



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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| <b>LAW SCHOOL</b>   | University of Texas School of Law |
| <b>ORGANIZATION</b> | ACLU                              |

**Update 1:** I'm excited to have completed the first few weeks of my summer internship with the ACLU's Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative as an Equal Justice America Fellow!

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, the need to address and prepare for the criminalization of abortion and pregnancy related outcomes has increased dramatically. I'm thrilled to be able to work with the amazing attorneys and staff at the ACDI to help defend those impacted by increasingly stringent abortion bans and set up defense strategies and networks to better achieve this work. I look forward to working on a range of both criminal and civil cases and research projects throughout the summer to address the intersection of reproductive justice and the criminal legal system.

Abortion bans, like most criminal laws, disproportionately impact already marginalized and over-policed communities that face barriers to legal aid services. I'm so grateful to Equal Justice America for their support of public interest law students. The aid provided by EJA helps make it possible to pursue legal internships and careers that help the vast number of people that do not have access to legal aid services.

**Update 2:** Excited to be halfway into my summer internship at the ACLU's Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative as an Equal Justice America Fellow. I had the opportunity to meet other EJA fellows at a reception in D.C. a couple of weeks ago. It was so exciting and inspiring to hear about the legal aid work other law students are doing this summer. I'm thankful to Equal Justice America for providing funding to us students so that we can pursue public interest internships. I've enjoyed the variety and depth of the assignments I've had the opportunity to work on so far in my internship and am looking forward to the rest of the summer.

**Update 3:** I'm so excited to have had the opportunity to work on *Gonzalez v. Ramirez et al* this summer. Starr County officials indicted, arrested, and jailed Lizelle Gonzalez for having an abortion despite Texas law clearly prohibiting the prosecution of people for terminating their own pregnancies. The ACLU's Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative and Criminal Law Reform Project, alongside the ACLU of Texas and south Texas firm Garza Martinez, are now representing Ms. Gonzalez in a lawsuit against Starr County and local officials based on violations of Ms. Gonzalez's



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constitutional rights. Last week, a federal judge ruled that the lawsuit can proceed, rejecting attempts by Starr County officials to have the case dismissed.

I'm thankful for Equal Justice America and the funding they provide to public interest students so that it's possible to work on cases like this.

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**Update 4:** I just wrapped up an amazing summer internship with the ACLU's Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative. I had the opportunity to work on both civil and criminal cases in which the criminalization of abortion was a main issue. This summer highlighted for me how abortion criminalization and stigma can occur anywhere, even in states that do not ban abortion.

I also had the opportunity to research novel legal issues in anticipation of potential ways abortion could be criminalized going forward. I am so thankful to the Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative team and all of the support and guidance they provided over the summer. The care and dedication with which the attorneys at the ACDI engage in their work is something I hope to take forward with me in my own career.

I'm thankful for Equal Justice America and the funding they provide to public interest students so that it's possible to pursue public interest internships and careers.

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**Update 5:** Final update for the summer! I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to intern with the ACLU's Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative this summer. I am thankful to both Equal Justice America and the University of Texas School of Law for providing funding for my internship and many other public interest students' summer internships. Thanks to this funding, it was possible to pursue an internship I was passionate about. Through Equal Justice America I was able to connect with other public interest students and hear about the amazing work they were doing at other civil rights organizations. One of the highlights of my summer was joining other Equal Justice America Fellows in Washington D.C. for a happy hour, where we were able to share our experiences with each other.

Reflecting on my time with the ACLU I feel fortunate that I had the opportunity to work not just with the Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative, but also to meet attorneys and interns from projects we work closely with such as the Reproductive Freedom Project and the National Prison Project. The collaboration among the different projects highlighted the importance of taking an intersectional approach to expand civil rights. I look forward to keeping in touch with the interns and staff that I met this summer.

Above all else, I am grateful to the people on the Abortion Criminal Defense Initiative team. I felt like I was welcomed as a full member of the team. I am so grateful to my supervisors who not only provided amazing feedback on my assignments and answered any of my questions, but also made the time to talk to me about career paths and provide advice for after law school. Overall, I feel like I learned so much this summer, not just about how to be a better attorney, but how to be a better co-worker and team member. I'm looking forward to continuing to work on reproductive justice issues back in Texas!