

Did A Court Just Grant Personhood To Two Chimpanzees?

A lawyer declared victory when the high court agreed to consider chimps Hercules and Leo's request for a writ of habeas corpus.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 27, 2015, the New York Supreme Trial Court heard arguments on whether chimps are “persons” under the law, [reports Reuters](#).

In April, the chimps’ lawyer Natalie Prosin declared victory when the high court agreed to consider chimps Hercules and Leo’s request for a writ of habeas corpus. A “habeas” writ is an ancient procedure used to challenge the government’s holding a person in custody.

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“Hercules and Leo have been granted legal personhood with the right to a writ of habeas corpus,” Prosin, executive director and staff counsel for the nonprofit legal advocacy group Nonhuman Rights Project (NRP) [told The Huffington Post](#).

“Only a ‘legal person’ may have an order to show cause and writ of habeas corpus issued in his or her behalf. The Court

has therefore implicitly determined that Hercules and Leo are ‘persons,’” claims a news release issued Monday by NRP.

Legal scholars counsel caution. Linda Meyer, who teaches criminal law at Quinnipiac University, agreed “the chimps are being treated, for the moment, as persons.” But Meyer cautioned the Court could later reverse that decision, if it finds Stony Brook University, where the chimps are being held, has not unlawfully detained Hercules and Leo, “precisely because they are not persons under the law.”

NRP contends Hercules and Leo are entitled to legal personhood, including the right to be free from captivity. The legal claim rests on Prosin’s contention that, because the chimps have “human-like intelligence, self-awareness and emotional complexity.” NRP has requested the Court grant the writ, thus freeing the chimps from captivity and allowing their transfer to a primate sanctuary in Florida.

“There is simply no precedent of (a) nonhuman animal receiving this kind of right,” responded Assistant New York Attorney General Christopher Coulston to Reuters, on behalf of Stony Brook University.

The case awaits final determination. The New York Supreme Court is a trial court, so later appeals to higher courts could also undo this or subsequent rulings. Similar requests brought on behalf of chimpanzees, including an earlier petition on behalf of Hercules and Leo, have been dismissed,

reports Reuters.

“Private investigators have an important role to play in cases like this, when a full evidentiary hearing requires live testimony to establish the facts,” says John A. DeMarr, P.I., a licensed [California private investigator](#) since 1988. “The attorneys do not testify, so an investigator can tell the court about the circumstances under which the chimps are being held, and describe the way the chimps are being treated.”

“Private investigators can work cases like this directly with attorneys, and also independently,” says DeMarr. To learn more about what a private investigator can do to assist you, contact John A. DeMarr, P.I., at (877) 433-6277 or go to: www.demarr.com.

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