



## Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Taylor Victoria Fallon

**Law School:** University of Pennsylvania

**Organization:** California Women's Law Center

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### Week of June 15<sup>th</sup>

Hello! Some of you may know that I just finished my first year Penn Law and I'm spending this summer as a legal intern for the California Women's Law Center. The CWLC provides legal assistance and advocacy to various underrepresented and marginalized groups throughout California and is involved in everything from advocating for trans women's rights to use public restrooms to writing amicus briefs to other forms of education, impact litigation, and policy work. This work feels incredibly important at the intersection of the global pandemic and one of the biggest civil rights movements for Black Lives Matter and other racial justice organizations.

I'm able to do this work in part due to generous funding from the Equal Justice America Fellowship program! EJA highlights the deep importance of legal aid work and provides funding to various fellows' work. I'm excited to be sharing a #EJAFellowUpdate on some of the work I've been doing with CWLC.

My first project with CWLC involved conducting research on the privacy rights of individuals, particularly trans and gender-nonconforming individuals, when they bring forth sexual harassment complaints before California's Department of Fair Housing and Employment. This work involved looking at a particular case and gathering information how privacy and anonymity impact reporting rates for cases of sexual harassment and sexual assault. This work was directly at the intersection of many of my passions: social science research, legal advocacy, and legal aid. I'm looking forward to sharing more of my work this summer through #EJAFellowUpdates.

I know there are many worthy causes seeking donations right now, but if you would like to empower law students to engage in legal services through summer funding, please consider contributing to EJA!



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## Week of July 6<sup>th</sup>

Did you know that in the United States there are almost three times as many crisis pregnancy centers as abortion clinics?

Many people don't know the term "crisis pregnancy center" (CPC), but these are often misleading, pro-birth institutions that claim to offer "abortion services" but in reality, serve to counsel pregnant people away from abortion. These CPCs look shockingly similar to abortion clinics both online and in person. They often are located across the street from abortion providers in an attempt to confuse patients as to which is the correct building. CPCs put out false information about fetal development, long term impacts of abortion, and states' abortion laws and restrictions.

The CWLC worked in collaboration with a cross-state coalition to track the behavior and movements of CPCs. In my work on this project, I focused particularly on if the CPC in question provided or advertised abortion pill reversal (APR). APR is based on false science and claims that if you have begun the process of a medical abortion (such as RU486) and have "changed your mind" that the process can be stopped. CPCs are essentially vague about how APRs work, but essentially it comes down to flooding the pregnant person with progesterone in attempts to repair the fetus's viability. This process is not based on science or research and results in pregnant people getting pumped full of hormones for a process that doesn't result in an APR. Gathering information about false advertising, including APR misinformation, helps set up the grounds for legal action against the CPCs.

I wouldn't be able to do this work without generous funding from EJA. Please consider donating to Equal Justice America, who helped with my funding to make this work possible!

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## Week of July 27<sup>th</sup>

I'm excited to update you all on some of the work I'm continuing to do with the California Women's Law Center (CWLC).

For one of my main projects, I've been assisting on an amicus brief for a sexual assault and anti-SLAPP case. Our client was assaulted by her then boyfriend and has since faced constant harassment in various forms, including having a malicious prosecution lawsuit filed against her by her abuser.

Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation or (SLAPP) is a tool used to intimidate and silence individuals who speak out about their abuse. Anti-SLAPP laws serve to protect First Amendment rights by allowing defendants of SLAPP suits to bring a motion to strike if the SLAPP claims arise from acts that are protected by a person's "right of petition or free speech under the United States Constitution or the



California Constitution in connection with a public issue.” (California Code of Civil Procedure, §425.16(b)).

This law attempts to counter the “chilling effect” that SLAPP lawsuits have against individuals coming forward and reporting their experiences and serve to “encourage continued participation in matters of public significance.” (§425.16(a)).

Our amicus brief encourages the appellate court to write their decision in such a way that not only our client will receive justice (as well as the attorney’s fees to which she is entitled following a successful anti-SLAPP motion), but also so other individuals facing SLAPP lawsuits from their abusers in similar contexts will have stronger caselaw as precedent. It is our eventual hope to expand the anti-SLAPP legislature to extend more specifically to our client’s current situation.

Please consider donating to Equal Justice America, who helped with my funding to make this work possible!

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

Imagine finding the strength and resources to leave an abusive relationship and seek a domestic violence restraining order (DVRO) against your abuser, only to have the presiding judge make you feel embarrassed, scolded, and discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.

A client sought the California Women’s Law Center’s (CWLC) services in response to that very scenario. One of my favorite assignments was drafting a judicial complaint for this client against a judge who has a long reputation of antipathy towards survivors in DVRO hearings. This judge used belittling language, made superfluous judgements on our client’s character, and she used her past role in drafting intimate partner violence law and policy to justify her bad behavior.

I used court transcripts from the DVRO hearing and phone calls with our client about their experience to draft a first-person report for the California Commission on Judicial Performance. Our client was rightfully upset at the prospect of revisiting the court transcript and was deeply grateful we could do this on their behalf. Being able to seek legal services to draft the brief on their behalf alleviated their anxiety and allowed a complaint to go forward that otherwise might have been forgone.

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