

# Lawyers for Civil Rights

## Timeline & Case History

### 2021

#### 20 Years of BizGrow

BizGrow celebrates 20 years of building wealth in low-income communities, serving over 1000 small businesses a year.

#### Vaccine Equity & Justice

Collaborating with medical providers and community organizations to address racial disparities in COVID-19 vaccine access.

#### BECMA

##### v. City of Boston

Title VI Complaint filed with DOJ to address racial disparities in Boston's public contracts on behalf of BECMA, Amplify Latinx, and the Greater Boston Latino Network.

#### Boston Parents Coalition v. BPS

Successful intervention with NAACP Boston Branch, Greater Boston Latino Network, Asian American Resource Workshop, and Asian-Pacific Islander Civic Action Network in lawsuit concerning the admissions policy for Boston's exam schools.

#### Greenroots

##### v. EPA

Lawsuit filed with Greenroots and Conservation Law Foundation challenging EPA's interpretation of Title VI.

#### Pandemic Relief for Tenants and Workers

In response to housing instability, launched a pro bono initiative to connect hundreds of families with emergency rental assistance (RAFT) and unemployment benefits.

#### Worcester Interfaith v. City of Worcester

Federal Voting Rights Act lawsuit filed on behalf of Black and Latinx voters in Worcester, challenging an all "at large" method of electing school committee members as illegally diluting the vote of communities of color.

#### Redistricting

Launched Democratizing Redistricting to ensure that the redistricting process is fair, equitable, transparent, and community driven. Coordinated efforts with the Drawing Democracy Coalition.

### 2020

#### Pandemic Relief for Small Businesses

Co-led the creation of the Covid Relief Coalition, the Coalition for an Equitable Economy, and Small Business Strong to provide free legal assistance to hundreds of struggling small businesses during the pandemic.

#### George Floyd

In response to George Floyd's murder, filed complaints on behalf of Black men and women racially profiled by local and state police.

#### Cofield

##### v. McDonald

Taxpayer lawsuit challenging entanglement and 287(g) contracts between local sheriffs and immigration officials.

#### Juarez

##### v. SoFi

Class action challenging discriminatory policy of denying DACA recipients access to loans.

#### Savino

##### v. Souza

First-of-its-kind class action filed on behalf of immigration detainees held in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at the Bristol County House of Correction during COVID-19 pandemic. Within a year of filing, the facility population dropped from a capacity of over 200 individuals to less than 10. Lawsuit served as a blueprint for COVID-19 litigation across the country.

#### Bertin

##### v. Galvin

Filed a landmark emergency SJC petition on behalf of Black, Latinx, and Asian-American voters, as well as Common Cause and MassVOTE, to compel the Commonwealth to send applications for mail-in ballots to all registered voters, as specified in an emergency elections law passed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Commonwealth

##### v. Long

Amicus resulting in major state criminal law reform providing victims of racial profiling with opportunities to challenge the legality of race-based traffic stops.

#### Morgan

##### v. Boston Police Department

Successful case on behalf of a Black man improperly bypassed by BPD. Client is now in the police academy.

#### Suffolk Downs

Successful Title VI complaint on behalf of GreenRoots and City Life/Vida Urbana with HUD alleging national origin discrimination in zoning and planning processes in Boston. The complaint resulted in a landmark agreement between the City and HUD promoting language access and community engagement in future planning and development.

#### Cruz

##### v. C&W Facilities Services

Successful race and religion discrimination case on behalf of an immigrant janitorial worker at Logan Airport.

#### NSTAR Title VI Complaint

Filed Title VI complaint on behalf of GreenRoots with Conservation Law Foundation regarding the state's refusal to provide meaningful language access. EPA launched a probe of the MA Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to assess their compliance with federal civil rights law.

#### Henry

##### v. Needham

Represented Black father of four, who was handcuffed in broad daylight on a main street because police falsely believed he was a shoplifter. Town of Needham launched an internal affairs investigation and hired an independent investigator.

