YOU PROBABLY KNEW this moment was coming. Even with the extraordinary and dispiriting flood of highly-publicized instances of black people being killed by police—in moments where the level of deadly force being used was in no way commensurate with the alleged threat—the past year has given us plenty of reasons to hope.

A robust dialogue has risen up about police practices—stop-and-frisk, broken windows, the biased implementation of the War on Drugs—which have led to both unnecessary deaths and, thankfully, to the “social death” of mass incarceration. Mass incarceration, or the New Jim Crow, has had a devastating impact on communities of color in Pennsylvania and throughout the country. In response, the Black Lives Matter movement has led the charge in demanding real reforms to policing, the criminal justice system, and the way our culture understands what race means in 2015.

It’s no surprise that the Black Lives Matter movement has come under attack. Despite media coverage that largely ranges from skepticism to scorn, the movement has been hugely successful. Policing reform bills have passed in numerous legislatures, and, last August, a poll showed that the percentage of Americans who think the nation needs to continue making changes to achieve racial justice has risen by 16 points in the last year.

This, of course, is a tremendous threat to those who, for whatever reason, are invested in the status quo—and they have started to bite back.

A New York Times article from early September about the growing homicide rates in many U.S. cities reported that “among some experts and rank-and-file officers, the notion that less aggressive policing has emboldened criminals—known as the “Ferguson effect” in some circles—is a popular theory for the uptick in violence.”

Mobile Justice Comes To Pennsylvania

This fall, the ACLU of Pennsylvania launched its own state-specific version of the incredibly popular Mobile Justice smart phone app, a tool that empowers residents during interactions with police.

The app has three main functions: record, witness, and report. “Record” enables individuals to capture exchanges between police officers and themselves or other community members in audio and video files that are automatically sent to the ACLU-PA. “Witness” sends out an alert when someone is stopped by police so that community members can move toward the location and document the interaction. “Report” allows for an incident report without filming. The app also provides an overview of your rights when stopped by law enforcement officers.

The app is available for free download through the App Store (iPhone) and Google Play (Android) or by visiting www.aclupa.org/mobile.
Dear ACLU supporter,

It truly has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the president of the ACLU of Pennsylvania for the past eight years. But it now is time to pass on the baton. This December, I will be stepping down as president of the board of this amazing organization.

During my tenure, I have marveled at the passion and commitment of our staff, board, volunteers, and supporters. We have—together—made incredible strides in making the promises of the Bill of Rights a reality for all Pennsylvanians. As for our victories, we secured marriage equality, overturned voter ID, and stopped Hadassah’s anti-immigrant ordinances. Each of these cases represents what matters most to me—not just liberties, but liberty and justice for all.

One of my proudest achievements as board president was overseeing the process that resulted in the hiring of our fantastic executive director—Reggie Shuford—four years ago. Before taking the state board chair’s seat, I was an ACLU volunteer lawyer, Pittsburgh Chapter member, and state board member. In that capacity, I came to know and admire the tenacity and dedication of Barb Feige, our featured guest at this year’s Bill of Rights Dinner in Philadelphia, which had a column on September 3, which, I think, provides a compelling explanation of why Black Lives Matter—and why we chose to share many of the movement’s concerns—are seeing this level of backlash:

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**Settlement Reached in ACLU-PA Lawsuit Over Pittsburgh Bureau of Police’s Discriminatory Hiring Practices**

This December, the ACLU of Pennsylvania reached a settlement in a lawsuit, Foster v. City of Pittsburgh. James Crawford, ACLU-PA Legal Director, representing plaintiff James Foster, and Rebecca Murray, ACLU-PA Staff Attorney, representing plaintiff Mary Foster, have reached a settlement.

**Yours,**

Reggie Shuford
Executive Director
ACLU of Pennsylvania

Kim Watterson
President
ACLU of Pennsylvania

Yours,

Reggie Shuford
Executive Director
ACLU of Pennsylvania

Kim Watterson
President
ACLU of Pennsylvania

**Settlement Reached in ACLU-PA Lawsuit Over Pittsburgh Bureau of Police’s Discriminatory Hiring Practices**

This May, the ACLU of Pennsylvania reached a settlement in our 2012 lawsuit, Foster v. City of Pittsburgh, which sought to correct a pattern of racial discrimination in Pittsburgh Bureau of Police’s hiring practices. Following a year of mediation, the city of Pittsburgh agreed to provide for both a process to reform the hiring system and payments totaling $119,000 to African-American applicants who were rejected between 2008 and 2014.

Our lawsuit had alleged that the low number of African-American hires stemmed from entrenched problems with the screening and hiring process, including favoritism toward applicants with family or friends who are already police officers and decisions based on purely subjective criteria.

The effect of the agreement has already been felt, as the first post-settlement class of new police officers was made up of 25 percent African-American applicants. Prior to the lawsuit, only about 4 percent of new hires were African-American. The city of Pittsburgh is 26 percent African-American.

More information about the case is available at: www.aclupa.org/foster

James Foster, lead plaintiff

Kim Watterson
President
ACLU of Pennsylvania

Yours,

Reggie Shuford
Executive Director
ACLU of Pennsylvania

Kim Watterson
President
ACLU of Pennsylvania
A Legacy for Social Justice
An Interview with Caroll Blank and Helen Nunn

ACLU-PA Director of Development Bruce Makous interviewed ACLU supporters Caroll Blank and Helen Nunn of Lewisburg, PA, on September 3, 2015.

