



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Isabel Geddes
LAW SCHOOL	University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School
ORGANIZATION	ACLU of New York

Update 1: During the first two weeks of my internship with the ACLU of New York (NYCLU), I have been immersing myself in learning about the organization's approach to strategic litigation and policy initiatives. Along with reading up on the projects I'm assigned to and speaking with attorneys about the current postures of the cases, I'm beginning to make substantive contributions. Recently, I conducted research into experts who can testify on behalf of our client who was injured while in immigration detention. I also wrote a research memo about New York laws that define and safeguard maternal healthcare, in an effort to inform policy proposals for New York's next legislative session. The past two weeks have also been full of trainings about effective legal writing, NYCLU's history, and the organization's multi-pronged approach to addressing civil rights and civil liberty issues. I'm grateful to have a hybrid position in both the legal and policy departments this summer and looking forward to continuing to protect civil rights on behalf of all New Yorkers.

Update 2: Over the last couple of weeks with NYCLU, I have been supporting preparations for a bench trial for *MG v. Towns*, a case in which we're challenging a law as unconstitutionally vague. Preparation for this includes reviewing defendant's documents for admissions that can be added to the brief, as well as drafting our plaintiff's declarations. This week, I spoke with clients seeking more information about our work on *Coe v. Blanche*, a case that NYCLU has brought to enjoin the federal government from obtaining records about minor patients who have received gender affirming care at New York hospitals. During my conversations with plaintiffs, we discussed the subpoena issued to NYU hospital, the scope of the government's requests, and how NYCLU will approach its litigation. I attended oral arguments for our TRO on this case and today we found out we won! The work continues as we'll prepare for a hearing on a preliminary injunction in a few weeks. Finally, I've been working on a research memo for a case called *Ortiz v. Orange County*. Our clients allege that Orange County Jail retaliated against them after they engaged in a hunger strike. I'm looking into 1st Amendment law in New York state to determine whether



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our clients can succeed on their claim that a hunger strike constitutes protected speech, and whether the jail's adverse action was caused by this strike.

Update 3: Over the last few weeks, I've been digging into two substantive research memos for one of the cases I'm assigned to, *Ortiz v. Orange County*. In this case, our clients allege that Orange County Jail retaliated against them after they engaged in a hunger strike. I'm looking into 1st Amendment law in New York state to determine whether our clients can succeed on their claim that a hunger strike constitutes protected speech, and whether the jail's adverse action was caused by this strike. In this same memo, I'm looking into whether we can also prevail on our claims that the jail retaliated against our plaintiffs after they submitted grievances about prison conditions, spoke to government officials, and filed complaints with the Department of Homeland Security — all of which are protected by the 1st Amendment. The other memo is about the standard for demonstrating failure to supervise claims for the purposes of *Monell* liability. I'm enjoying working on these substantive projects and I'm learning a lot about legal research and writing.

Update 4: I've just started the penultimate week of my internship with NYCLU and I'm continuing to refine my research memos on First Amendment law in New York and *Monell* liability. We recently learned that the government is appealing the preliminary injunction granted in *Coe v. Blanche*. In preparation for a hearing before the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals, I'm fielding questions with attorneys to answer plaintiff's questions. I'm also supporting the team with drafting our brief for the 2nd Circuit by drawing on recent decision from California. I'm enjoying this exploration of appellate work!

Final Reflection: I'm looking back over this summer with so much gratitude. I worked with some truly incredible litigators - sharp, honest, proactive, detail oriented, and driven. I'm so glad that these are the folks protecting civil rights, and I learned a lot just by osmosis! One of my favorite memories is attending our preliminary injunction hearing in *Coe v. Blanche* at SDNY. Meeting attorneys from the ACLU national, NYCLU, and Lambda Legal all together was a gratifying moment of what it means to have a team of lawyers working together. Seeing our weeks of research and preparation come together at oral arguments was gratifying, even more so when we found out we won. Being able to speak with parents whose children were impacted by this case was similarly gratifying. We don't often get to connect with clients affected by impact litigation, so I look back on this opportunity to directly understand the impact of our work fondly. Looking back, I'm also moved by the other case I worked on, on behalf of detained immigrants. at a moment when immigrants are scapegoated, targeted, and relentlessly harassed by the current administration, fighting on their behalf felt especially important. Between these two cases, I can see the benefits of being a generalist in a place like the ACLU - your exposure to a multitude of legal issues depending on what's particularly pressing to local communities is really special. Overall, my interest in civil rights litigation has piqued and I'm more motivated than ever to pursue this work in the future.