



Maida Public Interest Fellowships Program
2017 Report

Maida Public Interest Fellowships Program 2017 Report

Dear James and Sharon,

We are delighted to present this report on the 2017 program year of the Maida Public Interest Fellowships Program. Thanks to the generosity of the Maida Family, 33 public interest and government organizations hosted 35 Rutgers Law School students in 2017; these students, both 1L's and 2L's, provided at least 13200 hours of legal work, and probably much more. Placements included Department of Homeland Security (ICE) and the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, among others.

In addition, during 2016-2017, Alexi Velez worked tirelessly at ACLU-NJ, where her major project was a statewide study of municipal court practices in New Jersey. In light of the Ferguson report, there is increased national attention to court practices that essentially criminalize poverty by sending people to jail when they cannot pay fines and through other practices. In addition to this work, Alexi was assigned to a variety of other litigation projects to protect the due process and equal protection rights of various plaintiffs. She was involved in the case of an Afghan immigrant who worked for the United States military and was stopped at the airport as a result of President Trump's travel ban. In an email in December 2016, her supervisor said, "I can't say enough wonderful things about Alexi. I'm so grateful to have her with us this year. Thank you, thank you. In case you haven't seen it, an article featuring her work: <http://www.app.com/story/news/investigations/watchdog/government/2016/12/09/municipal-courts-hit-poor-hardest/94735926/>."

The ACLU asked Alexi to stay on for an additional year, and she agreed. Josh Bauers, the first Maida Public Interest Post-Graduate Fellow, also remains employed at Fair Share Housing, where your generosity allowed him to start his career as a public interest lawyer. The Maida Public Interest Fellowships Program is at this point a major draw for law school applicants, many of whom report that they chose Rutgers in part because they knew Rutgers values and promotes public service. In addition, we are building a much stronger pipeline with public interest employers, who get to know our students through public interest summer placements and are later in a better position to consider Rutgers students for other post-graduate fellowships and for long-term employment.

Your gift has had a substantial impact on the now 76 summer students who have benefited from your generosity, on the two new public interest lawyers whose careers you have impacted tremendously, and on the poor people in New Jersey and beyond who benefit from the legal work these ardent and idealistic future lawyers have provided.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Cahill".

Michael Cahill
Co-Dean

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jill Friedman".

Jill Friedman
Associate Dean for Pro Bono
and Public Interest



2017 Maida Summer Fellowships

2017 Maida Summer Fellowships

Tamara	Anaie	Newark	KIND
Francisco	Andrade	Camden	Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office
Usma Sohail	Ashraf-Khan	Newark	ACLU-NJ
Jessica	Beardsley	Camden	Mazzoni Center
Michael	Berryhill	Camden	Immigrant Justice Clinic, Rutgers Law School
Jessenia	Caquias	Newark	American Friends Service Committee
Tyler	Dougherty	Newark	Community Legal Services, (Phila) - Energy Unit
Kelli-Ann	Dreisbach	Camden	Domestic Violence Clinic, Rutgers Law School
Robert	Evans	Newark	New Jersey Public Defender's Office, Essex Co. - Juvenile
John	Flynn	Newark	Legal Aid Society - Juvenile
April	Gambardella	Camden	Volunteers for the Indigent Program (VIP)
Ebony	Garcia	Camden	Legal Clinic for the Disabled
Joanna	Gardner	Camden	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
Sara	Gray	Camden	PA Innocence Project
Landon	Hacker	Camden	NJ Public Defender's Office
Adam	Herpolsheimer	Newark	National Center for Lesbian Rights
Clare	Kelly	Camden	Child and Family Advocacy Clinic, Rutgers Law School
Christina	LaBruno	Newark	Brooklyn Legal Services, Elder
Ariella	Levine	Camden	Fair Share Housing Inc.
Amelia	Lyte	Newark	Department of Homeland Security, ICE
Ashley	Maddison	Camden	Disability Rights PA
Heather	McLinn	Newark	Sylvia Rivera Law Project - Immigrant Justice Project
Melanie	Morales	Newark	Legal Aid Society, Criminal Defense
Dan	Oates	Newark	Fair & Equitable Housing Office, NY
Zachary	Ostrow	Camden	New Jersey Attorney General's Office
Katherine	Petrie	Newark	New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
Sandra	Reed	Camden	ACLU-PA
Juan Ramirez	Rodriguez	Newark	American Friends Service Committee
Christina	Schnyer	Camden	Disability Rights NJ
Lauren	Sisson	Camden	US Attorney General's Office - Trenton
Khushbu	Solanki	Camden	Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
Domenico	Stockton-Rossini	Camden	Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Amelia	Vangellow	Camden	Community Legal Aid Society, DE (Disability)
Chelsea	Williams	Camden	Civil Practice Clinic, Rutgers Law School
Gokce	Yurekli	Newark	ACLU-NJ

Tamara Anaie

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Baghdad, Iraq

Undergraduate Institution: Montclair State University

Kids in Need of Defense

This past summer, I had the privilege of working with Kids In Need Of Defense, in the Newark, NJ office. KIND represents unaccompanied alien children, seeking legal status in the United States. I experienced, first-hand, the work that KIND does with refugee children fleeing violence, abuse, and other harm from Central America. Beyond learning about the complex issues tainting Central America, I had the ability to make a positive influence in the lives of those who truly need it them most.



During my time with KIND, I worked on several Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and Asylum cases. I took the lead on these cases, setting up interviews with our clients and accompanying them to Asylum Interviews, Master Calendar Hearings, Adjustment of Status Hearings, and other court-related matters. I was happy to see that while I was there, one of my clients was able to receive Asylum status.

Working with KIND has exposed me to a very vulnerable community who has left their home in order to seek safety and security. It is very fulfilling knowing that my work this past summer, allowed for families to reunite and be safe.

Furthermore, working in Public Interest in general was a great experience. There are plenty of opportunities to dive into case law and really make a difference for people who are solely relying on law to cure them. The public interest community is extremely driven by passion, which further confirmed my decision in pursuing public interest law.

Francisco F. Guzmán Andrade

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Manahawkin, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Stockton University

Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office

The Maida Public Interest Fellowship is one of the many things that makes Rutgers Law a leader in legal education and such an attractive option to aspiring law students. For me, it is the best thing Rutgers Law has to offer. It allowed to me pursue a summer employment position in public interest and get the most out of my summer experience.



My summer experience took place at the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office. The Office allowed me to have hands on experience and gain an inside perspective of what it takes to be a prosecutor and what a prosecutor's office does on a day-to-day basis. The work of the prosecutor's office goes beyond "putting away the bad guys"; these offices are integral part of the communities they serve.

An indicator of the integral role the Atlantic County Prosecutors Office plays in the community is the weekly walk they participate in the housing projects of Atlantic City. A movement began by the city to encourage connections among the city's youth and public officials, the prosecutor's office takes part by sending several of its prosecutors and detectives every week, allowing me to see how the office fosters relationships and serves the community outside of the courthouse.

But it was the experiences in the courthouse and in the office where I got the most out of my experience. At the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office, I had the opportunity to join a trial team and see how the trial process operates from beginning to end. Thus, I had the opportunity to draft and help attorneys prepare for motions at all levels of the trial process, from suppression hearings all the way to sentencing. I was also able to get my feet wet and make official appearances on the record. The experience I got standing up in front of a judge and making an argument based on a motion I had written, that had real and substantial consequences is unlike any experience you can get in law school.

But the experience didn't end at the courtroom. As everyone in the profession knows, only a small percentage of cases advance to the trial process. That's not because of lack of interest or claims, but because of the behind the scenes action that takes place. Prosecutors must make decisions from the very moment an arrest takes place—and sometimes even before—from helping detectives obtain warrants to deciding whether to bring charges against a defendant all the way to the sentence they recommend be imposed. At the office, I was able to participate in these various aspects of the trial process that offered meaningful experience, including witness preparation and pre-trial motions.

The most significant experience, however, came from the pre-trial conferences where prosecutors and defendants engage in the plea-bargaining process. It was here that I was witness the kind of power prosecutors have in their discretion. When people think of helping defendants, they often think the best way to do so is by being a public defender, and rightfully so; public defenders engage in noble work of ensuring all defendants get a fair trial and often do so at a voluminous rate. But prosecutors also have tremendous power to help those they believe would be better served through rehabilitation rather than punishment. They can offer deals that offer rehab and probation rather than incarceration and fines. Prosecutors aren't in the business of putting people in jail; they're in the business of serving our communities and make them safer. At the Atlantic County Prosecutors Office, I was able to help in these efforts and it didn't consist entirely of "locking people up." I am tremendously grateful for the Maida Public Interest Foundation for their generosity and helping provide this invaluable experience.

Usma S. Ashraf-Khan

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Dover, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Rutgers University, School of Arts & Sciences



American Civil Liberties Union– New Jersey

For my 1L summer I interned with the American Civil Liberties of New Jersey. I received this opportunity after interviewing with Jeanne LoCicero and Dianna Houenou at the NYU Public Interest Career Fair.

