



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Nishant Bhaumik
LAW SCHOOL	University of Chicago Law School
ORGANIZATION	Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic

Update 1: Hi everyone! I am excited to share that I have been selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow for my work this summer at the University of Chicago Law School's Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic. At the Clinic, I'll be supporting litigation combating misconduct and violations of arrestees' rights by local and federal law enforcement authorities.

Update 2: Hi everyone! Over the past few weeks, I have been familiarizing myself with the 2022 Consent Decree against the Chicago Police Department (CPD) requiring individuals in custody to be able to consult with family members and attorneys within three hours of being detained. While it has been several years since the Decree was put into place, the CPD continues to deny individuals in custody these rights, and much of my work has centered around watching interrogation footage to identify possible violations and opportunities for further litigation enforcing the decree. Working on cases like these has given me the opportunity to understand the type of work it takes to continue advocating even after success has been achieved in the courtroom, and I am excited to continue building upon these skills over the remaining weeks of my time at the Clinic.

Update 3: Hi everyone! Over the past few weeks, I have been immersing myself in two significant projects at the University of Chicago Law School's Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic. First, I have been conducting research to help with the implementation of Illinois' FAIR Act, a landmark piece of state legislation that establishes an Office of the State Public Defender to create statewide standards for public defenders' offices to improve the quality of indigent defense in Illinois. Second, I have been working alongside various impact organizations to brainstorm litigation strategies to potential voter suppression efforts by the federal government in the 2026 Midterms.



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Update 4: With my time at the Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic coming to an end, I am appreciative of the opportunities I have had to work on projects that involve both impact litigation and policy-oriented approaches to abuses of police power that affect communities in Chicago and beyond. Over the past few weeks, I have been working to identify potential violations of the 2022 *#LetUsBreathe Collective et al. v. City of Chicago* consent decree settlement focused on eliminating incommunicado detention of arrestees in Chicago. This work has exposed me to some of the complications that can emerge even after settlement agreements have been reached in police misconduct litigation, and I have appreciated the opportunity to learn what it takes to monitor these settlements to ensure that their promised outcomes reach fruition.

Final Reflection: Throughout the summer, I was able to gain first-hand exposure to civil rights and policing work through my time at the University of Chicago Law School's Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic. More than anything, I appreciated the dynamic nature of my time at the Clinic. Whether I was supporting attorneys and policymakers in their implementation of Illinois' State Public Defender Office, speaking with community members on their experiences with the Chicago Police Department, or working to further litigation that would enjoin federal interference with the 2026 Midterm Elections, I felt that each day brought the forefront new challenges and opportunities to improve myself as an advocate and future attorney.

Working in the Clinic forced me to navigate the complicated relationship between policy-level advocacy and direct aid. Many of the Clinic's projects focus on broad, policy-oriented solutions to issues of police misconduct in Chicago. Two of my favorite assignments this summer involved supporting litigation related to the federal and Illinois state consent decrees targeting police misconduct by the Chicago Police Department. Through this work, I had the opportunity to attend public hearings discussing the progress and shortcomings of the federal consent decree, spoke with individuals directly affected by police misconduct, and assisted litigants in challenging violations of their *Miranda* rights while in custody. Here, I learned that an advocate pushing for policy-level solutions to police misconduct, such as those captured by the consent decrees, must constantly be in conversation with individuals directly impacted by these issues in order to realize the full potential of their work. This ethos is central to the Clinic's work as a grassroots, community-oriented organization, and my experience working in this space informed me of the essential role that community members play in advancing affirmative litigation. As I begin my second year of law school, I am excited both to continue working at the Clinic and utilize my experience this summer as a springboard for a future in civil rights litigation.