

**UC Irvine** Law  
Fred T. Korematsu  
Center for Law and Equality

# Annual Report

2024  
2025

# About the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality

In 2009, Executive Director Robert S. Chang, professor of law, founded the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality at Seattle University School of Law with the mission to use litigation advocacy, clinical education, and research to promote racial equity and social justice. Professor Chang and the Korematsu Center joined the UC Irvine School of Law in July 2024.

The Center is named after Fred T. Korematsu, who defied military orders to report to a government incarceration camp during World War II. His refusal to obey the exclusion order led to his arrest and conviction in 1942.

Korematsu appealed his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld his conviction in 1944 on the ground that the removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans was justified by “military necessity.”

Forty years later, Korematsu filed suit to reopen his case based on new evidence that the government had suppressed, altered, and destroyed material evidence that contradicted its claim of military necessity. In 1984, a federal court judge granted Korematsu’s petition and vacated his conviction.

Korematsu remained an activist throughout his life, not only seeking redress for Japanese Americans who were wrongfully incarcerated, but also advocating for the civil rights of other victims of excessive government action, especially after the events of 9/11. In awarding Korematsu the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998, President Bill Clinton remarked, “In the long history of our country’s constant search for justice, some names of ordinary citizens stand for millions of souls—Plessy, Brown, Parks. To that distinguished list today we add the name of Fred Korematsu.”

Through litigation, amicus advocacy, education, and public engagement, the Korematsu Center continues Fred T. Korematsu’s legacy of challenging injustice and upholding constitutional protections for all.

# A Letter from the Founder and Executive Director

In October 2024, UC Irvine Law held a launch event to welcome the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality to its new institutional home. With UC Irvine Provost Hal Stern and Dean Austen Parrish, leaders from regional, state, and national bar associations, as well as leaders from community organizations, welcomed the Center.

The event also served as the ceremony where I was installed as the inaugural holder of the Sylvia Mendez Presidential Chair for Civil Rights. Thanks to a generous gift from long-time supporters of the Korematsu Center, with a partial match from a special fund created by the University of California Office of the President, an endowed chair was created for a faculty member who would lead the Center. I am so grateful to Sylvia Mendez for graciously granting permission to name the chair after her to commemorate her role as the lead student plaintiff whose legal challenge in the late 1940s ended the segregation of Mexican American children in the Westminster School District and led to the end of segregated education in all of California.

An additional gift from the Center's long-time supporters allowed us to add Shaleen Shanbhag ('14) as our Director. Shaleen has been able to work directly with students through the law school's Michael G. Ermer's Pro Bono Program, and she has expanded our ability to work with teams of students in the law school's clinical programs, including the Immigrant & Racial Justice Solidarity Clinic and the Defending Democracy Clinic.

In doing this work, we have drawn inspiration from the twin legacies of Fred Korematsu and Sylvia Mendez to meet the current moment, to fight for justice and the rule of law. In doing so, we hope to serve as a model for how a center situated in a law school can leverage resources to have an impact that far exceeds what any single person can accomplish.

The Korematsu Center has flourished in its first year at UC Irvine, due largely to the support from UC Irvine and our generous donors, as well as partnerships with local and national law firms, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations. It is this support that enables us to fight for justice now and in the coming years.

With gratitude,



Robert S. Chang  
Professor of Law and Sylvia Mendez Presidential Chair for Civil Rights  
Executive Director, Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality

# Meet the Center’s Director



**Shaleen Shanbhag (Law '14)** joined the Korematsu Center in June 2025.

“I’m honored to lead the Korematsu Center with Professor Chang and return to UCI Law, where my commitment to social justice was forged as a student. I look forward to growing the Center’s impact and expanding our efforts to advance racial justice and equity.”

# Meet the Center’s Faculty Affiliates

The Korematsu Center’s faculty affiliates are University of California, Irvine scholars and practitioners whose teaching and research amplify and advance the Center’s mission. In a future newsletter, we’ll highlight more of the work of the faculty affiliates.

