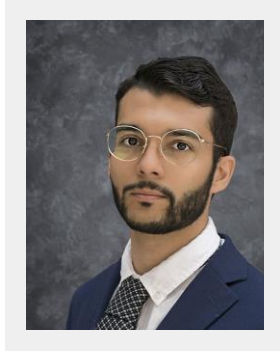




EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



Name: Luca Azzariti Crousillat

Law School: University of Texas School of Law

Organization: ACLU of Texas

Update 1: I am incredibly grateful to have received funding through Equal Justice America to support my legal work with the ACLU of Texas in their Transgender Rights and Freedom of Speech division. During my first two weeks, I have been dedicated to analyzing and researching anti-trans and anti-drag bills in Texas, while also conducting comparative research with other circuits that have similar bills. Additionally, I have been delving into federal statutes pertaining to transgender discrimination.

In the pursuit of justice and equality, it is paramount to address the challenges faced by transgender individuals in Texas. By examining the impact of discriminatory legislation and studying its implications in different contexts, I aim to contribute to the fight for transgender rights and freedom of speech. Through my research, my goal is to contribute to the pursuit of justice by identifying and supporting potential legal cases that can challenge the discriminatory legislation and prevailing cultural attitudes. By gathering evidence and conducting comprehensive analyses, I aspire to provide valuable assistance in bringing forward court cases that can seek redress for the individuals who have been adversely affected by these discriminatory laws and the broader culture they perpetuate.

Equal Justice America plays a crucial role in supporting law students like me who are dedicated to serving vulnerable communities and individuals living in poverty. Their funding allows me to gain practical experience in public interest work and work towards ensuring that everyone has equal access to justice. I am honored to be part of this important mission and look forward to continuing my work with the ACLU of Texas to advocate for the rights of transgender individuals and safeguard freedom of speech.

Update 2: Over the past two weeks, my focus has been on delving into the realm of constitutional protections for trans individuals and drag performers, which has been an incredibly meaningful and eye-opening experience. Exploring this area of research has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by these communities and the importance of advocating for their rights.

Additionally, I have been actively investigating Title IX violations in schools, with a particular emphasis on the marginalization of trans students in Texas. It is disheartening to witness the persistent discrimination and



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barriers they encounter within educational institutions, hindering their ability to thrive in a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Engaging in this work holds significant meaning, especially in the context of LGBTQ+ protection. By studying constitutional safeguards and highlighting the experiences of marginalized groups, we can uncover ways to better support and protect the rights of individuals who identify as transgender or engage in drag performance. It is essential to recognize the intersectionality of their struggles and to promote comprehensive legal protections that address the specific challenges they face.

By shedding light on Title IX violations in schools and the ongoing marginalization of trans students in Texas, we can bring attention to the urgent need for change. It is crucial to advocate for policies and initiatives that ensure equal access to education, promote inclusivity, and foster a nurturing environment for all students, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

In my research and advocacy efforts, I remain hopeful that the SCOTUS will recognize the critical nature of the predicament faced by trans individuals and the LGBTQ+ community at large. It is my sincere belief that through their deliberations, SCOTUS can play a pivotal role in upholding the constitutional rights and protections that are essential for fostering equality, dignity, and inclusivity for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression. By acknowledging and addressing these pressing issues, the highest court in the land has the power to shape a more just and equitable future for generations to come.

Update 3: Much has happened in the last two weeks; they have been eventful and fulfilling, dedicated to fighting against discriminatory bills in Texas. I am grateful for the opportunity to work on these crucial issues and make a difference in the lives of marginalized communities.

One of my main focuses has been working on a brief to oppose anti-drag legislation. This involved delving into the world of drag, listening to the inspiring stories of drag queens, and understanding the rich history behind this art form. Through my research, I learned about the significance of drag in relation to the First Amendment and the freedom of expression--an eye-opening experience to witness the resilience and strength of the drag community, and I am determined to protect their rights.

I have also been deeply involved in addressing Title IX complaints related to a school district that is denying trans and non-binary students the opportunity to join choirs that align with their gender identities. It was a remarkable experience to lead a deposition with a client, gathering valuable information to strengthen our case. And I am confident that our efforts will pave the way for equal opportunities and inclusivity within educational institutions.

I have then ventured into the realm of criminal reform for the first time. This area of work has highlighted the intercorrelation between the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments. I have been focusing on the right to recreation and outdoor activities, which some prisons have been denying to their detainees. As soon as I receive all the necessary information, I will be responsible for filing the complaint, to which I am committed to ensuring that the basic rights of incarcerated individuals are upheld and that they are treated with dignity and fairness.



