



## Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Vatsala Kumar

**Law School:** University of Chicago

**Organization:** Mandel Legal Aid Clinic – Civil Rights & Police Accountability Project

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### Week of June 15th

Tomorrow, I start my role at the Mandel Legal Aid Civil Rights & Police Accountability Project as an Equal Justice America Fellow. The funding EJA gives to its fellows relies on donations.

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### Week of July 6th

My past few weeks at the Civil Rights & Police Accountability Project at The University of Chicago Law School have been busy, to say the least.

We filed a mandamus suit on behalf of community organizations and the Public Defender's office against the City of Chicago to ask the court to force CPD to give arrestees phone calls and access to an attorney—as they are legally obligated to do.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/.../ct-public-defender-custody...>

We've been working to hold the city accountable for failing to meet their end of the consent decree put in place last year.

<https://www.nbcchicago.com/.../chicago-police-missed.../2292222/>

We've been working with community members in the use of force working group to recommend changes to CPD's policies. This included my learning way more about Tasers than I ever knew before (did you know they can pierce your skull, and have even penetrated the brain?).

<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/.../new-working-group-to-review.../>

And, finally, here's my incredible supervisor, Craig, talking about defunding the police:

[https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/06/08/attorney-and-professor-craig-futterman-says-cpd-is-dragging-foot-on-consent-decree-talks-about-what-defunding-police-might-accomplish/?fbclid=IwAR0BZUL4CcTrNolv2RaSJ\\_aAjYFQJp3DJHuT6tZr2r5mwERB1G1BFDWimbc](https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/06/08/attorney-and-professor-craig-futterman-says-cpd-is-dragging-foot-on-consent-decree-talks-about-what-defunding-police-might-accomplish/?fbclid=IwAR0BZUL4CcTrNolv2RaSJ_aAjYFQJp3DJHuT6tZr2r5mwERB1G1BFDWimbc)



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## Week of July 27th

The Civil Rights & Police Accountability Clinic has... still been busy.

We're helping community organizations sue the feds

(<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2020/7/23/21334726/black-lives-matter-lawsuit-federal-law-officers-chicago-president-trump>), we're mad that the city is letting police abusing protesters and refusing to make the reforms required by the federal consent decree

(<https://www.chicagotribune.com/investigations/ct-chicago-protests-abuse-letter-20200724-3ewl6psbdnh6zbo26yoxa4so64-story.html?>), and we're pushing full steam ahead on our lawsuit trying to force the city to stop their continued practice of holding arrestees without a phone call or access to an attorney (<https://blockclubchicago.org/2020/06/23/public-defender-joins-activists-to-sue-city-demand-end-to-incommunicado-detention/>).

I feel extremely lucky to be working so closely with community organizations and leaders and with the incredible attorneys helping them.

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## Week of August 10<sup>th</sup>

My summer with the Civil Rights & Police Accountability Project has come to an end for the summer (although I'll still be working on things as they come up, because the work is never over).

Some highlights from my summer:

- We filed a lawsuit against the city of Chicago to stop them from their continued practice of detaining people without access to a phone. While the judge didn't grant our emergency relief, we're cautiously optimistic about the outcome of this case in the long run.
- We filed a brief in a case challenging the FOP's request to destroy police misconduct records older than 5 years. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled against the FOP, holding that these records cannot be destroyed, no matter what the police union contract says.
- Chicago Police have a history of conducting wrong raids, similar to what the Louisville Metro PD did when they killed Breonna Taylor. This is also in direct violation of the federal consent decree CPD is under. We sent a letter to the city telling them they need to stop, or we will take legal action.
- We have helped to research and draft best policies for police use of force in Chicago. I know way more about Tasers and pepper spray than I ever wanted to.

I've felt so fortunate to work alongside Craig (and Erik!) this summer, and I'm lucky to work in such close collaboration with community groups and organizers. I'm excited to continue to do this kind of work over the next couple of years in the clinic.