**Haitian-Americans  
United v. Trump**

Lawsuit filed on behalf of Haitian-Americans United, Centro Presente, the Chelsea Collaborative, and the Brazilian Worker Center challenging President Trump’s exclusion of undocumented residents from the congressional apportionment base following Census 2020. The memorandum was rescinded by President Biden in January 2021.

**New York  
v. Trump**

Supreme Court amicus brief in support of enjoining President Trump’s memorandum excluding undocumented people from the congressional apportionment base following Census 2020. The memorandum was rescinded by President Biden in January 2021.

**Martin  
v. Rollins**

Amicus brief on the importance of filming police officers. This right was upheld by the First Circuit.

**Hernandez v. Strega**

Favorable settlement on behalf of Latina who was sexually harassed while working in upscale restaurant.

**Health Disparities**

Expanded Medical-Legal Partnership to MGH health centers in Chelsea, Everett, Revere and Charlestown.

**MFHC  
v. HUD**

Secured nationwide injunction against HUD preserving disparate impact protections of the Fair Housing Act on behalf of the MA Fair Housing Center and Housing Works.

**Students for Fair  
Admissions v. Harvard**

Represented multi-racial group of students in landmark trial to support Harvard’s use of race-conscious admissions. Federal court ruled in our favor, upholding Harvard’s admissions process, and the ruling was affirmed by the First Circuit.

**2019**

**LCR | BizGrow**

Rebranded our Economic Justice Project as LCR | BizGrow

**Baker  
v. MA Trial Court**

MCAD complaint filed on behalf of a Black female court officer who was improperly disciplined at work after reporting a colleague for calling her the N-word.

**Mussotte  
v. Peyser**

In response to major lawsuit brought on behalf of low-income students and students of color challenging discriminatory and unequal Massachusetts school funding formula, state enacted landmark Student Opportunity Act providing the largest investment in public education in decades. The Act resulted in millions of dollars flowing to low-income school districts.

**Washington  
v. DHS**

Amicus brief filed on behalf of healthcare providers across the country challenging the Trump Administration’s “public charge” rule. Favorable decision extensively cited the amicus. The Biden Administration subsequently announced that it will not enforce the “public charge” rule.

**Huot  
v. City of Lowell**

Successfully settled landmark federal voting rights lawsuit filed on behalf of Asian-American and Latinx residents of Lowell, which charged that city’s at-large electoral system illegally diluted the votes of people of color. Settlement requires city to change to a more fair and equitable system, accompanied by a robust public education campaign in English, Spanish and Khmer, allowing all residents to participate in selecting the new electoral system.

**Gregory  
v. Commonwealth**

Class action complaint challenging overly-stringent background regulations by the MA Department of Early Education and Care, which impose a lifetime ban on childcare work for juvenile offenses, many decades-old, and have a disparate impact on employees of color.

**IIIC v. Cuccinelli**

Lawsuit filed to stop the rescission of medical deferred action program which allows immigrants being treated for life-threatening conditions to be protected from removal. Administration backed down and reversed the rescission after lawsuit filed.

**Centro Presente  
v. McAleenan**

Federal litigation filed in Washington, DC., to stop the Trump Administration’s dramatic expansion of “expedited removal,” which eliminates due process for immigrants facing deportation.

**Ryan  
v. ICE**

Groundbreaking federal lawsuit filed on behalf of prosecutors, public defenders, and community groups including the Chelsea Collaborative to block civil immigration arrests in and around Massachusetts courthouses. Lawsuit served as a blueprint for similar cases nationally.

**African Communities  
Together v. Trump**

Case on behalf of Liberian nationals who are the beneficiaries of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), a humanitarian program which the Trump Administration sought to terminate in violation of Equal Protection. Hours before our preliminary injunction motion was set to be heard in federal court, the Trump Administration backed down and extended the program.