Working at the ACLU-NJ was a dream of mine. As an American-Muslim female, I have personally been the victim of hate and discrimination. I came to law school wanting to become an advocate and wanting to give a voice to those in need. In light of the current presidency, my internship at the ACLU-NJ came at the perfect time for me to achieve my career goals.

I wanted to work for an organization like the ACLU because I knew I would get to work on a diverse set of issues. Throughout my summer, my assignments ranged from bail reform, immigration, marijuana legislation, rights to protest, and juvenile defense. My first task was to draft testimony for Ms. LoCicero in regards to ICE officers making arrests at court houses. I went to Trenton to with Ms. LoCicero who presented the testimony I drafted to the Senate Judiciary Committee and watching my work make an impact, was a very humbling feeling.

During my summer internship, I also learned the realities of being an attorney; sometimes there is no winning argument. I worked on a brief with Alexander Shalom on a case involving an individual who on pretrial release was arrested by ICE and the prosecution was appealing for the individual to be detained in their facilities rather than Homeland Security's. Any procedure or act I would find would create a roadblock in the argument.

Overall, my summer was very rewarding and enlightening. Without the MAIDA funding, I would have had to reconsider my summer goals, but the funding allowed me to pursue my passion in fighting for justice.

Jessica Beardsley
J.D. Candidate, 2018
Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: North East, PA
Undergraduate Institution: University of Pittsburgh

Mazzoni Center

I spent the summer working at the Mazzoni Center. I had a great experience there and was able to gain not only legal knowledge, but also insight into the LGBTQ community itself. I interacted with several clients each day, whether by phone, email, or in person. I had meetings with my supervising attorney several times a week where we discussed cases and how to proceed in helping our clients. My main tasks were doing intakes for new clients, drafting petitions for various legal issues, researching legal issues, and filing documents at City Hall. I worked on numerous different types of legal problems that included family law issues, employment law issues, and discrimination issues.



Throughout my time at the Mazzoni Center, I developed friendships with the other interns as well as other employees that worked in different parts of the center. I learned a lot about the issues that nonprofit organizations can face, as well as all the great things that they can do for their communities. For example, the legal department at the Mazzoni Center held a monthly name change clinic from 5-7 where transgender individuals could come and talk to us and get more information about name changes in person. I participated in this once over the summer and it was one of the best experiences I had while working there. The people that came to the clinic would arrive stressed and confused about the process, then they would leave feeling better about it.

Because of Maida, I was able to help low income LGBTQ individuals at a time when they were most vulnerable, which is a cause that I am passionate about. Without the Maida funding I received, I would not have been able to work at the Mazzoni Center and gain the knowledge and experience that I received this summer.

Michael A. Berryhill

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Houston, TX

Undergraduate Institution: Drexel University



Rutgers Law Legal Clinic

My summer experience at the Rutgers Law Legal Clinic allowed me to work on a legal topic ripped from the headlines: immigration. This summer, I helped interview clients, researched complex legal questions, and assembled applications for immigrants seeking legal resources. During the summer semester, I had the opportunity to research matters and assemble applications pertaining to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, allowing me to receive a unique insight to a legal issue currently debated in the news and the halls of Congress. I had the opportunity to work on legal briefs that would be soon argued in court, giving context to my Legal Writing classes. I soon learned that one form of law, such as immigration, rapidly delves into separate forms of law for context, such as criminal, family, domestic violence, administrative and national security law, giving me a broad horizon in my legal experience.

The Maida fellowship funding allowed me to work directly with clients in need without having to work for a financial incentive. The Maida funding kept my focus on academics and client work, rather than student loans and bills. While I knew other students were having to juggle job, class, and work, the Maida fellowship took those balls out of the air and allowed me to focus on my legal experience. I would sincerely like to thank the Maidas for providing me with a legal opportunity that would previously been out of my reach.

I know that with each keystroke and each shake of the hand, I was helping someone working hard to legally become a member of society. I was helping others, and the work was rewarding. In very few legal practices is the work as gratifying as working for a legal clinic for the underprivileged. The Maidas allowed me to have that opportunity.

Jessenia Caquias

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Yonkers, NY

Undergraduate Institution: Fordham University–Rosehill

American Friends Service Committee

I had the wonderful opportunity to intern at the Immigrant Rights Program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) this summer. While I already knew that I wanted to do immigration because of my prior work experience with an immigration attorney, this internship has certainly assisted me in defining my goals. I had the privilege of being supervised by Lauren Major and Matthew Boaz, the attorneys that make up the “detention team” at AFSC.



I’ll take a moment to describe what being part of the detention team entails. As some people may or may not know, individuals in immigration court proceedings are not guaranteed an attorney as defendants in criminal proceedings are. As such, it is the respondent’s responsibility to obtain an attorney if he/she so desires. Those individuals that cannot afford an attorney, unfortunately must appear before an immigration judge, and against a trained government attorney, pro se. If this does not raise due process issues, I don’t know what does.

The amazing detention team at AFSC, have put in place a universal representation program at Elizabeth Detention Facility. The Elizabeth Detention Facility is one of three detention centers in New Jersey that houses detained individuals who are fighting their immigration cases. The universal representation program consists of providing free to low cost representation to everyone, regardless of the merits of the case. This ensures that everyone is represented with dignity, whether they have a winning case or not.

The way the universal representation program works is that the Elizabeth detention center provides AFSC with a list of individuals who are scheduled to appear before an immigration judge the following week. The attorneys, along with the interns go every Friday to do intake of the people on the list. Those who meet the income requirements, are taken on by the detention team at little to no cost. I was fortunate enough to go every Friday to do intakes of all these individuals with Matthew and Lauren.

After we took new detainee cases, all the substantive work began. I worked on preparing asylum applications, affidavits, country conditions, and more for all the new cases. I already had this type of experience because of my prior employment, so the team allowed me to develop new skills such as drafting the direct examination questions for hearings and preparing the client to answer them. I also had the opportunity to appear before an immigration judge on two occasions. Since immigration law is federal, I could appear before the judge as a 2L so long as I was supervised by an attorney. Matthew Boaz supervised me as I did the pleadings, presented

potential relief, and asked for continuances on three different cases my first time. The second time I appeared before the immigration judge, I submitted a motion for bond that I had prepared and got to argue for its approval. This experience was just incredible. I cannot thank Matthew and Lauren enough for allowing me that opportunity.

I also had the opportunity to draft a Habeas Corpus petition which I had not done before. Some detainees are subject to mandatory detention which means that they have to remain in detention until their case in immigration court finishes. Detained cases can take anywhere from three months to a year, on average. This means that some people are detained that entire time, sometimes without even having a criminal record. There is case law that establishes, among other things, that more than six months of detention for immigration purposes is unreasonable. As such, clients are able to submit habeas corpus petitions to federal court to ask for their release. I was able to draft one of these petitions and am very proud of it.

I could go on and on about the amazing experience I had at AFSC, but I think it suffices to say that I can never repay them for the wonderful experience they provided, and that I will gladly return if able to do so. Seeing the problems that exist in terms of little representation for detainees, has motivated me to create a similar universal representation program at the other two detention facilities in New Jersey once I become a practicing attorney. While I plan to have my own practice in the next five to seven years, I hope to also create a non-profit organization to provide universal representation for those in need in detention. Thank you to American Friends Service Committee and thank you to those that made this internship possible through the Maida Fellowship.

Kelli-Ann Dreisbach

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Northampton, PA

Undergraduate Institution: Pennsylvania State University

Domestic Violence Clinic

This summer I interned at the Rutgers Law Domestic Violence Clinic. After taking the clinic for credit in the spring semester of 2017, I knew I wanted to continue my work there through the summer, but I was worried I would be unable to because I could not afford to do something that was unpaid, and instead would have to work somewhere else where I knew I would not be afforded the same opportunities. That is when I found out about Maida.



Thanks to Maida, I was able to use this summer to not only further my legal career, but also boost my confidence in my legal skills and abilities. Through my work at the Rutgers Law Domestic Violence Clinic, I was able to meet with clients and work towards achieving their goals, which included representing a client at trial – the highlight of my experience this summer. After retaining the client, I spent a couple weeks preparing for the Final Restraining Order hearing and was guided by the supervision of my professor and supervising attorney, Victoria Chase, as well as the staff attorney within the clinic, Denise Higgins.

I was given the opportunity to meet and speak with opposing counsel regarding the case and discuss alternative options to the trial. I relayed these conversations to my client and then proceeded to advocate for her choices and best interests. I was able to experience for the first time on my own, a direct examination of a client in a real life situation, as opposed to a simulated scenario with actors. During my direct examination, I was able to put to practice what I had learned in Evidence by presenting multiple forms of admissible evidence to be considered by the court and in the judge's findings. Based on the testimony I elicited from my client during direct examination as well as the evidence that I brought forward, opposing counsel then declined to cross examine my client, and instead admitted to the alleged acts of domestic violence and consented to the final restraining order. This was a huge relief for both my client and myself because she did not have to be subjected to the cross examination from her husband's attorney. The relief was apparent; my client was overjoyed and began to cry because the suffering that she endured for over ten years had finally come to an end.

