



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	NAACP Legal Defense Fund

**Update 1:** I am so grateful that I've been able to intern at the Legal Defense Fund this summer, and that I've been able to do it with the sponsorship of [Equal Justice America](#). Equal Justice America's funding helped make it possible for me to spend the summer in Washington, D.C., which has been amazing.

I absolutely love interning at the Legal Defense Fund. It makes me wish the summer wouldn't end! I have been able to see what their work is like in many different areas, from education to economic justice to criminal justice to political participation. I'm interning in the policy department, which has given me the opportunity to do really interesting research for some of those topics. It has been such a great learning opportunity for me, and makes me so excited to do similar work in greater depth after I graduate law school (in one more year!).

I have also been lucky to be interning with some amazing students from all around the U.S. The intern area is always an exciting place to work! I've loved making new friends with others who are so smart and passionate about what they do.

**Update 2:** I have been having such a wonderful time interning in the policy department at the Legal Defense Fund this summer, and am grateful for the support of [Equal Justice America](#) for helping me make living in DC this summer a reality. I will be posting more about what I have been doing there this summer in my next three updates. It has been eye-opening to see what policy work looks like on a national level, and what working on a local level looks like from the nation's capital. It has also been a lot of fun to be in DC!

Part of what has made this summer so wonderful has been meeting new people. A few weeks ago, I got to meet up with other Equal Justice America fellows at a happy hour event at the DC BakerHostetler office. It was so interesting to hear about the amazing work that other Equal Justice America fellows are doing in DC. I am so grateful to be part of such a passionate and dedicated group of law students! I also saw another University of Texas School of Law student



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there. [Gwynn Marotta](#) is doing amazing work at the Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative at the ACLU. I am so proud of her and so excited about all of the work the other fellows are doing.

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**Update 3:** This has been such a wonderful summer interning in Washington, D.C. with the Legal Defense Fund. I have been able to learn so much more about racial justice policy in many different areas, including education, economic justice, and political participation. One of the projects that I was able to help with (in a very small way, haha—I did a little Bluebooking and helped make the letterhead) was a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland calling for him to investigate law enforcement abuses at peaceful protests this year. Read more about the purpose of the letter below:

“In recent months, thousands of campus and other protesters have been arrested and detained—sometimes with egregious use of force—by officers from university, state, and local police departments, some of whom university administrators have called to break up peaceful protests. A recent review found that 97 percent of on-campus protests in support of Gaza and the Palestinian people have been peaceful. This is consistent with the racial justice protests of 2020 of which researchers determined 93 percent were peaceful. Yet, law enforcement agencies have repeatedly deployed militarized force and tactics on campus and other protesters to disband pro-Palestinian protests, as they did in 2020 in response to racial justice protests. These actions require immediate investigation by DOJ and, as they pertain to educational institutions, by ED to ensure that the federal and constitutional rights of all protesters have been and remain protected.”

You can read the whole letter through this link: <https://lnkd.in/g/nKER6t>.

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**Update 4:** In my internship this summer at the Legal Defense Fund, one of the things I really enjoyed was working with the Texas team. My first interaction with the Texas team was during the 88th Texas Legislative session in the spring of 2023. I was a part of the student grassroots coalition Texas Students for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which had formed to advocate against Senate Bills 16, 17, and 18. All three of the bills threatened diversity and racial equality in higher education. The Legal Defense Fund worked with us in Texas Students for DEI to help us with advocacy in the many different steps of the legislative process. The way that the folks at the Legal Defense Fund showed up for us in our regular meetings and spent time with us to develop our advocacy plan really showed me the importance of community and coalition building. Although Senate Bills 17 and 18 still passed, I still really valued working with the other students, professors, and professionals and learning how to participate in legislative advocacy. This experience also spurred me to apply to intern at the Legal Defense Fund this summer. Continuing to work with the Texas team this summer in preparation for the next Texas legislative session was a good reminder that even though Senate Bills 17 and 18 passed, the fight is not over. I look forward to continuing to advocate for diversity and racial equity in this upcoming Texas legislative session and in the rest of my legal career.

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**Update 5:** This is my final [EJA Fellow update](#) for the summer! Thank you as always to [Equal Justice America](#) for supporting me this summer. Like many law school students hoping to work in the non-profit and public interest space, my internship was unpaid. Thanks to both the Justice



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Center's Summer Public Service Program stipend and Equal Justice America's summer fellowship program, I was able to live in Washington, D.C. for the summer and intern at the Legal Defense Fund. This was a total dream "job", and I am so grateful to Texas Law, Equal Justice America, and the Legal Defense Fund for making it happen. The purpose of these posts is in part to raise awareness about what Equal Justice America is doing to help train public interest-focused law students to be good lawyers without having to take jobs in different fields because of the pay. Please consider donating to them to keep this program going and helping more law students in the future.

For my last update, I want to share some of my favorite things from this summer internship. Overall, it was such an amazing experience, and there were so many parts of it that I loved. But here are a few of my highlights, in no particular order:

- The amazing people I met. My fellow interns at the Legal Defense Fund were so smart and it was inspiring to work with them. The staff I worked with were all very kind and taught me things from how to be a better note-taker to how to be a better lawyer to how to be a better person.
- Our weekly intern meetings where I got to hear about what everyone else was working on—I got to learn about judicial reform, death penalty work, the importance of the census, and much more from my fellow interns. I also loved learning more about each other through our weekly check-in questions!
- Learning more about voting rights from both research assignments and attending the John Lewis National Day of Commemoration and Action event. Especially at this time when democracy is hanging in the balance, voting rights and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act feel more important than ever. Separately from my internship at the Legal Defense Fund, I also attended A Toast to the League of Women Voters with friends one weekend, where I learned more about women's political power and how important ranked-choice voting can be.
- Attending a really great virtual event with Kimberlé Crenshaw and Damon Hewitt hosted by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. They spoke about how the attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Critical Race Theory are thinly guised attacks on Black people, and how white people in power are trying to prepare the law to continue to work for them once they are in the minority. One thing that has really stuck with me was them saying that the message from *Brown v. Board of Education* is more vital than ever: that the freedom to learn is necessary for full political participation in democracy.