**Figueroa  
v. Boston Police Dep’t**

Race discrimination case filed by civilian women of color against BPD, identifying a pattern and practice of failing to promote candidates of color and a discriminatory distribution of overtime hours.

**Commonwealth  
v. Espinal**

Amicus brief filed in the Supreme Judicial Court successfully arguing that jurors should be asked about bias against non-English speakers during voir dire.

### **Dep't of Commerce v. New York**

Amicus brief filed in U.S. Supreme Court arguing against inclusion of a citizenship question on the 2020 Census. Brief focused on the importance of the Administrative Procedure Act to communities of color and low-income communities as a check on illegal agency action.

### **Census Advocacy**

Launched multi-pronged campaign to ensure a full and accurate Census count, including a multi-lingual Census Hotline.

### **Amazon Class Action**

Nationwide class action filed on behalf of Black and Latinx former Amazon drivers who were suddenly terminated based on an overly stringent background check policy, which included old and minor offenses, and disproportionately affected people of color.

## **2018**

### **50th Anniversary & Name Change to Lawyers for Civil Rights**

Celebrated our 50th anniversary and rebranded as Lawyers for Civil Rights. The U.S. Congress marked this landmark occasion with a Congressional Resolution honoring our 50 years of impactful work. The Boston City Council issued a resolution honoring Lawyers for Civil Rights and declaring October 18 as Civil Rights and Economic Justice Day in Boston. At our 50th Anniversary Gala, Anita Hill called for national and legal solutions to sexual harassment and violence.

### **Finley v. Lexington**

Successfully settled a discrimination lawsuit on behalf of a Black female METCO social worker who was unlawfully terminated after advocating for the students of color in the school district.

### **Centro Presente v. Trump**

First lawsuit filed in the country to save Temporary Protected Status (TPS), humanitarian protection for Salvadoran, Honduran and Haitian immigrants. Affected individuals and community groups allege that TPS termination was racially motivated and discriminatory.

### **Coleman v. City of Boston**

In response to #BlackLivesMatter, lawsuit filed on behalf of a mother whose son—an unarmed Black young man with a disability—was fatally shot by the Boston Police Department.

### **K.O. v. Sessions**

Emergency petitions filed in response to family separation crisis to secure the release and reunification of children torn apart from their families at the border. Filed the first national class action seeking damages on behalf of separated children. Suit seeks creation of designated fund to address the mental health consequences of separation.

### **Pilot v. Brookline**

Successfully settled discrimination lawsuit filed by two Black police officers in the Brookline Police Department.

### **Rivas v. Bristol County Sheriff**

Damages action against the Bristol County Sheriff filed on behalf of immigrant father who was unlawful detained and denied bail based solely on his immigration status.

### **Sexual Harassment Settlement**

Successfully settled sexual harassment charge at MCAD brought by Latina immigrant against wholesale food preparation company in Everett.

### **Finklea v. City of Boston**

Secured favorable Suffolk Superior Court decision addressing the practice of police departments using overly stringent background checks to bar qualified minority candidates from employment opportunities.

## **2017**

### **Romero et al. v. McCormick & Schmick's**

In response to #MeToo, filed sexual harassment lawsuit on behalf of five low-wage Latina workers against a national restaurant chain, alleging a hostile work environment filled with lewd behavior and unwanted touching.

### **City of Chelsea v. Trump**

Federal lawsuit filed on behalf of Chelsea and Lawrence, challenging the constitutionality of President Trump's Executive Order targeting sanctuary cities. The suit helped to preserve federal funding and to protect local control over law enforcement priorities.

### **BizGrow Conference**

Launched signature event, connecting more than 200 entrepreneurs with free legal and business support.

### **Cook v. Mystic Valley Regional Charter School**

Represented Black students in successful challenge to school's discriminatory hair policy, which banned hair extensions and other hairstyles worn disproportionately by students of color.

### **Lawyers' Committee v. Hodgson**

Successful lawsuit to compel disclosure of records related to Bristol County sheriff's enforcement of federal immigration law. Within hours of filing the complaint, the sheriff apologized and released records.

