



# JUSTICE TAKES A FIGHT

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**T**his fall, we have been reflecting on our past twenty years of fighting the ideologies of war, xenophobia, and authoritarianism that drove the U.S. government's response to 9/11, while also reshaping destructive narratives and building structures needed for justice, accountability, and healing.

In those twenty years, we have defended those imprisoned at Guantánamo — successfully advocating for the release of dozens of men while demanding, time and time again, the prison's closure. We have fought back against attacks on Muslims and immigrants, called for accountability for torture, and illustrated the connections between post-9/11 military and carceral strategies and the longstanding practices that have targeted Black and Brown communities. And we have done it all in partnership with marginalized communities and social movements, with activists and artists, and most importantly, with you, our donors who ensure that we have the necessary resources to do this crucial work together.

Yet twenty years later, the ideological commitment to maximum state security reflected in the so-called “War on Terror” is still not over, and neither is our fight against

it. This year, we seized on the opportunity presented by a new president and called on the Biden administration to do three things: close Guantánamo Bay prison once and for all, provide redress to victims of the U.S. torture program, and dismantle the terrorism framework and ideologies of war, detention, and impunity. Thanks to your unwavering partnership, we will continue to hold this administration accountable as we have done with the previous three.

We work inside and outside the courts, with litigation and with advocacy. Using our “Activist-Lawyer-Storyteller” framework, we seek out new and often unseen voices through works of art that tell the stories of our communities and movement partners. And we don't do anything alone. Our work is only possible because of you, our bold and steadfast supporters! Also key to our work is the vast network that makes up the Center for Constitutional Rights family: the communities we serve, social movements, our board members, other lawyers and advocates, and storytellers, whether they be artists, writers, or journalists.

In this newsletter, you will hear from your fellow supporters, as well as our partners in the fight for justice! Thank you for understanding that the path to justice is not always a direct one, and that it is the relationships within the rich tapestry of the Center for Constitutional Rights' family that make our work transformative.

With gratitude and solidarity,

**Vince Warren**  
**Executive Director**

**It is your deep partnership that makes it possible for me, and the rest of our family, to wake up each day with renewed energy for whatever lies ahead in the ongoing fight for justice. I am so thankful for you.**