Seeing my client's reaction was not only a success story in her life, but in my life as well. Being able to reflect on the fact that I have changed one life is something that I am extremely grateful for. Not only am I grateful for this now, but also I will continue to be for the rest of my life because this is the first trial that begin my career as a lawyer. It is with confidence that I can say that my summer experience with the Rutgers Law Domestic Violence Clinic is a success story both personally and professionally, and had it not been for Maida, this would not have been possible.

John Flynn

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Cranford, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Georgetown University



Legal Aid Society – Juvenile

This past summer, I was a legal intern at Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Practice (JRP). I worked for ten weeks in the Staten Island Trial Office and spent much of my internship in the Staten Island Family Court. I had entered law school with the goal of pursuing a career in youth advocacy and juvenile justice. This internship provided me with one of the best opportunities to pursue this goal.

At JRP, attorneys represent children both in child protection and juvenile delinquency cases. As an intern, I was able to encounter the challenges and rewarding moments that accompany doing this type of work. I primarily aided in the representation of children whose caregivers faced allegation of abuse and neglect, which often presented challenging situations. Throughout the internship, I was able to improve many legal advocacy skills: client interviewing, client counseling, motion practice, and trial preparation. Additionally, I had the opportunity to frequently appear on the record in family court on behalf of clients. In many of these instances, I advocated for our client’s expressed wishes. For example, our client direct advocacy might involve advocating for a child to be returned to her parents despite objections from ACS. In these instances, I felt that by representing our clients’ expressed wishes, we were acting as their voice before the court and the child welfare system.

Most importantly, the stipend provided to me this summer allowed me to fully participate in this internship. For one, I would not have been able to afford the transportation costs of traveling to Staten Island every day. Additionally, since I had this funding to reimburse costs, I was able to use my car to complete home visits and detention visits. I visited children, both in and out of facilities, in almost every borough. In sum, I greatly appreciate the stipend, as it allowed me to pursue public interest legal work in my specific area of interest, have many opportunities to grow as a lawyer and advocate, and most of all, serve the children we represent.

April Gambardella

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Glen Ridge, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Rowan University

Volunteers for the Indigent Program (VIP)



Through the Maida Fellowship Program I had the privilege to work at Philadelphia VIP over the summer. Philadelphia VIP, is a non-profit legal organization that helps place low income Philadelphians who fall below the poverty line with volunteer attorneys. For many individuals, VIP is an agency of last resort. Dealing with only civil matters, VIP assists people with issues from “A-Z”, meaning adoption to zoning and anything in between. A sister organization of Community Legal Services and Philadelphia Legal Assistance, VIP impacts the lives of thousands of individuals per year who would be unable to receive the legal assistance that they require without VIP’s existence.

At Philadelphia VIP, I assisted in various capacities to help service clients. My daily tasks included anything from working up cases by calling and interviewing clients, gathering court documents, helping fill out various documentation, and reaching out to volunteer attorneys to take on our cases. By the end of the summer, I created a Guardianship Manual that Philadelphia VIP will use in the future to help assist clients with the Guardianship process. At Philadelphia VIP I gained a lot of substantive experience from a wide variety of legal areas including, but not limited to- Custody, Divorce, Probate, Deed Transfers, Collections, Guardianship, Torts, and Tax. At VIP I gained a lot of experience speaking and meeting with clients which helped me foster experience working with people from all different backgrounds which will be invaluable moving forward in my legal career.

My Maida Fellowship not only allowed me to support myself throughout the summer, but allowed me to have the pleasure of experiencing a truly inspiring non profit legal organization that I would not have been able to experience otherwise. At VIP I was surrounded by the most supportive staff that I could have imagined. Each attorney and co-worker was not only brilliant and passionate about their work to ensure equal rights to justice for Philadelphia residents, but truly believed in and took pleasure in teaching and assisting law students throughout the summer. If it weren’t for my Maida Fellowship, I never would have been able to meet such an amazingly kind and brilliant group of individuals. It was at this organization that I was encouraged and inspired by those around me to begin to become the zealous advocate that clients deserve during legal representation.

Joanna Gardner

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Haddon Heights, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: The Catholic University of America

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

This summer, I worked for HIAS Pennsylvania, a non-profit that provides refugee resettlement and immigration legal services in Philadelphia. Specifically, I worked with the legal services department's Domestic Violence Project, which assists immigrant survivors of domestic violence with their immigration cases. Over the course of the summer I had the opportunity to work on each part of the process of filing an immigration application, including interviewing clients to put together applicant affidavits, collecting evidence and compiling exhibit lists, writing "cover briefs" that apply the facts of a case to the statutory requirements for different types of relief, and researching legal questions related to the applications being filed by the domestic violence team, such as the T-visa for immigrant victims of human trafficking and the U-visa for immigrant victims of crime who have cooperated with law enforcement. In addition to the work I did with the domestic violence project, I also assisted with bilingual intake, visited a detention facility for unaccompanied minors, observed immigration court, and interpreted for a child's asylum interview.



My experiences this summer have solidified my interest in immigration law and convinced me that it is the area of law I hope to practice. I built relationships with some wonderful immigration law professionals, which I hope to maintain going forward. I learned a lot about the complexity of the immigration system and the law, as well as the interplay between the courts and the administrative agencies that review applications for immigration benefits. All of these experiences will be instrumental in my legal career going forward, which I hope will one day take me back to working for an immigration legal services non-profit. I am so grateful for the Maida stipend program, which made my summer work possible, and allowed me to make a meaningful contribution to an agency that is serving some of the city's most vulnerable people: undocumented immigrant survivors of domestic abuse.

Sara Gray

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Merchantville, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: La Salle University



Pennsylvania Innocence Project

As a Maida Public Interest Summer Fellow, I interned at the Pennsylvania Innocence Project (PIP), which works to exonerate those convicted of crimes they did not commit and to prevent innocent people from being convicted. It was an amazing experience.

As a PIP intern, I participated in the client screening process by writing a report evaluating the investigative and legal avenues for a potential client. The process of writing an investigative report requires a full review of a case file of a potentially wrongfully convicted individual. In this particular case, I was able to identify a number of indicators that support the theory that the defendant was wrongfully convicted. As a result of my investigation and report, I have been asked to continue to volunteer after my internship. This school year I will be presenting the case to the PIP Review Board, making a recommendation that this individual should be taken on as a client of PIP.

Additionally, I was able to assist existing clients by drafting post-conviction motions and petitions. PIP also gave the interns plenty of opportunities to observe court proceedings. I had the chance to visit Graterford Prison to meet with clients. Most importantly, I witnessed the culmination of years and years of litigation when I saw two innocent people freed from prison after serving 20 to 30 years. The work made personal impact when I saw one of PIP's clients actually walk out of the courtroom and reunite with his family. Had it not been for the Maida Public Interest Summer Fellowship, I would not have been able to do this work. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to hone my legal writing and professional skills while also building contacts that will support my future professional endeavors.

Landon Hacker

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Burlington, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Rutgers University - Camden

New Jersey Public Defender's Office

This past summer I interned with the Camden County Office of the Public Defender under the direct supervision of Daniel Peshkin and Nancy Coutcher. Dan and Nancy are the public defenders for Camden County's Drug Court Program.



Drug Court is a diversionary program for those who have committed drug related offenses. It is a program designed to address the rehabilitative needs of addicts. In lieu of going to state prison, offenders are given the opportunity to participate in Drug Court. In order to qualify for Drug Court, the offenses must be drug related. Past and current offenses are considered regarding qualification. There are certain offenses that would and could bar a person from getting into Drug Court. All violent and sexual based crimes are a bar (so most 1st and 2nd degree crimes). Distribution charges could also be a bar to getting into Drug Court, unless it can be found that the person was selling to support his/her habit (As opposed to for-profit dealers). Although technically a drug related crime, Drug Court is supposed to be for addicts, not dealers). Admission into Drug Court is at the discretion of the prosecutor and the judge, and the defense attorney can always appeal a rejection if necessary. Each county's program is ran and operated a bit differently. Some judge's are stricter than others, some prosecutors are more lenient as to who can get in, and each county has its own set of rules regarding probation requirements.

In New Jersey, Drug Court is a 3-5 year program. Like regular probation, an alternative sentence is set at sentencing. Unlike regular probation, Drug Court is an intense supervision program. It is essentially probation on steroids. While a regular probation officer may have hundreds of cases, a Drug Court probation officer is only supposed to have 50-60 cases so they can better address participants' needs. There are 4 phases, and each phases gets less restrictive as the program progresses. Drug Court consists of court reporting, probation reporting, and in-patient and/or out-patient care. Before being sentenced into Drug Court, a Drug Court evaluator will evaluate each participant to determine whether they need in-patient treatment (either short term or long term) or out-patient treatment (either intensive or regular) or both. The program also requires participants to attend 3 AA/NA meetings a week, maintain gainful employment, and remain arrest free during participation. Any violation of the program's terms, failing a drug test, or failure to go to meetings and appointments, results in a sanction. If one is sanctioned enough, or depending on the severity of the violation, one could be given their alternative sentence and be sent to prison. During the early phases of Drug Court, participants are often drug tested multiple times a week. In order to progress in the program, you must be in compliance with the program's rules and

conditions. Upon graduation with no new charges, participants get an expungement of their entire record (for everything that is expungeable).