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As I reflect on these past two weeks, I am filled with a sense of purpose and motivation. The work ahead will undoubtedly present challenges, but I am fueled by the belief that every step taken toward dismantling discrimination brings us closer to a more just world. None of this would have been possible without the support of the EJA fellowship. The financial assistance they provided has allowed me to embark on this journey and pursue my passion for social justice. I am immensely grateful for their trust in me and their dedication to creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

Update 4: These past few weeks have been nothing short of intense and demanding. With each passing day, my workload seems to grow, but so does my determination to make a difference. My focus has been on researching anti-trans legislation and the harmful implications it has on the LGBTQ+ community. As I delve deeper into this subject, I am reminded of the immense responsibility I carry, and the potential impact our efforts can have on countless lives. It's both daunting and inspiring.

Today, in particular, was a momentous day as I sat down with my supervisor to co-write our first complaint. This complaint, aimed at opposing the anti-drag legislation in Texas, feels like the embodiment of our collective commitment to fighting for justice. The hours spent researching constitutional law have not been in vain, as I can now apply that knowledge to build a solid legal foundation for our case. Though the task is challenging, I am grateful for the mentorship and guidance my supervisor provides. We're not just filing a complaint; we're standing up for the rights and dignity of a vibrant community.

The more I immerse myself in constitutional law research, the more I become aware of the intricacies and complexities of the legal system. The concepts of overbreadth, vagueness, and ripeness have become my constant companions. It's heartbreaking to witness how the lives and businesses of our clients hang in the balance due to these legislations in Texas. But, even amidst the uncertainty, I find solace in knowing that my understanding of these principles will help us craft compelling arguments in our favor. I cling to the hope that our knowledge will be a force for positive change.

I also delved deeper into the implications and repercussions of 303 Creative in the LGBTQ+ community. The freedom of speech has always been a fundamental right, but it's disheartening to see how it can be weaponized to harm and discriminate against vulnerable communities. I understand the importance of being well-informed about these issues, as it will shape our strategies in fighting against injustices. It's a reminder of why I chose this path of advocacy - to protect the rights and dignity of those who face discrimination and marginalization. As I reflect on the journey I've undertaken these weeks, I can't help but feel immense gratitude for the support and opportunities provided by EJA. Their dedication to systemic change and the resources they've offered have been invaluable. Without their help, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my passion for making a difference in the world of law and social justice. This journey is far from over, but with EJA by my side, I know I'm not alone in my fight for equality and justice.

Update 5: This summer has been an incredible journey, filled with meaningful work and a sense of purpose as I stood alongside the ACLU, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and fighting against institutionalized discrimination. My focus was on challenging SB-12 in Texas, a bill that posed a threat to the fundamental rights of drag performers. The experience was both challenging and rewarding, allowing me to make a real impact in the fight for equality.



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A significant portion of my time was dedicated to drafting essential legal documents. I wrote complaints, briefs, and motions, each carefully crafted to convey our arguments effectively and underscore the importance of protecting First Amendment rights enshrined in the Constitution. This process taught me the power of legal language and the importance of thorough research, as we scrutinized the bill and its implications, ensuring we left no stone unturned.

Client interviews were an eye-opening aspect of this work. Meeting individuals directly affected by discriminatory policies gave me a profound understanding of the human toll of such legislation. It fueled my motivation to fight harder for justice, knowing that the lives of so many people were at stake. Hearing their stories and being a part of their journey further solidified my commitment to the cause.

A significant aspect of my work was centered around the First Amendment, focusing on overbreadth and vagueness. Understanding the nuances of constitutional protections was essential in crafting strong arguments. I spent countless hours researching and comparing similar bills to the one we were challenging. This thorough analysis provided us with a comprehensive perspective, allowing us to build a compelling case that eventually led to the filing of a complaint and taking the battle to the courtroom. Seeking an injunction before the bill came into effect was a pivotal moment, and I felt proud to be part of this critical step in the fight against injustice. Addressing anti-trans sentiment in schools, particularly in the context of Title IX, was another crucial area of my work. I worked closely with my supervisors, engaging in extensive research to develop persuasive arguments that highlighted the discrimination faced by trans students, particularly those who couldn't freely express their gender identity, like joining the choir. It was a challenging endeavor, but every argument we crafted felt like a step closer to creating a more inclusive environment for these students.

None of this work would have been possible without the support of the EJA, whose funding played a crucial role in enabling us to take on these fights for justice. I am immensely thankful for the opportunity to be part of such a dedicated team and to contribute to a cause that holds such profound significance. This summer has been a transformative experience, and it has deepened my commitment to advocating for equality and dismantling discriminatory institutions. I'm eager to continue this journey, knowing that every effort we put in brings us closer to a more just and inclusive society.