

Short Circuit 254

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SPEAKERS

Marie Miller, Anya Bidwell, Sam Thypin-Bermeo, Mark Silverstein



Anya Bidwell 00:24

Hello and welcome to this very special Short Circuit episode. Today we're celebrating Martin Luther King Day and civil rights lawyers who are fighting tough odds to vindicate their clients' constitutional rights. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. rose to the fore of the civil rights movement in 1955, and remained central to it until his assassination in 1968. This is also the period when the United States Supreme Court made it easier to sue individual officers and municipalities for violations of constitutional rights. In 1961, for example, the Court ruled in *Monroe v. Pape* that Section 1983 allows individuals to bring constitutional suits not only against officials who enforce unconstitutional state laws, but also against government officials who act rogue, which is the bulk of the civil rights litigation. Moreover, at that time, there was no immunity to shield these officials from accountability. Today, things look very different. *Monroe v. Pape* has not been overruled, but in 1982, it was significantly neutered by the Court's invention of qualified immunity. Since 1982, things have only gotten worse to the point that in the Ninth Circuit, you can't sue officials for violating your Fourth Amendment rights, even when they steal money from your home. In the 10th Circuit, you can't sue them for violating your First Amendment rights, even when they order you to hand them over your tablet after you record a violent arrest. And in the Eighth Circuit, you can't sue them for retaliating against you, even when they launch an unfounded investigation to punish you for standing up for your rights. And that's just scratching the surface. So where does that leave victims of constitutional violations? For the most part, not in a good place. In cases like these, it is very difficult to find lawyers who are willing to take on the government and all the immunity doctrines at its disposal. But that's not the end of the story. There are still lawyers willing to take on these cases. And for those individuals lucky enough to find them, there is an opportunity to knock on the courthouse door and at least try to fight. Today, three of these amazing lawyers are our guests, and they will tell you all about the cases they recently brought in trial courts. Mark Silverstein is legal director of ACLU Colorado. His latest case was brought on behalf of Ruby Johnson, a 77-year-old innocent woman whose house was searched and damaged by Denver's SWAT team based on a hastily obtained and misleading warrant. Sam Thypin-Bermeo runs his own civil rights law firm, Thypin-Bermeo PLLC. He recently brought a case on behalf of Mariyah Maple, a certified nurse's aide and a mother of two who was hit with a bicycle by a police officer, then pepper sprayed and then arrested all after she recorded the violent arrest on her phone. Marie Miller is an attorney right here at the Institute for Justice. Her lawsuit is against two Louisiana police officers who

stopped Mario Rosales and his passenger Gracie Lasyone for no reason, interrogating and frisking them and preventing them from recording this unlawful police encounter. Marie also sued the chief of police and the city of Alexandria, Louisiana. Let's begin with Mark. Mark. First of all, welcome.

M

Mark Silverstein 04:02

Oh, thank you for inviting me.

A

Anya Bidwell 04:06

Could you tell us more about Ruby Johnson and what happened to her?

M

Mark Silverstein 04:11

Well, at the beginning of last year, 2021, a Denver police officer who is the defendant in our case was investigating the theft of a truck. It had been stolen the day before. And the detective spoke with the owner of the truck on the phone and the owner said my truck was stolen. I had six firearms in it, two drones, \$4,000 in cash and an old iPhone 11. And the owner said that during the previous day, he had used the Apple Find My app to track the location I have his stolen truck. And the owner asserted that the app had pinned to a particular house in the Montbello neighborhood of Denver, our client's house, Ruby Johnson's house. Ruby, she was 76-years-old at the time, she's owned her house for 40 years, she lives alone. And she really doesn't even leave the house much except to go to church and to the grocery store. The detective didn't do any further investigation. He didn't look for any corroborating evidence. He simply began writing up an affidavit for a search warrant, based on the owner's report of the use of this Find My app. And the affidavit for warrant that the detective submitted basically said, the owner reported that the phone that the app pinged to this house in Montbello and the affidavit contained a screenshot that was evidently a screenshot from the app. And it showed a large blue circle that covered about six properties in the Montbello area. And the detective wrote in the affidavit, the app shows that the phone is inside the house. And based on that a supervisor approved going for the warrant and an assistant DA gave the green light. It went to a judge and an hour after the judge had it, the warrant was signed by the judge. And amazingly, a fully equipped SWAT team was out to the home in Montbello, an hour later, or less than an hour later. So they pulled up one of these almost armored vehicles that the police have right onto the lawn. And on a bullhorn, they ordered everybody in the house to come out with their hands up. And, rather terrified, Ruby Johnson, our client, came outside, she was taken down the street in a patrol car while the SWAT team proceeded to toss the house. They used a battering ram on her garage door, even though she had told them where a key could be found. They left the house in disarray, they broke off the head of one of the dolls in her prized collection. And they found nothing, that she had no connection to the theft. She didn't have the iPhone, she didn't have anything that was stolen. And the problem is that the officer did not do any investigation to find out what is the significance of this screenshot from the Find My app. And had he done maybe a minute of Googling, he would have learned that Apple says that that large blue circle, what it means is that the location of the phone cannot be precisely identified. The large blue circle is meant to be an estimate and approximation. And since it encompassed six properties in that neighborhood, there is no way that that that app provided probable cause