### **Lawyers' Committee v. Spence**

Public records lawsuit filed with the SJC to compel the Massachusetts Trial Court to release information on its employment practices.

## **2016**

### **Boston Latin School Complaint**

Federal civil rights complaint requesting that the U.S. Attorney investigate racial harassment at Boston Latin School. U.S. Attorney found that BLS violated federal law by failing to adequately respond to racial harassment, and the City of Boston agreed to take steps to improve the racial climate at BLS.

**Fisher v. Univ. of Texas at Austin**

Amicus brief filed on behalf of prominent national empirical scholars in a case concerning the use of a race-based admissions policy at the Univ. of Texas at Austin, arguing that the “mismatch” theory espoused by affirmative action opponents is flawed. The Court upheld the policy, affirming use of race as one of many factors in college admissions.

**Lawyers’ Committee v. Evans**

Successful lawsuit to compel the Boston Police to release records concerning the racial impact of its employment practices. At a time of growing tension between police and communities of color, the data was the subject of intense public scrutiny concerning the lack of diversity in the police force.

**Airbnb**

Urged HUD to investigate Airbnb’s compliance with civil rights laws, citing research showing that Airbnb renters with distinctively Black names are 16% less likely to be accepted by hosts than other renters. In response, Airbnb took immediate steps to eliminate discrimination by hosts against minority renters.

**School Discipline Toolkit**

Released toolkit to educate teachers, administrators, students and parents about school disciplinary policies and alternatives to suspensions, in order to improve school discipline and combat race and disability related disparities in suspension rates.

**Doe v. Peyser**

Intervention filed on behalf of students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners in support of retaining Massachusetts’ charter school cap. The SJC upheld the constitutionality of the charter cap, preserving vital resources for traditional public schools.

**2015**

**Defay v. Boston Police**

MCAD found that Boston Police discriminated against Black recruits in its Training Academy. MCAD ordered Boston Police to “cease and desist” from discriminatory conduct and to reinstate and compensate affected individual.

**2014**

**Not Measuring Up – School Discipline Report**

Published groundbreaking report analyzing Massachusetts school discipline data and finding that students of color, students with disabilities, and charter school students are disproportionately suspended, particularly for minor misbehavior, bringing national attention to disparities in school discipline rates.

**City of Brockton v. Energy Facilities Siting Board**

Filed an environmental justice amicus brief challenging decision to locate a power plant in a minority community.

**2013**

**Pulido v. National Grid**

Successfully represented Filipino electrical worker in employment discrimination matter against National Grid.

**2012**

**NAACP v. Galvin**

Challenge to the Commonwealth’s failure to offer voter registration opportunities to public assistance recipients, in violation of the National Voter Registration Act. Commonwealth agreed to policy changes and ongoing monitoring, enfranchising thousands of low-income individuals.

**Ortiz**

**v. Boston**

**Children’s Hospital**

Employment discrimination case challenging wrongful termination of Latina health care workers. Case resulted in favorable settlement, including a bilingual public apology.

**2010**

**Bonds**

**v. Boston School Committee**

Successful employment discrimination case on behalf of a Black teacher at Boston Latin School who received less desirable teaching assignments than less-qualified White teachers.

**EEOC**

**v. Autozone**

Successfully represented a Sikh employee, who faced religious discrimination.

**2008**

**Amara**

**v. Fairmont Copley Plaza**

Successfully represented seven Moroccan and Muslim employees of the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel who faced religious and national origin discrimination.

**2006**

**Bradley v. City of Lynn**

Intervened on behalf of the NAACP and the Boston Society of Vulcans to challenge discriminatory civil service exams for police and firefighter jobs in twenty communities. In a settlement, the state agreed to offer back pay and jobs to 66 minority candidates who took the discriminatory exams.

**EEOC v. Home Depot**

Successfully represented a Black employee who experienced a racially hostile work environment and was wrongfully terminated.

