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## In human rights suits, activists target border protection agency

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*Note: The quote originally attributed to Joseph Anderson has been correctly attributed to Matt Adams. Also, the name of the Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law has been corrected.*

Immigration rights advocates announced March 13 that they have filed 10 suits around the country targeting abuses by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency.

The suits allege that CBP agents "routinely disregard basic constitutional protections and the human rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens," as well as overstepping the boundaries of their authority.

"Whether someone is a citizen or a non-citizen, they are still entitled to certain fundamental rights," said Matt Adams, legal director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project.

The suits detail a litany of alleged abuses. In one administrative complaint brought by the Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, a 63-year-old woman with no criminal history was allegedly hauled off a bus in Ohio by CBP agents.

The woman was held in a cell with no food or water for eight hours, nor was she taken to use the bathroom. "She was forced to sit all night in her urine-soaked jeans," according to law student Jackie Pearce speaking on the conference call. The woman then had a stroke, which "was the sole result of the extreme stress of the experience," Pearce said. The suit seeks monetary damages for her mistreatment.

In another case filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York by Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton and the American Immigration Council, a 4-year-old U.S. citizen was allegedly detained at Dulles Airport with her grandfather for more than 20 hours. The child was only given a cookie and soda the entire time, and agents waited 14 hours before notifying her parents in New York.

CBP agents allegedly claimed they could not return the girl to her parents because they were "illegals" and instead sent her and her grandfather back to Guatemala. The child, who was brought back to the United States three weeks later by a lawyer that her father hired, has post-traumatic stress disorder.

In another administrative complaint, Lucy Rogers, a naturalized American citizen of Mexican descent, was pulled over by a CBP agent conducting "a citizenship checkup." She was interrogated for several hours.

"Why should I be the target of suspicion simply because of the color of my skin," she said during the press call.

CBP spokeswoman Jenny Burke in an emailed statement said that "CBP does not comment pending litigation. CBP stresses honor and integrity in every aspect of its mission. We do not tolerate misconduct or abuse within our ranks and we fully cooperate with all investigations of alleged unlawful conduct, on or off duty, by any of our CBP employees and contractors."

Summaries of the cases can be [found here](#).