Tell us a little about yourselves and how you met.

Caroll and Helen: Caroll grew up in Lewisburg, PA, and had a first career in oncology nursing, teaching at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. After completing training as a clinical social worker, she moved back to this area in the late 1970s, began a second career by establishing her own practice and became a well-regarded Jungian feminist psychotherapist in Lewisburg. Helen grew up in western Pennsylvania and moved to Selinsgrove in the mid-1980s to serve as Director of Financial Aid at Susquehanna University. However, once we began to attend local meetings and met members of the local chapter, our faith in the importance of the work was cemented. We wanted to be part of it.

What inspired you to become a member?

Caroll and Helen: We had been aware of the work of the ACLU on various civil rights issues through the media and through presentations by Nadine Strossen, then ACLU national chair, at Susquehanna University. However, once we began to attend local meetings and met members of the local chapter, our faith in the importance of the work was cemented. We wanted to be part of it.

What civil liberties issue are you most passionate about and why?

Caroll and Helen: We have been committed lesbian partners for 23 years. We have experienced first-hand the homophobia that pervades our society, watched in horror as brothers and sisters have been physically assaulted and harassed and sometimes killed, cheered as Edie Windsor was vindicated in seeking to be treated as the legal spouse of her deceased partner for inheritance rights, and supported the work of the ACLU and others in the fight for marriage equality. Clearly, this issue is very personal for us. We chose to travel to New York City to marry two years ago, hoping that Pennsylvania would soon recognize our marriage. Thanks in large part to the work of the ACLU, this has come to pass and we are grateful for that important effort.

You have been very generous to the ACLU since you joined, and you recently established the Caroll Blank and Helen Nunn Fund for Social Justice at the ACLU. Can you tell us what has inspired you to make this gift?

Caroll and Helen: We both just recently retired from our professions and in the course of our estate planning, we felt strongly that we wanted to create a legacy that would go on working for good long after we were gone. Contributing to the ongoing efforts of the ACLU offered an opportunity to be confident that, as issues and needs change over time, our money would be put to the work of the most pressing concerns that emerge. We are grateful that we were able to establish our fund and hope to continue to contribute to it over time.

Any other thoughts you would like to share?

Caroll and Helen: The ACLU is consistently on the front lines of the issues that matter most to the dignity of individuals. While we celebrate our newfound recognition as a married couple, we know that the work continues on behalf of LGBT equality, one of the great civil rights causes of our time. We also know that there are many other areas where the ACLU is needed. At this time, we are most especially focused on the systemic racism that continues to plague all aspects of our American life. We continue to support the ACLU’s ongoing work in this critical area.

Bruce Makous interviewed ACLU supporters Caroll Blank and Helen Nunn of Lewisburg, PA, on September 3, 2015.

We officially joined the ACLU in 2009 after Caroll was recognized by our local chapter for a letter she had written to the editor of our local paper.

ACEU-PA at Philadelphia Pride

Kevin North and ACLU-PA Legal Fellow Adrienne Ghoshari march with the ACLU in the Philadelphia Pride Parade.

ACLU-PA staff attorney Molly Tack-Hooper and her son Milo before the parade gets underway.

PHOTOS: BEN BOWENS

TELL PA LAWMAKERS: Pass the Pennsylvania Fairness Act!

This August, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers introduced the Pennsylvania Fairness Act, legislation that will update Pennsylvania’s 1955 Human Relations Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

Pennsylvania is the only state in the Northeast that does not currently provide protections from discrimination for its LGBT community. Call your state legislators and tell them to support the PA Fairness Act! Find your legislators’ contact information at: www.aclupa.org/yourlegislator
The ACLU of Pennsylvania’s Frankel-Adair scholarship provides $1,500 in support of post-secondary education to an LGBT student residing in the Greater Philadelphia area. The scholarship honors the late Larry Frankel, former executive and legislative director of the ACLU-PA, and the benefactor, Thomas T. Adair.

This year there were two award winners, D’Angelo Cameron, a student at La Salle, and Michael Kokozos, a student at the University of Pennsylvania. You can find interviews with the two award-winners on the ACLU-PA blog, Speaking Freely, at blog.aclupa.org.

Volunteer attorneys at Reed Smith and the ACLU of Pennsylvania have been advocating for reform of Pennsylvania’s asset forfeiture laws. Under these laws, the government can take and keep someone’s property—even if the property owner has never been accused of a crime. Originally designed as a tool against drug kingpins, forfeiture has increasingly been used to take homes, cars, and cash from ordinary Pennsylvanians.

Fortunately, people across the political spectrum have recognized the need to fix this abusive practice in Pennsylvania. This summer, companion bills to reform the forfeiture system were introduced in both the state House and Senate with bi-partisan support. If passed, the bills, drafted with the assistance of the ACLU-PA, would require that property owners be convicted of a crime before their property is forfeited and would end the profit incentive for law enforcement by requiring that proceeds of forfeiture be deposited into a general government fund. We expect hearings on these bills sometime this fall.

Learn more about forfeiture at: www.aclupa.org/forfeiture

Reforming Pennsylvania’s Broken Forfeiture System
Greater Pittsburgh Chapter Annual Picnic

This past July, civil libertarians in Pittsburgh gathered for food and conversation at the Pittsburgh Chapter’s annual picnic.