

# Lawyers' Committee Fellowship Programs



## About the Program

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, one of the nation's foremost civil rights legal organizations, recruits for its own one-year George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellowship. We also sponsor recent law school graduates for the two-year Skadden and Equal Justice Works Fellowships and host recent graduates through law school-sponsored fellowships, as well as fellowships sponsored by other third parties.

Our fellows may work on co-counseled litigation with prominent law firms, allowing them to develop experience in client contact, case investigation, discovery, negotiations, amicus briefs, appeals, and trial practice. Non-litigation activities include legal services to community development groups, legislative and public policy advocacy, and public education on important civil rights matters. Our emphasis on ensuring that fellows obtain hands-on, substantive experience prepares them to continue a law career in the public interest. Many of our fellows have been hired as permanent Lawyers' Committee staff attorneys after their fellowships. Others have obtained positions at top public interest organizations.

### George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellowship

The Lawyers' Committee's one-year George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellowship provides an opportunity for recent law school graduates with demonstrated commitment to racial justice and civil rights to become familiar with civil rights practice by working with many of the nation's leading civil rights experts. Fellows have the opportunity to gain legal experience in several of the Lawyers' Committee's cutting-edge programs.

### Skadden and Equal Justice Works Fellowships

The Lawyers' Committee seeks to sponsor bright, creative, and driven individuals for the two-year Skadden and Equal Justice Works (EJW) fellowships. The Skadden applicant has the option of working with the Lawyers' Committee's Education, Employment Discrimination, Fair Housing and Community Development, or Criminal Justice programs. The EJW applicant has the option of working with the Fair Housing and Community Development or Voting Rights Projects.

### Other Fellowship Opportunities

The Lawyers' Committee also hosts recent law graduates with law school public interest fellowships, law firm associates, and others with third-

# Meet Current and Recent Fellows

## Brendan Downes



Brendan Downes is the Lawyers' Committee's 2014-2015 George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellow, assigned to the Voting Rights project. He is a graduate of American University Washington College of Law and Boston College. During a law school internship with the Voting Rights project, Brendan worked on the case *Mi Familia Vota v. Detzner*, which sought to prevent the unlawful removal of thousands of eligible voters in Florida. His work on the case inspired his fellowship project, which will focus on reforming voter removal processes in communities of color. "Within days of beginning my internship, I knew I was at an organization that I wanted to work with upon graduation. The Lawyers' Committee has been at the forefront of the country's most pressing issues for more than 50 years and continues to be a crucial defender and promoter of dignity and equality for all Americans. It's an honor to return to the organization and play a role in ensuring that the voices of the marginalized are fully heard at the ballot box."

## Melissa Gallo



Melissa graduated from Cornell Law School in 2012 and joined the Lawyers' Committee's Fair Housing and Community Development program as the first Cornell Rhodes Fellow through a two-year fellowship sponsored by Cornell Law School.

As the Cornell Rhodes Fellow, Melissa managed the Lawyers' Committee's Latino Economic Empowerment Program, aimed at providing legal support to Latino community organizations. Melissa's fellowship allowed her to take initiative in shaping her own goals, supported by the Fair Housing and Community Development program's existing local partnerships. Through a connection made during her work for the Fair Housing and Community Development program, Melissa obtained a position as the Program and Policy Director of the Miami Coalition for the Homeless upon the conclusion of her fellowship.

"My work as a fellow has impacted the New Orleans community by contributing to a campaign making changes to landlord and tenant laws in Louisiana. As a renters' city, New Orleans owes its tenants more protections. I've assisted with the drafting of proposed recommendations to the state's landlord-tenant laws."

# Meet Current and Recent Fellows

## Arusha Gordon



Arusha Gordon is a 2013 graduate of Berkeley Law (Boalt Hall). Arusha joined the Lawyers' Committee in September 2013 with a post-graduate fellowship from Berkeley Law that allowed her to work with the Lawyers' Committee's program work in the areas of employment, education, and fair housing.

"As a fellow I felt that there was a real investment in making sure that I was getting what I wanted out of my fellowship – when I voiced an interest in something, opportunities were always made available. I felt like I had real responsibility and was completely made part of the team."

When a permanent associate counsel position became available with the Lawyers' Committee's Voting Rights program during Arusha's fellowship, she applied and was selected for the position. "My experience as a fellow allowed me to further develop my legal skills so that I was able to transition directly into a dream position as associate counsel." As associate counsel, Arusha relies on her legal training, organizing background, and policy experience to advocate for stronger voting rights in a number of different states. "I love that my job requires me to approach civil rights advocacy with creativity and a broad set of skills – on any given day, I might be assisting with civil rights litigation, drafting regulatory comments, writing an op-ed, or meeting with grassroots partners in the local community."

