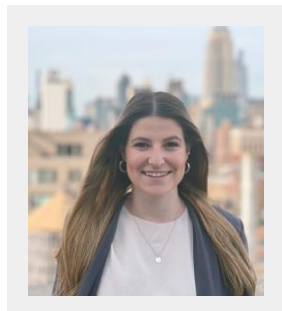




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Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



Name: Rachel Marandett

Law School: NYU Law

Organization: ACLU SoCal

Update 1: Local and national systems of ‘security’ and surveillance are so engrained into the daily lives of Americans that those of us who occupy positions of privilege barely realize their presence. Seeing police cars whizz past, officers issuing a citation, or even border patrol stopping certain people in the airport customs line is so normalized that it becomes barely noticeable. However, for other Americans, these very systems that purport to be for safety and security create an environment of constant fear. Fear of profiling, fear of being stopped and searched, fear of being perceived as a threat, fear of arrest or citation, fear of physical violence and harm.

In my first two weeks at the ACLU of SoCal on the Police Practices and National Security team, I have witnessed first-hand what movement lawyering for and with those most impacted by our oppressive and violent policing and national security systems looks like. The ACLU of SoCal employs an integrated, wholistic strategy that utilizes non-legal advocacy efforts alongside litigation. The organization works directly with the most impacted individuals and communities to center their voices and priorities. Consequently, I have already gotten to work alongside community coalitions and local legislators as well as clients. Engaging in movement-based advocacy work alongside legal research projects has provided me with a window into what movement lawyering at its best looks like. I am so excited to delve deeper into this intersectional work to learn how the law can be used as a tool to dismantle systems of state-sanctioned violence and create an America where civil liberties and rights belong to everyone, not just the privileged few.

Update 2: As I hit the halfway mark of my summer internship, I have been spending quite a bit of time reflecting on what it means to be an impactful legal advocate in the movement lawyering space. As I mentioned in my last update, the ACLU of SoCal employs a cross-cutting advocacy model that integrates litigation efforts with non-legal advocacy work spanning from legislation efforts to supporting coalitions to working with local politicians. I learned during my orientation that this integrated model was spearheaded at the SoCal office but is now employed at ACLU offices across the US. Having the opportunity to be a part of an organization at the forefront of redefining what it means to be a legal advocate has been incredibly impactful. I have spent just as much time learning how to talk to local government officials and integrate the priorities of coalitions of impacted communities as I have doing legal research.



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I knew before starting my summer work that I wanted to learn how to be a holistic advocate not just a legal one. However, I was concerned that wide-scale nature of national security work would limit my ability to develop those skills. Instead, I have found quite the opposite to be true. Because the team is so small and the work so big, I have unparalleled opportunities to work on large scale projects, collaborate with other attorneys and advocates both in and outside various ACLU offices, and learn from directly from impacted communities and individuals. It is from this kind of collaborative work that I am starting to develop my own picture of what being the best advocate I can be look like for me.

Update 3: The second half of my internship has looked a bit different than the first. I spent the beginning of my time at the ACLU working on a myriad of cases and learning about the diversity of projects the Police Practices and National Security teams take on. For this latter portion, however, I was lucky enough to have the exciting opportunity to take on an independent, sustained project: an amicus brief for a 9th circuit appellate case.

There are numerous reasons this project has been and continues to be an incredibly formative opportunity. First, because amicus briefs serve to provide the court with a unique, interested-third-party perspective, I have gotten to delve into the positions and practice of the ACLU's National Security work. This has allowed me to integrate the diversity of experiences I had in the first half of my internship with new research and conversations. Second, this project operates a really fascinating intersection of writing, research, and advocacy. I have had to opportunity to build a complex, interdisciplinary, constitutional law and criminal procedure argument from the ground up. Doing this has pushed the bounds of my past experiences at my internship and in the law school classroom by teaching me to integrate new and non-legal research with pre-existing doctrine. Even though I still a ways from having a first draft, the work I have done on this brief so far has already taught me an immeasurable amount about the power of written advocacy in the legal non-profit space.

Update 4: As my internship at the ACLU is coming toward a close, I have spent quite a bit of time reflecting on what my biggest takeaways are from this summer. Although I of course learned a lot in my 1L doctrinal classes at law school, my experience this summer has shed light on just how valuable learning by doing is in the legal field. The diversity of hands-on experiences I have had, ranging from client intake meetings to watching oral arguments to writing (and re-writing) briefs and memos, have showed me what being a lawyer actually looks like.

I think that how to be an effective movement lawyer is particularly challenging to teach in the confines of a law school classroom. This summer I have gotten to see what kind of behind-the-scenes strategic conversations go into assessing what cases to take on, projects to focus on, and movements to work with. In many ways, it seems that it is these conversations that really define what it means to be a movement lawyer. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to work with so many wonderful attorneys and non-attorneys who have shown me what it means to practice in this kind of space. Learning how to have challenging conversations, develop long and short-term strategies, and work collaboratively has added a new and paramount dimension to my understanding of what being a lawyer means. This, I feel, is the most important lesson I will take with me from this summer into the rest of my time in law school and my career thereafter.

Update 5: As discussed in some of my previous updates, my summer at the ACLU of SoCal was essentially divided into two parts. During the first half of my internship, I worked on a diversity of smaller assignments



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such as research memos on discrete legal issues, public records requests, brief editing, and advocacy campaigns. I then spent the second half of the summer focusing almost exclusively on preparing a full draft of an amicus brief for a 9th Circuit Appeals case. Having the opportunity to both occupy a more standard legal intern role and then take on a month-long independent project really enriched my summer internship experience. I not only learned a lot about how a small team at an impact litigation non-profit operates and collaborates, but also gained skills in crafting a legal argument and setting my own research agenda and direction. I think that this duality of collaborative and independent work is quite reflective of what working in this kind of movement based legal non-profit space looks like. This expanded my understanding of the shape my career could take while reaffirming why I want to work in this kind of space.

In a similar vein, one of the most valuable experiences I had this summer was working with a local coalition on a legislative advocacy project. This project integrated legal and non-legal advocacy and was intentionally drive by the needs and voices of the impacted community. Having the opportunity to work on the project gave me an invaluable window what an effective integrated advocacy model looks like. I have always felt very strongly that the best legal advocacy happens when it operates in tandem with other forms of community-driven advocacy. However, before this summer at the ACLU, I did not have a real sense of what that would look like in practice. As one of the pioneers of this kind of litigation model, the ACLU of SoCal was the perfect place for me to learn hands-on how to practice law this way.

My final and certainly most significant takeaway from my work this summer was deepening my understanding of legal strategies to combat state-sanctioned violence perpetrated in the name of ‘policing’ and/or ‘national security.’ As I noted my first EJA update just days into starting my internship, “Local and national systems of ‘security’ and surveillance are so engrained into the daily lives of Americans that those of us who occupy positions of privilege barely realize their presence.” Reflecting on this notion now, at the end of my summer, it rings far truer even than it did then. The diverse set of cases I had the opportunity to work on this summer provided me with an invaluable window into just how omnipresence and embedded surveillance systems that deeply and inexorably infringe on our constitutional rights are into the fabric of American society. What I also saw, however, is that there is an incredibly driven, passionate, committed, and creatively strategic community of lawyers and advocates dedicating their everyday not only to shedding light on these hidden violent systems but also to utilizing a plethora of tools to combat them both in and out of the courtroom. Thus, as disheartening as much of this work can be, I learned this summer that I am far from alone and that entering this space means growing every day to push the bounds of legal praxis in order to make real change in the lives of so many people impacted by this kind of state-sanctioned violence.