In Camden, court reporting is every Monday and Wednesday, and those are the days I participated. Each day commenced with a meeting with the Drug Court team (public defenders, prosecutors, probation, court administration, etc.). We went down the list of all the participants scheduled to appear that day, and discussed their situations. Some were there for sanctions, new charges, getting plead in, sentencing, etc. After the meeting, I spent almost all of my time with the clients. I filled-out and went over their plea forms with them, sentencing forms, appeal rights, etc. I spent a lot of time dealing with the clients who were locked up for sanctions or picking up new charges. I discussed with them their issues, laid out their options for them, and helped them through their problems. I also found myself working with the clients who were resistant to the program, and the clients who were locked up and contemplating whether or not to take Drug Court. I was also involved in negotiations with the prosecutor and probation on behalf of the clients. I found that being a Drug Court public defender entails a huge “social worker” aspect, because the clients have a lot of issues (housing, DYFS, etc.) that need to be addressed and resolved.

On days when court was not in session, I worked on graduates’ expungements. I went over their criminal histories, and prepared their expungement orders. On some days when court was not in session, I went over to the jail to do First Appearances for people who were recently locked up. I conducted interviews with the clients to get their side of the story, went over their Public Safety Assessment with them, and advised them of the procedural process.

As a fellow graduate of the Drug Court Program (Burlington County, 2014), I found this entire experience extremely surreal, as I was once in the shoes of the clients I was working with and helping. This internship provided me with an opportunity to give back to the program that once saved my life and to help fellow addicts. I was able to serve as demonstrable evidence to those running the program that this program truly does work. Most importantly, I was able to provide the clients with hope and proof that this program really can change your life if you give yourself a chance. It was amazing to get a different perspective of the program, and to see behind the scenes and the inner-workings of the program. My dream is to become a Drug Court public defender, so this was a dream come true. I look forward to doing it again in the future. Thank you.

Adam R. Herpolsheimer
J.D. Candidate, 2018
Rutgers School of Law | Camden



Hometown: Wichita, KS
Undergraduate Institution: University of Kansas

National Center for Lesbian Rights

I interned at the National Center for Lesbian Rights in Washington DC. This summer my work focused on policy, which meant less interaction with actual clients but I still feel like tangible rewards were plentiful.

In law school and in life in general my focus is almost always “big picture” or somehow based in theory. I have taken every theory class Rutgers offers and even found a few other ones to take or made some theory based on my own. I love theory... possibly to my detriment. What I mean is that sometimes I lose sight that the central point of law and even the theoretical side of law is to help real people. This summer changed that.

As a policy clerk a big portion of my work was centered on making legal information accessible to people maybe not explicitly versed in the treacherous terrain of the legal realm or academic law talk. By shaping policy that affected real people I had to think less about the perfect way to solved problems, instead thinking about pragmatic ways to solve problems that can impact the most people and in adequately efficient ways.

The biggest projects I worked on over the summer involved criminal justice reform, specifically bail reform and sex offender registry reform. With bail reform, I learned that around three-quarters of LGBTQ individuals in jail are ONLY there because for whatever reason they can't pay bail. In so many words this is punishing people for their economic status. With sex offender registry reform, the problem is that in many states people are required to register as sex offenders for often time's consensual sex, like sex-work, indecency, and in some states STILL for long ruled unconstitutional sodomy laws.

The work was engaging to the extent that it allowed me to think of explicit ways that legislative change was needed. My work may not have been in the drafting of legislation on its own, but by informing others (other organization in the community, politicians, those with contrary opinions on the matter, etc.) about the need for change, and laying the groundwork so that change could come to fruition.

Thank you so much for the opportunity.

Clare Kelley

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

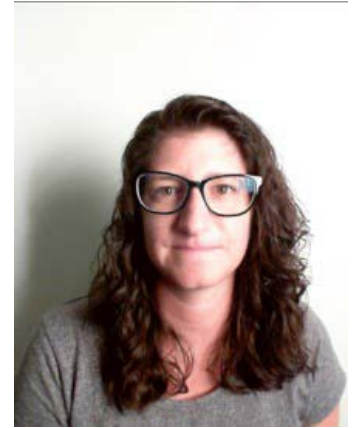
Hometown: Haddonfield, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Siena College

Family Advocacy Clinic

With funding provided through Maida I was able to have gain a meaningful and educational summer experience working at the Child and Family Advocacy Clinic at the Rutgers Law School in Camden.

The clinic was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Family Court and specifically, about parental rights.



Prior to my summer I had little knowledge about family law however, after this summer I have a better understanding of the law and specifically the work the clinic strives and succeeds at accomplishing. By reviewing discovery, discussing the law with Professor Schalick, whom I worked with, and having the opportunity observe court proceedings (and the discussions that go on behind the scenes) I was able to gain a wonderful real-life experience. My new knowledge and insight are helping me in my approach the classroom this semester. learned about being the responsibilities of a Law Guardian and always advocating for your client, the child, who may be too young to articulate their needs.

As part of my role at the clinic I also assisted the South Jersey First Star program. The First Star program prepares foster youth from across south jersey to succeeded academically by helping students prepare for the future during middle school and high school. Through tutoring, mentorship, and meetings with program staff, the students set and work towards benchmark goals for the upcoming year. The program also has a wonderful summer component where the students study, socialize, and live on a college campus. As part of the program, I was acquiring educational records from the past academic year to help the students set their goals for the upcoming year. Hearing the student's goals and knowing how the program is helping them achieve those goals was a rewarding experience.

My summer funding offered me the opportunity learn and see the law in action. I also got insight into how future policy changes take shape and are implemented. As a 2L, my first summer experience was an important step in shaping my goals moving forward. I was thankful to have such a hands-on educationally rewarding experience.

Christina LaBruno

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Secaucus, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Fordham University at Lincoln Center

Brooklyn Legal Services, Elder

This summer I had the incredible opportunity to intern with Brooklyn Legal Services, a civil legal service provider to low-income Brooklyn residents. I had the privilege of working under the Elder Law Unit where I served Brooklyn's senior citizen population. Through the internship, I assisted with litigation and advocacy projects under the supervision of Fraidy Nachman, the Director of Outreach and Elder Law. There, I conducted legal research on housing issues, specifically on holdover and nonpayment proceedings. I also conducted client-intake interviews and drafted and prepared papers for court.



Through this experience I learned a great deal about New York City housing law and the extensive protections the city provides to rent controlled and rent stabilized tenants. However, I was also confronted by the impact that gentrification has on these protections. Throughout the summer, I worked on eviction cases where landlords desired to clear out entire apartment buildings to make room for higher paying tenants. I witnessed landlords use a myriad of techniques to get around the city's housing regulations to attempt to legally evict their tenants. In response, the attorneys of Brooklyn Legal Services and I had the responsibility of upholding the applicability of these housing protections in the face of a changing urban landscape. One particular experience I'd like to highlight concerns a low-income elderly woman whose landlord attempted to evict her on nuisance grounds. Although the woman paid her rent on time and kept to herself, the landlord claimed her non-resident son had disturbed the comfort and enjoyment of others in the building. The landlord included in its complaint a number of false and outrageous allegations against the tenant's son. I was assigned to the case and was required to write a motion to dismiss. The motion argued that the notion of termination had been vitiated because the landlord continued to accept rent, and, in the alternative, that the alleged complaints did not rise to the level of severity required to justify eviction on nuisance grounds. Upon reading the motion the landlord's attorney decided to drop the case. I highlight this experience because it was one of the most rewarding from my time at Brooklyn Legal Services. To help an elderly and vulnerable woman maintain her home was an incredible and humbling experience. Thus, I am so very grateful to have been selected as a Maida Public Interest Fellow and to have had the opportunity to affect meaningful change in people's lives.

Ariella V. Levine

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Cherry Hill, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Wheaton College-Massachusetts

Fair Share Housing Inc.

This summer I have the privilege of receiving a Maida Fellowship with Fair Share Housing Center. Peter J. O’Conor, one of the three attorneys who brought the original Mount Laurel litigation, founded Fair Share Housing Center (FSHC) in 1975. The organization is dedicated to protecting the housing rights of New Jersey’s poor. FSHC does this by enforcing the Mount Laurel Doctrine, and working towards its expansion. Although I read Mount Laurel I, the landmark decision that prohibits economic discrimination through exclusionary zoning, and requires all towns to provide their “fair share” of their regions need for affordable housing in my 1L Property Class, I quickly learned that there was much more to affordable housing in New Jersey. Mount Laurel I was intended to end discriminatory or exclusionary housing patterns that have deprived the poor, but unfortunately loopholes were found and the intended purpose of the doctrine was not fulfilled.



