



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: The first few weeks of my summer clerkship have been incredibly rewarding. I am currently working on two distinct projects: a motion for early prison release under IRAA and a motion for early termination of probation. It has felt incredible to take my past work experience as well as the doctrine I learned during my 1L year to support my clients in Washington, D.C. As I get to work on my own motions at the Second Look Project, I am able to take the lead when it comes to communicating with my clients. I have been able to call, text, and email my clients, building incredibly meaningful relationships in a very short amount of time. Legal aid is central to the functioning of our legal system, but especially within the post-conviction space. The Second Look Project manages a majority of IRAA work and advocacy in D.C., even training different pro bono firm teams. It has been a true privilege to learn from post-conviction experts within my own office and to dedicate an entire summer to a specific subset of post-conviction work. It is a true honor to transform my education into a vehicle that my clients can utilize to tell their stories.

Update 2: Over the past few weeks, I have been spending the majority of my time on one of my clients' early release motions. I am very grateful to have so much freedom on a project that is so important. Because of the trust that both my client and the Second Look Project have placed in me, I want to produce the highest quality work possible. Being on the appellate side of the criminal system has truly demonstrated to me the significance of storytelling in criminal law practice. I have the rare privilege of writing anywhere between 20-50 pages of what is effectively a biography of my client.

To work in criminal defense is to be constantly inspired. I am inspired by my clients' strength, resilience, humor, kindness, growth, and forgiveness. My clients' life stories would shock even



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the coldest reader. It is an absolute honor to work so closely with individuals who have experienced nothing but abuse within their lifetimes.

I feel just as lucky to be interning for the Second Look Project, now, as I did at the beginning of the summer. I have felt nothing but support from every single member of this team. I am grateful to be contributing toward such an important cause with a truly incredible team.

Update 3: Over the past few weeks, I have grown much closer with the incredible team at the Second Look Project. Public interest work is difficult, both in terms of emotional load and tangible workload. That being said, public interest work is made easy by an incredible team, which the Second Look Project undoubtedly has. I have watched the attorneys at this organization represent their clients with the utmost level of dedication, which has inspired me in my own work.

Last week, the law clerks and a few of the SLP attorneys attended an ARC training in Maryland. At the ARC training, we learned about mitigation as a resource for clients, evaluating different mitigation methods. Though I have worked with mitigation teams in the past, it was interesting to have an entire day dedicated to lessons on how we can improve mitigation efforts for our clients.

I have been continuing to work on two clients' motions, building stronger relationships with them each day. I have most recently been digging through previous interviews and letters of support for our clients. Learning more about the lives of those I have the privilege of working for makes me feel incredibly honored. In the public interest space, it is crucial to never take the trust someone places in you for granted.

Update 4: I recently completed two separate motions for my internship: a motion to dismiss and a motion to terminate probation early. Going into the final segment of my internship, I am finalizing a motion for early release from parole supervision (IRAA).

It felt incredible to send off two motions that I had spent a considerable amount of time working on. Through learning my clients' stories, speaking with their POs, and crafting a motion that balanced fact and emotion, I really gained a taste for what it means to be an attorney within the post-conviction space. Every day, I am reminded of what a privilege it is to work with my clients. My clients have endured life situations that would terrify the average American, yet they are met with extreme resistance in the courtroom. I feel truly lucky to have earned their trust and to turn that trust into something tangible.

On my last in-person day, the Second Look Project hosted a cookout where I got to meet many of the organization's clients. Meeting our clients before I left was a true honor. I felt very emotional as we all ate, chatted, laughed, and reflected together.



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As I wrap up my internship, I feel sad about terminating my relationships with my clients. That being said, I feel so lucky to have met them and to have been a member of their teams. The team at the Second Look Project has taught me what it means to balance speaking up with stepping back when it comes to client representation. I look forward to seeing how the judges rule on the motions I have completed.

Final Reflection: Completing my internship with the Second Look Project (SLP) was bittersweet. On the one hand, I felt so proud of the meaningful, client-centered work I had contributed to. The Second Look Project is composed of a once-in-a-lifetime team. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity I had to learn from the SLP team. On the other hand, I was sad to leave my clients behind. Post-conviction cases can take months to resolve, if not years. I did not get the opportunity to stand with my clients as decisions were made on their cases. That being said, I will be checking-in with the SLP team to see how my clients' hearings go.

I am grateful to the Second Look Project for the incredible opportunities I had to connect with individuals facing some of the harshest realities in our country. I am grateful to the EJA team for making my internship possible by not only believing in me, but also by actively supporting me throughout my internship. Lastly, I am grateful to my clients who had zero reason to place their trust in me, but who chose to believe that I was genuinely there to help them. The criminal legal system is cruel, and it takes tremendous strength from those who have been the system's victims to place their trust in someone working within the system. My summer internship experience was unparalleled and inspiring. I am excited to enter my 2L year, with new stories driving my curiosity for legal reform.