to believe that the phone was inside the house. But nevertheless, the warrant just sailed through a process that's apparently intended to have some checks on an overzealous incompetent affidavit writer, but all of those checks failed.

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Anya Bidwell 09:18

Yeah, that's the fascinating part, right? That technically, they did everything correctly in that they obtained...the officer wrote the affidavit, then they got a supervisor to look at it, and then they got a judge to sign off on it. So technically, they checked every box, but that just doesn't seem like it's a sufficient way to protect people's rights.

M

Mark Silverstein 09:43

Even an additional box because an assistant district attorney reviewed the affidavit and signed off on it. And all this you know, probable cause is not that hard a standard for officers to meet, but it was not met in this case. But there ought to be an even higher standard when a judge is going to authorize police officers to search a home that's currently occupied by people who live in the home. This was, in a way, it's really lucky that nothing worse happened. Because we know what happens when SWAT teams have gone out to homes, to occupied homes, and things don't go. As well as yes, Ruby Johnson came out when ordered to and she cooperated with the police. In Denver, I know about a case that I looked at several years ago, where the SWAT team had the wrong house, because the informer identified the wrong house. And the SWAT team started coming into the house with a search warrant. Well, Ismael Mena thought, well somebody's breaking into my home. And he had a weapon, and the police killed him. His defense of his home may have been justified under Colorado law, but they shot him dead. And we all know about Breonna Taylor in Lexington, Kentucky. And so we're lucky that something worse didn't happen. But this warrant, the officer did not have the facts necessary to write an affidavit for search warrant, the supervisor should have vetoed it. The district attorney should not have green lighted it, the judge should have rejected it. The SWAT team should have stayed home.

A

Anya Bidwell 11:55

And on that note, too. I'd like to plug in for our listeners the podcast called Broken Doors that the Washington Post released a couple of months ago. And there they talk about no knock warrants and how easy it is to obtain those. You even have these kinds of things called like Cloud Gavel, right? It's an online way to obtain a warrant where it takes about five minutes to get a warrant and the next thing you know you're breaking into someone's home. So just because there is a warrant doesn't mean that a person's constitutional rights are not being violated. Mark, could you tell a little bit more about why you chose to sue under a civil rights statute in Colorado, rather than Section 1983, the federal civil rights statute?

M

Mark Silverstein 12:45

Well, sure. Your introduction to the podcast talked about the barrier that the doctrine of qualified immunity poses to lawsuits seeking to vindicate constitutional rights, when there are cases of police officer misconduct. In Colorado, in 2020, we enacted a statute that authorizes a

cases of police officer misconduct. In Colorado, in 2020, we enacted a statute that authorizes a cause of action for damages for violations of the state constitution. It authorizes suits against police officers and it expressly rejects the defense of qualified immunity. And so I think this is one of the first lawsuits to rely solely on that statute as grounds for relief. And I will say that, under Section 1983, the standard when you want to sue an officer for obtaining a search warrant that should never have issued or for executing a search warrant that should never have issued, the legal standard in the case law has the qualified immunity standard built right in. And so the familiar standard, to the extent that federal courts are familiar with it, is already a qualified immunity standard, without saying so. You have to read some of the cases to realize that. So I think it's going to be much more clear in state court that this is a violation of the Fourth Amendment and we don't have to prove the almost impossible standard that it would be in federal court. I think that we could meet that standard, but we won't have to deal with that in state court. And I think it's good for the state courts to start looking at what is the scope of our state constitutional protection against unreasonable searches and seizures because of the federalization of search and seizure law in the last 40 years has been almost so many state courts just reflexively just look to federal court standards. But we have a few cases in Colorado, where the state courts have said, you know, our state constitutional protection against searches and seizures, it's more protective than the Fourth Amendment. We have greater protection against unreasonable invasions of the privacy of the home. So we want the courts to continue working on that expansion of protection for civil liberties.