**2005**

**Arise for Social Justice v. City of Springfield**

Successfully challenged Springfield’s “at-large” election system, which diluted minority voting power in violation of the Voting Rights Act.

**2004**

**Alshrafi**

**v. American Airlines**

Federal court ruled that the Airline Deregulation Act did not preempt a discrimination claim by an Arab-American passenger who was barred from a flight after 9/11.

**Black Political Task Force v. Galvin**

Federal court struck down the 2001 State House redistricting plan for 17 districts serving Boston, and enjoined the Commonwealth from holding elections for those seats until the court approved a new plan. Court found that the state plan violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, resulted in “extreme” packing of the 6th Suffolk district, and improperly stripped minority voters out of the 11th and 12th Suffolk districts.

## 2003

### Grutter Amicus Brief

Co-authored amicus brief filed by the Boston Bar Ass'n. and leading Boston law firms in the U.S. Supreme Court in support of affirmative action in admissions to the Univ. of Michigan Law School.

### Comfort v. Lynn School Committee

Filed amicus brief, along with the NAACP, successfully defending Lynn's voluntary school desegregation plan against a constitutional attack.

### Jones v. City of Boston

Landmark legal challenge to a discriminatory and unreliable hair test used by the City of Boston to determine drug use. In 2014, the First Circuit ruled that the hair test disproportionately affects Black officers. In a companion case, the MA Civil Service Commission found in 2013 that the hair test is scientifically unreliable and required Boston Police to reinstate six officers.

### Health Disparities Project

Established Health Disparities Project centered on Medical-Legal Partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital in Chelsea.

## 2002

### South Boston Betterment Trust Corporation v. Boston Redevelopment Authority

Filed amicus brief to ensure that community benefits derived from Seaport District development were equitably distributed to minority neighborhoods.

### Mayor of Cambridge v. Secretary of the Commonwealth

Filed amicus brief with the SJC to protect several majority African-American State House districts.

## 2001

### Established Economic Justice Project

In its first year, the project provided free legal support to over 250 small businesses and entrepreneurs.

### Morris v. City of Lawrence

Federal court enjoined the City of Lawrence from implementing a voter ID policy that would have discouraged Latinos from voting.

## 2000

### Mendes v. Sullivan

Successfully represented a Cape Verdean couple who were assaulted and had their property vandalized by White neighbors.

## 1999

### Jane Doe v. Boston Housing Authority

Class action lawsuit against the Boston Housing Authority for failing to protect minority tenants from chronic, racially-motivated violence and harassment at historically White housing developments. Case resulted in HUD's first-ever finding of "systemic discrimination," and the Housing Authority agreed to a \$1.5 million settlement, including adoption of a "zero-tolerance policy" for racial harassment.

## 1998

Lawyers' Committee participated in the formation of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston.

### Thornton v. Amtrak

Employment discrimination class action lawsuit on behalf of minority track workers resulting in a \$16 million settlement and systemic changes in hiring, training, promotion, and discipline.

## 1997

### Julks v. Neptune Towers

Successful lawsuit against federally -subsidized housing development that maintained a pattern and practice of discrimination.

## 1996

### Barrett v. Danca Realty World

Housing discrimination case at the MCAD resulted in a \$60,000 award for emotional distress, the largest amount ever awarded at that time.

### Mak v. Fall River Housing Authority

Successfully represented Cambodian tenants against the Fall River Housing Authority, which failed to protect them from racial violence and harassment.

## 1993

### McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education

SJC struck down Massachusetts' public school financing system, which relied heavily on local property taxes and resulted in gross disparities between districts. SJC ruled that Massachusetts has a duty under the state constitution to provide an adequate education for all children, regardless of the wealth of their local communities.

### Bennett v. City of Boston

Federal lawsuit on behalf of families challenging unlawful searches and seizures by police during the Carol Stuart murder investigation.