## **THE 9/11 EFFECT: RECKONING WITH 20 YEARS OF INJUSTICE**

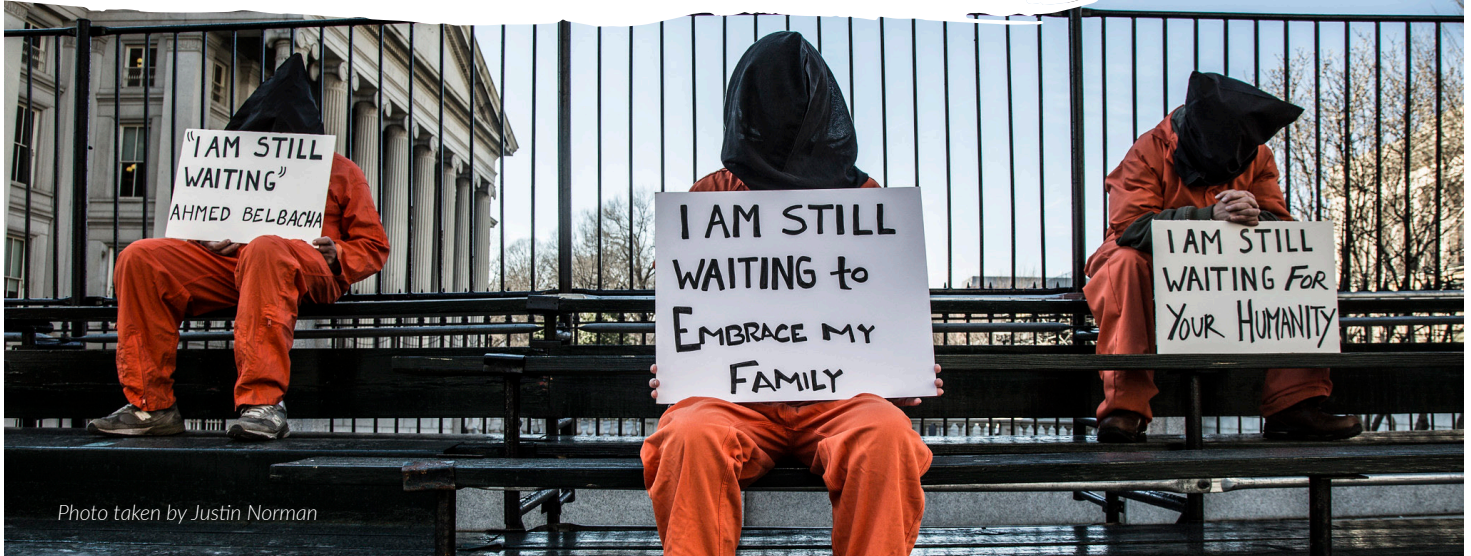


Photo taken by Justin Norman

“Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States turned a horrific criminal act...into a platform to launch a shocking human rights crisis. The government used the same formula it had for centuries before 9/11: launch foreign wars and establish domestic policies to oppress its own people in service of some broader ideological conflict. Here, as before, in transforming politics, law, and culture, the United States constructed a dominant, destructive, and enduring 9/11 ideology building upon narratives of xenophobia...”

—CCR Legal Director Baher Azmy

**T**he Center for Constitutional Rights continues to fight back. What follows is a glimpse of our multifaceted, long-term work to resist the ideologies of authoritarianism and help build a world of justice and love. Thank you for your crucial partnership in fighting for marginalized communities!

## **PATH-BREAKING LITIGATION**

In summer, winter, autumn and in fall  
Years of life passed away without feeling  
Wounded heart bleeding without healing  
Precious times of my life have been stolen

—from the poem “Soul” by Guantánamo detainee and CCR client Majid Khan

### ***Khan v. Obama/Khan v. Gates/United States v. Khan***

In 2003, Majid Khan was disappeared by the CIA and tortured at secret overseas “black sites” before being transferred to Guantánamo in 2006. We started representing Khan in 2006, and because, we believe, the government was so scared of his potential to reveal their illegal conduct, it took



Guantánamo detainee and CCR client [Majid Khan](#)

a year of fighting just to meet with him. This fall, Majid Khan finally became the first person held in CIA secret detention and torture sites to publicly tell his devastating [story](#) of disappearance, detention, and torture in an unprecedented hearing in a Guantánamo courtroom. After hearing his testimony, the majority of the jury of military officers [recommended clemency for Majid Khan](#), saying that what he suffered was akin to “torture performed by the most abusive regimes in modern history” and “should be a source of shame for the U.S. government.” Khan is scheduled for release in February. His hearing was featured in the *New York Times* and numerous other publications.



**A stubborn myth about the men at Guantánamo is that at some point they were all squared off against U.S. soldiers with guns drawn, and were captured and shipped off to Guantánamo to neutralize the threat they posed. The well-documented but little known reality is that following its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S. military ran a slipshod, bounty-based dragnet that ensnared hundreds of men and boys whose worst crime was being at the wrong place at the wrong time.”**

—Omar Farah, Senior Staff Attorney and Associate Director of Strategic Initiatives, reflecting on the case of our client Tariq Ba Odah in *Rolling Stone* in 2015. In 2016, after litigation and public pressure drawing attention to his courageous long-term hunger strike forced the government’s hand, Ba Odah was released—after 14 years of detention without charge or trial.

Within weeks of the first men being brought to the Guantánamo Bay prison in 2002, we filed [Rasul v. Bush](#), one of the first cases to challenge unlawful detentions there. Our work led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling that the men have the right to challenge their detention. The case opened the base that had been intended as a legal black hole to counsel — and opened the eyes of the world.

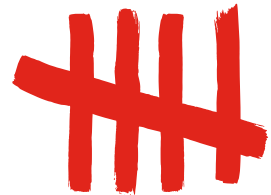
In [Rasul v. Rumsfeld](#), we alleged that then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the military chain of command approved interrogation practices they knew to be in violation of U.S. and international law. Our clients, who had been imprisoned at Guantánamo, were released without ever being charged with a crime.

**“Solitary confinement has destroyed me...It was like a huge mountain that was on top of me. And the pressure on me was so high it squeezed tears out of my eyes...I had no sense of [time] passing...I was all alone in the world. I couldn’t find a way to stop the torture.”**

—Mohammed al Qahtani, who has been held without trial at Guantánamo Bay prison for more than 19 years, despite being entitled to a medical evaluation to determine whether the government may continue to detain him in light of the severe mental illness he suffers. We have been fighting for him since 2005 and we will persevere.

We are currently fighting for five of the 39 men still detained at the base, including representing two at the International Criminal Court at the Hague. We are fighting for their release while we fight for the whole prison to be shut down. In addition to the cases we have fought directly, the Center for Constitutional Rights has organized hundreds of pro bono attorneys to ensure that every man imprisoned at Guantánamo had the opportunity to be represented by counsel.

