

*Yahui "Ellis" Liang, Princeton '15, Veterans Legal Clinic of
Harvard Law School, Jamaica Plain, MA*

With the support of the Liman Summer Fellowship, I interned at the Veterans Legal Clinic of the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School. The Veterans Legal Clinic primarily assists veterans with legal issues related to federal and state veterans' benefits, discharge upgrades, access to healthcare, and estates planning.

The majority of my work involved doing legal research, conducting client intakes, corresponding with clients, and acquiring and organizing military and medical records. My favorite projects during the summer were preparing for administrative hearings and drafting pleadings, because I enjoyed the challenge of synthesizing regulations and the facts of a case in order to mold an argument. Guided by my supervisors Daniel Nagin and Betsy Gwin, I drafted part of a closing brief for a SNAP benefits hearing, outlined a discharge upgrade petition, and wrote case opening memos analyzing the merits of clients' cases. I also helped promote outreach to veterans by attending a female veterans' support group and coordinating the legal services booth at a homeless veterans' resource fair.

My internship not only taught me about the veterans' benefits and healthcare system, but it also taught it me how to

think critically and write directly. One of my biggest takeaways is that effective service does not necessarily mean representing all veterans. During a particularly busy week in July, I conducted client intakes for a veteran who was denied benefits because he was convicted of a felony, a male veteran who had been raped by his commanding officers, and a veteran with anxiety disorder so severe he couldn't leave his house. When I presented these cases to my supervisor, she said we couldn't take any of them. I doubted these veterans could resolve their legal issues pro se. One man had already unsuccessfully filed seven times for disability benefits, and another could hardly spell the referral information I provided. I asked my supervisor if there really was nothing we could do. "We're not social workers," she replied. There was no legal argument to be made in any of these cases, and we had to focus on cases in which VLC could have the biggest impact—cases that set a precedent or exposed an agency's error. In my idealism to serve all veterans, I had spent too much time on intakes that I was starting to pay less attention to VLC's existing cases, whose outcomes would have far-reaching benefits. I realized that the best way to help veterans necessitated saying no to some clients, especially when the clinic had limited resources. Though it seems like a simple

lesson now, I had to learn where to direct my time and resources, a skill I will continue developing in the future.

I am applying to law school this fall, where I hope to learn more about becoming an effective advocate. The passionate attorneys I worked with and the opportunities for direct client interaction this summer affirmed my intent to pursue public interest law. I'd love to work in the field of poverty law, especially veterans' law. My internship showed me that the need for pro bono veterans' attorneys surpasses their supply. For example, it was difficult for me to provide attorney referrals to many clients, because few attorneys handle discharge upgrade cases pro bono. I feel compelled to use my legal training to serve those who have served this country, especially when I have relatives and friends in the military and can imagine them facing struggles similar to those of my veteran clients.

I am grateful to the Liman Fellowship for this opportunity to grow as a student and aspiring lawyer. Without the financial support, I would not have been able to afford an internship in public interest law. The fellowship has also connected me with talented undergraduate and law students. In July, I had coffee with Dana Montalto, who will be starting her Liman Fellowship at VLC this month. She provided invaluable advice on applying to law school and brainstorming ideas for post-graduate service
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projects related to veterans. I only wish there were more opportunities to meet the undergraduate and law student fellows at the colloquium. It might also be helpful to have more emails or activities from the Liman program over the summer, such as encouraging Liman fellows in a certain geographic area to meet up or sending check-in emails with fellows. However, I do appreciate the changes made to the program this year, such as implementing a separate summer fellows' portion; I especially enjoyed hearing from former summer fellows as well as learning what non-legal careers YLS graduates have pursued. Overall, the fellowship was an enjoyable learning experience that exposed me to real people struggling with real legal issues and that affirmed my desire to practice public interest law.