In response to the Mount Laurel litigations in the legislature passed the Fair Housing Act of 1985 (FHA). The FHA created the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), a state agency that allowed municipalities to voluntarily create a plan to meet their “fair share” obligation, by doing this the municipality would be protected from builder’s remedy lawsuits. COAH was responsible for the methodology of and assigning municipalities with their fair share numbers, and approving compliance mechanism. COAH’s Third Round regulations were adopted in 2008, since then COAH was inactive and nonfunctioning. In 2015 the New Jersey Supreme Court stripped COAH of its power and transferred the power back to the courts to handle the affordable housing process. Kevin Walsh, the executive director of FSHC, who I had the opportunity to work with this summer, brought the case that made this change. Mr. Walsh explained to me the ineffectiveness of COAH was effecting the enforcement of the Mount Laurel Doctrine.

Thanks to the Maida Partners program I was able to spend my summer working with and learning from the passionate staff of the FSHC. There are three full time attorneys at FSHC, Kevin Walsh, Adam Gordon, and Joshua Bauers who travel up and down New Jersey because they believe in the idea that everyone should have the opportunity to reside in an safe, decent, sanitary housing near employment and educational opportunities. Not only did these attorneys teach me about zoning regulations, and how to effectively enforce the Mount Laurel Doctrine, they also mentored and supported me throughout the summer as grew as a law student. With their guidance I was able to draft settlement agreements between municipalities and FSHC, which set the municipality’s obligation and the mechanisms used to meet the fair share number.

I also had the opportunity to observe and participate in mediations between FSHC and municipalities in order to reach a settlement agreement. These mediations varied from high tension situations to friendly settings. These mediations sometimes involved the presiding judge, and/ or the “Special Master.” The energy of the staff and attorneys at FSHC was contagious, and really set the tone for the rest of my legal career. Everyone I worked with believed in fighting for social justice and protecting the rights of New Jersey’s poor. Every day I was inspired to have a “go get em” attitude because of the people I was working with. FSHC has a staff of only eight, but they manage to effectuate real progress and change, I believe this is because they are all motivated and strongly believe in the work they do.

I came to law school so that I could work for a public interest organization to help effectuate change. The Maida Fellowship allowed me this very opportunity. Without the Fellowship I could not have supported myself. This opportunity allowed me to support myself and gain skills that I will carry through my legal career. My research, writing, and critical thinking/ problem solving skills greatly improved this summer because of the mentorship this program allowed me to have. I will always have a strong connection with Fair Share Housing Center’s work and staff because of the Maida Fellowship program, and I am so grateful for this.

Amelia Lyte

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Edison, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: State University of New York - Binghamton

Department of Homeland Security, ICE



This past summer I had the opportunity to work in the Department of Homeland Security Immigration Customs Enforcement’s Office of the General Counsel here in Newark, NJ. I began knowing nothing about immigration law, but I had the opportunity over this summer to really expand my knowledge of this area of the law and the changes it is undergoing. Although I was initially concerned given the emotional debate on immigration, I found that the assistant attorneys maintained their prosecutorial discretion even if several general policies of the Department changed.

I was in front of an Immigration Judge almost every day and worked on cases involving all kinds of immigration issues, including criminal and national security. A typical hearing was unlike any other proceeding I have attended. The judges are administrative and because of that, and the emotional nature of the cases, the rules of evidence and the demeanor of the court are more flexible. Proceedings, rather than continuing on when there are missing documents or evidence, tend to be adjourned for extended periods of time. Even if this delay is not ideal, it gives the Respondent a chance to continue living here and build up further equity, ultimately strengthening their case.

I assisted attorneys in removal proceedings, asylum applications, and change of status cases. The Newark office is one of the busiest in the country, and I had a lot to do and a lot of motions to file. Although the facts of each case differed, the volume of cases lead me to recognize patterns in the applications from individuals coming from the same country. I also did a lot of work on “SURGE” cases, or cases involving minor children crossing the border illegally, either alone or with their families. One week, the office filed about 3,500 such cases.

It is my ambition to work in the federal government and this summer allowed me to gain extra experience and contacts which will benefit me going forward. I especially was able to gain a lot of practical writing experience given the sheer volume of briefs and motions. My experiences over this past summer were a very interesting and enlightening. I am very grateful to have been chosen for the internship and to have received funding as a Maida Fellow.

Ashley D. Maddison

J.D. Candidate, 2019

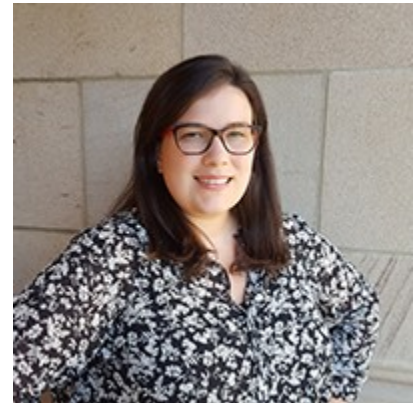
Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Kirkwood, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Drexel University

Disability Rights Pennsylvania

My first day I showed up in standard black leather heels and a suit—I did not realize I would spend my very first afternoon visiting a site with a client, crouching on the ground with a tape measure, trying to summon any working knowledge of geometry that dwelled in the bowels of my brain to assess how building modifications were going. I was hooked.



It was the beginning of a hands-on summer of public interest work. I had the privilege of working at Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP), the designated protection and advocacy organization for Pennsylvanians with disabilities. DRP focuses on ensuring that adults and children with disabilities receive equal treatment and access to public accommodations, as well as safe and appropriate services. I provided support in the areas of legal research, drafting documents including informational publications, following up with clients to gather more information after initial intake, assisting with assessing sites for accessibility, and reviewing suggested policy comments. We even participated in Disability Pride Day in Philadelphia, setting up a table in the shadow of City Hall to educate attendees and passersby about DRP.

This summer's internship offered me one-on-one experience working with extremely talented, knowledgeable attorneys. I received practical tips, feedback on writing, and plenty of support. Being able to work on many different projects and cases in various stages of completion also helped me gain perspective on different issues facing the disability community and the ways in which legal professionals can help address those issues through both education and litigation. The most rewarding part of my experience was having the opportunity to witness a client visit a previously inaccessible place for the very first time. I know that public interest work, especially when focusing on big, systemic issues, can seem overwhelming. Sometimes it feels like you might not even be making a dent—but being able to see a seemingly small but very tangible victory firsthand and the enormous impact it had for that client was an honor.

Maida Public Interest Funding provided me with a stipend for work which otherwise would have been unpaid. Knowing that that this funding was available allowed me to “dream big” when evaluating prospective internships. I could focus on applying to organizations I was passionate about like DRP, knowing that Rutgers (through Maida funding) would support me in my pursuit. I am so thankful for the stipend I received, and I am proud to attend a law school that commits itself to forming new lawyers to serve our community.

Heather McLinn

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Indianapolis, IN

Undergraduate Institution: Indiana University

Sylvia Rivera Law Project

This past summer, because of the Maida fellowship, I was lucky to work at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP) in Manhattan, an organization that provides pro bono legal assistance to the transgender, gender nonconforming, and intersex communities of New York City. Within Sylvia, I was an intern in the Immigrant Rights Department. Under the tutelage of the staff attorneys at SRLP, I strengthened my skills as an advocate and received invaluable training in client interaction.



Most of my work at Sylvia was geared toward researching legal questions about and filing for humanitarian visas. Many of our clients, because of their gender identities, had been subjected to violence in their countries of origin, and were thus strong candidates for asylum. Some were survivors of human trafficking and were candidates for T-Visas. During my time at SRLP I conducted an asylum interview with a client, and used the information to file the application with USCIS. I was also able to help draft a declaration to be filed in conjunction with a T-Visa application.

This experience was made possible for me because of the Maida funding. Because the internship at SRLP was unpaid, I would not have been able to accept it without some sort of outside funding. I am so grateful that the Maida fellowship exists at Rutgers to help students like me pursue public interest internships. I am truly grateful to have been given this opportunity!

Melanie Morales

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Newark, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: University of Chicago

Legal Aid Society, Criminal Defense

For my 2L summer, I interned for The Legal Aid Society. I worked with experienced and dedicated attorneys in the Criminal Defense Practice to represent indigent clients in New York County. I loved every day at my internship and took every opportunity available for us interns to learn and challenge my abilities as a future public defender. I also gained a firsthand view of the grueling role of the criminal justice system in the state level.



As soon as I began, I shadowed my supervisors at arraignments. Many of our clients have some past contact with the system. Some also hail from extremely poor and marginalized communities, some have histories of unattended mental health issues to drug addictions. At one arraignment, I interviewed a client who was scared of his own drug habit, but could not stop. But I also met clients with wealthy upbringings, but with few options for a new life, such as one unemployed European with a marijuana offense who also faced potential immigration consequences. They were unnerved, angry, and exhausted. At every arraignments shift, there was always an opportunity to advocate, from reasoning with the prosecutor to offer a violation instead of a misdemeanor, to making a bail package for the judge by highlighting our client's lives, and clarifying criminal history records that were not updated.

Beyond arraignments, I initiated investigations for the cases that I picked up from arraignments. For my first investigation, I located the complaining witness in a Lower Manhattan neighborhood and interviewed him. I spoke with other potential witnesses who were at the scene of the arrest. I met with my clients in the Manhattan Detention Complex and The Bridge, the holding facilities in the courthouse. I helped prepare for trial, and even brought my knowledge from Trial Presentations when preparing direct and cross examinations and defense theory.

