



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: Duke University School of Law

Organization: North Carolina's Prisoner Legal Services

Update 1:

Two weeks ago, I started my internship with Prisoner Legal Services. Here, attorneys are helping people who are incarcerated receive their basic human rights, whether that be the right to practice their religion, protection from excessive use of force, or much needed medical care.

As I intern with PLS, I see attorneys who care about their clients, who are often ignored and dehumanized. It is a reminder to treat all people with dignity, no matter who they are or what they have done.

One PLS civil attorney told me, "I am proud of the cases we have worked on whether we were able to make a difference that helped a large group of people, or we made an impact on a single person's life. And in cases where we were unable to achieve a legal win, we were still able to make our clients feel seen and heard."

Update 2:

Under the 5th and 14th amendments, no one – including incarcerated people – can be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. But what does due process really mean for those who are incarcerated? This summer, I've been tasked with researching and understanding the limitations of due process provided to those in prisons. For example, what happens if you're wrongfully designated a security threat because of your religion? How can you appeal this process? Who can you turn to? Who will believe you?

This internship has made me think about the importance of our constitutional rights – that we so often take for granted – in incarceration, a place where freedom is by definition limited. As the 4th of July approaches, perhaps we can reflect more deeply as to whether we truly believe we all deserve basic inalienable rights.



Update 3:

While working at Prisoner Legal Services (PLS) this summer, I have met and spoken to incarcerated clients who are struggling with civil issues while in prison. I have seen how some incarcerated men have been labeled security threats because of their religion. Their right to practice their religion is met with increasing retaliation and arbitrary restrictions, like the inability to access the phone to talk to family members, to participate in educational programs, or accept certain jobs in prison.

As I speak with our clients and develop meaningful relationships with them, I am struck by how they are punished because of their faith. I am glad to be part of PLS this summer where we advocate for our clients and their ability to freely practice their religion without retaliation.

Entry 4:

I have thoroughly enjoyed my summer at Prisoner Legal Services. I learned that in North Carolina, there is incredibly important civil work being done to protect people who are incarcerated. As I pursue a career in criminal defense, I will always remember how critical civil litigation is within the criminal legal system.

As my internship comes to an end, I spoke with my supervisor, a PLS civil attorney, who described his passion for civil work within prison. His commitment to civil litigation for those in custody deeply resonates with me.

As my supervisor said, “When people think about helping prisoners, they often think about helping prisoners get out of custody early. But there’s a great deal of work to be done to help prisoners while they’re in custody. Using civil lawsuits and advocacy, we can help people get adequate medical care, ensure they are able to communicate with their attorneys and loved ones, and otherwise help ensure their constitutional and other legal rights are respected. Being able to help prisoners with matters like this brings me a lot of satisfaction and lets me make a difference in the civil litigation and advocacy context.”