



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Katy Frank
LAW SCHOOL	UC Berkeley Law School
ORGANIZATION	Abolitionist Law Center

Final Reflection:

I cannot overstate how grateful I am to have had a summer internship at the Abolitionist Law Center (ALC). To learn from such hardworking, principled, brilliant attorneys while getting to try my hand at a wide variety of work is a privilege. Fighting the carceral system is one of the (many) moral imperatives of our time, and ALC has several different strategies for doing so. My first assignment involved working on our case *Bell v. Little*, which seeks to end the unconstitutional solitary confinement imposed on many men incarcerated at SCI-Fayette. These men are locked in extremely small cells for at least 22 hours a day, and have virtually no contact with others except when they are taken to small outdoor yard cages for one hour on weekdays. What's more, the process for challenging this solitary confinement has been opaque or even nonexistent for these men. All of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit have spent at least 11 months in solitary confinement, with some spending as much as 15 years. ALC, along with the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project and Dechert LLP, are following the lead of a group of incarcerated men who filed the initial lawsuit pro se. To be led by the clients, to challenge unjust policies (or lack thereof), and to work in a spirit of collaboration and not hierarchy: these are key facets of working at ALC.

Another lawsuit I assisted with is *Remick et. Al. v. City of Philadelphia*. Initially filed by people incarcerated in the Philadelphia prison and jail system to challenge unsafe conditions related to Covid-19, this lawsuit has become an important way of holding the City accountable for the treatment of people it incarcerates. My fellow interns and I visited two jails and conducted interviews with clients, all of whom were incredibly generous with their time and knowledge. I am glad I got to work on my client interviewing skills: building trust, and asking well-formulated



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questions that illuminate important information without re-traumatizing your client, are absolutely essential skills for an attorney.

I spent my summer learning about different strategies to fight the carceral state, and what an excellent way to use my time and skills. I am especially grateful that I got to learn about federal civil rights law as it relates to “on the ground” Pennsylvania criminal law. This summer, I really valued learning about the behind-the-scenes labor, preparation, and document organization that goes into these lawsuits from attorneys, and I really valued the opportunity to learn about various strategies to create a less carceral and more just society.