For more than a decade, in [Al Shimari v. CACI](#), we have represented Iraqi victims of torture at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in a case against a U.S.-based government contractor. It is a historic challenge to corporate impunity for human rights violations. We are one step away from a trial where our clients can tell their story in an American courtroom.



**Number of detained men we are currently fighting for**

**“The Center for Constitutional Rights heals wounds of injustice so that all people may take their rightful place in society and fully participate”**

—CCR donor Carolyn Purcell



“When we look for people fighting for those men...caged by our government at the U.S. prison at Guantánamo, we see the Center for Constitutional Rights. CCR remains a beacon of light in these dark times.”

—CCR Donors Paul and Katja Rehm

“Words can’t explain the suffering of my family, the worry and tears of my mother. The years I couldn’t see my wife because I was stuck in this open prison and couldn’t fly.”

—Naveed Shinwari

a plaintiff in our Supreme Court case **Tanvir v. Tanzin**, which successfully defended our clients’ right to sue federal officials for damages under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act after they had been placed on the No-Fly List in retaliation for their refusal to spy on their Muslim communities.

“[After 9/11] the Center for Constitutional Rights was brave enough to challenge the national narrative that justified suspending basic legal protections in the interest of ‘national security.’”

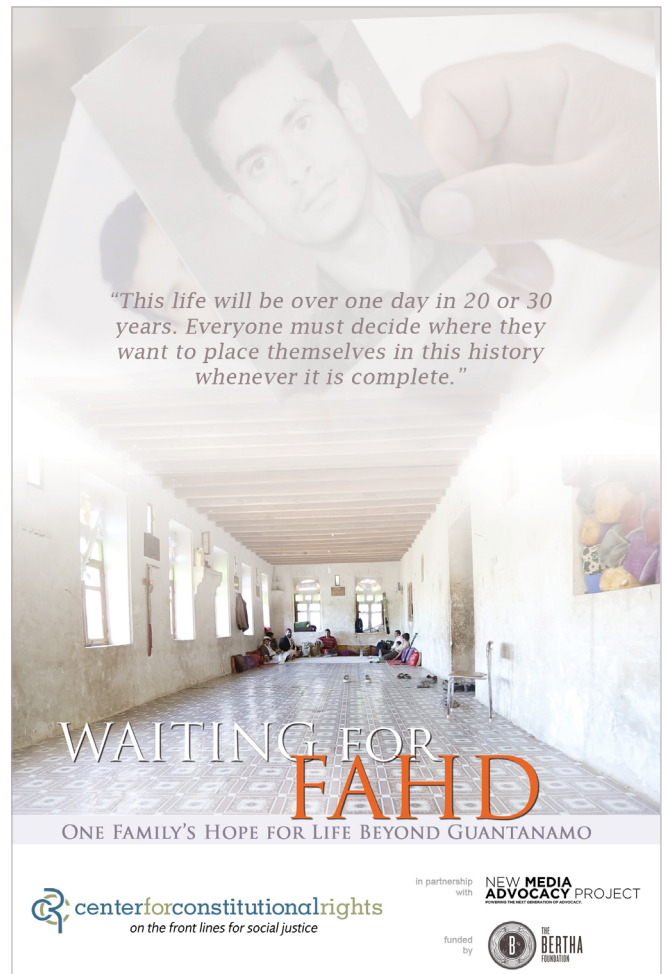
—Board Co-Chair Lisa Crooms-Robinson

# ADVOCACY

**W**e fight for justice through the legal system, and we also take the struggle beyond the courts.

**“If you have an activist, a lawyer, and a storyteller, you can change the world.”**

Writers, artists, and filmmakers help us show the real, human impacts of authoritarian ideologies and policies. We amplify our clients’ creative expression and honor the art of probing and resistance.



**“Be a voice for the voiceless—for another human being who is suffering.”**

—Fahd Ghazy, a client of the Center for Constitutional Rights who was unlawfully detained at Guantánamo when he was 17 and spent more than a decade there. Our short film **Waiting for Fahd** shares his story.

# ADVOCACY (CONT'D)

virtual event

Monday, September 20, 2021  
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. ET

## LETTERS FROM DETENTION: PERFORMANCE AND TALK-BACK

A virtual performance and reflection on 20 years since the post-9/11 immigration roundups and detentions.

RSVP: [bit.ly/letters-detention-21](https://bit.ly/letters-detention-21)

ASL and live transcription available

CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS in association with PUBLIC.

We partnered with the Public Theater on [Letters from Detention](#), a theatrical work by Jessica Blank and Eric Jensen based on letters between Hany Ibrahim and Yasser Ebrahim, two brothers and Center for Constitutional Rights clients who were detained in post-9/11 roundups along with hundreds of other Muslim, Arab, and South Asian immigrants based only on their race, religion, immigration status, and national origin.