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Anya Bidwell 15:39

Mark, have you guys considered suing the police department itself?

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Mark Silverstein 15:44

Well, unfortunately, this statute that was passed in 2020, authorizes suits against police officers. So suing the police department is, I think, equivalent to suing the city and county of Denver, which that would be a claim that you could fail under Section 1983 but not under the state statute. We could file a 1983 claim, along with our state law claim that would allow the defendants to remove the case to federal court. Right now, and what the city and county of Denver and police officers have done for years when Section 1983 cases are filed in state court, they immediately remove because the jury that is selected in the federal court case here in Colorado, chooses jurors from all over the state, and a Denver jury is likely to be more sympathetic to victims of police misconduct, and may be less sympathetic to police officers. So the fact that this case is positioned for a Denver jury, I think is another thing favoring the plaintiff's potential recovery.

A

Anya Bidwell 17:13

Another thing about this statute is that it not only doesn't allow suit against municipalities, but it also is limited to law enforcement officers.

M

Mark Silverstein 17:23

Right. And also, besides doing away with qualified immunity, it also includes for plaintiffs'

lawyers attorneys fees, mirroring for federal law that civil rights lawyers have been accustomed to.

A

Anya Bidwell 17:41

Which is a big deal if you want to encourage civil rights lawyers to take up these cases.

M

Mark Silverstein 17:46

Right.

A

Anya Bidwell 17:47

How did Ms. Johnson find you?

M

Mark Silverstein 17:50

She actually, her son started to ask around about how can this be? And he wrote to us, I think it was through our online intake system.

A

Anya Bidwell 18:06

Yeah, this is so important to have organizations like ACLU on the ground so they can actually bring lawsuits, cutting -lawsuits really like these. And for those interested in the Colorado statute, we have it in our report called 50 Shades of Government Immunity, just Google 50 Shades of Government Immunity, you'll go on the website that ranks every state based on their performance, and it discusses the Colorado statute, which is one of the bright spots in the last couple of years. Thank you so much, Mark, for coming and talking to us about this case. And now let's go to Sam and talk about his case and Mariyah Maple. Tell us what happened to her.

S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 18:51

So in 2021, Mariyah Maple, a certified nurse's aide college student and mother of two, dreamed of celebrating her 27th birthday in the city of Miami Beach. Ms. Maple is a Buffalo, New York native. And she had spent a long, cold, very snowy winter in Buffalo. This was during the intense moment of COVID restrictions. So she was at home with her two kids trying to keep up with her own schoolwork, trying to supervise her children during their schoolwork. And she was tired, she needed a break. During the same period, the city of Miami Beach was drafting and passing a local ordinance called 70-8. This law made it a crime to stand within 20 feet of a law enforcement officer after a warning with an intent to do a number of things, including indirectly harass them or provoke a physical response. Ms. Maple didn't know any of this when she and her family were excited about planning our trip to Miami Beach. So she goes down to Miami Beach. And the day after her birthday early in the morning, she's out with her mother, her aunt, her sister, and her best friend. And they're walking on the street, dancing, laughing, have a

great time. They're filming each other and Miami Beach. As they're walking, they come across an officer who is arresting another person in the middle of the street. And there's a number of officers around the scene. One is just kind of standing there looking at them, but she turns her camera to this officer. And before she knows it, this officer charges her, first hitting her at with his bike and then pepper spraying her. The officer doesn't offer to provide any help to her. He just watches her walk off. And she, blinded for the moment by a pepper spray, walks about half a block to her mother who has a rental car. And they sit in the mother's car and they try to figure out how do we find help in a city that we're just visiting? Mariyah and her mother come from a family with a lot of public servants. Some are nurses, some are police officers. So they see a police officer walking down the street and they feel like him down thinking that he can help her. Unfortunately for them, the person they flagged down is supervised by the officer who pepper sprayed her. So they show this officer a video of her being pepper sprayed. And instead of immediately rushing to decontaminate her eyes, or provide her with water, which we know is on the scene, he says one moment. And he turns off his body-worn camera. A few minutes later, he and two other officers returned to arrest Ms. Maple. They arrest her for violating this law 70-8, the law that made it a crime to stand within 20 feet of a law enforcement officer after warning with an intent to indirectly harass them. Ms. Maple is then searched in the middle of the street, taken to a jail and then eventually charged with this crime. And after she was charged, the officers filed a number of pieces of paperwork that had false representations about what happened. Luckily, she beat her criminal case and sued the officers who are involved in pepper spraying her, arresting her, prosecuting her and then covering it all up. She's also sued the city of Miami Beach for passing this ordinance under the theories that it's creates a vague standard, authorize arbitrary enforcement, criminalized protected speech, and discriminate against certain viewpoints and topics.