The criminal court is a place of both chaos and long stretches of quiet, and of frustrations at our clients' treatment and of the joys when our clients' cases are dismissed or acquitted. At Legal Aid, I worked with attorneys who devote their lives to their clients, who find their hearts and souls in public defense and advocacy for the indigent. It has solidified my desire to be a public defender after law school. Thanks to the Maida Summer Fellowship, I was able to afford the expenses associated with my experience. I am deeply appreciative of the support of the Maida Program to help fund my public interest internship and my journey into public defense.

Dan Oates, MSW

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Port Washington, NY

Undergraduate Institution: James Madison University

Fair & Equitable Housing Office, NY

Over the summer, I worked for New York State’s Homes and Community Renewal’s (“NYSHCR”) Fair and Equitable Housing Office (“FEHO”). NYSHCR serves New York in several capacities; they are best known for advancing affordable housing and community development. FEHO provides guidance to NYSHCR for all equity matters that fall under the general Fair Housing framework (e.g., Fair Housing Act, Violence Against Women Act). In addition to internal guidance, FEHO orchestrates statewide Fair Housing policy, educates stakeholders, and coordinates agencies to ensure compliance.



My work at FEHO focused upon housing discrimination against protected classes. More specifically, I analyzed discrimination under a disparate impact theory and its application to a wide array of housing practices. These practices included: Qualified Allocation Plans & Low-Income Housing Tax Credit; landlord’s use of credit scores for tenant screening; and siting of affordable housing units. The majority of my work considered case law stemming from a recent Supreme Court decision that affirmed disparate impact claims as cognizable under the Fair Housing Act, albeit with a heightened prima facie standard. This research, however, also touched upon administrative law related to federal agencies and statutory analysis for triggered statutes. I presented my work to my supervisors in memos.

I reported to three supervisors generally, but only one for daily tasks. That supervisor, Danny Sternberg, significantly impacted my practice. Because I had worked prior to coming to law school, I had a loose grasp on my own professional identity. Yet, I grew in unexpected ways because of Danny’s guidance. In particular, I observed and modeled Danny’s attention to specificity when writing and talking. It appeared as if there was a regulator planted upon his tongue and at tip of his pen, no word could pass without purpose. This kept me accountable. My writing improved under Danny’s supervision. He helped transition my stubborn ways into correct form and style.

My tenure at FEHO reinforced my respect for the utility of a legal skillset. Behind every problem solved or issue addressed, there seemed to be a lawyer. Not all decision makers went to law school, but almost all were surrounded by competent, legal advisors.

FEHO was my first placement in the public sector, and it was illuminating. While the benefits are obvious (e.g., quality of work, job security, and professional growth), the political drawback was significant. Currently, NYS has a progressive governor; NYSHCR falls within his purview. The governor backs most of the equity initiatives, but should the executive fall to a more

conservative adversary, internal turmoil would be inevitable. I would have difficulty following an agenda I didn't wholeheartedly back. I will continue to explore distinctions between the government and non-profit sector, and how I can be of best use.

FEHO has prepared me for my next steps as a fall intern with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity ("HUD"). I appreciated FEHO's opportunity to navigate equity issues on the state level. HUD will enable me to better understand those same issues from a federal perspective.

Thank you for supporting me during a formative placement. I shall bring value to your investment by continuing to serve our greater community.

Zachary Ostrow

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Trevese, PA

Undergraduate Institution: The College of New Jersey



Office of the Attorney General of New Jersey

Thanks to the funding so generously provided to me through the Maida Fellowship Program, I was able to work full-time in the Office of the Attorney General of New Jersey this summer. I worked within the Division of Law in the Tort Litigation section. This was a relatively large section with a very heavy caseload. Due to the heavy volume of work, I was one of ten interns in the section.

The work was assigned by the Deputy Attorneys General via assignments sheets which were kept in a folder and were distributed by the chief secretary. Assignments were given out based on whether you were a rising 1L or 2L. 2L's received more difficult assignments such as motions, briefs, or more complex legal questions. 1L's were typically assigned deposition summaries, records summaries, or document review.

I personally completed around ten substantive assignments during my ten-week internship. These assignments included briefs in support of motions to dismiss, motions for summary judgment, and motions for partial summary judgment. I also worked on several memos addressing central questions in upcoming litigation. I occasionally was asked to summarize depositions and medical records so that I could include this information when writing the brief. Some of the work that I submitted was filed in court with only minor editing. At least one of my memos uncovered crucial information that the Deputy said that he missed. He told me that what I found may have won the case for him. So, I am proud of the work that I did and am confident that I was an asset to the office during my stay there.

Aside from the actual writing experience I obtained, I was invited to sit in on depositions, oral arguments, case meetings in a federal judge's chambers, and arbitration meetings; all of which I had little or no experience with prior to this internship. We were also given tours of several state run facilities including the "ROC" information hub, the State Police Forensics lab, the State Emergency Operations Center, and the New Jersey State Prison. Each of these experiences were insightful and interesting.

Aside from these great experiences, I became friendly with my fellow interns. Several people in the office said that we were one of the tightest-knit group of interns that they've ever had. After a meeting, we convinced the Attorney General to take a photograph with our section which was later featured on the Attorney General's Facebook page.

My experience this summer was a very positive one. I gained valuable experience and insight, new writing samples, new networking contacts, and new friends. I would certainly recommend

this internship opportunity to anyone, even if they aren't particularly interested in tort litigation. I'd like to thank the Maida Fellowship Program for selecting me to be a fellow for a second year. The funding was tremendously beneficial because it allowed me to pursue my interest in public interest legal work on a full-time basis. Thank you.

Katherine Petrie

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Mendham, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Pennsylvania State University -
University Park

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice



I could not be more thankful for both my summer experience at NJISJ and the Maida funding I received this summer. I was given the opportunity to work on important social justice issues while not having to worry about making ends meet. This allowed me to get everything possible out of my internship without having to stress about finances.

At the Institute, I was tasked with various legal projects for the Criminal Justice and Juvenile Justice departments. The first project I had was writing a white paper regarding a Newark Bias-Free Policing Policy. This white paper ended up being sent to the Department of Justice for review, which was an exciting experience.

I wrote a number of memos and letters dealing with various criminal justice issues. My favorite project was writing a letter to a prison facility about the implementation of a braille program in their facility. It was a good experience getting to attempt to convince someone of something that I was passionate about.

Throughout the summer I also did a lot of research on various topics for the Institute. My mentor was working on a report, so I was able to help her gather information in support of her arguments. Much of my research involved the laws of other states, and determining how they compared to our own.

Lastly, towards the end of my internship, I worked with another staff attorney who focused on reentry issues. I was able to proofread some of his writing, including testimony he gave to a state congressional group. I also did some research regarding driver's license laws in New Jersey.

Overall, working for the Institute was a great experience. It furthered my passion for public interest work, which is something I hope to pursue when I graduate from Rutgers in 2018. I also met many wonderful attorneys and interns who made me proud to be pursuing a legal career.

Sandra Reed

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Ventnor City, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Stockton University



American Civil Liberties Union – Pennsylvania

My experience this summer interning at the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania (“ACLU-PA”) was invaluable to my future legal and professional development. As this is an unpaid internship, I would not have been able to accept the position at the ACLU of Pennsylvania if it were not for the generous funding provided by the Maida Partnership Program.

While at the ACLU, my legal work involved (1) the efforts to avoid potential litigation, (2) the preparation for potential and ongoing litigation, and (3) the observation of the practices and policies of various judges and courts in Pennsylvania. I researched and drafted an appeal from a denied public records request made by the ACLU under the Pennsylvania state right-to-know law. Even though this was an unsuccessful formal appeal, the appeal notice motivated the entity to work with the ACLU’s request in order to avoid litigation.

Second, as an intern at the ACLU-PA, I was involved in various stages of civil rights litigation in federal court. I researched circuit splits and drafted a research memo for attorneys who were participating in a Rule 16 pre-trial conference and thereafter submitted findings of fact and conclusions of law. I was privileged to attend several depositions and to create the deposition digests afterward for a case that was brought by the Alliance Defending Freedom against a Pennsylvania public school that had transgender-friendly bathroom policies. The ACLU was an intervening party under the federal rules, which presented very unique and different challenges. I was also involved in follow-up conference calls that planned the litigation strategy.

Lastly, I gathered data through court observations and contributed to a forthcoming report that discusses the practices of state judges dealing with criminal defendants who are unable to pay their court fines and costs. Staff attorneys also brought me to participate in interviews with potential clients at jails and prisons in Pennsylvania.

Juan C. Ramirez Rodriguez
J.D. Candidate, 2019
Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Perth Amboy, NJ
Undergraduate Institution: Rider University

American Friends Service Committee

This past summer I worked at the American Friends Service Committee (“AFSC”) as an Immigrant Rights Intern and my experience there was amazing in every sense of the word. Before my internship at AFSC, I did not have any exposure to immigration law, but I came to law school knowing that I wanted to practice immigration upon graduation. My experience this summer has only strengthened my desire to practice immigration and thanks to the Maida Partners Stipend I had the opportunity to do the kind of work I want to do in the future.