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| <b>Sameer Ashar</b> , Clinical Professor of Law                | <b>Annie Lai</b> , Clinical Professor of Law                   |
| <b>Swethaa Ballakrishnen</b> , Professor of Law                | <b>Stephen Lee</b> , Professor of Law                          |
| <b>Mario Barnes</b> , Chancellor’s Professor of Law            | <b>Susan McMahon</b> , Professor of Lawyering Skills           |
| <b>Mehrsa Baradaran</b> , Professor of Law                     | <b>Emily Penner</b> , Associate Professor, School of Education |
| <b>Rachel Croskery-Roberts</b> , Professor of Lawyering Skills | <b>Song Richardson</b> , Chancellor’s Professor of Law         |
| <b>Veena Dubal</b> , Professor of Law                          | <b>Ji Seon Song</b> , Assistant Professor of Law               |
| <b>Kaaryn Gustafson</b> , Professor of Law Emeritus            | <b>Beatrice Tice</b> , Professor of the Practice of Law        |

On occasion, faculty affiliates partner with the Korematsu Center in our work. In April 2025, **Susan McMahon** joined the team to draft amicus briefs in support of law firms Perkins Coie, Jenner & Block, WilmerHale, and Susman Godfrey in their cases challenging Executive Orders that aimed to punish law firms for providing pro bono legal services disfavored by the Trump administration. She also joined the team that drafted amicus briefs challenging the federal government’s Birthright Citizenship Executive Order in *Washington v. Trump*.

In November 2025, **Rachel Croskery-Roberts** and **Beatrice Tice** joined the Korematsu Center team to draft an amicus brief supporting a challenge to the Trump administration’s ban on transgender military service in *Talbott v. USA*.

# Meet the Center's Non-Resident Fellows

The Korematsu Center's non-resident fellows are scholars and practitioners from around the country who advance the Center's mission by partnering with us in our work.



**Nolan Cabrera** is Professor at the University of Arizona's College of Education. Cabrera and Chang are co-authors of the book *Banned: The Fight for Mexican American Studies in the Streets and in the Courts*, published in January 2025. In October 2025, their book was awarded the bronze medal for the Victor Villaseñor Best Latino Focused Nonfiction Book by the International Latino Book Awards.



**Jeremiah Chin** is Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Washington School of Law. He joined the Korematsu Center in filing four amicus briefs challenging Executive Orders that aimed to punish law firms for providing pro bono legal services disfavored by the Trump administration.



**Rose Cuison-Villazor** is Professor of Law and Chancellor's Social Justice Scholar at Rutgers Law School and joined the Korematsu Center as co-counsel representing members of Congress to support Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelans before the Ninth Circuit and the Supreme Court. She also serves as counsel for amici in *Jones Eagle v. Ward*, supporting Jones Eagle's challenge to Arkansas's discriminatory alien land laws in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.



**Adrienne Davis** is William M. Van Cleave Professor of Law at Washington University School of Law. Davis and Chang are co-authors of *Afterword: The Revolution Will Not Be Streamed*, forthcoming in the University of Pennsylvania Law Review.



**Charlotte Garden** is Professor of Law at Minnesota Law. She joined the Korematsu Center in filing four amicus briefs challenging Executive Orders that aimed to punish law firms for providing pro bono legal services disfavored by the Trump administration.



**Caitlin Glass** is Lecturer and Clinical Instructor at Boston University School of Law. She collaborates with the Korematsu Center on advocacy projects addressing racial disparities the criminal legal system, including co-authoring numerous amicus briefs with the Korematsu Center. In Fall 2025, Korematsu Center pro bono students Morris Fuller ('28) and Sarah Wong ('28) completed a 50-state survey of murder sentencing which supports Professor Glass's advocacy efforts to challenge life-without-parole sentencing.



