



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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LAW SCHOOL	New York University School of Law
ORGANIZATION	Lambda Legal

Update 1: I recently finished my first year at New York University School of Law, and this summer I am working at Lambda Legal, an organization that fights for the civil rights of queer people. I'm hopeful that working at Lambda will help me reconnect with the reason I came to law school after a difficult year and reignite my goal of supporting liberation for trans people of color.

Although I have only been working the internship for a few weeks, I've absolutely loved my time at Lambda so far, and am so grateful to be working here with the support of a fellowship from Equal Justice America. Contributing to Lambda and their broader mission has been a dream of mine ever since my own queer coming of age, and feels especially important in this uncertain, often frightening era of increasing anti-trans rhetoric and politics.

Thus far, I have learned about three impactful pieces of litigation that Lambda is working on in Missouri, Idaho, and Montana that I will be supporting. They cut across many issue areas that I feel so lucky and excited to be learning about: prison conditions and rights, gender-affirming care, school policies for transgender students, and more. I've already learned how some of the complicated concepts from Constitutional Law and Civil Procedure interact with real litigation and show up in arguments. I also participated in a social justice law academy in Washington, D.C. and was able to attend a beautiful pride celebration at Lambda's New York office. I am so looking forward to learning and working from the incredible lawyers here over the summer and am excited to write further updates!

Update 2:



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I've had a great experience over the last few weeks at Lambda! I spent most of my time supporting attorneys with research questions relevant to current and prospective litigation. One thing I have found extremely interesting is being able to learn about different jurisdictions and their respective laws on issues of trans rights. That's definitely a huge perk of working at a national organization; I get to sit in on meetings with co-counsel who live across the country and bring unique sets of expertise to our teams.

I'm currently sitting in on depositions for a prison rights case. They are extremely heavy to sit through, so I'm also learning about how personally impactful and exhausting civil rights work can be. I'm definitely appreciating how intersectional Lambda's work is, though, and the carefulness with which the attorneys approach this work. Next, I'm looking forward to taking on a policy project and longer writing assignment.

Update 3: Lambda was closed for a restorative week for part of the summer, so I have spent much of my time recently conducting independent projects. I'm working on a few assignments right now that I've really enjoyed contributing to. First, I'm summarizing deposition transcripts from a case that involves discrimination on the basis of HIV status. This is super interesting because I'm trying to draw out and highlight the most salient admissions and points that were discussed in the depositions, and will hopefully be useful for the trial team going forward. I've loved seeing how interdisciplinary this work is; it reminds me more of my studies in public health and English in college than law school. I'm also working on two broader research projects—one is about the status of charter schools as state actors, which will be a useful addition to Lambda's work protecting the rights of queer and trans young people in schools. Another is a policy project about the Comstock Act and exploring the intersection of reproductive justice and LGBTQ+ rights, focusing on how lawmakers could potentially use the Comstock Act to curb these rights. I'm very excited to try and create a longer-form writing product by the end of the internship!

Update 4: Over the last few weeks at Lambda, I've spent time learning about the motion to dismiss process and the steps towards settlement. I conducted some research about the differences between injunctive relief and declaratory relief, which was really interesting; like I wrote earlier, it has been awesome to see how one quick concept you gloss over in a class can turn into an entire research project in a specific jurisdiction when you are actually practicing. I also had the opportunity to work on another small research memo about the rights of people incarcerated in a specific prison system, again emphasizing the importance of local versus global knowledge when doing impact litigation. I am definitely appreciating the mentorship and learning I've experienced at Lambda; I really feel close to the attorneys I've been working with, and I feel so excited about possibly doing this work in the future.



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Besides those projects, I got to work more on the research about the Comstock Act, which has been very informative—it's great to work on something that isn't tied to a specific case or client, because I get to talk about it with my friends who aren't in law school but also care about social justice issues! I also attended a brown bag conversation about disability justice and its intersections with LGBTQ+ identities and the LGBTQ+ rights movement, which again generated very interesting discussion. All of this feels especially relevant as the election approaches and issues like transgender rights are being heavily scrutinized and discussed. In general, continuously feeling a lot of gratitude to learn from the team at Lambda, thanks to EJW!

Update 5: My final update for this summer! I have absolutely loved my time at Lambda. Over the final few weeks of the internship, I finished up the deposition project I was working on before, conducting a deep dive into the intricacies of that case and understanding exactly how each witness fit into the theory of the case that we were arguing. I also had the opportunity to work on a research assignment about charter schools; this work is significant because charter schools exist in a state of limbo for the purposes of students' rights. I was tasked with researching the different legal conceptions of charter schools as state actors, which would in turn affect whether students have constitutional protections in those schools. For Lambda, this is important as it has a huge impact on whether young queer and trans students are afforded the full protection of the law against discrimination. This was a really interesting project to work on that I may be able to turn into a longer-form piece of writing after the internship concludes—super grateful to the team at Lambda for being willing to supervise that. I was able to organize and lead a fruitful meeting with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools about this question, which was so cool! It showed me how collaborative the civil rights law world is—it felt like we got a private tutorial from an expert in this narrow field of law!

Thank you so much to EJA for providing funding for my time and to the supervising attorneys at Lambda. This experience solidified my commitment to working in public interest, specifically civil rights in service of young queer and trans people of color. I also now know that there are issue areas I worked on this summer that I would love to revisit: prison rights, HIV discrimination, and students' rights. While I am still uncertain as to whether I want to work with clients one-on-one or do broad impact work like Lambda, I had a fantastic time over the summer and feel way more excited about law school now than I did at the end of 1L. Thank you again!