*"Nobody tells me when I'm going to go home, nobody tells me why I am detained all this time for no charge."  
—Yasser Ebrahim*

*"Sometimes, I find myself walking around in my cellblock, wondering who these people are, why I am here, and where my brother is. I cannot believe what happened, how and why. The only reason why you are here, is that you are Muslim. That's the whole story." —Hany Ibrahim*

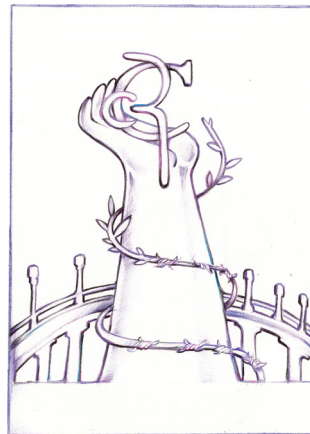
We harness the power of film to educate, activate, and build community.



## [Freedom Flicks](#)

is an ongoing screening and conversation series that presents award-winning, cutting-edge works about the political and social unrest shaping our world. We also co-sponsored the 2021 War on Terror Film Festival, a month-long virtual program featuring films made over the last 20 years that document abuses, highlight crimes, and satirize absurdities of the so-called War on Terror.

Art by [Ghaleb Al-Bihani](#) and [Djamel Ameziane](#), clients of the Center for Constitutional Rights, has been exhibited in New York City and Washington, DC. In 2022, in collaboration with the Tea Project, their work will be featured in "Remaking the Exceptional: Tea, Torture, & Reparations | Chicago to Guantánamo" at the Depaul Art Museum in Chicago.



art by CCR clients and Guantánamo Detainees Ghaleb Al-Bihani (left) and Djamel Ameziane (right)

The Center for Constitutional Rights and our broad network of partners coordinated [a letter urging President Biden to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay once and for all](#). Through our deep and broad movement relationships, we were able to bring together more than 100 signatories, including organizations working to end anti-Muslim discrimination and torture, immigrant rights organizations, and organizations working broadly on civil rights, civil liberties, and racial justice.

To learn more about our work over the past two decades, visit our multimedia web resource [ccrjustice.org/911-effect](https://ccrjustice.org/911-effect).

➤ Thank you for making it possible to be fierce and resolute in the fight for justice!

# WAYS TO GIVE BACK

## Double the Impact of Your Gift

### The Michael Ratner Campaign for the Next Generation

Thanks to Katherine Franke's generous match, you can double the impact of your commitment by making a new or increased gift to the Michael Ratner Campaign for the Next Generation at [ccrjustice.org/MRC](http://ccrjustice.org/MRC).

## Justice Sustainers

### Monthly Donors Make Our Work Possible

*Thank you, Justice Sustainers!*

The fight for justice never stops—and it makes a huge difference to have funding we can count on to sustain our work. Recurring monthly gifts allow the Center for Constitutional Rights to plan ahead, and to leverage resources to respond to challenges and opportunities as they arise. That means more hope for our clients, more support for grassroots movements, and more justice for all.

All new Justice Sustainers will receive a free copy of Michael Ratner's autobiography, *Moving the Bar!*

Don't forget to give by establishing an automatic monthly gift at [ccrjustice.org/donate](http://ccrjustice.org/donate).

## Thelma Newman Planned Giving Society Supporting Justice for Generations to Come

Thelma Newman was not a wealthy woman, yet she made a six-figure gift to the Center for Constitutional Rights to support our work into the future. And she hoped to inspire others to do the same.

Newman was the legal assistant to our co-founder Morty Stavis at the United Electrical Workers. She knew the fight for justice is long, and she wanted to support it even beyond her own lifetime.

The members of our Thelma Newman Planned Giving Society have included us in their estate plans. Join them and make the struggle for justice an enduring part of your legacy at [ccrjustice.org/TNS](http://ccrjustice.org/TNS).

### > If you would like to learn more about:

Becoming a *Justice Sustainer*, joining the *Thelma Newman Society* or supporting the *Michael Ratner Campaign for the Next Generation*, please contact our Director of Development Theda Jackson-Mau at [tjackson-mau@ccrjustice.org](mailto:tjackson-mau@ccrjustice.org) or 212-614-6448.

# THANK YOU!

Make a gift at:

[ccrjustice.org/donate](http://ccrjustice.org/donate)

Online gifts are a quicker and greener way to give!

By mail to:

Theda Jackson-Mau

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YEARS