



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: After finishing my 1L year at the University of Virginia School of Law, I am working at Equal Rights Advocates this summer in San Francisco. Through impact litigation, policy advocacy, and direct client services, I will contribute to advancing the civil rights and economic justice of women and underrepresented communities in schools and workplaces.

In the past few weeks, I have worked on researching intersectional employment discrimination laws and writing memoranda in support of ongoing litigation. I also got the opportunity to assist and attend the annual ERA Gala event, which featured voices of equal justice leaders, and celebrated ERA's policy and litigation wins in the past year. It was inspiring to see so many lawyers and advocates of the Bay Area community continuing to fight for civil rights and gender equality in our society.

Update 2: Over the past few weeks at Equal Rights Advocates, I have gotten the opportunity to contribute to important civil rights and gender justice projects in both the policy and litigation spaces. I worked on a client intake appointment with a tradeswoman who experienced pervasive sexual harassment and sexual discrimination in her apprenticeship program. Hearing her stories of being the only women on jobsites and enduring hostile work environments showed me firsthand how gender-based violence and discrimination remains a major issue in our society, negatively impacting many people's jobs and livelihoods. Based on these client experiences, I am researching viable employment discrimination and Title VII claims against these trades' employers, with the goal of making the trades career path and apprenticeship program more accessible to women.



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Through interacting with clients directly facing employment injustice and researching important civil rights laws, I am truly inspired to see how public interest legal work can change people's lives. I am grateful to Equal Justice America for supporting my career aspirations in public interest law and civil rights impact litigation.

Update 3: So far, I have been learning so much about civil rights litigation and workplace justice through my time at Equal Rights Advocates. Since my last update, I have wrapped up a research memorandum on apprenticeship sponsor and union liability under Title VII and explored potential claims on behalf of our tradeswomen clients. I am also working on a case where an educational institution is preventing girls from having equal athletic opportunities as their male counterparts. I got the opportunity to draft a pleading with Title IX and Section 1983 Equal Protection claims that will eventually be filed in a district court. Getting to advocate for the social justice and economic advancement of clients through litigation has not only increased my interest in civil rights impact litigation but also allowed me to strengthen my legal research and writing skills.

Update 4: In the past few weeks at Equal Rights Advocates, I have been researching, writing memoranda, and drafting litigation documents related to the Equal Pay Act and wage discrimination. It was eye opening to learn how so many women and people of color get paid less for doing the same work as their counterparts due to discriminatory employer policies and procedures. I enjoyed researching different equal pay statutes and case law in different jurisdictions. I also got the opportunity to work on an impact litigation case, involving class action claims, fighting against unfair wage discrimination against female employees. I am grateful to contribute to advancing economic justice and socioeconomic equity through my legal research and writing and learning from civil rights lawyers who are incredibly dedicated to this work.

Final Reflection: After my 1L year of law school, I spent the summer at Equal Rights Advocates (ERA), a nonprofit civil rights organization in San Francisco. My experience was not without its challenges; however, I gained invaluable personal and professional growth. I entered law school with career aspirations to advocate for the civil rights of underrepresented communities. However, in my first year of law school, I learned that public service legal organizations are underfunded and lawyers working tirelessly to fight for the public interest are underpaid. I felt conflicted as I searched for a balance between financial stability and doing work that was meaningful to me.

Every day at ERA, I worked alongside lawyers and advocates who clearly cared about their work and poured passion into fighting for the rights of women and underrepresented individuals in employment and educational discrimination. I got many incredible opportunities



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to work on cases combatting discrimination including tradeswomen facing sexual harassment on jobsites, women working at a major corporation being paid less than their male counterparts, and female athletes facing gender discrimination. I was involved with client calls, getting to directly hear stories of harassment and discrimination and how it negatively affected their lives. When I completed my assignments, including legal research, writing memos, and drafting briefs and complaints, I could see how my work was contributing to uplifting people's lives by fighting for their rights.

Furthermore, ERA focuses on impact litigation, where cases often involve classes of plaintiffs facing similar types of discriminatory behavior from their employers or institutions. I truly enjoyed working on impact litigation cases, since my work not only affected one client, but a large group of workers who were facing disparate treatment based on a protected characteristic. By the end of the summer, I had diverse experiences in civil rights, employment, and impact litigation, thanks to the lawyers at Equal Rights Advocates that made sure I got these opportunities.

At the end of my internship, I decided that I wanted to continue pursuing civil rights impact litigation as the main practice area of my legal career. Despite the challenges that come with the structure of public interest law, I learned the genuine value of working on issues that I'm passionate about. Being surrounded by lawyers that have dedicated their lives to uplifting the civil rights of underrepresented communities has inspired me to stay true to why I went to law school in the first place.

Lastly, organizations like Equal Justice America that support public interest law students are so important in the continued fight for equality and justice. The support of EJA has helped make my growth and learning experience at ERA possible. The efforts of EJA not only make public interest law an accessible career for law students but also improve legal services and access to justice for underserved communities. I would highly recommend both my fellowship experience with EJA and summer internship with ERA.