**H. Timothy Lovelace, Jr.**

is Professor of Law at Duke Law School. Lovelace and Chang are co-authors of a forthcoming article in the

Boston University Law Review, "Who Owns Civil Rights History?" examining *SFFA v. Harvard* in the context of civil rights history and narratives of racial progress.



**Evelyn Rangel-Medina**

is Assistant Professor of Law at Temple University Beasley School of Law. She is working with the

Korematsu Center to develop a project that examines how the "we" in "We the People" is constructed in order to advance a more inclusive way of thinking of national belonging



The Korematsu Center opening celebration at UC Irvine School of Law.

# Highlights of the Korematsu Center's Work

## AMICUS ADVOCACY

The Korematsu Center actively files amicus briefs, or friend of the court briefs, in cases around the country. Here's why:

- Amicus briefs can impact the litigation by exploring legal alternatives or providing important historical context.
- Amicus briefs serve a democratizing function by allowing non-party voices to be heard.
- Amicus briefs involve sign-on strategies that create opportunities for community engagement and coalition building.
- Amicus briefs serve an important educational function that is a critical part of advancing narrative change.

Since our move to UCI Law, the Korematsu Center has participated in filing **thirty** amicus curiae briefs in cases around the country. This has included 21 filings in federal courts (6 in district courts; 11 in circuit courts; 4 in SCOTUS); and 9 state court filings (6 in high courts in CA, MA, and WA; 3 in intermediate appellate courts in CA, CO, and NY). The majority of these cases involve executive overreach, LGBTQ+ rights, and the criminal legal system.

## EXECUTIVE OVERREACH

The Korematsu Center works to protect our system of checks and balances by advocating against executive overreach and to ensure that courts fulfill their proper role in our constitutional democracy.

### Challenging domestic deployment of the military

The Korematsu Center along with the California Unity Bar filed an [amicus brief](#) before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Newsom v. Trump*, arguing that President Trump did not have authority to deploy federalized National Guard forces in response to protests in Los Angeles. The brief urges the Ninth Circuit to scrutinize the motives behind the President's deployment and draws on the lessons of *Korematsu v. United States*, a notorious example of the courts failing to serve as a check on executive power.

### Defending birthright citizenship

The Korematsu Center led an [amicus brief](#) filed in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Washington v. Trump*, challenging the federal government's Citizenship Stripping Order. The amicus brief places the Order in historical context, tracing parallels to past government actions such as the post-*United States v. Thind* denaturalization of South Asian Americans and

the Expatriation Act of 1907, which stripped citizenship from American women who married non-citizens. Similar briefs were filed in the First and Fourth Circuits. With the grant of certiorari on this issue, we are planning a filing at the Supreme Court this spring.

### Challenging the termination of Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelans

The Korematsu Center served as co-counsel representing 137 members of Congress in an [amicus brief](#) filed on the U.S. Supreme Court emergency docket in *National TPS Alliance v. Noem*, a lawsuit challenging the early termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelans. The Korematsu Center filed another [amicus brief](#) in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on behalf of over 120 members of Congress, urging the Court to affirm the district court's ruling that the Trump administration's decision to vacate and terminate Venezuela's TPS designation was unlawful.

## Challenging the illegal invocation of the Alien Enemies Act

The Korematsu Center, working with the Asian Law Caucus, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, and the Japanese Americans Citizens League (JACL), filed on behalf of the JACL and other Asian American and Pacific Islander organizations [an amicus brief](#) in *W.M.M. v. Trump*, challenging President Trump's invocation of the Alien Enemies Act (AEA) against Venezuelan nationals alleged to be members of the Tren de Aragua. The AEA is a wartime authority that allows the president to detain or deport the natives and citizens of an enemy nation. Amici share stories of Japanese American families targeted by the AEA during World War II, urging the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to heed lessons of Japanese American incarceration and act as an independent check on the executive branch. The Korematsu Center filed a [similar brief](#) before the en banc Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

## Defending the First Amendment rights of law firms

The Korematsu Center joined co-amici in support of the law firms [Perkins Coie](#), [Jenner & Block](#), [WilmerHale](#), and [Susman Godfrey](#) in their cases challenging Executive Orders that aimed to punish law firms for providing pro bono legal services disfavored by the current administration. The four briefs warn against the constitutional dangers of the Executive Orders, which amici argue violate the First Amendment rights of law firms and their clients. Drawing on historical parallels to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, the briefs urge the court not to repeat the mistakes of *Korematsu v. United States* by deferring uncritically to vague claims of national security. These cases are now before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and we are planning amicus filings this spring.

## LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

The Korematsu Center advocates for the rights of LGBTQ+ people and other marginalized groups experiencing discrimination.

### Challenging the ban on transgender military service

The Korematsu Center, along with the Japanese American Citizens League and other race and law centers, led an [amicus brief](#) in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in *Talbott v. USA*. The brief urges the D.C. Circuit to uphold the nationwide preliminary injunction halting enforcement of the Trump administration's ban on transgender military service. In addition to a discussion of the unique harms suffered by the LGBTQ+ community, the brief draws from history, including exclusions of Black Americans, Japanese Americans, Women, and LGBTQ+ individuals, to show what the nation loses when it excludes people from serving in our nation's military based on their identities, as well as what the affected individuals lose when excluded.

### Defending Colorado's ban on conversion therapy for minors

The Korematsu Center, with other race and law centers, filed an [amicus brief](#) in *Chiles v. Salazar*, urging the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold Colorado's law banning licensed mental health care providers from practicing conversion therapy on minors. Conversion therapy—efforts to “convert” a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression—has been widely discredited as harmful to LGBTQ+ youth. The brief draws parallels between current challenges to LGBTQ+ protections and past efforts to undermine civil rights laws. Amici warn that granting First Amendment protections to providers of harmful treatment could open the door to future attempts to justify discrimination against other marginalized groups.

## RACE AND THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

Through filing amicus curiae briefs in cases across the country, the Korematsu Center challenges systemic racial disparities in the criminal justice system and advocates for equality.

### Strengthening California’s Racial Justice Act

The California Legislature passed the Racial Justice Act (RJA) in 2020 to eliminate racial bias in the California criminal justice system by prohibiting the state from pursuing a criminal conviction or imposing a sentence based upon race, ethnicity or national origin. The Korematsu Center, along with race centers and scholars, filed three amicus briefs in the California Supreme Court seeking to educate the Court about implicit bias and how the RJA provides a pragmatic remedy ([People v. Bankston](#), [People v. Chhuon and Pan](#), and [People v. Barrera](#)). The Korematsu Center filed another amicus brief in the California Court of Appeal on the use of statistical evidence of disparity under the RJA ([People v. Henderson](#)).

### Advancing reforms to prevent discrimination in jury selection

The Korematsu Center, along with the New England Innocence Project, filed an [amicus brief](#) in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in *Commonwealth v. Robinson*. The brief calls on the Court to reinforce safeguards against racial discrimination in jury selection as outlined in *Batson v. Kentucky* and its Massachusetts counterpart, *Commonwealth v. Soares*, which prohibit the use of peremptory challenges to exclude jurors on the basis of race. Amici encourage the Court to consider adopting the “Objective Observer” standard, an approach embraced in several other states, which asks whether an objective observer could view race or ethnicity as a factor in the use of a peremptory strike.

### Challenging felony murder laws

The Korematsu Center, along with Professor Caitlin Glass at Boston University and Professor Aliza Hochman Bloom of Northeastern University School of Law, authored an [amicus brief](#) in *New York v. Joseph*, before the New York Appellate Division. The case centers on Dalen Joseph, a 17-year-old convicted of felony murder despite the jury’s acceptance of his self-defense claim. The brief argues that New York’s felony-murder law disproportionately impacts Black individuals and youth, highlighting

systemic racial bias, and the excessive severity of Joseph’s mandatory life sentence. It contends that the denial of his right to present a justification defense violated due process, calling for either a reversal of his conviction or a reduction in his sentence.

