



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: These past two weeks at the ACLU of Texas have been challenging yet exciting. I was assigned to a protestor's rights case, which involved three civil rights leaders in Gainesville who were arrested for obstruction of a passageway or highway after protesting a Confederate statute on the courthouse lawn. After conducting research on similar cases and statutes, I was able to learn more about how government officials can retaliate against protestors and change agents. These three civil rights leaders may face incarceration for speaking out against racism. This is why I love the ACLU of Texas and the amazing work they do. They never fail to stand up against injustice and inequality no matter how big, small, or hard the case may be. The amazing attorneys I have the pleasure of working with on this case continuously fight passionately for their clients, even though the case has been ongoing for years. Every day I have the opportunity to work with this amazing non-profit organization reminds me of why I want to join the good fight. People like the three civil rights leaders in the Gainesville case need attorneys who are going to show up for them daily no matter what.

Update 2: I have officially been with the ACLU of Texas as a legal intern for an entire month and I have just completed the first assignment given to me. I was assigned to review eighty-seven Texas school districts' dress and grooming policies and report if they violated the recently enacted Texas Creating an Open and Respectful World for Natural Hair "CROWN" Act, passed to prohibit hair-based discrimination based on race. To my dismay and disappointment, approximately 56 school districts outright violated the Texas CROWN Act and the remaining few used ambiguous language to get around it. As I was researching, I couldn't help but hope many of these policies would be inclusive and protective of minority students, then I was quickly reminded why this fight for equality and justice was so important. Public interest attorneys are fighting to ensure a better tomorrow. A tomorrow that is just. A tomorrow where one is not discriminated against simply because of the way their hair grows out of their head. A tomorrow where people are no longer afraid to embrace who they truly are publicly. I am grateful for all the amazing work done at the ACLU of Texas, especially this project. This project centered around people who looked like me, an African American woman who routinely wears protective



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hairstyles and enjoys the texture of her natural hair. This project made me and my struggles as a black woman in America feel seen. So, thank you to the ACLU of Texas and EJA for funding this dream turned reality and supporting my goal of becoming a public interest attorney. With your help, we can continue to fund the future careers of many other public interest attorneys.

Update 3: This post was initially due during the week of July 8, 2024, however, Hurricane Beryl had other plans as to when I'd be able to complete it. During that week I sat in my home for nearly seven days and six nights without power and in extreme heat. I could not help but feel angry and dejected at the response of our state leaders. Gov. Gregg Abbott and Senator Ted Cruz were both out of the state and doing very little to help the citizens in need. It was also not lost on me how they have had nearly a decade to fix the issues involving our electrical grid but have yet to solve the problem. I then thought about the amazing attorneys who will fight for the affected Texan Citizens in the days, weeks, months, and years to come. Many of the citizens adversely affected by the storm were considered low-income and wouldn't have the means to properly recover if they ever do. Many legal aid organizations are already vocalizing their disappointment in the way Texas handled the storm and power outage. These organizations and attorneys are boldly going against the Texas government to fight for change and justice in current laws and policies. Future generations cannot continue the fight if they cannot afford to attend law school or have the ability to work and learn at legal aid organizations. That is why it is important to fund the future generations of legal aid attorneys who will continue the fight.

Update 4: This past month at the ACLU of Texas I was assigned to assist on a case involving an African American family who was deeply harmed by the system of CPS. The family decided to give birth by way of a midwife rather than by conventional means due to past trauma and issues with their first two children. Shortly after giving birth, their three-day-old baby was ripped from their arms because their pediatrician disagreed with the plan of care provided to them by their midwife. CPS never contacted their midwife, even though they had knowledge that this was the family's primary healthcare provider at the time, which led to the family being separated from their newborn baby for approximately one month. During this separation, the family was only allowed to see their newborn child for one hour weekly. This family lost crucial bonding time and was deeply traumatized by the actions of CPS. This case deeply troubled me, yet it is not a unique story for many. Many African American families are disproportionately targeted by CPS and many families never recover from the trauma that this system caused. That is why I am deeply grateful for the many social justice and civil rights attorneys who have made it their responsibility to see a change in how our government and government agencies are run. Systems like CPS were created to protect children from abuse and neglect but have caused more harm than good and hide behind qualified immunity to continue tormenting innocent families. That is why it is important to fund the future generations of legal aid attorneys who will continue the fight.

Update 5: This past summer at the ACLU of Texas has been one of the greatest and impactful summers I have had thus far. I've had the opportunity to work with an amazing team of individuals who were more than willing to share their journeys and expertise. I also had the opportunity to work with the amazing legal department who continued to nurture the skills I learned at Thurgood Marshall School of Law. The projects I worked on were brag worthy, from



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contributing to a U.S. Supreme Court Writ of Certiorari, research for the Texas CROWN Act, to a pre-litigation memorandum regarding a tragic CPS case.

While at the ACLU of Texas, I also learned many of my strengths and most importantly my weaknesses. The invaluable insight I received changed my perspective and helped me understand what I need to work on during this upcoming semester. My biggest struggle this summer was time management and independent research. I know I am not the only person in the world who deals with procrastination and focus issues, and these issues reared their ugly heads during this internship. I learned that my attention span was not as long as I thought it was and that I needed to work in bursts. The pomodoro method was a life saver in this department and helped me finish all my assignments in a timely manner. I also learned I had a weakness in the research department. This was my first time ever having to do my own legal research. No cases were given to me, the research topic was not narrowed for me, and the facts were not hypothetical and real people's lives were on the line. The only way I was able to conquer this was to be open to criticism and be willing to learn from any mistakes I made. Needless to say, I had to write many drafts in order to get it right, but I improved in each draft which was the most important thing I took from it.

This summer was absolutely one for the books. I had an amazing summer and met amazing people. I also learned so much about myself and the ACLU of Texas.