



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: ACLU of Pennsylvania

Update 1: This summer, I am privileged to intern at the ACLU of Pennsylvania (ACLU-PA) with the generous support of Equal Justice America (EJA). Throughout this summer, I will be posting EJA Fellow Updates on the work I am involved in.

My first few weeks at the ACLU-PA have been both inspiring and motivating. To start, everyone on the team is wholly dedicated to advocating and fighting for justice. The ACLU-PA's mission is to preserve and promote civil liberties, including freedom of speech, the right to privacy, reproductive freedom, and equal treatment under the law. I have already had the opportunity to assist with cases involving voting rights, discrimination and LGBTQ+ rights, and First Amendment issues. Additionally, I've participated in litigation team calls, learning more about how the team selects and strategizes on cases. My experience to date has reinforced my interest in civil rights law and the important role that legal aid organizations perform in our society. I look forward to continuing to learn from the ACLU-PA's legal team this summer!

Update 2: These past few weeks at the ACLU of Pennsylvania (ACLU-PA) have provided a rich opportunity to contribute to interesting cases with varied subject matter. Concurrently, I am drafting a legal memo analyzing issues of attorney-client privilege and work product protections while also working on a First Amendment issue involving municipal sign ordinances. Interestingly, many municipalities have not updated their sign ordinances since the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 ruling in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*, a case that struck down a town's sign ordinance because of its content-based restrictions on signs. Plainly, towns are not allowed to regulate the size, number, or duration of signs displayed on a person's private property based on what the signs say.

Moreover, the ACLU-PA has provided thorough training opportunities for me to learn about the organization's different areas of work. We've had sessions with members of the policy team to understand how the legal and policy teams work together to advance shared goals. Last week, we attended an education and



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policy training to learn more about how current issues in the public education system—like the rise of school policing—affect students and impact their civil rights. Additionally, in this short time, I've already learned a great deal about how challenging impact litigation can be, including how long it can take (sometimes years) to find a case that is positioned to challenge a long-standing law.

Update 3: Today marks eight weeks since I began my summer internship at the ACLU of Pennsylvania. This week, I had the privilege of listening to a discussion led by the ACLU's national team about the recently completed U.S. Supreme Court term. During this session, the team provided an overview of the term's major cases, reviewed the Court's opinions and legal reasoning in each case, and discussed the implications for the ACLU's work and our country moving forward. Below are links to the ACLU's statements on a few seminal decisions of this term.

ACLU Comment on *303 Creative, Inc. v. Elenis* (LGBTQ+ rights, free speech, religious liberty):

<https://shorturl.at/DGLZ4>.

ACLU Comments on *Merrill v. Milligan* and *Moore v. Harper* (voting rights, racial justice):

<https://shorturl.at/mxIN3> and <https://shorturl.at/fOTZ5>.

ACLU Comment on *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. UNC* (affirmative action): <https://shorturl.at/fjY45>.

Update 4: As I enter the homestretch of my ACLU-PA internship, I continue to explore areas of the law that are new to me. I have learned about Pennsylvania's probation system and legal issues facing low-income residents on parole. Of note is that Pennsylvania has the highest incarceration rate in the Northeastern U.S. and the second-highest percentage of its citizens on probation and parole in the country.

I'm also continuing to assist on various projects in different stages of litigation. Currently, I am supporting document review for a case in discovery, researching questions of law involving discrimination and the Affordable Care Act, and reviewing voting rights cases concerning Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law (a law allowing individuals to request and receive records from Pennsylvania state and local governments).

Update 5: My summer at the ACLU of Pennsylvania (ACLU-PA) has drawn to a close, marking the culmination of an enriching internship experience. Over the past few months, I have gained insight into the ACLU-PA's culture, the lives of our clients, and the civil liberties at stake in each case. I am endlessly grateful to the ACLU-PA team for welcoming me to the organization and creating such a meaningful and engaging experience. I couldn't have asked for a better introduction to the world of civil rights litigation.

A highlight of my time at the ACLU-PA was the opportunity to attend hearings in person and listen to our supervising attorneys discuss litigation strategy in each case. I had the opportunity to learn from attorneys who, every day, work to right wrongs and strive to make this country more equitable. I was inspired by the team's



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perseverance, resilience, and humility. I was also struck by the courage of many of our clients, who are willing to pursue litigation despite the stress and upheaval that inherently accompanies any lawsuit.

I was also fortunate to work on a breadth of legal issues this summer. For example, I worked on cases involving the First Amendment, Fourth Amendment, and sex and race discrimination. I also gained a deeper understanding of issues facing residents impacted by Pennsylvania's criminal justice system. With each assignment, I learned of an additional barrier perpetuating systemic inequalities in Pennsylvanian communities. Although structural change is slow, one of the best parts of interning with ACLU-PA was learning about its holistic approach to systemic change. In addition to its impact litigation, the ACLU-PA uses collective action and integrated advocacy to incite tangible change at the local level.

As I reflect on my learnings this summer, I am acutely aware that this internship has been a transformative step in my legal education. My summer has not only equipped me with new skills but has also affirmed my desire to contribute to the pursuit of a more inclusive and equitable society. I continue to be grateful for my funding from Equal Justice America that helped make my summer with the ACLU-PA possible.