

My placement at *The Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice* (HCSJ) began the Monday after I graduated from Princeton. I was welcomed to my office at UC Berkeley's Simon Hall, the eight-story tower attached to Boalt Hall, by rowdy chanting from the tree-sitters protesting the University's plan to cut down 44 Oak trees next to Memorial Stadium in order to erect an expanded athletic center. Arms, legs, and pully lines dangled from the tree branches that I soon discovered were in direct sight of my desk, just outside my eighth floor office window. Fortunately, I quickly came to the realization that the interaction I would have with the tree-sitters and their supporters would be limited to that which occurred during my morning commute, when I had to carefully avoid the juggling shows and potlucks that they held in the middle of the street next to Boalt. Otherwise, I was engrossed in the Center's work.

The HCSJ's mission is to train the next generation of public interest lawyers in best practices for representing disadvantaged communities while simultaneously producing scholarship that exposes current social problems and helps to identify possible solutions. For example, the research staff is now working on reports concerning state agency discrimination and bias in public employment hiring and promotion practices and in the public education system. The Center's innovative and accessible scholarship combines theory, practice, and policy and provides social justice advocates with the data and perspective that they need to argue effectively for changes that have the potential to drastically improve the lives of the many underprivileged currently living in California.

I will admit that at first I was worried that perhaps I had made a mistake by coming to law school center because I wasn't in direct contact with the beneficiaries of our research as I would have been had I chosen to work in legal services. My conception of legal work was, I will admit, very "Law and Order" inspired; I thought I couldn't truly be considered an active

participant in the realm of public interest law unless I was, just for example, supervising police interrogations to ensure the person in custody wasn't being unfairly harassed because of his or her minority ethnic status. As it turned out, I spent the first few weeks of my job entering in and analyzing a lot of statistics about the effects of Proposition 209 (CA's anti-affirmative action law) on the number of minority business enterprises in the state. I did this without learning too much about the specifics of the *legal* fight against Prop 209 or even California business law in general. However, as the weeks progressed I began to have increasingly more one-on-one time with the director of our Center, Professor Frampton, and she and I spent a substantial portion of the summer collaborating on a report intended to help dismantle the intent doctrine in discrimination law. I was absolutely thrilled that *I*, a 22 year-old who knows approximately nothing about the law in general (save that it's illegal to drink under the age of 21 and a few other pertinent staples) had the opportunity to write this 45-page report for a Boalt professor who is now going to use it as a part of the "Scholar Advocates" program for Berkeley Law students. Not only did I learn an enormous amount about discrimination case law and the legal processes involved in making and trying an employment discrimination case, but I was also able to use my neuroscience background to explain how newly published scientific studies help found the argument against the continued use of current burden of proof requirements in these cases. Recent experiments have yielded evidence that most racial discrimination occurs as a result of emotional reactions not controlled by conscious, intentional thought processes. This calls into question the fairness and reasonableness of the current discrimination case requirement that the complainant prove the defendant knowingly acted in an intentionally prejudicial manner.

I was given more similarly challenging work when my very brief stint as a Prop 209 data entry/analysis specialist ended and I instead began helping the research manager, Mike, come up

with surveys and tests to measure the effectiveness of a restorative justice program at a troubled Oakland middle school. Restorative justice, as it pertains to the education system, is a program that promotes collaboration and discussion among students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members as an alternative to suspension or expulsion when a minor is involved in activities that might traditionally merit such disciplinary action. As a part of my research for this project, I read some of the reports that Professor Frampton's second and third year law students wrote about their positions as advocates for kids who were up for these traditional disciplinary actions. They talked at length about their frustration with the bias inherent in the juvenile court system and the lack of attention given to the root causes of these children's problems. After working with Mike and Professor Frampton for a while, I realized just how multi-faceted a study of any element of "the law" can be. Though I wasn't necessarily sorting through penal codes or sitting in youth court (or adult court, for that matter) trials everyday, I decided that I was in fact participating in an endeavor that was effecting change in juvenile law.

Working at a university allowed me the opportunity to begin to understand just how complex issues of law often are. My time at the HCSJ helped me appreciate that what I might one day be doing as a lawyer could have widespread ramifications in society that one might not expect just based on the language of the law being treated. I regularly talked to sociologists, an anthropologist, a published novelist, and of course lawyers, who were all incredibly invested in our research and the potential effects of the policy recommendations that would be made or alluded to in our work. My position in this diverse academic community afforded me access to nearly unlimited resources, of which I attempted to make as much use as possible. In order to inform my own report and also to make recommendations about information to be added to the Center's reports on the Oakland education system and California Proposition 209, I fused ideas

and language from reports written by other Boalt Centers along with those of different academic communities. I was able to access this material thanks to UC Berkeley's subscription to a wide array of scholarly journals. I was even once sent to speak directly with an expert after a meeting with Professor Frampton. We were talking about my discrimination report's section on international law and were unable to come up with an explanation for why exactly the ACLU decided to bring an immigrant discrimination case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on behalf of several workers' unions. We knew that if the lawyers had chosen to represent individual complainants in a US court, they would have the chance of winning a legally binding ruling preventing the subjugation of immigrants to workplace exploitation and discrimination. The course that the ACLU chose to take had no such potential. Since she does not specialize in this area of law, Professor Frampton's suggested that I speak with Rachel Shigekane, the Senior Program Officer of the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center, about the reasoning in this case... so I did!

One of the highlights of my fellowship was definitely hearing Professor Shigekane's thoughts on the value that Human Rights Courts add to the US legal system, as well as her ideas about how valuable the study of human rights is to acquiring a complete legal education. I have to admit, though, that other highlights included learning all about data regressions from Mike as he worked on the Proposition 209 report and keeping on the lookout for Professor Yoo coming or going from his office, which was on the same floor of Simon Hall as mine. (Professor Yoo is the former deputy assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Counsel at the U.S. Department of Justice who famously wrote a memo in 2002 that provided legal cover for the Bush administration's use of torture against detainees.)

All in all, being able to use all the resources and be exposed to the breadth of work that

relates to the Law is an invaluable experience for those who, like me, are weary of becoming lawyers and spending all day everyday drafting contracts if the “Law and Order” gig doesn’t pan out. Also, working in a Center that focuses on academically evaluating and formulating recommendations on an array of social justice issues was particularly great experience for me as my next job will likely involve some similar undertakings, though in a wholly different context. On August 6 I will be moving to Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to work for the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for one year. The IRC also collects data about dispossessed communities while simultaneously advocating for policy changes to improve their well-beings. I am sure that the set of issues and appropriate courses of action to be taken will vary dramatically, but I feel privileged to have the opportunity to be exposed to the inner workings of the pursuit of social justice on a legal and social front both at home in zany Berkeley and in a place that’s just about as far away from home as imaginable, but which will hopefully start to feel like home in not too long.

All this being said, there is a caveat. A lot of what I did at the HCSJ was very academic. Collaborating with Professor Frampton was similar to the JP or Senior Thesis writing experience... except that I had from 9-5 on two or three days of the week to work on it and wasn't expected to do anything on it outside of normal business hours. This is not at all like the Princeton independent research experience! I would caution other recent college graduates to think carefully about whether they are ready to launch right back into another round of sometimes frustrating and sometimes daunting research – though granted it will be broken up by other responsibilities. If you are ready, you won’t regret it because it will absolutely clarify in your mind, to the fullest extent possible, what an enormous responsibility it is to be a lawyer and just how much you want to be a part of the social justice cause.