## 1992

### Culbreath v. BayBanks

BayBanks agreed to an \$11 million settlement in a lawsuit over its indirect home improvement financing program, which used illegal sales tactics to lure homeowners in communities of color to take out high interest loans, in violation of consumer protection and civil rights laws.

## 1988

At the Lawyers' Committee's 20th Anniversary, Sen. Edward Kennedy called for "a new abolitionist movement" to stamp out racism.

### Black Political Task Force v. Connelly

Federal court invalidated the State House redistricting plan based on the 1985 state census for violating the "one person, one vote" principle. First Latino state legislator elected from newly created Boston district.

### NAACP v. Boston Housing Authority

Federal class action lawsuit against the Boston Housing Authority for maintaining racially segregated public housing.



**1987**

**Thong Lim  
v. Somerville Housing  
Authority**

Federal class action lawsuit against the Somerville Housing Authority for its failure to protect minority tenants from racial violence and harassment.

**Hispanic Parents  
Advisory Council  
v. City of Lowell**

School desegregation and bilingual education case in Lowell, resulting in a favorable settlement.

**1986**

**Established Fair Housing  
Project**

**1983**

**Latino Political Action  
Committee  
v. City of Boston**

Federal court invalidated Boston's redistricting plan for violating the constitutional principle of "one person, one vote," under section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

**1982**

**Established Project to  
Combat Racial Violence**

**1981**

**Rendell-Baker  
v. Kohn**

Represented several teachers at a private special education school in Brookline.

**Hispanic Parents  
Advisory Council  
v. City of Holyoke**

School desegregation case in Holyoke, resulting in a favorable settlement including bilingual and special education plans.

**1979**

**Brown  
v. City of Salem**

Successfully represented minority applicant who was not hired as a police officer despite ranking first on the civil service exam.

**1978**

**Latino Association for  
Progress & Action  
v. Worcester Public  
Schools**

Lawsuit to compel the Worcester Public Schools to provide equal educational opportunities to children with limited English proficiency. Settled by a consent decree.

**Latinos Unidos de  
Chelsea en Acción  
v. HUD**

Challenged the disbursement of federal funds to the City of Chelsea under the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act.

**NAACP  
v. HUD**

Class action lawsuit challenging the discriminatory use of HUD funds disbursed to Boston, resulting in a favorable settlement.

**MAMLEO  
v. Boston Police**

Challenged a discriminatory civil service exam for promotions to sergeant, resulting in a consent decree that led to the first permanent Boston Police sergeants of color. The consent decree survived a challenge as "reverse discrimination" in MAMLEO v. Boston Police. A court upheld the consent decree's extension to lieutenants and captains in Stuart v. Roache.

**Castro & NAACP  
v. Beecher**

Successfully challenged discriminatory police and fire department hiring practices in communities across Massachusetts, including Boston. As a result of consent decrees, there are now hundreds of police officers and firefighters of color in Massachusetts.

**1974**

**Morgan  
v. Hennigan**

Federal court ordered the Boston Public Schools to desegregate in 1974, a landmark decision upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

**1970**

Published "The Quality of Justice in the Lower Criminal Courts of Metropolitan Boston," a groundbreaking report that led to systemic court reforms.

**1968**

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the Boston Bar Association was formed in 1968 in the midst of riots and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the findings of the Kerner Commission report (concluding that the nation was "moving toward two societies, one Black, one White – separate and unequal"). Funded with a grant from the Ford Foundation and contributions from Boston law firms, the Committee became the first of eight independent affiliates of the national Lawyers' Committee. President Kennedy's vision of the legal profession mobilizing its resources to support progress in civil rights came home to his birthplace. Gaspard D'Andelot "Don" Belin served as the first Chair of the Committee.

**1963**

**On June 21, 1963,  
President John F.  
Kennedy and Attorney  
General Robert F.  
Kennedy met with 244  
leading American lawyers  
in the White House.**

The President and Attorney General made a special appeal to mobilize the legal profession to support the struggle for civil rights. The national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law was created.