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# Aaron B. Zisser

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## **SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS**

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- More than five years as a Trial Attorney with the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, developing and leading complex, cutting-edge systems-reform investigations and compliance monitoring, including extensive interviewing; review of policies, records, and data; and evaluation of internal investigation procedures and incident reports.
- Strong focus on addressing correctional practices, including use of force, interactions with inmates in mental health crisis, and sexual abuse; sex-based and race-based discrimination; and community mental health and disability services, including crisis intervention.
- Demonstrated leadership and commitment to collaboration, creativity, and strategic community outreach.
- J.D., cum laude, from Georgetown University Law Center; B.A., with honors, from U.C. Berkeley.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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### **Consulting**, Oakland, CA, *May 2015 – present*

- Developed and presented webinar for school districts on federal enforcement regarding discrimination in student discipline and other practices through the State Performance Plan Technical Assistance Project.
- Completed training to become Department of Justice-certified auditor Prison Rape Elimination Act.
- Presented research on and developed policies for reducing incarceration and out-of-home commitments.

### **Disability Rights Advocates**, Berkeley, CA, *Jan. 2015 – May 2015*

*Senior Staff Attorney*: Litigated and investigated disability rights matters, including use of solitary confinement in jail and juvenile detention, unnecessary institutionalization, and education.

- Prepared for and participated in settlement negotiations in jail case; interviewed inmates.
- Coordinated media strategy and multiple firms' initial discovery and negotiations in high-profile litigation.
- Requested and reviewed policies and data from dozens of juvenile detention facilities and related agencies.

### **U.S. Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division**, Washington, DC, *July 2009 – Jan. 2015*

*Trial Attorney, Attorney General's Honors Program*: Lead attorney on complex and cutting-edge systems-reform cases on prisoners' rights, disability rights (*Olmstead*), and education and led high-profile strategic initiatives.

- Managed and directed teams of attorneys, investigators, paralegals, interns, and subject matter experts.
- Drafted findings letters, compliance letters, complaints, discovery requests, briefs, and settlements.
- Conducted comprehensive site visits, interviews, and reviews of policies, records, and data.

### **Educational Opportunities Section**, *Aug. 2013 – Jan. 2015*

Led complex investigations and compliance monitoring on student discipline, harassment, and segregation.

- Conducted discovery, depositions, and hearing and initiated negotiations on student discipline.
- Co-led statewide investigation of race and disability discrimination in alternative disciplinary programs.
- Conducted site visits to dozens of schools and numerous alternative education programs.
- Interviewed state officials, district and school administrators, staff, students, parents, and advocates.
- Served on hiring committee for Attorney General's Honors Program attorneys.

### **Special Litigation Section**, *July 2009 – Aug. 2013*

Led "pattern or practice" cases regarding conditions in correctional and psychiatric facilities and unnecessary institutionalization; litigation on access to reproductive health services; and initiatives on solitary confinement.

- Developed and led first-of-its-kind investigation and findings letter focused on solitary confinement.
- Led investigation of prison and compliance monitoring of jail on mental health treatment, solitary confinement, and use of force and led and conducted compliance monitoring in psychiatric facilities.

Considered: 01/12/2016

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- Co-founded solitary confinement working group; coordinated research; hosted experts and advocates.
- Led investigation of prison on sexual abuse and protection from harm.
- Developed and led statewide investigations and compliance monitoring of disability/mental health services systems (*Olmstead*); negotiated comprehensive settlement; coordinated statewide outreach.
- Conducted numerous site visits to correctional, psychiatric, and disability facilities in five states.
- Interviewed hundreds of prisoners, patients, residents, staff, administrators, and service providers.
- Conducted extensive reviews of policies, procedures, forms, inmate and patient records, incident reports, internal investigations and reviews, data, and other documentation.

### **American University Washington College of Law, Aug. 2013 – Dec. 2013**

*Adjunct Professorial Lecturer of Law:* Co-taught seminar on multi-disciplinary public interest advocacy.

