sikh Coalition work,” Singh said.

Instead of putting out metaphorical fires at a small organization, Singh hoped to spark new ideas about advocacy on a larger scale. He joined the staff of the Open Society Foundations, where he directs grants to organizations that confront discrimination against Muslims, Arab-Americans, and South Asian Americans. The organization itself also lobbies, litigates, organizes, and even works to shift narratives in pop culture.

Singh didn’t miss the stress of running an organization, but he did miss advocating in his home state. He joined the ACLU-NJ board in 2016.

“Since I was in law school, I’ve looked up to Amar as a civil rights leader and as an advocate who’s had a profound impact in the lives of South Asians,” said ACLU-NJ Executive Director Amol Sinha. “I’m thrilled to be able to collaborate with him and to continue to learn from him, and I’m grateful that the ACLU can benefit from his expertise.”

He’s proud to tell his three young children – including the eldest, named Azad, meaning “freedom” – that he serves on the board of the ACLU-NJ, an organization that makes New Jersey a better place to live.

“If we don’t defend rights and liberties, who will? It’s our role. It’s on us.”

He’s especially proud to help steer the ACLU-NJ at a time when the organization is harnessing the power of grassroots activism.

“There are only so many lawsuits you can file – it’s critical, important work, but sometimes the law is just against you,” Singh said. “We want to see a change, and we’re going to be out there until we see one.” [ACLU](#)

Five Years Later: Ferguson is Still With Us.

The fatal shooting of Michael Brown, a young Black man killed by police on a quiet suburban street in Ferguson, Missouri, put a national spotlight on the struggle of Black Americans to survive the daily threat of police violence. And it gave birth to Black Lives Matter.

Newarkers know that reality, too — the pain of police violence and the urgency of activism in its wake.

On Wednesday, Aug. 14, a group of activists with Newark Communities for Accountable Policing gathered in the Newark Public Library for “Michael Brown, Ferguson, Five Years Later — Where Are We Now?” to talk about the impact of Michael Brown’s tragic death and police accountability in Newark.

The serenity: that was what struck photographer Kris Graves about the street where Michael Brown’s death took place, he shared during the event. Graves presented slides from his photo series, “Bleak Reality,” documenting, memorializing, and re-contextualizing the sites of police killings of Black men.

He shared notes he took about Ferguson while making the project: “People say hello; women push babies in strollers; a father drives back from McDonald’s with his two children. A bartender says: ‘Make us look good. We’re not monsters. We’re not evil. Families live in those homes.’”

Graves’ documentary photographs paid tribute to other lives cut short by police violence: Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, Freddie Grey, Alton Sterling, Walter Scott, and Akai Gurley.

Graves took each photo at the same time of day that the fatal violence took place.

Kalambayi Adenet from the Uhuru Movement of Ferguson video-phoned in, discussing how she became an activist. When she saw the militaristic police response to protesters in Ferguson, she felt a deep sense of injustice and sensed that because she and her family were Black, they were forbidden from speaking.

“In college, when I first heard about colonialism, it clicked — that’s what we live under,” she said.

She talked about fighting for rights in Ferguson, and a panel of Newark activists discussed ongoing work to rein in the Newark Police. A recent court ruling upheld the legality of Newark’s strong civilian complaint review board, but the people need to exert constant pressure to maintain the board’s power.

Newark Communities for Accountable Policing, a coalition of activists and organizations, is working to mobilize the public, through events like the forum on Ferguson, demonstrations, and community meetings. [ACLU](#)



The Murder of Michael Brown, Ferguson, Missouri, 2016, from photographer Kris Graves’ “Bleak Reality” series



The Murder of Eric Garner, Staten Island, New York, 2016, from photographer Kris Graves’ “Bleak Reality” series



The Murder of Tamir Rice, Cleveland, Ohio, 2016, from photographer Kris Graves’ “Bleak Reality” series



The El Paso Shooting Demonstrates Why Distinctions Between Local Law Enforcement and Immigration Agencies Matter

BY AMOL SINHA, ACLU-NJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the last few years, attacks against immigrants have intensified. Those attacks took tangible shape on Aug. 3, when a gunman in El Paso targeting immigrants killed 22 people. Less than an hour before, the shooter posted on social media about his desire to rid the country of immigrants.

News outlets shared reports of family members of victims who were too frightened to enter reunification centers, believing contact with law enforcement could lead to deportation.

This wrenching choice — risking potentially permanent separation from their families or staying in the dark about loved ones’ conditions — illustrates the importance of distinctly separating local government functions and federal immigration enforcement.

Like the rest of the country, New Jersey faces the poison of xenophobia, hatred, and white supremacy. Unlike the rest of the country, a robust policy protects civil liberties in New Jersey’s immigrant communities, fostering trust and public safety.

The Immigrant Trust Directive, issued by New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal in November 2018, prevents local law enforcement from turning ordinary encounters into junctures for family separation.

In this era, we have a duty to realize the directive’s full potential. Law enforcement must follow it strictly, ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection must respect it, and all New Jerseyans, of all statuses, must understand the directive’s importance.

When the directive went into effect in March, state and local law enforcement could no longer ask about immigration status in most cases. Now, New Jersey’s law enforcement agencies cannot contribute facilities, resources, equipment, or officers to carry out federal immigration enforcement.

Initially, the directive limited ICE’s access to county jails, including putting restrictions on 287(g) agreements, which deputize local law enforcement as immigration agents. Law enforcement needed authorization from the Office of the Attorney General to enter into those agreements. But on Sept. 27, Attorney General Grewal went even further by amending the directive to outright forbid 287(g) agreements altogether making New Jersey one of the first states in the country to take that step.

The two counties that had agreements in place — Cape May and Monmouth — had renewed their

agreements just before the directive took effect. After the Attorney General’s Office announced the end of 287(g) agreements, the two counties have challenged the directive, along with Ocean County, which filed suit against the directive even before the additional changes.

Irresponsibly, ICE and Cape May, Monmouth, and Ocean counties have argued that state and local law enforcement in New Jersey should not be able to focus exclusively on their primary mission of protecting local public safety. Federal ICE officials in New Jersey even claim that immigrants do not fear interacting with police or government agencies, despite countless testimonials and studies to the contrary.

Regardless of status, immigrant communities are less likely to report crimes or seek protection if they believe departments collaborate with immigration authorities. When survivors and witnesses fear law enforcement, everyone suffers.

Law enforcement contributed significantly to crafting the Immigrant Trust Directive, for good reason: drawing a line between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities gives immigrants and their loved ones fewer reasons to avoid interacting with police.

When local law enforcement officers assume immigration powers, the likelihood of racial and ethnic profiling increases, and counties are more likely to use ICE detainees — non-binding, unconstitutional requests to extend detention without due process or legal justification. In addition to the constitutional violations, detainees can carry astronomical costs through potential legal liability and lack of compensation from ICE.

We all deserve to live our lives without fear that a law enforcement interaction could rip our families apart. To protect all New Jerseyans, we must make sure the Immigrant Trust Directive’s impact measures up to its promise. [ACLU](#)

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In honor of Avi Kelin
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In memory of Kenneth Koppel
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In honor of Alexander Shalom
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In memory of Stan Weber
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In memory of Ben Wilkowitz
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LIGHT THE TORCH OF LIBERTY

Help the ACLU of New Jersey build a safe and free future by investing in its mission. Defend liberty by making a tax-deductible gift to the ACLU-NJ Foundation. For more information on the many ways to give, call us at 973-642-2086. Visit our website to make a gift today: www.aclu-nj.org/donate

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