A

Anya Bidwell 23:44

So Sam, there is this audio, right, where the officer is saying that they want to arrest her to make sure that she doesn't file excessive force charges against them, right? Or at least one of the family members is telling you that they heard the officer say that.

S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 24:05

Yeah, so the audio that we have is as Ms. Maple is being put into the police van, she confronts the officer who pepper sprays her and she asked the officer why she's being arrested. And the officer says to her, Listen, listen., when you got pepper sprayed, you ran away, you should have kept running. And that is recorded on a body-worn camera.

A

Anya Bidwell 24:47

And then there is also in your complaint, you're saying Sergeant Stella told Officer Burson that Ms. Mabel had not violated any valid law, but that he wanted him to arrest her because she had requested medical care and could sue him for excessive force. What do you think is going on there? What's happening there? What is going through their minds? Obviously, we can't tell until discovery, but we have enough to kind of make very reasonable assumptions.



S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 25:16

So the basis for that allegation in the complaint is that they arrested her solely for violating 70 Dash eight, not state statutes, which had been upheld constitutionally. And the basis for why they just arrested her under 70-8 are that the facts did not justify her arrest under the state laws.

A

Anya Bidwell 25:51

So tell us, by the way, a little bit more about what the legislature in Florida was trying to do and then how the ordinance is related to that.

S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 26:02

So the Florida legislature tried to pass very similar laws that included these prohibitions on being within officers in a certain distance after warning with an intent to do a number of very broadly described things. Those two bills died in the legislature. But that didn't stop the city of Miami Beach from passing them.

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Anya Bidwell 26:32

So the state legislature thought that was too much of a reach. But the the local authority did not think much of it and passed it anyway. A similar status, similar ordinance.

S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 26:45

So the public record in Miami Beach doesn't provide an explanation for why the state legislature decided not to pass those laws. The commissioners, however, who were sponsoring, it said that the reason why the state decided not to pass it was of no importance to them, because they wanted to pass this law.

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Anya Bidwell 27:14

Why did you choose to go the Section 1983 route? Well, this is different from what Mark Silverstein did. Instead of suing under Florida law, you're going federal routes. Could you explain your thinking there?

S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 27:30

Sure. So there are two benefits to suing under federal law than state law in Florida. The first is that to sue under state law, you need to provide a notice to the defendants and wait a certain amount of time before suing. When I joined the case, it had been brought just under federal law

and that notice had not been provided. An additional benefit of federal law versus state law is that there's a cap on claims brought against governments under tort law, including constitutional torts, whereas in 1983, there's not a cap.

A Anya Bidwell 28:23

And for those interested again, go to 50 Shades of Government Immunity, click on Florida, and you will see the Florida laws relative to Section 1983 and how different they aren't. It gets a much lower grade than Colorado. Let me put it just that way. So one last question. Tell us how Ms. Maple found you? Or how did she find people that you were working with?

S Sam Thypin-Bermeo 28:51

Ms. Maple initially brought her case with the lawyer who represented her on her criminal case.

A Anya Bidwell 29:00

Which is pretty typical, actually. Right, in that sense, because that's the lawyer that she knows.

S Sam Thypin-Bermeo 29:05

Yeah. And there's very few civil rights lawyers, as you mentioned, in Florida that will take these sorts of cases. And so when they were looking for a lawyer who specializes in this area, my name came across their desk.

A Anya Bidwell 29:25

Yeah, that's very lucky, I'd say.

S Sam Thypin-Bermeo 29:29

I feel very excited to be working on this case. And hopefully we can get Ms. Maple some justice.

A Anya Bidwell 29:35

Absolutely. Even thinking back to what the officer told her, right? When he said you should have kept running. That's just mind boggling that something like that would happen and the officer would feel comfortable saying that. So it's amazing that you guys are bringing accountability in this sense. Let's now transition to Marie. We want you to tell us Marie, about the case that you brought on behalf of Mario Rosales in Louisiana.