While at AFSC I learned about immigration law and how to practice it. I researched questions having to do with inadmissibility bars that would make an applicant inadmissible to the United States. I also did some research on the immigration consequences of criminal convictions and how to apply the categorical approach. Further, I learned about asylum and other immigration relief and what the law requires for applicants to establish in order to qualify for such relief.

On a practical level, my supervisors at AFSC allowed me to take the lead on many of my assignments and they walked me through the appropriate procedures for completing, submitting, and filing applications and other motions. I was able to interview clients and prepare their asylum, work authorization, and other relief applications. I was tasked with preparing submissions for the immigration court and observing procedures in both a detained setting at the Elizabeth Detention Center and the non-detained setting in the Newark Immigration Court. I was also able to appear before two immigration judges in Newark under the supervision of my supervising attorney.

I am grateful for the Maida Partners Program in recognizing the importance of public-interest work and for rewarding me with a stipend while I worked at my first-choice organization. This past summer could not have been better for me and I hope I have the opportunity of participating in the Maida Partners Program once more.

Christina Schnyer

J.D. Candidate, 2019

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Collingswood, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Rutgers-Camden

Disability Rights New Jersey

I feel so grateful to have had the opportunity to explore and experience an area of law that I feel so passionate about - Disability Law. To have been given the chance to work while receiving these funds allowed me the opportunity to not only help others in such a vulnerable population, but also to help myself in a way by seeing if public interest work, especially within this field, is something I can truly see myself doing. After a full summer at Disability Rights NJ, I can absolutely say with complete confidence that I cannot imagine doing anything different. While there, by wonderful supervisors truly supported and challenged me by allowing me to research the breadth of the religious exemption under the ADA, whether having an intermittent and chronic disease would allow you to qualify for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and how *Olmstead v. L.C.* impacts/interplays with specific state-provided services. I've gone to Newark many times for case settlement conferences and a trial - both in the Office of Administrative Law. I was also working directly with clients over the phone and, under supervision, further getting a grasp of the legal issues at play and providing them with the various legal routes that may have available potentially inside or outside of our office. I was able to take a special education case from the first phone call where the student was not receiving an education at all, to coordinating writing up the petition of appeal and filing of emergent relief against a school district, and to attending an eligibility/IEP meeting where the family was also able to receive an incredibly favorable settlement agreement. Additionally, thanks to the opportunity I had with DRNJ, because they had funding allotted towards an intern and I was able to save them money by coming to them with funding, they were encouraged to offer me a position for the entirety of the 2017-2018 school year. I could not have dreamed of a better experience - what a great way to find inspiration to move myself forward in my career path.



Lauren Sisson

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Philadelphia, PA

Undergraduate Institution: University of Maryland

US Attorney General's Office - Trenton

I had an extremely varied and interesting experience at the U.S. Attorney's Office this summer. The Trenton office is significantly smaller than the main office in Newark, so the majority of the attorney's work on criminal matters, although there are two civil attorneys. The supervising attorney for the intern program told us the first day to feel free to try and spend as much time in the courtroom viewing proceedings, so we spent a few hours in court almost every day. All of the attorneys in the office were great at keeping us apprised of what appearances they had that day, and usually sent internal memos or other documents to us beforehand so we were up to speed. We were able to view arraignments, indictments, initial hearings, pleadings, sentencing, and portions of several trials.



The work we were asked to do over the course of the summer was also quite varied. In addition to writing responses to habeas petitions, sentencing, prosecution, and plea memos, we also spent time listening to jail calls and other recordings to gather evidence that could be used in plea negotiations or prosecution.

At least once a week we were able to participate in videoconferences with the Newark office where some of the department heads gave presentations on their daily jobs or important cases they prosecuted. The offices clearly put a lot of thought and time into the intern program, which we really appreciated.

I am very thankful for the MAIDA funding, it went a long way toward deferring the cost of commuting to Trenton five days a week, and allowed me to enjoy my summer experience without worrying about financial issues.

Khushbu Solanki

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Kendall Park, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: Kean University



Volunteer Lawyers for Justice

I'd like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Maida Partners Foundation for funding my internship at the Volunteer Lawyers for Justice in Newark, New Jersey in Summer 2017.

My focus areas were human trafficking, child support, and veterans' issues. The human trafficking cases were about helping victims of human trafficking vacate their criminal convictions which they received as a result of being trafficked. The child support cases mainly involved emancipations and modifications of child support. The veterans' issues ranged from trusts and estates matters to the apportionment of Veterans Affairs benefits. I took a lead role at the child support and veterans' clinics.

I also participated in divorce, expungement, driver's license, and consumer law clinics. In these clinics, Volunteer Lawyers for Justice helped people file for divorce or respond to divorce filings, expunge their criminal records, restore their driver's licenses, and file for bankruptcy or negotiate with their creditors respectively.

I highly recommend interning at Volunteer Lawyers for Justice because the mentorship is fantastic, the casework is interesting, the work is gratifying and fulfilling, and interns will get a comprehensive overview of New Jersey law. My mentors were Jessica Kitson, Kaleia Edmundo, and Jessica Limbacher. Jessica Kitson is the Managing Director and handles the human trafficking cases. Kaleia Edmundo handles the family law cases; veterans cases; and the divorce, child support, and veterans clinics. Jessica Limbacher handles consumer law and bankruptcy cases and is responsible for the interns. Volunteer Lawyers for Justice interns will get a comprehensive overview of New Jersey law because they make it a point to send every intern to every clinic and train them in at least the basics of every area of law Volunteer Lawyers for Justice handles. Those interns focusing on veterans issues, will get a particularly comprehensive overview of New Jersey law.

Dom Stockton-Rossini

J.D. Candidate, 2018

Rutgers School of Law | Camden

Hometown: Ship Bottom, NJ

Undergraduate Institution: William Patterson University



Pinelands Preservation Alliance

I interned with the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) over the summer of 2017. The PPA is an environmental non-profit whose mission is to protect and preserve the over one-million acre Pinelands State and National Reserve. The PPA is also a government watch dog group, working with local and state officials to better protect the Pinelands area.

I was able to work with the PPA to find new ways to pressure New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Pinelands Commission to better serve the Pinelands. I was able to research for potential litigation to compel state action in multiple areas of environmental law. I researched cases interpreting the Pinelands Preservation Act and its implementing regulation to determine how the PPA could move forward on different initiatives and challenge the state.

I also researched how the PPA could challenge a bill presented before the state legislature which would have lowered the conflict of interest standards for Pinelands Commission members. After completing the memo, the PPA allowed me to advocate on its behalf at the statehouse before the bill was scheduled to be voted on. I spoke with members of the state Assembly and Senate, and their staff, to prevent this bill from passing. For now the bill has been put on hold since the sponsors were unable to get the votes needed to pass.

In addition to the legal and advocacy work I was to experience, I also experienced much of the physical beauty the Pinelands has to offer. I was able to experience both the Batsto and Mullica rivers as part of educational tours run by a PPA subsidiary, Pinelands Adventures. I was also able to attend the PPA issues committee meeting and their quarterly board meeting to experience how an environmental non-profit functions. Overall this was an amazing experience that showed how non-profits work to accomplish their goals and how citizens can get involved to better our environmental resources.

Amelia Vangellow
J.D. Candidate, 2018
Rutgers School of Law | Camden



Hometown: Fairport, NY
Undergraduate Institution: Nazareth College

Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.

Thank you very much for making it possible for me to work as a Maida Fellow this summer at Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. in Delaware. My goal is to work in direct legal services, so this summer was incredibly valuable in gaining experience in the exact type of work I want to do under the supervision of multiple talented attorneys.

The majority of the time I worked on cases involving both disability rights and immigrants' rights. I worked with a client with Alzheimer's disease in requesting a hearing after he was denied citizenship because he could not pass the educational requirements. The client had previously filed the proper paperwork documenting his disability, but the officer did not deem it adequate and still attempted to administer the exam to the client. I wrote a lengthy letter challenging the decision and worked with the client's family in gathering the necessary documents. I also worked with a young asylee with developmental disabilities and her caregivers in applying for permanent residency.

I also gained a lot of substantive knowledge on the workings of Medicaid and Medicare while I created a *pro se* Medicaid appeals guide and assisted another client in an appeal of a Medicare overpayment. I finally was able to learn more about special education issues and assisted an attorney with several small projects and I conducted legal research for on the burden of proof in special education due process hearings.

Finally, I was able to gain experience in elder law under the supervision of an elder law attorney. Our client was an elderly woman who was severely taken advantage of by someone that pushed her to sign a contract. We represented the elderly woman in a civil suit and I assisted in the deposition and the mediation. I also helped investigate and discovered a history of financial abuse prosecution which was helpful to our claims. This case made me feel especially enraged at the way vulnerable people are taken advantage of, however I have grown interested in learning more about these issues and how to prevent them.

I am sure that everything I learned this summer will be incredibly useful to my future career and I am so thankful for the support of the Maida program.

