

“But let justice roll down like waters in a mighty stream”  
Amos 5:24

To work in an area other than public interest law would be to live my life with my eyes wide-shut. Throughout my life I have seen my fair share of injustice. Several of my own immediate family members have experienced the ramifications of our criminal justice system and the collateral consequences that soon follow. Persons of underprivileged backgrounds are taken advantage of the most and denied their fundamental rights on a daily basis.

Working at the Public Defender’s Office last summer, I was offered the opportunity to not only provide legal counsel, but provide direct and referral services for housing, health benefits, employment, drug and alcohol treatment, family counseling and immigrant counseling. One of the most important lessons that I learned was that many of my clients needed more assistance when they returned to their communities. They needed assistance in areas such as gaining and retaining employment and housing. Often times they complained about mistreatment at their jobs and being denied employment for jobs in which they were more than qualified. They carried with them the burden of maintaining harsh working conditions to survive and provide for their families. Because they did not have the proper venue to address their concerns, many of our clients took their situations in their own hands. This included reporting incidents to supervisors only to be terminated from employment soon after or engaging in confrontational discussions that also led to termination.

Furthermore, in working with juveniles, I became extremely concerned when many of my clients could not read paperwork, write a description about the

incident in which they were being charged, nor articulate their opinion or feelings to a judge. My clients were clearly at a disadvantage in the criminal justice system because their educational system had failed them.

This reminded me of my experience as a student at Spelman College when I volunteered at a middle in extremely poor conditions. The middle school lacked necessary supplies, textbooks, and qualified teachers. I realized that the denial of an adequate and equal education had far-reaching repercussions in their lives, especially in our judicial system. Many of my students experienced run-ins with the law because they were not receiving the attention needed at home and/or school. Their issues were not being properly addressed by state legislatures and none of the programs promised to the students were being implemented or monitored. Because the one window of opportunity that was supposed to be guaranteed, education, was closed, my students found it hard to see their way out of the cycle of low expectations.

Because of my experiences with my own family, volunteering with middle school children, and working at the Public Defender's Office, I have become very passionate about protecting the civil rights of those who can not afford legal representation. I became infatuated with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights because of its mission to "champion the legal rights of people of color, poor people, immigrants and refugees..." I truly believe that safeguarding the civil rights of our human race is justice in its true essence.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR) is a great fit for my goals and purpose as a legal advocate. When I interviewed for the position, I was attracted to the passionate nature of the

attorney with whom I interviewed. In addition, I was attracted to the plethora of civil rights projects the LCCR has successfully implemented for the past 40 years in effort to provide free legal assistance and representation to individuals on civil legal matters. It is obvious that this office understands that civil rights injustice endangers our communities and human race as a whole.

The LCCR provides direct services such as the Education and Equity Project, Race Discrimination and Referral Line, Homeless Rights Project, Legal Services for Entrepreneurs, Asylum Program, and Immigration Clinic. In addition, the LCCR provides impact litigation in areas such as Education, Voting Rights, Consumer Discrimination, Contracting, Equal Access to Municipal Services, and Public Benefits. These programs speak volumes about their commitment to public interest and adequate representation.

As a summer law clerk with LCCR, I will have an opportunity to work on all of the organization's projects related to impact litigation, direct client services, policy advocacy and community outreach. I will focus on the Education and Equity Project, Legal Services for Entrepreneurs, Workers' Rights and Voting Rights litigation in particular. Under the Education and Equity Project, I will assist with informing students, parents, teachers and community members about the educational resources guaranteed to all California schoolchildren under the *Williams v. California* settlement. The Legal Services for Entrepreneurs project will provide me with an opportunity to assist low-income people interested in starting or expanding small, for-profit businesses as a way of becoming more economically self-sufficient, as well as certain businesses that invest directly in economically distressed neighborhoods. Impact litigation with respect to

workers' rights and voting rights will allow me to work on litigation that ensures fair employment treatment for immigrant workers as well as secures the voting rights of citizens pursuant to the California Voting Rights Act. I know that the experience that I will gain as a summer law clerk with the LCCR will be extremely beneficial to the organization, its clients, and myself as an aspiring attorney.

As an African-American female and first generation American, I believe that I will provide the LCCR with a diverse perspective of aspects that affect a person's life. My experiences in life have provided me with a window of understanding that surpasses the routine elements of a legal process. There will be many occasions in which I can relate to the background issues of a person's life. Not only have I witnessed many members of my immediate family experience extreme hardship with respect to negative treatment at the workplace and as immigrants, I have witnessed the same occurrences as a law clerk with the Public Defender and our law school's Reentry Clinic for Ex-Offenders. I want to protect the rights of people who are unable to protect themselves. The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights will provide me with an invaluable hands-on experience and allow me to vigorously represent the needs of the public. LCCR's amazing success in civil litigation and policy will definitely provide with a rewarding summer experience and opportunity to make a strong impact in protecting the civil rights of persons in the San Francisco Bay Area.