



## Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



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School of Law

**Organization:** Legal Aid Justice Center,  
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Division

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### Week of June 15th

It has been extremely challenging to be a law school student these past two years to say the least and even more challenging to be a Black law school student. Many times, I feel helpless and ready to be a lawyer so I can serve my community. But the work I am doing this summer is helping me through this process. I really appreciate work that produces tangible results. I will be spending this summer working at Legal Aid Justice Center in their Civil Rights and Racial Justice program. Talk about God and His timing!!! As a part of my fellowship with Equal Justice America (EJA), I will post updates on my internship to provide information about the work that legal aid programs do and to hopefully motivate you all to donate to EJA. So far, I have been working on projects regarding police accountability and conditions at Virginia prisons and their response to COVID. I can see the impact my work is having and that is a feeling I could never put into words. For example, I can see my work being used to implement mechanisms that will hold the Richmond Police Department accountable for police brutality and officers' use of excessive force. I feel like I am finally fulfilling my purpose and reaching my lifetime goal of serving my community through advocacy and litigation.

Equal Justice America is a non-profit organization that funds and provides opportunities for law school students who seek to work with legal aid organizations. This year, I was granted the opportunity to become an EJA fellow and receive funding for my internship! EJA needs your donations to continue to provide opportunities for law school students all around the county. Thanks in advance!

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### Week of July 6th

It's time for my second [EJA Fellow Update](#) with LAJC!!!!

This week, I wrapped up my research on the process an ordinance goes through to become law in Richmond. This research was significant to my role as the Technical Assistant with RTAP (Richmond Transparency and Accountability Project). I was tasked with figuring out what body Richmond would need



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to put together that would be responsible for presenting a Civilian Review Board to City Council. What is particularly important for the task force that presents the CRB, is that the body includes community members that are disparately impacted by over- policing. Additionally, it's important that the CRB does not include police officers. During this process, I learned so much about Civilian Review/Oversight Boards and how they operate throughout the country in different cities. Each CRB is unique and is based on the relationship between the community, leaders, and the police department. I know that Portsmouth would really benefit from a CRB that is structured in a way that the community sees fit. That is something I would love to work on, and see come to fruition.

This week, I also expanded my research to determine what legislation would have to change or be implemented in order for the CRB to have subpoena power and final disciplinary authority. This is the only way the CRB would be able to make real change! This will be my focus for the next few weeks.

This project has been super complex and full of unexpected nuisances. I have built such a respect for community lawyers who do this work. The community is demanding change which requires us to move quickly and efficiently. This work has also given me a lesson in professionalism. When emotions are high and the pressure is on, it is so important to remain focused on the goal and one's role in making sure the community's needs are met.

I hope this entry was informative. Please take time to research all of the organizations I mention. They provide opportunities for us to get involved and stay informed about the issues black and brown people experience in our day-to-day lives. If you cannot donate money, give your time, share some information you learn each day, share a petition, or sit down with your family to discuss and dissect each person's views on what is happening right now- you may be surprised at what you learn from one another!

Working with LACJ this summer has truly been a blessing. You cannot put a price on working in an environment where everyone is dedicated and passionate about improving the lives of the community. This opportunity may not have been possible had I not been granted the opportunity to be an EJA Fellow. Please consider donating. Thanks in advance!

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## Week of July 27th

It is time for another [EJA Fellow Update!](#)

My experience with LAJC in the CRRJ division was fulfilling, educational, and practical. I made connections with my colleagues that will last a lifetime. I was able to close out my correspondences with the women at Fluvanna Correctional Facility for Women. Working with those women was an eye-opener. Because of this experience, I will pay more attention to the happenings in the prison and will find a way to incorporate advocacy in that realm throughout my career. Lastly, I got to see the Richmond City Council accept the CRB proposal from RTAP. This was a very huge step towards better police accountability in Richmond! I spent numerous hours on this project but that was minimal compared to the expansive efforts put forth by RTAP's members. This was about 3 years of fight that came to fruition.



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My summer experience may not have been possible had it not been for Equal Justice America. Please donate if possible.

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## **Week of August 10th**

This summer, I learned a lesson in professionalism. Life is always going to throw its curve balls- we cannot control that. That is why I think it is imperative that we pursue careers where we are fulfilled and feel that our work is bettering the lives of others. This summer was a challenging one for me, but I took the time I needed to be with my family, and I got back to work. My LAJC supervisor was very supportive and made sure to inform me that I could take all the time I needed.

Nevertheless, I returned to my work shortly after because I knew that there was a bigger purpose connected to my work. I will take this ideal with me for the rest of my life. We have to find a balance between life and career so that we can be our best selves in both capacities. Professionalism was the most fundamental lesson I took from my experience with CRRJ division of LAJC.

This post is my last opportunity to ask you to donate to EJA. I am grateful for this opportunity. EJA provides funds for students like me to take advantage of opportunities like the one I have had with LAJC. Non-profit organizations like Equal Justice America are valuable because they provide students with funding to experience representation through legal aid offices. If at all possible, please donate using the link attached. Thank you.