In *Baxter v. Florida*, the Korematsu Center and Professor Caitlin Glass authored an [amicus brief](#) in support of Sadik Baxter, who was sentenced to life without parole at the age of 26 for an accidental death he played no role in bringing about. Amici ask the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals to hold that Florida’s first-degree felony-murder law violates the Eighth Amendment, arguing that life-without-parole sentences for people like Sadik Baxter, who did not kill or intend to kill anyone, are disproportionate, cruel, and improperly influenced by extralegal factors, including racial bias.

### Decriminalization of persons experiencing homelessness

The Korematsu Center and Professor Caitlin Glass filed an [amicus brief](#) in *Feet Forward v. City of Boulder*, a case challenging a Boulder ordinance that imposes criminal punishment on individuals who sleep outside with a blanket or tent. The brief argues that the ordinance violates the Colorado constitution because any criminal punishment for the status of being unhoused or the act of sleeping outside is cruel and excessive.

### Advocating for public access to dependency court proceedings

The Korematsu Center, along with Professor Caitlin Glass, and the First Amendment Clinic at Duke University School of Law, filed an [amicus brief](#) in *Civil Rights Corps. v. Walker*, supporting the criminal justice reform organization Civil Rights Corps’ motion for a preliminary injunction in a case advocating for public access to North Carolina’s dependency court proceedings. The brief underscores the historical openness of such courts and the role of public access in fostering civic engagement and judicial reform, and emphasizes that transparency is essential for accountability, fairness, and the prevention of systemic abuse.

## DIRECT REPRESENTATION

The Korematsu Center engages in merits-impact litigation as another form of advocacy for racial justice and equity.

### Challenging discriminatory alien land laws

Robert Chang and Shaleen Shanbhag are co-counsel with Kutak Rock LLP in *Jones Eagle v. Ward*, where they represent Qimin “Jimmy” Chen, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in China, in his challenge to two laws restricting foreign ownership of agricultural land and ownership in data centers in Arkansas. The suit claims the Arkansas laws are preempted by federal law, deny due process, discriminate based on national origin, and deprive just compensation for taking property.

As of October 30, 2025, thirty states have passed laws restricting foreign property

ownership while six states are considering such bills. This recent, troubling wave of state laws restricting foreign property ownership mirrors early twentieth century alien land laws that restricted property ownership by Chinese and Japanese nationals.

In December 2024, the Korematsu Center and co-counsel successfully obtained a preliminary injunction halting enforcement of the Arkansas laws against Jones Eagle LLC, a digital data center operator that mines cryptocurrency, and its owner, Qimin “Jimmy” Chen. The preliminary injunction order is currently on appeal before the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, with oral argument on January 14, 2026.

## EDUCATION

The Korematsu Center seeks to provide law students with real-world experiences to help them become agents for social change

### UCI Law’s Immigrant & Racial Justice Solidarity Clinic

The Immigrant & Racial Justice Solidarity Clinic, directed by Professor Annie Lai, is formally affiliated with the Korematsu Center. In Fall 2025, clinic students Stephanie Boulos ('27), Sarah Curtis ('27), and Kevin Valero ('27) partnered with the Korematsu Center on the Inclusive Census Advocacy Project. This project arose out of President Trump’s August 2025 directive to administrative officials to create a “new” census that excludes undocumented immigrants. Stephanie, Sarah, and Kevin organized and led a Census Forum to discuss the future of the U.S. Census and its impact on political representation and racial equity. The Census Forum, which took place in November 2025, was a large success and widely attended by students, faculty, and staff across the UCI campus as well as local community organizations.



UC Irvine Law Immigrant & Racial Justice Solidarity Clinic students **Stephanie Boulos ('27)**, **Sarah Curtis ('27)**, and **Kevin Valero ('27)** host Census Forum on November 24, 2025.