M**Marie Miller 30:04**

Great. Well, thanks Anya. Yes. So we at the Institute for Justice represent Mario and Gracie in a case arising from a traffic stop in Alexandria, Louisiana. And it involves a series of constitutional rights violations. But the facts leading up to those violations are really quotidian. You know what happened to Mario and Gracie could happen to lots of innocent people across the country. So here's what happened. Last June, Mario and Gracie got off work around 5pm. And they were on their way to pick up a car part from someone who was selling it on Facebook. Mario restores and repairs cars as part of his job and as a hobby. So Mario was driving his 2007 red Mustang, and the car was in proper working order. It wasn't making loud noise. It wasn't tied to any criminal activity. The only conspicuous thing about it was that it had New Mexico license plates. So Mario is driving along with Gracie in the passenger seat, abiding by all traffic laws, and he approaches a stoplight that is red and he turns his left blinker on and is sitting in the left turn lane, and a police SUV pulls in behind him and stops at the red light. The light turns green, Mario turns left through the intersection, and the police SUV follows. Before the SUV clears the intersection it flashes its emergency lights to pull Mario over, and Mario promptly pulls over and waits in the car. One police officer tells him to exit the vehicle and come to the hood of the police SUV. Mario does that. And the officer asks for his license, registration, insurance information. Mario provides those things. While he's providing his insurance information by pulling it up on his phone, the second officer gets out of the car and asks Mario if he has a gun in the car. And Mario honestly answers yes, I have one in my bag. It's in the backseat. The officer asks him, do you have any on you? And he says, no, not on me. Regardless, one of the police officers starts to frisk Mario and finds nothing. And the other officer asks, Mario can I search your car? And Mario says no, I don't want anyone searching my vehicle. Mario has a personal reason to distrust police officers. We represent Mario in a different case out of the 10th Circuit that's currently pending involving a different incident. So Mario doesn't trust the officers, rightly so, denies consent to search his vehicle. The officer then orders Gracie out of the passenger seat and she complies, gets out of the car. And the officers proceed to start an investigation about drugs, even though they have no reason to believe that Mario or Gracie are involved in drugs or any criminal activity. They issue Miranda warnings to each of them and ask them about their personal lives. And then go through this litany of drugs. Any any marijuana in the car, any cocaine, crack cocaine, meth, prescription pills not prescribed to you? And through all this questioning Mario and Gracie are remarkably calm, honestly answered, No, we're not involved in any kind of illegal substances. Regardless, the officers try to search Mario again. They tell him to empty his pockets, find nothing. Ultimately, the interrogations lasted about 20 minutes. And Mario at one point asked the officer why did you pull me over? At first he had thought, maybe they think I'm a wanted criminal that they're looking for. But it quickly became apparent that that wasn't the case, that they were searching for something that they could pin on him and Gracie. So one remarkable thing about the facts here is the police officers asked dispatch to run some criminal history checks on Mario and Gracie. And when dispatch reported back that they weren't negative on both, the one officer just expresses his extreme disappointment. Think, oh, man, what are the chances of that? So the officers here were hoping for and assuming that they would find something. But in the process, did an investigation completely backwards. They stopped people to try to find some crime instead of stopping people because they knew about a crime that they suspected people of.

M**Marie Miller 30:38**

Didn't they say something, you know that there was actually a reason for the stop, that Mario didn't signal when he was driving? And then you guys asked for tapes, and you could, you know, see that he actually was signaling.

M

Marie Miller 35:57

Yes. So the at one point, Mario asks the officer, you know, why did you pull me over? And the officer initially says, I'll tell you in a second. And then more questioning happens from the officers. Later on, Mario asks, again, can you be honest with me? Why did you pull me over? And the officer says, failure to signal. Pure, straight, honest answer, you failed to signal so we pulled you over. Now, Mario could have sworn that he did use his turn signal. And so we obtained the dashcam footage from the police SUV. And that footage shows clear as day that Mario did, in fact, use his turn signal before he turned left, before the police officers pulled him over. So what's clear is that the officers just thought there was something about Mario, his car, that flagged for them that this guy has got to be a criminal, that we can find something on him. If we just pull them over and start asking questions, or pull them over and search.

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Anya Bidwell 37:20

They say, what are the chances?

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Marie Miller 37:22

Yeah, what are the chances of that? And at one point, the one officer says, I'll bet there's more to this than meets the eye. Essentially saying, you know, on the face of this, there's nothing here. Yet we think there's something underneath the surface. And so let's let's keep digging. The problem is that's not what the Constitution allows. You need reasonable suspicion that criminal activity is afoot. You can't just have a hunch or base a stop on out of state plates. That's that's not any indication of criminal activity.

