



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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**Organization:** Washington & Lee Tax Clinic

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**Update 1:** Since I work at a low-income tax clinic, I get to help many individuals with legal problems involving finances and financial hardship situations. Currently, I have multiple clients that are relying on receiving money back from the government in the form of stimulus payments, and I am the contact attempting to get them those payments. This really struck me because without the help of this clinic and the multitude of work that we all put in, these people would likely not receive money that they need to provide for them and their family.

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**Update 2:** As I get to the middle of my internship, I am getting to do a lot more legal work for my clients. This week I have 2 conferences and next month I will be going to court at least twice. In preparing for these events, I have been working hard keeping an open line of communication open between clients and making sure all the required paperwork is submitted. The clinic has also received many new clients recently, which is unfortunate because it means that someone is having legal trouble. However, it gives us a chance to help a lot more people and hopefully lessen the burden of their tax problems.

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**Update 3:** As I enter into the last month of my internship, I am reflecting on how much I have learned from this summer. I have learned so much about taxes, tax forms, and the IRS and VATAX process. I have also been able to help so many people with their tax problems. As we close out clients and get started on transfer memos, I get to see my work firsthand and how much I have accomplished this summer. Especially through the eyes of the clients. I communicate with so many of them regularly, and I have even gotten a few referrals. I truly enjoy my work and helping people figure out their tax liabilities and possible solutions. I have many clients who call me freaked out and sometimes crying about not being able to pay the IRS. They really do need help and I am happy there is a place like our clinic that is able to help them.

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**Update 4:** This past week, I had the privilege of meeting with a client in person for the first time (most of our work is done remotely since our area is so large that we cover). I helped the client fill out paperwork and discussed their tax issue and how we can possibly help them. They were very appreciative, and I really enjoyed



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being able to put a face with the name and voice. It humanizes my work, when I can actually see the person that I am helping. It gives meaning to what we are doing here at the tax clinic, and I hope to meet with more clients in person in the future. As my time at the tax clinic ends, I was tasked with completing case transfer checklists for the clients that I have helped. It was great to see a large stack of paperwork showing how much I have done throughout the semester. I have not decided yet, but I may come back and work at the tax clinic at another point during my law school career since I enjoyed it so much. It was truly rewarding work, and I learned a lot throughout the summer.

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**Update 5:** As I reflect back on my time as an intern at the Washington & Lee Tax Clinic, I think about how much knowledge I gained. First, I gained knowledge about the subject matter- tax law. I learned about tax forms and how to complete them based on different client information. I learned about interacting with different tax organizations, such as the IRS and VATAX. And I learned about explaining complex tax information to clients. Second, I gained knowledge on working with clients, especially low-income clients that are in a tough spot. I learned how to fight for my clients and attempt to get them a favorable result so that they can avoid penalties and large payments to the IRS that they cannot afford. I learned how important the services of the tax clinic are to the Virginia community. I helped some clients that only had a small payment due (maybe a couple hundred dollars), but that amount was as important to them as a couple thousand dollars to another client. Each of my clients really needed the help of the tax clinic, and the clinic tried to help as many people as we were able to.

The biggest hurdle of my internship was communication with the IRS. Since our clients truly needed fast results, and the IRS is not a fast organization, it was difficult to keep telling the clients “we are just waiting on a result from the IRS.” Since so many problems with the IRS can last over a year, it is especially frustrating to the clients to just keep waiting with no result for so long. That was especially hard since the money involved in the cases was something the clients needed a lot sooner. So, it was difficult feeling as if I could not help them, even though I had done everything that I could do in their case. It also made me think about the lasting effects of COVID and how backlogged agencies are because of the pandemic and how long it will take to get back to normal. I hope that they are able to get back to normal soon so that our clients can get the answers that they need.

Overall, I am very thankful for my experience at the tax clinic, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to help people in need. I hope to have many more opportunities like working at the tax clinic in my legal career. Thank you so much for this great opportunity.