## UCI Law's Defending Democracy Clinic

Professor Paul Hoffman, who directs the Defending Democracy Clinic, is co-counsel with Robert Chang and Shaleen Shanbhag in *Jones Eagle v. Ward*, which challenges two Arkansas alien land laws. Students from the Defending Democracy clinic have provided valuable assistance in this case: briefing in opposition to a motion to dismiss, briefing in support of a motion for preliminary injunction; briefing in support of plaintiff-appellee Jones Eagle's response brief in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals; and drafting discovery requests and briefing in support of a motion to compel discovery responses.

## UCI Law's Michael G. Ermer Pro Bono Program

The Korematsu Center partners with UCI Law's pro bono program. We are grateful to our inaugural pro bono students, Morris Fuller ('28), Olivia Mazzucato ('26), Benjamin Strehlow ('27), and Sarah Wong ('28), for their volunteer work with the Korematsu Center in Fall 2025.



**Morris Fuller ('28)** and **Sarah Wong ('28)** completed a detailed survey of murder sentencing across fifty states, which will be instrumental in advocacy efforts to challenge life-without-parole sentencing across the nation.



**Olivia Mazzucato ('26)** and **Benjamin Strehlow ('27)** provided invaluable research and helped draft the Korematsu Center's amicus brief challenging the Trump administration's ban on transgender military service in *Talbott v. USA*.



Dr. Karen Korematsu delivers remarks at the opening celebration of the Korematsu Center at UC Irvine Law.

## To Our Pro Bono Partners

Thank you to the law firms below for lending your legal expertise and countless hours to advancing justice—your pro bono partnership is invaluable to our mission.

All Rise Trial & Appellate

Bahar Law Office, P.C.

Benedict Law Group PLLC

Complex Appellate Litigation Group LLP

Covington & Burling LLP

Friedman Kaplan Seiler Adelman &  
Robbins LLP

Law Offices of Joseph Doyle

Miller Johnson PLC

Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP

Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP

O'Melveny & Myers LLP

Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP

Sessions & Fleischman, LLC

## To Our Generous Donors

Thank you for standing with us in the fight for justice and equality—your generous support empowers us to honor Fred T. Korematsu's legacy. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to building a more just and equitable society for all.

## The Race and Law Center Network

The Race and Law Center Network (RLCN) is a coalition of law school-based centers and institutes focused on racial justice, which aims to enhance collaboration and amplify the impact of its members. Robert Chang serves on the Network's steering committee, which organized a RLCN convening in October 2025 at UCLA School of Law. The Korematsu Center along with scholars and practitioners from other race and law centers participated in discussions on the role of race centers and their advocacy in this political moment.



Korematsu Center Executive Director Professor Robert S. Chang delivers remarks at opening celebration.

# Awards and Recognitions

The Korematsu Center received the Community Pillar Award from the Orange County Asian American Bar Association in July 2025. For his work with the Korematsu Center, Robert Chang received the Spotlight on Excellence Award from the Orange County Coalition for Diversity in the Law in September 2025.

The Korematsu Center honors **Professor Eric K. Yamamoto**, the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality's 2025 Recipient of the Champion for Justice Award.



The Champion for Justice Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to advancing racial justice and equity through their advocacy, leadership, and action.

# Looking Forward

## **Korematsu Center Postdoctoral Scholar**

We are presently searching for our inaugural Korematsu Center Postdoctoral Scholar. This two-year position, funded by an endowment established by generous donors, is designed to help prepare an aspiring law professor enter the legal academy. The position begins in Summer 2026. Interested candidates should apply [here](#).

## **Joint Convening of the Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty and the Western Law Teachers of Color**

The Korematsu Center is planning to host a joint convening of the Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty and the Western Law Teachers of Color to occur in spring or summer 2026.

# Get Involved

**DONATE:** [Make a gift](#) to the Korematsu Center

**VOLUNTEER:** For volunteer or pro bono opportunities, please contact Shaleen Shanbhag at [sshsanbhag@law.uci.edu](mailto:sshsanbhag@law.uci.edu)

**STAY CONNECTED:** [Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



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