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Liman Summer Fellowship Report

My Liman fellowship allowed me to work in the Montgomery, AL office of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) as a Criminal Justice Reform legal intern for nine weeks this summer. The SPLC is a nonprofit legal advocacy organization focused on civil rights litigation, anti-hate monitoring, and public anti-bias education. My team's efforts were concentrated on *Braggs v. Dunn*, a multi-year class action lawsuit against the Alabama Department of Corrections for a myriad of rights violations, centering on inadequate mental health, medical, and dental care for incarcerated Alabamians. During my internship, the team was wrapping up the mental health claim and transitioning to the medical claim.

As an intern, I supported the lawsuit by maintaining phone and mail communication with incarcerated clients and alerting my team to case-related developments. These moments of direct human interaction were immensely rewarding but complex – located as they were within an immense power differential and with my limited ability to provide anything near what my callers needed. My most challenging days involved encounters with people in acute distress to whom I could offer nothing but a listening ear. My other work related to the lawsuit involved document review, participating in visits to incarcerated clients, and attending court and mediation proceedings.

Beyond the lawsuit, my responsibilities included updating the SPLC's Attorney Referral List for Alabama, a resource for incarcerated people seeking individual legal representation (as opposed to the SPLC, which provides only collective legal representation). The highlight of this project was an accidental, and somewhat embarrassing, phone conversation with legendary civil rights attorney and activist Fred D. Gray! I also helped create a Parole Guidebook for clients and others nearing their release dates, as the Alabama Department of Corrections does not provide easily

accessible parole resources. Additionally, I compiled a spreadsheet outlining the various fines and fees assessed in criminal cases from Alabama's 64 judicial districts. These legal financial obligations are legally sanctioned impediments to reclaiming voting rights for people with felony convictions. I concluded my internship with a week in rural Georgia supporting SPLC's work representing detained immigrants at the Folkston Detention Center. My experiences this summer deepened my commitment to fighting for an end to the brutality, dehumanization, and violence perpetrated in America's jails, prisons, and immigrant detention system.

I am immensely grateful for the range of experiences and legal work I encountered at SPLC. I extend sincere thanks to my SPLC colleagues for a wonderful summer and to the Liman Fellowship for making my internship possible.