



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



|                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
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| <b>LAW SCHOOL</b>   | University of Minnesota |
| <b>ORGANIZATION</b> | Gender Justice          |

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#### Update 1:

I'm excited to share that I started this week as a Legal Intern at Gender Justice! As both a UMN Human Rights Fellow and an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer, I look forward to working with the talented legal team at Gender Justice to dismantle legal and structural barriers that contribute to gender inequity.

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#### Update 2:

This past week I was able to meet with a client whose daughter was not allowed to play on her local recreational sports team because she is trans. Minnesota Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity and so I was able to help the mother write an advocacy letter in order to request that the statewide organization remove restrictions for trans children looking to play on a team that aligns with their gender identity. As someone who grew up playing on sports teams this was very meaningful to me because some of my best memories were made playing sports in a team setting and making friends. Especially as an 11-year-old child, I can imagine this experience of being not allowed to play was devastating and I am heartened to know that the work I am contributing to is aiming help prevent this type of discrimination in the future.

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#### Update 3:

This week my team was ecstatic to learn that one of our cases, *Cooper v. USA Powerlifting* was accepted for review by the MN Supreme Court! This case sheds light on the importance of transgender inclusion in sports and how attacks against the trans community are constant. I have seen this in my work this summer with other clients, even young trans children facing discrimination in sports participation. Working with this amazing legal team this summer has been incredibly enlightening and I really value my experience.

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#### Update 4:

This year the Minnesota legislature passed multiple updates to the Minnesota Human Rights Act that impact the work of Gender Justice. I have been busy compiling those changes, and analyzing



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how the various alterations will have an effect on the work of Gender Justice. In addition to this project, I have been helping with an employment discrimination case in which the defendant is seeking a religious exemption. The research I have been conducting considers what religious exemptions have been sought after in the past and what has made them successful/unsuccessful. With only a few weeks left in my internship, I can believe that it is coming to a close! This experience has proven invaluable, and I am grateful for my summer at Gender Justice.

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## **Update 5:**

In this final week of my internship, I am wrapping up research projects and editing various memos I've worked on. This summer, I had the opportunity to interface with clients, write briefs, legal memos, and advocacy letters, and engage in a variety of legal research projects. I gained experience in cases involving discrimination based on sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, as well as cases advocating for access to reproductive health care. My work spanned diverse environments, including prisons, schools, and workplaces.

One particularly compelling project was a case where a school sought a religious exemption for terminating an employee based on gender identity. Last week, Gender Justice filed a discrimination lawsuit, *Reyzi Grace v. Academy of Holy Angels and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis*, concerning the termination of an employee who came out as trans.

Researching the evolution of religious exemptions across the U.S. and the shifting interpretation of the ministerial exception offered valuable insights into how such cases are framed by schools and businesses. Working at an organization focused on strategic impact litigation allowed me to see how these broader legal trends inform the direction of our work.

This summer provided invaluable insight into an area of law I am eager to pursue after law school. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work at Gender Justice and for the support I received from Equal Justice America in this endeavor.