Gokce Yurekli, ACLU-NJ
J.D. Candidate, 2018
Rutgers School of Law | Newark

Hometown: Ankara, Turkey
Undergraduate Institution: Rutgers University - Newark

American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey

I had the pleasure of working at the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey (“ACLU”) during the summer of 2017. It was an incredibly rewarding experience and I am so thankful to the Pro Bono and Public Interest Program at Rutgers for giving me this opportunity.



As a summer fellow, I worked closely with senior attorneys and conducted extensive research on specific legal issues that were completely new to me. One of the many projects which found me happily working past hours was drafting a brief in support of motion for preliminary injunction over the privatization of a municipal water utility. The case required me to explore state regulations, public health and safety concerns, and similar litigation, including ACLU’s fantastic work in Flint, Michigan. Although we no longer needed to file the motion, I was praised for my clear writing style and efficient research skills.

In addition, I wrote legal memoranda on issues such as municipal liability, use of hearsay in supporting a warrant application, standards of review for federal courts reviewing denials of parole in the immigration context, and issuance of marriage licenses in state prisons. I also helped devise the cross-examination strategy for expert testimony in a criminal trial.

Furthermore, we had brown-bag lunches with other interns from NJISJ and AFSC in Newark. We also visited the East Jersey State Prison, observed criminal trials, and conversed with Judge Chagares from the U.S. Court of Appeals for Third Circuit.

In sum, I really enjoyed my time at the ACLU. Thank you!

2017 Maida Post- Graduate Public Interest Fellowship

Alexi Velez '15 Examines the Impact of Court Fines and Sanctions

February 28, 2017



Alexi Velez '15 studies the impact of court fines and sanctions on people who can't pay.

Every year, New Jersey's municipal courts handle over six million cases, including disorderly persons and traffic offenses, many of which carry hefty monetary fines and other sanctions, including incarceration.

This year, Alexi Machek Velez, Rutgers Law '15, is working as a Maida Law Fellow with the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey is exploring shortcomings within the municipal court system to showcase those struggling

to meet their financial obligations and to examine the consequences they suffer – including incarceration – when they cannot.

“I have observed court sessions in approximately 40 municipal courts throughout our state; interviewed a number of folks who have been personally impacted by the struggle to pay off fines and fees despite having limited income . . . spoken with prosecutors, municipal judges and defense attorneys working in our municipal courts about the challenges they face; collected and synthesized a great deal of data having to do with municipal court revenue, municipal demographics, and the rate at which municipal defendants suffer incarceration for inability to pay municipal court fines and fees,” she said.

While the project illustrates problems within the municipal court system, it also brings attention to broader issues of economic and racial injustices, Velez said. Velez said because most attorneys join the ACLU-NJ with significant prior experience, it is often through fellowships such as the Maida program that newer attorneys are able to work for the organization. Thus, without funding from the Maidas, she said she would not have had this opportunity to work at the ACLU-NJ and conduct this focused study.

Velez has been busy since she started her fellowship six months ago. She has served as co-counsel on a federal civil rights case where a 20-year-old college student was jailed for inability to immediately pay \$239 in court costs and fines imposed as the result of a littering ticket. She said she’s become a more seasoned attorney through her work experience, “I have conducted depositions, managed discovery, argued a motion, written and responded to various discovery tools, worked closely with our policy team on various

legislative actions, contributed to organizational strategy efforts and ACLU publications, conducted ‘Know Your Rights’ workshops . . . and worked with a community group on an initiative and referendum process.”

Though she is only halfway through her yearlong fellowship, she’s already drafted an amicus curiae brief to the New Jersey Supreme Court regarding a pending search and seizure case. She is also writing a report on the municipal court system that will be released at the conclusion of her fellowship.

Velez graduated with a slew of accomplishments, including serving as president of the Association of Public Interest Law (APIL), a Marshall Brennan Fellow, staff editor for *The Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*, and treasurer of the National Lawyers Guild. She also was honored by the New Jersey Women Lawyers Association and worked on the Street Law Pro Bono Project.

After her yearlong fellowship is done she hopes to continue working in public interest law and someday become a clinical professor. “I will always be grateful to the Maidas for their investment not only in this important work, but also in my future as a social justice lawyer,” Velez said. “Without them and their fellowship program, I would have missed out on the incredible opportunities ACLU-NJ has afforded me.”

James Maida, a 1990 graduate of the Rutgers Law School in Camden, and his wife Sharon made a \$1 million gift to the law school in 2015 to support pro bono and public interest initiatives. In addition to the post-graduate fellowship, which funds the full-time salary of a selected fellow working in the

public interest, the Maida gift also provides funding for up to 40 students each summer to work for public interest legal organizations in positions that are normally unpaid.

Peace, Love and a J.D.

A law graduate's hippie upbringing gave way to her civil rights advocacy

By Cathy Donovan
May 13, 2015



Early childhood memories for Alexi Velez include living unconventionally in a purple school bus, above a metaphysical bookstore and in a migrant farmworker camp.

Photo: Courtesy of Alexi Velez

"I felt ignorant on this area of the law (ethnic profiling) and limited by academia and its audience. Personally, it was important to connect with and advocate for my Roma identity. – Alexi Velez

What a long, strange trip it's been for Alexi Velez into law school.

The soon-to-be attorney, who leaves [Rutgers Law-Camden](#) with a slew of accomplishments, including serving as president of the Association of Public Interest Law (APIL), a Marshall Brennan Fellow, staff editor for *The Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*, and treasurer of the National Lawyers Guild – and with an impressive New Jersey appellate division clerkship lined up after graduation – began her life journey following the Grateful Dead with her family.

Early childhood memories for Velez include living unconventionally in a purple school bus, above a metaphysical bookstore and in a migrant farmworker camp at a time when her father was fixing tractors as an odd job. Snapshots show her as an infant donning a colorful cap in a playpen at a Rainbow Gathering, a temporary intentional community of hippies living on public land.

At a young age, her father left Velez, her mother and infant brother. They were living in Michigan then, far away from the support of family and friends, so they initially struggled to recover. Through the help of extended family and the assistance of public benefits, Velez recounts her mother's ability to overcome great adversity. At age 10, her mother remarried; Velez's stepfather, named Bill, embraced Velez and her brother as his own. From living on the road to the quiet suburban home she shared with her mother, brother and Bill, it was a long strange trip, indeed.

Velez, a first-generation college student, is about to graduate with a third academic degree – she says her unique origin ultimately led her to earn a J.D.



Velez is pictured here in rainbow bonnet at a Rainbow Gathering.

A descendent of Roma heritage, Velez has long been intrigued with her ancestry, even compelling her to write the thesis for her master's in anthropology from Florida Atlantic University on the Roma people's plight around the world and in the U.S. This research on the Roma diaspora developed into Velez's interest in law enforcement's history of profiling the "gypsy" population.

But what she wasn't learning about Roma people in graduate school, Velez was experiencing in part in real life. Her father, Roma himself, had his own run-ins with the law. While her father's Roma background has intrigued her intellectually, Velez credits her mother and step-father for ultimately providing the needed stability for her educational success.

“I felt ignorant on this area of the law [ethnic profiling] and limited by academia and its audience. Personally, it was important to connect with and advocate for my Roma identity,” she says of her decision to enroll in law school.

As a law student, Velez quickly identified with public interest-minded students, faculty and programs. She found Rutgers-Camden to be a perfect fit for her desire to connect the disenfranchised with access to justice by taking part in programs like the Street Law Pro Bono Project and the yearlong Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project seminar, which engages talented law students to teach local schoolchildren about the Constitution. The Rutgers Law-Camden student’s leadership and academic excellence was even honored by the New Jersey Women Lawyers Association.

Velez’s childhood situation allowed her to be a more sympathetic ambassador when interacting with Camden youth experiencing the tough realities of poverty. “Anybody can be in that situation at any time. Relying on public benefits doesn’t have to be permanent, you can overcome poverty,” Velez observes. “Not having a savings account doesn’t mean college isn’t an option.”



Velez’s mom, pregnant with Alexi, stands in front of a first family home.

According to Jill Friedman, adjunct professor and associate dean of the pro bono and public interest program at Rutgers Law-Camden and Rutgers Law-Newark, Velez is one of the strongest students she’s ever had.

“She is exactly what we mean when we talk about the best and brightest,” says Friedman. “I have had the pleasure of working with Alexi in her capacity as an officer

– now president – of our public interest student group in Camden, and as her professor in a yearlong course. Her sophistication, diplomacy, intelligence and grace are matched only by her fiery, purposeful work to speak truth to power, her dedication to international human rights and her belief in the power of education to overcome disadvantage.”

After her clerkship, a coveted one with the Honorable Judge George S. Leone of the Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division, Velez has ambitions to advocate for another disenfranchised population, the LGBT community. She has also written a paper on the criminalization of Roma ethnicity that she is seeking to publish.

“The mission statement of APIL, providing access to justice and civil rights lawyering in general, is why I came to law school,” notes Velez, who credits several faculty members for supporting her throughout her legal education. “If it weren’t for Rutgers Law School I don’t know that I would feel as nurtured and ready and supported. I just feel super, super lucky.”