



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1: Welcome to my first EJA Fellow Update! I am so lucky to be interning this summer for the MacArthur Justice Center, a public interest law firm, and to be supported by Equal Justice America. MacArthur is on the forefront of advocating for issues I care about deeply, including police accountability, wrongful convictions, and rights of incarcerated people. In my first week, I was added to a case in which MacArthur is fighting to get justice for an incarcerated person's family. I have gotten a close look at the discovery process and feel a sense of responsibility to be reviewing documents that might one day be used at trial to prove our case.

I am excited to continue my learning process as my responsibilities expand this summer and I get to work on more cases. The team at MacArthur is brilliant and inspiring, and I am so grateful to them and to Equal Justice America for this opportunity.

Update 2: It's been a hard two weeks. As the end of this Supreme Court term approached, I found myself hitting refresh at 9am most mornings wondering whether the law was even a worthy pursuit. All I saw around me were the ways the law was used to do harm: from taking away rights to make our own decisions about our bodies, to limiting the ways governments can fight gun violence, to the cruelty of the prison system.

In the midst of all this, MacArthur held a meeting about their work on trans rights in celebration of Pride month. It was like a breath of fresh air. In hearing about MacArthur's wins on behalf of incarcerated trans people, I was reminded that the law is not only a tool to oppress, but it can also be used to validate the rights of the oppressed.

With renewed vigor, I threw myself back into the work. Although I am only an intern, I know I am a part of something bigger: a network of law students and lawyers at MacArthur Justice Center and Equal Justice



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America who will not stop fighting until the law reflects what we know it can be. The Supreme Court's terrible decisions in the last two weeks will not be the end of the story. Far from it.

Update 3: It's hard to believe I'm over halfway through my time at the MacArthur Justice Center. Based on how much I've learned, I feel like I have been here for so much longer, but it also feels like I just started yesterday!

As my familiarity with the work has increased, I have been added to more cases, which has given me great opportunities to expand my knowledge on MacArthur's issue areas and observe experienced attorneys at the top of their practice. My highlight of the last two weeks was observing a deposition for which I helped prepare. It was incredible to see my supervising attorney walk an expert witness through the case, step by step, pressing him where his answers did not match our client's version of the story. Although I played a small role, I was so grateful to be a part of the process, and was especially excited when she cited to facts I helped find.

One of the things they don't tell you in law school is just how much law is out there—so much that you'll never learn it all in the classroom (even at the University of Chicago Law School). I love starting a research assignment with no knowledge of the topic and finishing a memo feeling like an expert. (Ask me about police lineups sometime!) I want to once again thank Equal Justice America for supporting my work this summer.

Update 4: My time at the MacArthur Justice Center might be coming to a close, but the work is never done. In the last two weeks, I have split my time between doing legal research to prepare for an upcoming trial and assist in prepping for an expert witness's deposition. I've also had the privilege of sitting in on some of the bigger picture strategy meetings amongst MacArthur attorneys and other co-counsel, which gave me a better appreciation for the lifespan of the cases of which I only see a small part.

Among the highlights of this summer has definitely been working with and getting to know my fellow interns. They are doing impactful work, and part of my research this week has been building on the knowledge they have added to our cases. And I certainly have to shout out their work on helping to file MacArthur's groundbreaking case against the city of Chicago for its use of ShotSpotter in racially targeting Chicagoans for illegal police stops and false charges.

Update 5: It's crazy to realize that ten weeks have passed and my time at the MacArthur Justice Center has come to an end. I am so grateful for the experience; I feel that I have grown as a person, a student of law, and a future litigator. I'm sad to report that this is my last #EJAFellowUpdate.

The MacArthur Justice Center's mission focuses on vindicating the rights of incarcerated persons, people who were wrongfully convicted, and those who have been personally impacted by police and prosecutor misconduct. During my internship, I was lucky enough to work on cases spanning each of these practice areas.



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Each case presented unique challenges, and MacArthur sought different remedies based on the injustices that their clients experienced. Whether we represented a single person, a family, or an entire community, I loved seeing how MacArthur varied the approach to the case based on what would be the best result for the clients. Due to the nature of the work, all of MacArthur's clients have faced terrible injustice at the hands of the government. It was continuously uplifting to see MacArthur's attorneys committed to working tirelessly to provide some sort of remedy for what these clients had faced.

In addition to working on cases, I had the opportunity to sit in on brown bag discussions that spanned all of MacArthur's offices and practices. As a result, I was able to learn directly from trial and appellate attorneys who are committed to fighting government abuse all across the country. After a hard morning of sorting through discovery materials depicting the horrors that state officials inflict on already vulnerable individuals, it was often a relief to eat lunch with my fellow interns and hear about MacArthur's victories. It was a great sign that our work may be hard, but it would pay off for the people who needed it, even when we have left and returned to our classwork.

While there were no shortage of life lessons and new skills that I will take away from this internship, one of the best parts of working for the MacArthur team was the trust they had in me. Although I have only completed one year of law school, I was tasked with researching areas of law and making substantive contributions to MacArthur's work product. I wrote in a previous post about how exhilarating it is to start a research assignment with no knowledge of the topic and finish a memo feeling like an expert. But the best moment was when the MacArthur attorneys—experts in their field—would turn to me and ask for my take on that topic. It was amazing to be trusted to add to MacArthur's work in that way, and I feel so grateful and so proud to have been able to do so. I hope to take this feeling forward as I keep studying at the University of Chicago Law School. (At the very least, maybe it'll combat some of those imposter syndrome feelings that often crop up.)

As if I haven't said it enough, I am beyond thankful for the MacArthur Justice Center for allowing me the opportunity to work on their team and make a difference through their cases this summer. I also am incredibly grateful for the financial assistance from Equal Justice America to be able to take on this internship.