### **Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, Sept. 2008 – June 2009**

*Staff Attorney:* Conducted litigation and advocacy on disability rights and special education.

- Conducted on-site investigations; reviewed data; drafted complaints, briefs, and discovery documents.
- Lobbied local and state officials and drafted op-eds and press releases.

### **Human Rights First, Washington, DC, Aug. 2007 – Aug. 2008**

*Human Rights Fellow:* Lobbied and conducted other advocacy on international human rights issues.

- Observed Guantanamo Military Commission trial; was interviewed by national media; published blogs.
- Conducted government, UN, and media advocacy on protection of human rights defenders.

### **U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee, Memphis, TN, Aug. 2006 – Aug. 2007**

*Law Clerk:* Researched and drafted substantive orders, including numerous civil rights cases.

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## **EDUCATION**

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### **Georgetown University Law Center, J.D., cum laude, May 2006**

Honors: Moran Family Endowed Scholarship in Law, 2005-2006; Witkin, CALI Awards, Fall 2003

Clinics: International Women's Human Rights Clinic, Jan.-May 2006  
General Assistance Advocacy Project, 2003-2004

Internships: Orleans Parish Indigent Defender Board, Summer 2006; Israeli anti-trafficking nonprofit, Summer 2006; U.S. Dept. of State, Office of the Legal Advisor, Fall 2005; Southern Center for Human Rights, Summer 2005; ACLU of the Nation's Capital, 2004-2005; U.S. Dept. of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Criminal Section, Summer 2004

Certificate: Certificate in Refugees and Humanitarian Emergencies, May 2006

Journal: *Hastings Int'l and Comparative Law Review* (invitation extended – transferred to Georgetown)

### **Univ. of California, Berkeley, B.A., with distinction, Comparative Literature (Spanish and English), May 2003**

Minors: Creative Writing; Spanish Language and Literatures

Study abroad: University of Salamanca, Spain, 2001-2002

Honors: Matrícula de Honor for term paper; Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, Fall 2001

Volunteer: Mentored high school student, Spring 2001 and 2002-2003; Tutored in the public middle and high schools, 2000-2003; American Jewish World Service, Development work in Honduras and Ukraine, Summer 2003; Interned at Santa Clara County Office of the Public Defender, Summer 2002; Tutored at local orphanage, Fall 2001

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### **PUBLICATIONS**

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- “Spoiled voters or spoiled election?” in *The Philadelphia Sunday Sun*, Oct. 12-18, 2008
- “Report from Guantánamo: Hamdan trial is a false and unnecessary experiment,” in *Jurist* online, July 2008
- “Fig Newtons and Fundamental Rights,” and three subsequent blog posts, in *ACS Blog*, July 21-24, 2008
- *Pakistan’s Courts and Constitution under Attack*, a Human Rights First report (co-author), Feb. 2008

### **BAR MEMBERSHIP, OTHER ACTIVITIES, AND LANGUAGE SKILLS**

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- **Bar memberships:** Admitted to practice law in California and New York State.
- **Mayor’s Commission on Persons with Disabilities**, Oakland, CA, *Sept. 2015 – present*  
*Commissioner:* Advise the Mayor and City Council and other City boards and commissions. Review and comment on City policies, programs, and actions.
- **Training:** Selected for and completed week-long training to become DOJ-certified auditor for prison and jail compliance with Prison Rape Elimination Act standards (awaiting certification).
- **Awards and honors:** As individual and as DOJ team from DOJ Arc of Virginia, for *Olmstead* case.
- **Guest-lecturer:** Comparative rights of women, at University of Memphis, Intro to Philosophy, *Spring 2007*. Invited to various panels and as guest lecturer at several DC law schools.
- **Other activities:** Alumni interviewer for Georgetown Law; DOJ Honors Program hiring committee (2014).
- **Language:** Highly proficient / near fluent in Spanish.