



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Liyu Woldemichael
LAW SCHOOL	Harvard Law
ORGANIZATION	Southern Center for Human Rights

Update 1: This summer, I'm excited to be working with the Southern Center for Human Rights as an Equal Justice America Fellow. Growing up just minutes from Kilby Correctional Facility in Montgomery, Alabama, I saw the reality of Alabama's prison system up close. My proximity to Kilby sparked my decision to go to law school and pursue civil rights law. At the Southern Center, I've been working alongside advocates fighting inhumane prison conditions, capital punishment, and the criminalization of poverty across the Deep South. It's exactly the kind of work that inspired me to become a lawyer.

I'm incredibly grateful to Equal Justice America for making this opportunity possible. EJA funds public interest summer positions, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent law students from pursuing this work.

Update 2: I've been thrilled to have the opportunity to work at the Southern Center for Human Rights. My summer has focused on the criminalization of poverty, primarily through fines and fees in municipal court. Additionally, I've been able to support the Jail Voting team, ensuring those incarcerated are able to cast their ballot. I'm looking forward to continuing to learn how the law can be a vehicle of change while understanding other theories of change.

Update 3: I am so fulfilled by the work I've done so far, and I can see the impact it is making. I've met people all over Georgia who have been directly impacted by the criminal legal system, whether they themselves have been incarcerated or whether they have loved ones inside. Beyond the legal projects I've been assigned to, one of the most profound experiences has been in answering intake calls. I heard often "thank you for answering the phone." I have realized, as I've helped people navigated incredibly challenging and urgent situations, that our work begins



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

by showing up. Taking the time to listen and to understand. I will forever be shaped by the calls I've answered and will carry them with me as I advocate for change.

Final Reflection: I ended my summer with the Southern Center with extreme gratitude. The way I think, write, and advocate has been stretched and challenged. As I've worked through thorny and unjust areas of the law, I have learned what it means to not only understand the law as it is but also have a normative view of what the law should be. One without the other is incomplete.

I worked across areas, working on both the Impact litigation Unit and Capital Punishment Unit. On one of the last days, I visited a client for on death row, where we spoke for nearly two hours on our lives, passions, and the people we care about. That conversation will remain with me as I continue to fight for the abolition of the death penalty and criminal legal reform. It is critical that the normative view we create of the law is colored with the perspectives of those most harmed by the law as it is. I am so amazed by how much I've changed, and I look forward to continuing to grow as I pursue a life committed to civil rights and social justice.

Thank you so much to EJA for making this opportunity possible.