



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2025

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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ORGANIZATION	NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Final Reflection:

This summer, I had the privilege of serving as an intern at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF), where I contributed to active litigation and research across multiple areas of civil rights law. My work spanned education equity, qualified immunity, and police accountability—issues that lie at the heart of advancing racial justice in the United States. ‘One of the most significant projects I worked on was a lawsuit challenging a Trump Administration executive order that terminated federal Equity Assistance Centers (EACs). Originally established in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* as Desegregation Assistance Centers, these programs helped local education agencies craft and implement desegregation plans. In 2016, they evolved into Equity Assistance Centers, embracing a broader mandate of educational equity and inclusion. Today, they help schools and districts prevent and remedy ongoing discrimination, as well as ensure equitable access, treatment, and outcomes for learners of every background. While I had previously read about the administration’s broader anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda, reviewing the administrative record and testimony firsthand underscored the real and lasting consequences of eliminating these resources. The case reminded me that policy decisions that may seem abstract in the news translate into concrete barriers for students seeking equal access to education.

I also spent much of the summer engaging with qualified immunity doctrine and its consequences for police accountability. Each day, I reviewed federal judicial opinions to identify cases where appellate-level intervention by LDF could be strategically impactful. This work exposed me to a wide range of incidents involving police and correctional violence, deepening my understanding of the systemic barriers families face when seeking justice. I was also part of the team litigating *Krueger v. Phillips*, a case in which LDF represents the family of a man killed



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by police. Participating in this case gave me a front-row view of both the human cost of state violence and the doctrinal challenges inherent in civil rights litigation.

One of the highlights of my fellowship was drafting a section of an amicus brief to be filed with the U.S. Supreme Court this fall in the case *Landor v. Louisiana Department of Corrections and Public Safety*. That case was brought by Damon Landor, a Black Rastafari man with knee-length dreadlocks, concerning treatment he experienced while incarcerated. He gave prison officials a printed out opinion from the Fifth Circuit protecting the right to have dreadlocks in accordance with religious practice for another incarcerated Rastafari man. Prison officials threw the opinion in the trash before strapping him down and forcibly shaving his head had his dreadlocks. LDF agreed to be amici because of their advocacy around hair discrimination, or policies that prohibit natural hairstyles in schools, prisons, and workplaces.

I found it profoundly meaningful to contribute to advocacy at the nation's highest court as a rising 2L. The experience sharpened my legal writing skills and showed me how carefully crafted arguments can shape the law at a systemic level. Through these assignments, I not only developed stronger research and writing abilities but also gained a clearer sense of how strategic litigation operates, how organizations like LDF identify cases, build coalitions, and pursue impact far beyond individual disputes.

My fellowship affirmed my commitment to pursuing a career in public interest law. Working alongside attorneys who dedicate themselves to dismantling entrenched inequities reinforced my conviction that the law can be a powerful tool for advancing racial justice when wielded with creativity and persistence. This experience gave me the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to an organization with a historic legacy of civil rights advocacy while also deepening my own understanding of the struggles and resilience of the communities we serve. I leave the summer with a sharper vision of the work ahead and a renewed determination to pursue justice through public interest law. It was an honor to play even a small role in this mission, and I know the lessons I learned will continue to shape my career for years to come.