

SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

For violations of civil rights and civil liberties, including free speech, assembly and the right to protest:

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Massachusetts
tel. (617) 482-3170

To report police misconduct or a hate crime:

- Civil Rights Division of the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
tel. (617) 727-2200 x 2901
- ACLU of Massachusetts at (617) 482-3170

To file a complaint of discrimination:

- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
tel. (617) 565-3200
- Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
tel. (617) 994-6000

To defend civil rights:

- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
tel. (617) 482-1145
- American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee - Massachusetts
tel. (617) 262-8902
- ACLU of Massachusetts at (617) 482-3170

For voting rights:

- Dunk the Vote
tel. (617) 233-4238; (617) 445-3700
- Mass Voters for Clean Elections
(617) 451-3620; (617) 451-5999

For a referral to a lawyer:

- Massachusetts Bar Association Lawyers Referral Service
tel. (617) 742-0625
- National Lawyers Guild Referral Service
tel. (617) 227-7008

For immigration issues and attorneys:

- Boston College Immigration & Asylum Project
tel. (617) 552-0593
- American Immigration Lawyers Association
tel. (800) 954-0254

For prisoners rights:

- Mass. Correctional Legal Services
tel. (617) 482-2773
- American Friends Service Committee
tel. (617) 661 6130



www.aclum.org

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!



Retracing the steps of the Movement: Jessica Murray
Boston students walk over the Edmund Pettus Bridge

"In this revolution, no plans have been written for retreat."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

On March 7, 1965, civil rights demonstrators were beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama when they marched for voting rights. But they were not defeated. Led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., thousands of marchers reached the state capital of Montgomery on March 25, and pressured Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act.

To keep moving forward we need to know what our rights are and use them -- and have no plans for retreat.

Know Your Rights and Use Them - Or You May Lose Them!

For most of our country's history, rights were just words on paper. It took the Movement of the 1950s and 60s to begin to make rights real for large numbers of Americans.

The civil rights and civil liberties we have today were won on the streets, at the polls, in the legislatures and in the courts. And unless we are prepared to challenge threats to rights on the streets, at the polls, and in the courts, we could move backwards as a society.

What are civil rights?

Civil rights are the fundamental rights of citizenship, including the right to be treated equally under the law, the right to be free from discrimination, and the right to participate in the political process. Despite the gains of the Movement, we still have a long way to go to realize the promise of fair and equal treatment. The Movement's unfinished business includes ongoing discrimination in housing, employment and health care, the failure to adequately fund public schools for all our children, and racially-biased criminal justice policies that disproportionately target people of color.

What about the right to vote?

If you are a US citizen, you can vote in Massachusetts if you are at least 18 years old, have registered, and are not serving time for a felony conviction. But even this basic right cannot be taken for granted. Voting districts created to provide fair representation have been struck down by Congress. And in 2007 some sections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 will expire unless renewed by Congress, putting the voting rights of millions at risk.

What are civil liberties?

Civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights protect individuals from the power of government. They give you as an individual the right to freedom of speech, to an uncensored press, to hold demonstrations and petition the government, to worship free of government interference, to have a fair trial and due process protections, and to have your privacy respected.

If I am not a citizen, do I have any rights?

Yes! The courts have ruled that once you are in the country - even if you are not here legally - you and your children do have some rights to fair treatment and education. The Bill of Rights prohibits discrimination based on race and national origin against citizens and non-citizens alike. And everyone in the country should enjoy certain civil liberties.

However, if you are not a citizen, you don't have exactly the same constitutional protections and due process rights. But even if you are here illegally, you are not supposed to be deported without a hearing.

Do we still have these rights post 9/11?

The government says it needs more power to ensure national security. Through the USA PATRIOT Act and other actions, it has expanded its power to monitor us, collect information about us and search and wiretap our homes. The current "zero tolerance" enforcement of immigration regulations has devastated families and communities. These measures are often counterproductive, do not make us safe, and must be challenged and rolled back.

What are my rights at home and on the streets?

- If the police ask to search your home, you don't have to admit them unless they have a warrant signed by a judge. But in some emergency situations -- say, someone is screaming inside -- they may enter without a warrant. Even if they have a warrant, you do not need to answer questions until you have a lawyer.
- If they do not have a search warrant, you do not have to let them in or answer their questions. If they insist on searching and you do not consent, get their names and badge numbers and call a lawyer as soon as possible. Remain silent until you consult a lawyer. If you do consent to a search, it can affect your rights later in court.
- If you are stopped by police on the street you can be patted down outside your clothing if they believe you are carrying a weapon. If they search any further, say "I do not consent to a search." You do not need to answer any questions.
- If you are stopped in your car you do not have to consent to a search. But if police have probable cause to believe you have been involved in a crime or they can see evidence of a crime in your car, your car can be searched without your consent.
- If you are arrested you have the right to remain silent and talk to a lawyer before you talk to the police.
- You have the right to march, demonstrate and leaflet in many public places.

Use your First Amendment rights to keep the promise of the Movement alive!