



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: The past couple weeks, I have been interning with the ACLU of DC. I am so excited to be here and play a part in making meaningful change to protect people's rights! I have worked on a few projects, including research on criminal and civil issues. My past internships have been in public defense, so this has been my first experience with civil litigation. It has been interesting to contrast the single-client nature of criminal defense with the broader focus of the ACLU's litigation. I have liked learning from that shift in perspective, but it is also difficult knowing that limited resources mean that not every viable case can be chosen. Also, I have liked learning more about the procedure of civil litigation. What I was surprised by was the many barriers to even filing a lawsuit. Furthermore, I have been happy to be able to continue using what I learned in public defense. For example, the first issue I researched was about searches, so I could draw on my past experience from classes and internships. Finally, I have enjoyed watching court proceedings and learning more about that aspect of advocacy.

Update 2: I am still enjoying my internship with the ACLU of DC! Since my last reflection, I have completed another project. This one had very little to do with criminal law, which is where most of my experience is. It was an area I had never researched before, and I had only learned about the issue briefly in class. I found it rewarding and educational to complete the project. It taught me more about civil litigation generally, especially all the work that goes into getting (and keeping) a claim in court. I received helpful and constructive feedback that I can implement in future projects. Also, I had the opportunity to watch a hearing on a preliminary injunction concerning speech rights. It was really interesting to hear how the judge and advocates navigated the issues and explored the facts. Moreover, I got to meet the clients and learn more about their protest work. It was impactful to see how what happened in court directly impacted the real decisions and behavior of the clients. I look forward to continuing to learn about and engage with new concepts.



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Update 3: I am surprised that I have been at my internship for over a month now! It has gone by so fast! I am continuing to get new projects that involve topics I have not encountered much before. For example, I recently worked on a discovery issue that was new to me. I am now working on an issue with limited case law and other authority, and it has been an interesting challenge. The attorneys continue to be supportive, kind, and helpful regarding my assignments and general legal pursuits. One area that I would like to experience more this summer is working with clients. I will hopefully get to do that soon through intake calls, where I will help collect preliminary information from potential clients. It can be easy for legal work to feel distant and disconnected, so I value learning more about clients and speaking with them if possible. Doing so underscores the human impact of the law and my efforts. Again, I look forward to continuing my work to support the ACLU and know that I will keep finding new issues to learn about and grow from.

Update 4: I can't believe this is my fourth EJA update! The summer has gone by so fast! Throughout my time at the ACLU of DC, I have been happy to work on a variety of projects and with almost every attorney in the office. Recently, I got to lead a client intake meeting. I enjoyed having the opportunity to talk with a potential client, learn their story, and hopefully contribute to them getting justice. Meeting the human behind the (potential) lawsuit motivates me to work harder by making that work feel more meaningful. I want to continue practicing and building upon these client-focused skills in the future. Also, I have been working on various research assignments focusing on statutes and regulations. My previous assignments have been much more focused on case law, so this has been an interesting new challenge. In the last couple weeks, I will finish at least one more assignment and modify some submissions based on feedback. Also, I hope to be able to go to court to watch another hearing or oral argument, ideally featuring an ACLU lawyer.

Final Reflection: This summer, I was a legal intern for the ACLU of DC. Now that I have finished the internship, I can say that I learned a lot, and it has influenced my perspective on my future. Throughout the summer, I had opportunities to work on a wide variety of legal issues. I was more familiar with some of these issues, like police searches, while others were new to me, like state action. It was great to have those chances to dive into new issues. I not only learned substantive law, but I also learned more about legal research, writing, and the day-to-day of being a lawyer. Also, I liked watching ACLU (and other) lawyers argue in court. I had previously only observed criminal trials, so it was interesting to see this type of oral advocacy. Moreover, I appreciated the support and feedback from the lawyers that I did projects for. It was great to talk through issues with them and improve my projects based on their feedback. In particular, I improved my objective memo writing skills. Furthermore, I valued the opportunities to interact with clients. I was able to do this when leading an intake interview, through which I learned



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about government actors treating a potential client in a way that violated their rights and dignity. I hope that the ACLU can get some justice for this person and others that have experienced something similar. Finally, something that surprised me this summer was learning about some of the other departments of the ACLU-DC. For example, I got to hear about the communication team's work. It was interesting to learn about their efforts to increase public awareness and how that interacted with the legal department.

Moving forward and thinking about my future career, I am glad that I learned about and supported the ACLU's civil rights work. Before this internship, I thought I would pursue a career in public interest with a focus on criminal justice but was unsure of exactly what form that would take. Now, after seeing what the civil side of that work looks like, I still plan to pursue such a career and hope that I will be able to do both public defense and civil rights work. In both of these roles, I would be working toward the overall goal of a more humane and fairer justice system.