

Liman Fellowship Summer Report

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This summer I worked as a legal department intern at the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California. As the largest ACLU affiliate, the ACLU of Northern California engages in litigation and advocacy to protect the civil liberties of Northern California residents. The office has over 50 staff, including attorneys, policy specialists, and outreach coordinators, and over 55,000 members. The ACLU's mission is to preserve and defend the protections embodied in the Bill of Rights, and it works on issues from freedom of speech to reproductive rights to criminal justice reform.

As an intern in the legal department, I had the chance to do a variety of assignments on an interesting spectrum of topics. I researched and wrote legal memoranda on subjects including search and seizure, protestors' rights, and jury selection. I also helped draft letters and interviewed potential declarants. One of the most interesting parts of the job involved following up with people who called our complaint hotline to report rights violations. I had the opportunity to speak with a diverse selection of people who had experienced a wide variety of issues. Following up with callers allowed me to hear firsthand about the obstacles people face in securing their constitutional rights and gave me a chance to try to help, even if sometimes all I could do was listen to their stories.

The highlight of the summer came when I watched my supervisor argue in front of the Ninth Circuit. The case tackled difficult moral, legal, and philosophical questions about privacy and identity, and it was wonderful to witness such a skilled debate over a novel and important issue. The judges were truly engaged in the question, and they let both lawyers go well over

their allotted time limits in order to ensure that each side was properly heard and all questions were addressed.

Another one of the most memorable experiences I had at the ACLU didn't happen during normal business hours. Instead, it happened on the weekend, in San Francisco's Pride Parade. The office invited the interns to march in the ACLU's parade contingent, so we all lined up early one Sunday morning and paraded down Market Street. I was amazed at the enthusiasm that greeted the ACLU contingent – one group of spectators had even made big ACLU signs to cheer us on. Lawyers aren't a group that usually gets a lot of applause, so it was really surprising and encouraging to see that sort of heartfelt support for the ACLU's work and mission.

Next spring, I will graduate from Columbia Law School and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. After graduation, I hope to become a public defender and, eventually, I would like to work on criminal justice reform and teach law in a clinical setting.