

Reflections, continued

“This provides pay and can function as a summer job, but it is much more than that. I have never had a better opportunity in my life.”

– Erik Meinhardt
Berea High School
Recipient of the national ACLU’s
2006 Youth Activist Scholarship



Victor Leonard

“The wealth of knowledge that can be gained from this experience is priceless.”

– Victor Leonard
Undergraduate Intern
Cleveland State University

“It’s a great way to experience new things and bring awareness to yourself and others.”

– Tiffany Scott
East High School
Cleveland



Founded in 1920, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of civil liberties activists who are constantly at work in our communities, the courts and legislature fighting to preserve individual freedoms for all.

The ACLU represents ordinary people who have experienced injustices, but have decided to fight for their rights. Without the ACLU’s free services, these violations of civil liberties would go unchallenged.

The ACLU’s work is often controversial, unpopular and misunderstood. While our litigation may make headlines, the ACLU of Ohio is also a national leader in creating and implementing educational programs that make the Bill of Rights a part of our everyday life.

Our work is supported by local and national activists who are committed to ensuring that many of the freedoms we take for granted are preserved. Nationally, there are more than 500,000 members of the ACLU, while the ACLU of Ohio has almost 30,000 members and supporters throughout the state.

Find out more about what the ACLU is doing in Ohio and join the ACLU at www.acluohio.org.

Summer Internship Program



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The ACLU of Ohio Summer Internship Program is a crash course in civil liberties and the world of non-profits for high school and undergraduate students. These paid internships allow students to experience first hand the ACLU's mission in protecting Americans' Constitutional rights.

Lesson plans focus on a specific civil liberties topic each week, such as the USA Patriot Act, reproductive rights, racial profiling, LGBT rights, the death penalty, immigrant rights, and freedom of expression.

Out in the field

Classroom sessions are supplemented with field trips. Students have visited the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections; Preterm; the LGBT Center; Migrant Worker Nurseries; Cleveland City Hall; and the city of Cincinnati, to examine the implementation of the landmark Collaborative Agreement between the city's police force and citizens. These experiential visits expose students to nonprofit management, grassroots organizing, citizen participation, and our political processes.

Skills in citizen education

Students gain valuable experience planning and executing citizen education programs. Interns assist in managing the annual summer Brown Bag lecture Series, statewide student conferences, and special projects, such as plays. Students leave the program with new skills in topic and speaker selection, media and public relations, writing, advertising, flyer design, and conference and stage set-up – solid abilities they can list on their resumes.

Mentoring makes the difference

ACLU staff members pay special attention to recruiting students for the program. Interns are recruited from Cleveland-area high schools and Ohio colleges. Undergraduate students with a demonstrated commitment to civil liberties, activism and leadership are sought. High school students, on the other hand, may have a diverse range of interests, but are often not the typical leaders at their schools.

This kind of match results in the greatest benefit for the high school students. The younger students receive the attention and nurturing to build leadership skills that they may miss out on in their school settings. And carefully structured team activities involving students, law clerks and staff foster the open exchange of ideas and a sense of tolerance.

To learn more about the ACLU of Ohio's summer internship program, contact Education Specialist Shakyra Diaz at 216/472-2220 or contact@acluohio.org.

In 2005, the national ACLU recognized the Ohio affiliate's outstanding youth outreach efforts, including its internship program, with the New Blood Prize Award.

Reflections from Interns



Tasha Forchione and Michael Houser

“This program is unique. The work is substantive, not busy. There is a large learning component that is missing elsewhere.”

– Tasha Forchione
*Undergraduate Intern
John Carroll University*

“This program helped us learn on a different level. This experience will be good for anyone who wants to make a change.”



– Jonica Rutledge
*High Tech Academy at
John F. Kennedy High School
Cleveland*

Erik Meinhardt and Jonica Rutledge