

Rita Sklar
Retirement Letter
July 2019

After almost 28 years of fighting the good fight, the time has come to hang up my gloves.

I've had the honor and privilege of working with the most dedicated, passionate, hard-working volunteers, supporters, colleagues and lay leaders that I could hope to find.

After starting my career with the ACLU in New York, I was selected as head of the Arkansas affiliate in 1993. From Day One I have counted myself as one of the lucky ones who could come to work every day and get paid to be myself: irate, pugnacious and outraged over the latest injustice, the latest abuse of power by those in power over those less powerful.

Working for the ACLU has afforded me the chance to actually make a difference--to stop the bullies, the bad guys, the people who trample other people's rights. It's been as satisfying as it's been maddening to see how badly some people treat other people: instead of just shaking our fist or yelling at the radio, we get to actually do something about it—to help people, to make a better world.

A lot has changed since I started here, when the paid staff consisted of just myself and a part-time office manager. In that time we've done a lot to be proud of: Fighting to keep abortion services safe and accessible; Making polls accessible to people with disabilities; Ensuring that people with mental illness are not languishing in jail without treatment, much less a court hearing; Killing scores of anti-choice, anti-immigrant, and anti LGBT bills in the Legislature year after year; Getting a bill passed to track and prevent racial profiling by the police; Ensuring the free speech and religious liberty rights of students; Winning a landmark case that ensures that lesbians and gay men are no longer seen as harmful to their children and receive equal rights under the law; Fighting to ensure transgender persons have equal rights on the job; making sure jail and prison inmates get their vital medication and healthcare; Stopping the practice of shackling female inmates to their beds like animals while giving birth; And much, much more.

I'm so grateful to all of the wonderful people who have supported the Organization, and who have given me the backing, encouragement, and plain ol' muscle power to get things done for the people of Arkansas. Times are changing but the struggle goes on. I know that the ACLU of Arkansas will continue to fight the Good Fight. I'm backing off of the front lines, but my support, and my heart will always be with what I sincerely believe is one of the most vital organizations in America.

To all of my supporters, with my sincere affection, thanks. It's been a great run.

Rita