



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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Update 1: I have spent the first two weeks of my clerkship completing onboarding and creating game plans for the remainder of the summer. My substantive work has primarily been legal writing and research on guides to help incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals. These guides are important because they help inform these individuals of their rights and assist them in exercising such legal rights. For example, I have researched and written about voting rights for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, which helps inform them of their potential right to vote and steps they need to take to ensure they are registered and prepared to vote. I have also done preparatory work for my direct advocacy assignments involving reading service-recipient forms and stories and building actionable steps to assist PLAN in helping these individuals improve their conditions. My direct advocacy work is focused primarily on first amendment rights for incarcerated individuals, which is important because these individuals are heavily restricted and do not retain all the same rights and resources as others. The resources and assistance PLAN provides helps improve prison conditions and mitigate first amendment violations.

Update 2: For the last two weeks, my internship has been focused on planning and going on a legal visit to two prisons in Massachusetts. This was a very meaningful and fulfilling experience because me and my work partner were able to complete three in-person legal interviews by ourselves. We spent the week before the visit planning the logistics of the trip, including calling and emailing the facilities to scheduling meetings, and creating interviews plans for each of the individuals. From the planning and the trip itself, we learned a lot about how to contact these facilities and the rights and protections for legal correspondence. This experience taught me a lot about the persistence required to be an advocate for marginalized groups. After the trip, my partner and I prepared a presentation for the full team about the experience, which helped



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teach us how to consolidate legal information and present it to a larger group and helped us work through the mental and emotional impacts of visiting a prison.

Update 3: Over the past two weeks, I have continued action steps on advocacy work for several service-recipients. This includes planning and completing legal calls and preparing legal mail for several service recipients in hopes that we can help improve prison conditions. These calls and legal mail provide both an essential legal resource to PLAN's service recipients but can indirectly provide a sense of emotional support that the organization cares about these individuals even when it seems the rest of society does not. I have also spent time analyzing the recent *Watson v. RNC* case ruling and implementing the new precedent into PLAN's voting rights resources. The ruling impacts voting rights nationally and has been a massive step towards preventing unjust disenfranchisement and the promotion of democracy nationwide. Lastly, I have helped PLAN update and revise one of their memos on First Amendment rights for incarcerated individuals, who may not have easy access to information on their rights or resources analyzing relevant case law on how those rights are understood and applied in practice.

Update 4: The past two weeks have been very focused on legal writing and research. PLAN creates guides and memos on important legal issues affecting incarcerated people so that they may have and use these resources to build their legal claims. These resources help these individuals understand their rights and options for redress. Importantly, these guides also help incarcerated individuals avoid common pitfalls that lead their lawsuits to be dismissed and/or disciplinary action taken against them. When creating these guides, the biggest challenge is ensuring the language and format is accessible to individuals at all levels of education. This work has helped me grow as a writer and build better client communication skills by teaching me how to explain complex legal topics in accessible terms, which can build trust and understanding while also testing my own legal knowledge. If I can't explain a topic in simple terms and examples, I probably need to review it myself. The research portion has built my substantive knowledge in a number of topics in Constitutional Law beyond what was taught in my 1L curriculum.

Final Reflection: My summer placement with the Prisoners' Legal Advocacy Network was a rewarding experience in every way. The placement helped me grow in my substantive knowledge of constitutional law, voting rights, and more. It also helped me build essential writing and professional skills. Not only did I learn these skills through research and assignments, as in school, but I was actively engaging in the full legal process while working with real service recipients. The ability to work on real issues with real people helped me learn how all the pieces of content learned in school come together to form the whole picture. It also helped me grow in my practical legal writing skills, which are very different from practice exercises taught in a legal writing class.



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Beyond the substantive legal skills I learned this summer, it was also an emotionally rich experience. I went into law school with the intention to work in public interest law and hoping to work in prisoners' rights work in some way. Having the opportunity to test that goal and build on the practical and emotional skills needed for such difficult work was incredibly meaningful. Not only did I leave this summer with a deeper understanding and respect for what this career requires, but I also learned so much more about what it provides. I was able to learn from jailhouse lawyers with inspiring stories and immense knowledge on both life in prison and how the law applies. Engagement with service recipients grounded me and filled me with so much passion, I was affirmed in my career choice. It was heartening to see how much good I could do, and passion inducing to see how much change needs to be made. It filled me with even more excitement about my career to come without hiding any of the intensity or emotional difficulty working in client-facing public interest law requires. I am so grateful to EJA for helping make this experience possible for me. Of course, I am also beyond grateful to PLAN for providing me with this opportunity.