

Tabatha Gillombardo ('16)

EDUCATION

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT May 2016

Bachelor of Arts Candidate; GPA: 3.96/4.00

Major: Government, International Politics concentration;

Certificate: Middle Eastern Studies

University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands Fall 2014

Bachelor's Exchange Program: Political Science

Honors:

The Scott Award for Excellence in a Modern Language: Arabic May 2103

Wesleyan University Dean's List Fall 2012 - Spring 2013

Relevant Coursework:

Elementary Arabic; Intermediate Arabic; Colloquial Levantine Arabic;

Democracy and Dictatorship; Religion and Politics; History of the Middle East

in the 20th Century; Introduction to Conflict Studies; "Gentlemen don't read each other's mail"; Comparative Politics of the Middle East; National Security

Law

EXPERIENCE

Incarcerated Voices, *Submission review intern*, remote March 2015 - Present

- Read letters from individuals serving time in prisons across America
- Review the letters to see if they successfully respond to the predetermined topic of the radio broadcast
- Write feedback letters to the contributors to convey impact and offer suggestions for future writing

Office of General Counsel, *Intern*, Middletown, CT January 2015 - Present

- Organize current casework
- Redesign the office's website to improve its aesthetics and accessibility

Department of Conflict Studies: PMP, *Research Intern*,

University of Amsterdam

October 2014 - Present

- Determine the ways in which media indexes local and global events
- Translate and analyze Arabic international resources about the Schilderswijk, Netherlands
- Explore whether changing the meaning of a word in the media directly impacts human relations

Advocates for Children of New York, *Intern*, New York, NY May - August 2014

- Worked on Early Childhood Education Project: early childhood students with disabilities
- Explained the rights of children with disabilities and pertinent legal processes to families so they can better self-advocate for their children
- Formatted new AFC publications to improve accessibility to NYC special education information

Federal Public Defender's Office, Extern, Akron, OH May - Sept. 2013

- Worked under Federal Public Defender that represents twelve prisoners at Guantanamo Bay
- Researched clients and created their Wikipedia pages
- Wrote speech outline for Congressional Hearing on conditions at Guantanamo Bay Read letters from prisoners to Federal Public Defender

ACTIVITIES/SERVICE

Government Majors Committee, Member, Wesleyan Univ. Sept. 2014 - Present

- Organize talks on political science topics by Wesleyan faculty or outside speakers
- Serve as an additional resource for majors and perspective majors

Volunteer, Vista Vocational and Life Skills Center; Madison, CT Feb. - May 2014

- Assist residents with practicing everyday activities
- Help the Vista faculty teach visual arts, theater, and academic classes

Volunteer, La Romana, Dominican Republic Summer 2008, 2010

- Worked as the translator for my service group
- Assisted in expanding a three-floor hospital in La Romana
- Traveled to Haitian refugee villages to build homes and first latrine system

QUALIFICATIONS

- Computer: Microsoft Office Suite, including Publisher; Word Press; Salesforce; Research; Social media
- Languages: Fluent Spanish; Intermediate Modern Standard Arabic; Familiarity with Levantine Arabic

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Program Proposal

1. A brief overview of the organization for which you will intern.

Brooklyn Defender Services represents 45,000 people a year and was the “nation’s first public defense attorney for people facing deportation.” Each BDS client works with a team of professions, including an attorney, paralegal, social worker, investigator, and an administrative staff member. BDS strives for an interdisciplinary approach to representation to maximize the impact of defense. This approach also demonstrates to each client that he is important and deserving of such outstanding representation. BDS’ mission is to “provide high quality legal representation and related services to people who cannot afford to retain an attorney.”

