



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Alexis Boyd

**Law School:** American University – Washington  
College of Law

**Organization:** Advocates for Justice

---

**Update 1:** My first few weeks of my internship have been great. Since working at Advocates for Justice, I have worked on numerous projects including cases involving education, employment discrimination, and housing rights. Many of my clients are Black and Brown and have been harmed by a public institution in some way. It is disappointing that the government is supposed to protect its citizens, but either intentionally or unintentionally ends up causing them harm. However, I am glad that I am working at a nonprofit that is helping people who could not otherwise afford it to protect their rights.

I am also interested in the community organizations that are also helping to protect these marginalized communities as well. This is my first time staying in New York for an extended period, and I hope to use my time to learn more about the neighborhoods and communities in them. I believe it is important that community organizations and legal nonprofits work together to both prevent and protect communities facing harm. This summer, I am excited to see how my internship also works towards this goal.

---

**Update 2:** Over these past weeks, I have learned a lot of skills and legal knowledge I never knew before. I received my first substantive assignment from my supervisors, which entailed writing a memo to see if our potential client had a valid federal claim. Doing the research and remaining on time has been challenging, but I have enjoyed learning about these new legal areas. Specifically, I have had to learn a lot about American disability law for children with disabilities, which I previously had no experience with. I have also had lots of opportunity to help with trial preparation by organizing exhibits, writing deposition questions, and researching relevant case law for briefs. I have sat in on numerous hearings and arbitrations, which has given me good insight on what strategies and qualities are helpful for an attorney. I have learned that you must be both patient and observant to ensure that you adequately represent your client and monitor the strategies of opposing counsel.

I appreciate that I have had the opportunity to work on all types of legal proceedings such as arbitration, administrative hearings, and federal court cases. This has really helped me figure out the type of law I would like



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

to practice along with what practice area I am most interested and passionate about. I hope to continue to learn and grow in my internship and sharpen my skills as a lawyer. It has not been easy learning all the different skills needed to be a good litigator, but I am trying my best to improve every day!

---

**Update 3:** This week I have been working on a research / litigation project with all the other interns at my nonprofit. We have been working tirelessly on a project representing New York City children, teachers, and parents. This has led us to fast track a complaint, affidavits, and memo of law to file in New York state court before hosting a rally in front of the city hall. This experience has been a great way to see how nonprofit legal institutions and community organizations and organizers work together for a cause. We were able to find named plaintiffs through public interest non-profits who were interested in the facts of our case. Specifically, we are working on reversing budget cuts to New York City schools, which could impact teacher employment, funding for school programs, and student class sizes. The non-profits helped us find interested teachers, councilmen, and parents who either were affected by the cuts or were upset about the vote to budget cuts.

I enjoyed learning from teachers, councilmen, and parents affected by the changes in budget. And was impressed to see how many people came out to the rally on such short notice. Community organizing involves lawyers, organizers, and community leaders and members. I was glad to see this was true for A4J's representation of New York City children, teachers, and parents. Hopefully, I will have more opportunities like these in the future.

---

**Update 4:** For three weeks I have been working on ongoing litigation where my organization has represented the plaintiffs on behalf of students, parents, and teachers of New York City public schools against the New York City and the New York City Department of Education Chancellor. Specifically, we are hoping to enjoin the more than \$200 million budget cuts to the Education budget which resulted from improper voting procedures. I have been able to work on the brief, memo of law, affidavits, and other legal documents that have been produced to aid in winning this lawsuit. When I attended the rally held by community organizers, teachers, parents, and education nonprofits a couple weeks ago, I learned how important this case was to the people of New York City. However, since then, the case has become even more publicized, as articles written in the New York Post and New York Times have drawn attention to negative effects of the budget cuts such as loss in school programs, cuts to special need services, and excessed teacher positions. It has been amazing to see that something I worked on and helped co-write has been publicized by so many news outlets. Additionally, I have seen how the increased media attention has brought in more support for the lawsuit in the form of outreach to other people who have been affected by budget cuts and would like to voice their support of the bill through more media attention, amicus briefs, or potential pro bono work.

Recently I was able to sit in on a hearing with a State Appellate Justice. After the hearing the Justice decided in favor of our represented party, allowing the temporary restraining order to remain in place to prevent further implementation of the budget cuts. I never knew how fast paced civil litigation procedures could be, and just



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

this past week I and my colleagues have submitted several reply briefs. Although everything has been moving quickly, I have learned a lot about litigation that I never knew before this internship. The sheer time, research, and work that goes into starting a class action lawsuit is more than I expected, and it was great to see what this looks like from the beginning. Although this is just the beginning of the suit, I am excited to continue working on this suit on behalf of our clients.

---

**Update 5:** Reflecting on this past summer experience, I realize that I have learned a lot about myself and the type of lawyer I want to be. I decided to work at Advocates for Justice (A4J) because I wanted litigation experience in a public interest setting. I wanted to learn more about writing motions, briefs, and appealing cases in a courtroom. While most of the litigation proceedings were still online, I still was able to experience administrative and court hearings. On my final day of my internship, I was actually able to finally witness an in-person court procedure. Overall, I believe that I learned a lot during my internship, and I am grateful for all of the legal experience I gained.

One of the things I looked forward to the most during my internship was understanding how nonprofit legal organizations interact with other community organizations to effectively advocate on behalf of their clients or cause. While at A4J, I was able to witness firsthand how this worked. For example, some community organizations would refer clients to our office in order for the clients, who were often working class, to receive assistance. This was very impactful for clients, who, although they knew they had been wronged, did not know what legal resources to reach out to for help nor had the time to figure it out. During my internship, my organization also handled a couple of class action lawsuits. One lawsuit, which I was able to work intensively on, was against the City of New York. The lawsuit came about after community interest groups reached out about suing the City of New York because the budget passed by City Council and endorsed by the Mayor underfunded schools and violated the State regulation on how voting procedures should occur. Through the public interest groups, we were able to reach out to potential plaintiffs to join the lawsuits. We also reached out to teachers unions, local leaders, and the public for community input on the lawsuit and the effects of the budget cuts on the people of New York. By engaging with the community, our nonprofit law firm was able to effectively find willing plaintiffs, spread support for the lawsuits, and build a better case against the City by relying on firsthand accounts of the effects of the budget cuts.

I enjoyed seeing firsthand the different tasks that a nonprofit legal organization must carry out. At A4J, attorney both did pro bono cases and cases on a lower rate contingency basis. Additionally, being a general public interest lawyer requires you to have a mastery over a variety of fields, and if you did not know something then you had to spend time researching to become an expert. I was able to work on employment discrimination cases, child disability cases, and class action lawsuits. I enjoyed being able to dip my toe into so many different legal fields since I wanted to use this summer to explore being a public interest attorney. Working in more a client facing setting was exciting, since I was able to see the effects of my work in real time. I also learned how busy working for a non-profit can be as you must juggle getting outside funding with litigating cases.



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Overall, I appreciate my experience at Advocates for Justice. I was able to explore a new city and state that I want to practice in while also familiarizing myself with the courts and judges of New York City. I also met and learned from amazing attorneys who have spent years as public interest attorneys. Because of my experience, I am more prepared to enter into different styles of legal environments. I also have a better understanding of the type of law I want to practice. I have found that I get the most enjoyment out of working on employment discrimination and labor cases for employee clients, but I also enjoy larger class actions seeking to prevent some government action from causing harm. While I am still not one hundred percent sure what I will do in the future, I do know that my number one priority is to advocate on behalf of marginalized people, and I will enjoy any role that allows me to do that.