A

Anya Bidwell 38:07

And also, didn't you guys bring First Amendment retaliation claims? Because that Mario and Gracie were prevented from recording the encounter?

M

Marie Miller 38:17

We did bring First Amendment claims. They're not retaliation claims, but they are First Amendment claims for the office's completely preventing Mario and Gracie from recording this illegal encounter. So Gracie had asked, Can I record on my phone? And the officers just flatly refused to let either of them record what was happening on their phone. Even though Mario showed early on that he could use his phone to provide his insurance information to the officers. So it's not like allowing them to record was going to interfere with the investigation. A total ban on recording the encounter, and they justified that prohibition by saying everything's being recorded by us, which is not very comforting for someone who is on the other side of the recording, who doesn't have possession of the recording themselves. You know, who knows

what could happen to the police recording, if they were in fact recording? Mario and Gracie didn't know that for sure and didn't know what would happen to the body cam footage or the dash cam footage in the police officers own possession.

A

Anya Bidwell 39:38

I'm going to ask you the same question I asked Mark and Sam. When you are considering where to bring the claims, how did you end up with Section 1983?

M

Marie Miller 39:47

Well here, there were very clear violations of the Fourth Amendment and First Amendment and we saw that this kind of traffic stop and series of violations can happen in any state. So there were opportunities to pursue some state claims in Louisiana State court. But we would have had to navigate a series of immunities and procedural hurdles that would have really detracted from the federal claims that we wanted to focus on. And so we chose to just bring the federal claims in federal court under Section 1983, and not bring any new state law claims.

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Anya Bidwell 40:39

W, that I think, lends us in a good place for wrapping up, although maybe one more question that will be better for that is, tell us a little bit of a backstory behind you and Mario and how he ended up finding you.

M

Marie Miller 40:56

So Mario, as I mentioned earlier, Mario had an encounter with a police officer previously in 2018, where a police officer held him at gunpoint in his own driveway, because that officer had a hothead and developed road rage, simply because Mario passed him on a road. So we represented Mario in an appeal of case arising out of that incident. And so while we were working on his appeal, this incident happened to him in Alexandria, Louisiana. And he told us about it. And we said, Well, those are clear violations. And what's remarkable about this traffic stop situation is, we are quite confident that this kind of a thing happens every day, to people across the country. The problem is, it's so costly to try to hold government officials accountable when they violate rights in this way. And so it's rare for someone to actually seek accountability, especially in the form of a lawsuit. But because we already had a connection with Mario, we were able to recognize this as an opportunity to actually hold government officials accountable for trampling on people's rights in ways that they often would otherwise be able to just do without any recourse.

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Anya Bidwell 42:37

So two of the lawyers we had on the program today are public interest lawyers, when working for ACLU and Marie here working for the Institute for Justice, and it makes sense for public interest law firms to take on these cases. That's why we exist. And so I want to give my final

question to Sam, who is really a solo practitioner, right? Sam, you have your own firm. How in the world do you survive? And why do you take on cases like this?

S

Sam Thypin-Bermeo 43:11

So I'll start with the first question. Or the second question, rather. Why do I take on cases like this? I went to law school to help people and to represent the Davids versus Goliaths. And that's what these cases represent to me. It's an opportunity to stand up for someone and to face really long odds. How do I survive? The answer is doing a wide range of work. If you want to make a career doing this, you have to figure out ways to do different types of work with different income streams. So I've worked on appeals. I've worked on different areas of the law. But this is something that I think is very important. And my goal is for it to become an even larger practice, not only in my own firm, but also across the country. Because these are rights that are being violated. And the law is there to help people vindicate them, and to make the people who violate those rights pay.

A

Anya Bidwell 44:30

That's very inspiring, Sam. I'm here to encourage lawyers who are listening to be more like Sam, to bring up these types of civil rights cases because if you don't do it, nobody is going to do it. And it's very important to hold the government accountable through courts because that's how our system works. Don't be discouraged by barriers like qualified immunity. Check out our studies like Constitutional GPA that Marie spearheaded and 50 Shades of Government Immunity, also an IJ study that I believe I mentioned a couple of times already. These studies will help you at least with doing initial research. And also don't forget that we are here, IJ is here to serve as your appellate shop if there is a need like that. If you run into immunity issues, don't hesitate to contact us and we are here to help you out in any way that we can. With that, I'm going to wrap it up. Thank you for listening and happy MLK Day.