“Each year, there are 100,000 arrests in Brooklyn. Eighty-five percent of these arrests are for misdemeanors or a non-criminal offense. Ninety percent of the people arrested cannot afford an attorney. Brooklyn Defender Services staffs the court so that every person has an attorney as soon as they see the judge...it is only through a zealous voice advocating for those unable to speak for themselves that justice is done. BDS is that voice.” (BDS website)

2. Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

I will primarily be stationed in the Family Defense Practice, but will also help with the Criminal Practice and Immigration Practice. My language skills will be utilized because of the diversity of BDS’ clients. The Family Defense Practice has several subset programs including the “Know Your Rights,” “Parent Unification Process,” and “Young Mothers Empowerment” sessions. These programs strive to improve community relations and give the at-risk communities more information about their rights.

Another aspect of my position is research for the attorneys and the other office tasks, such as organizing cases. I am looking forward to these responsibilities because I will learn and practice important skills of an effective law practice. I have not had experience with domestic criminal law or family law, so this experience will maximize my exposure to law. I will

also be a liaison between BDS and clients' care providers. I did some of this last summer at Advocates for Children of New York, but this outreach is to create partnerships within the community that will enhance the preventative legal aid networks for at-risk peoples.

[The Senior Staff Attorney, Family Defense Practice] was so impressed with my suggestions for outreach and my previous work experience that she said my responsibilities will evolve throughout the summer based on ideas/projects I come up with to enhance BDS' effectiveness and creativity. I am very good at anticipating problems and coming up with innovative solutions. She could tell how passionate I am about everyone's right to a thorough defense as well as my desire to counteract the prison system's strategic targeting of marginalized communities by establishing supportive, empowering programs. For these reasons, she wants to expand my tasks and responsibilities to include other BDS programs that interest me. I am so invigorated and inspired by her confidence in me.

3. How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

On April 27, 2015, my internship with Brooklyn Defender Services was confirmed. I spoke with my to-be supervisor, Piyali Basak, on the phone and she said that when BDS received my resume and personal statement, the staff agreed that they needed to "snatch me up." Piyali repeatedly exclaimed her excitement about working with me. She and the other senior staff attorneys were impressed with my resume and my dedication to social justice.

4. How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

Since eighth grade, I have been stunned by marginalized communities' lack of awareness of mobility. When I was in the Dominican Republic working with Haitian refugees, one of my positions within our construction group was to translate. I asked the children what the dream of doing when they are older. They all responded by saying that they will live in this same remote village and become a cane worker. Of course, there is nothing wrong or inferior with this lifestyle, but these children were unaware of any other options. Their life trajectory was limited to what was immediately at their fingertips because of deeply entrenched Dominican racism.

After my abroad experience, I wanted to find domestic examples of social injustice. From Guantanamo Bay to systematic incarceration, the US is fraught with deprivation rooted in discrimination. BDS is one of the best defense organizations in the country. BDS echoes my desire to use my own

leverage as a means to challenge a corrupt system, to stand for what is right instead of what is easy. BDS and my mission statements and morality will wonderfully enhance each other. I want to speak on behalf of people whom society marginalizes out of fear, resentment, or hatred. All life is nuanced and complex. Working with BDS will allow me to question the existing authority that perpetuates injustice via institutional allies, like the prison system, economic elite concentration of wealth, health monopoly, and poor climate and poor education system.

BDS is a unique firm because it goes beyond solely representing people. It exposes the flaws and weaknesses of our current system and seeks to counter this through targeted preventative programs. BDS is working to change the system by working in the system, which is exactly what I dream of doing. It is essential to creatively and effectively use the tools that opposition forces are using to oppress people of the population. Thus, you not only can enact change, but you are also minimizing their control over the field itself, which makes reform much for plausible. Sadly, a right to a good defense, due process, speedy and fair trial are all protected constitutional rights. It is sickening that these rights are circumstantial. I am horrified that our system strives to deprive people of their inherent constitutional rights. I want to work with BDS to hold the system accountable and to remind the people (of Brooklyn) that they too have allies. We at BDS will thrust upon society the reality that these people are just as deserving as these rights as any white, heterosexual, wealthy male. Lady Justice is meant to be blind, not the American people.