



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

NAME	Freedom Gobel
LAW SCHOOL	Georgetown University Law Center
ORGANIZATION	First Shift Justice Project

Update 1:

It is a great honor to be working as a law clerk at the First Shift Justice Project this summer, an organization dedicated to helping working families assert their workplace rights.

In the last 3 weeks, I've been thrown into the world of labor and employment law, assisting those who are dealing with pregnancy discrimination, those who require reasonable accommodations at their worksite, or those who simply need a little help in caring for their family members. I continue to learn with each client interaction, and am more confident every day in my decision to pursue public interest legal aid as a career.

Update 2:

In the last 4 weeks, the First Shift Justice Project has taught me so much about public interest lawyering. The work NEVER stops, but the positive impact First Shift has in DMV communities and beyond makes it all worth it.

So far, I've worked on demand letters for clients asserting their workplace rights against their employers, drafted EEOC complaints, helped new parents apply for paid family leave benefits, proposed settlement increases for pregnant women in failure-to-accommodate cases, and so so much more. My supervisors are superheroes, and I can't wait to continue learning from them.

Update 3:

What law school doesn't teach you is how much of your day in legal services is spent handling practical problems, as opposed to practicing and learning the law. At First Shift, we're faced with unexpected challenges, like how to maintain contact with a client whose phone is off due to an outstanding bill, how to transcribe muffled speech from a voice memo, or how to best serve clients with English or Spanish language barriers, to name a few. Every day brings a new and unforeseen task.



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While some challenges are inherently unpredictable, I've learned that many can be avoided. If you are an employee who is being discriminated against, there are several steps you can take to make the pursuit of justice a touch simpler, but my best piece of advice is this: take note of everything, and most importantly, PUT IT IN WRITING! This experience has not only helped me assist others who have been harmed, but has taught me exactly how to protect myself in the face of discrimination. Valuable lessons indeed.

Update 4:

At this point in the summer, I've been able to see a few cases and several clients all the way through to the finish line. While there is seldom a perfect result, the many good ones make the work worth it. Reaching settlement agreements for new moms, successfully negotiating up on severance packages, or finding alternatives for visa holders facing employment discrimination are just a few examples of the small wins that can make a big impact. In my final weeks at First Shift, I hope to play a part in a few more.

Public interest legal work is hard! More than that, however, it is important to our broader communities, meaningful to individuals, and at times, rewarding for those who do the legal work. I'd like to once again thank Equal Justice America for contributing to my ability to work at First Shift this summer.

Update 5:

My time as a law clerk for First Shift this summer was more impactful than I could have imagined. At an organization with a small but mighty legal team (four people, including myself), I was able to learn so much in such a short time. I saw some clients' cases from start to finish, assisting with intake interviews, consultations, drafting demand letters, tracking negotiations with employers, drafting and filing motions with the DC Office of Human Rights, drafting charges with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and helping the organization research for legislative proposals. The list goes on, and I will take all I learned from each of these experiences into my future legal work.

Not only did I learn about the work of a lawyer, but I learned about my personal goals and aspirations in the legal field. I know now that the only path for me is pursuing a legal services career in public interest law. I loved my time working in employment law, and I'm curious and excited to learn more in my time at law school and during my future summer work experiences.

I would like to, one final time, thank Equal Justice America for contributing to the possibility and success of this opportunity. I learned so much thanks to their support, and I know future fellows will be afforded the same impactful experience. Public interest legal work is SO important! Please consider donating to EJA so they can continue their efforts in introducing law students across the country in doing work that matters.

Thank you to everyone who followed and supported me through this experience, thank you to First Shift and the legal team, and of course, thank you to EJA.