

Katherine Powell

Liman Fellow, Summer 2019

**The University of Chicago Law School – Federal Criminal Justice Clinic**

This summer, I had the absolute pleasure of working with Professors. Alison Siegler, Erica Zunkel, and Judith Miller. I was also guided by two students at the Law School, David Silberthau and Alexandra Aparicio. It was a tremendous learning experience and I was glad to spend the summer with the Federal Criminal Justice Clinic (FCJC).

The broad aims of the Clinic are to represent indigent clients in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, and also to engage in impact litigation and policy reform in federal court in Chicago and beyond to ensure that the most vulnerable clients get proper representation and fair treatment. To this end, our main project this summer pivoted on 18 U.S.C. § 3142 – the Bail Reform Act, the federal statute that regulates pretrial detention. I was involved in a month-long courtwatching initiative, which entailed attending hearings in federal court, taking verbatim notes of the proceedings, gathering data. In this way, I was able to observe how the statute is applied, and how defense attorneys and prosecutors use the language of the statute in the courtroom. The data I and others gathered will help guide the Clinic's ongoing reform efforts.

I also assisted with some ongoing cases from the last major systemic impact project the Federal Criminal Justice Clinic took on, which dealt with racial discrimination in stash house stings by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). Even though I came in at the very tail end of this project, Professor Siegler and the other interns were more than willing to explain the work that they had done and to guide my contributions to the ongoing cases.

I worked with Professors Siegler, Miller, and Zunkel on compiling data from stash house cases; editing and writing portions of motions for clients; and researching the Bail Reform Act for a legislative reform proposal. I was actively involved in the Clinic, and Alexandra and David were willing to take the time to work with me and assist in my supervision. By the end of the summer, I felt that I had actually contributed something to the important work that the Clinic strives to do.

Overall, being at The University of Chicago Law School and working with the FCJC was a wonderful experience. The people that I learned from this summer were patient and kind, taking the time to explain the most basic legal terms to me. As someone who'd never done a legal internship before, it was amazing to have mentors and teachers who were willing to bring me into a professional world that can often seem inaccessible and intimidating.

Most importantly, I was glad to do anything I could to help the FCJC's clients, who were always at the center of everyone's efforts. I heard from the lawyers and clients alike how these cases negatively impacted their lives – their ability to work, their connections with their families,

and their general wellness. Being able to provide top-notch legal services for people who don't have extensive resources is important to me, because I see firsthand how my own community struggles to find fair representation in the legal system. I hope that I was able to contribute half of all that I learned in my work with the Clinic, because they are providing a valuable service to those who need it most.

I am indebted to the Liman Fellowship for providing me with the opportunity to pursue this internship. I am also incredibly grateful to all the people at the Federal Criminal Justice Clinic for helping me learn and grow this summer.