## Hallie Ryan



Hallie is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan Law School. Hallie joined the Lawyers' Committee in the fall of 2013 as a University of Michigan Public Interest Post-Graduate Fellow working on criminal justice issues. Hallie's fellowship provided her with the opportunity to help expand the Lawyers' Committee's criminal justice work through initiatives such as organizing nationwide "listening sessions," writing testimony for congressional and executive agency hearings, and advocating for legislation on issues such as sentencing reform and felony disenfranchisement. In working on these issues Hallie strengthened her communication skills while developing the ability to take initiative and plan strategically.

At the conclusion of her four-month fellowship, the Lawyers' Committee created a new position for Hallie to become an associate counsel with the Legal Mobilization Project based on her performance during her fellowship and her desire to expand our criminal justice work. Since then, Hallie has continued the work she began in the fall and has also started new projects on topics ranging from a presidential clemency initiative, sexual abuse in prisons and jails, and the intersection of immigration and criminal law enforcement.

"The Lawyers' Committee is exceptional in many ways, but one of them is the immense freedom I am given to be creative in the legal strategies we take to approach systemic problems like mass incarceration. Initiative is both expected and rewarded."

# Meet Current and Recent Fellows

## Thomas Silverstein



Thomas was the Lawyers' Committee's 2013-2014 George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellow, assigned to the Fair Housing and Community Development program. He graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law in 2013, following a two-year tenure as a project associate and legal assistant at the Lawyers' Committee.

Thomas's fellowship project focused on the duty to affirmatively further fair housing. Throughout his fellowship, Thomas was actively engaged in helping to draft the Lawyers' Committee's comment letter and gauging other stakeholder groups' reactions to the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's Proposed Rule on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing.

"Meeting clients and allies on the ground in Louisiana and Mississippi was invaluable. Through my fellowship, I honed my ability to analyze housing and community development planning documents, develop statutory enforcement theories, and draft public records requests, advocacy letters and talking points." Thomas became an associate counsel with the Fair Housing and Community Development program at the conclusion of his fellowship in order to continue development the program's focus on the affirmatively furthering fair housing mandate.

## Matthew Sykes



Matthew was the Lawyers' Committee's 2012-2014 Skadden Fellow and associate counsel with the Lawyers' Committee's Educational Opportunities Project. A graduate of Rutgers School of Law-Camden, he clerked for the Honorable Dolores Sloviter of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit before beginning his fellowship with the Lawyers' Committee.

Matthew's project involved the launching of the South Jersey Educational Reentry Program to alleviate school placement obstacles for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Matthew was attracted to the Lawyers' Committee because of the organization's rich history and national profile, which he saw as a means of benefitting court-involved youth. "As a fellow, I gained concrete litigation skills. I now feel confident appearing before a judge, questioning witnesses and drafting pleadings." Matthew brought his first case on behalf of a juvenile parolee who had been denied enrollment at Atlantic City High School, which has since changed its policy of denying enrollment to juvenile parolees. Matthew had a 100% success rate in obtaining positive results for the students he represented, and his work laid the basis for a potential class action that would challenge unfair treatment of juvenile parolees.

# Meet Current and Recent Fellows

## Erandi Zamora



Erandi Zamora received her law degree from Columbia University Law School in 2011. Erandi joined the Lawyers' Committee as the 2011-2012 George N. Lindsay Civil Rights Fellow. During the course of her fellowship, Erandi developed a worker's rights program focused on the eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia.

Erandi's success as the George N. Lindsay Fellow led to the Lawyers' Committee's creating an associate counsel position for her with the Legal Mobilization program, in which capacity she lead the Lawyers' Committee's efforts in developing a language access program for limited English proficiency voters. "As a staff attorney, I've had the opportunity to continue working on some workers' rights advocacy as well as leading voting rights work. I also appreciate that the organization works hard to invest in its fellows and help them transition into permanent employment, whether at the organization or elsewhere. I have truly enjoyed working with some of the nation's leading advocates in civil rights." Through her work on behalf of the Legal Mobilization program with California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLAF), Erandi was offered an opportunity to return to her home state of California as a litigation attorney with CRLAF in Sacramento, working on behalf immigrants and the rural poor.

## Noel Roycroft



Noel Roycroft is a graduate of American University, Washington College of Law. Noel served as a Public Interest Fellow/Associate Counsel with the Lawyers' Committee from October 2012 to September 2013, through the sponsorship of Ropes & Gray LLP. During her fellowship, Noel provided litigation assistance to the Education, Employment Discrimination, Legal Mobilization, and Voting Rights programs.

Noel was especially involved with the Education Project's *Everett v. Pitt County Board of Education* case, which arose from a school desegregation order issued by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina in 1971. "As a part of the litigation team, I was involved with every aspect of a federal civil rights case, including motion writing, all of the preparation leading up to trial and participation in the trial. With the Lawyers' Committee, I took my first deposition, and was able to conduct both direct and cross-examinations of witnesses in a federal court. I believe it was one of the best opportunities a young lawyer could have in their first year out of law school."

Noel now works as an associate attorney with Ropes & Gray.

# Meet Current and Recent Fellows

## Janyll Canals



Janyll Canals is a graduate of American University Washington College of Law. With a post-graduate fellowship provided by her law school, Janyll worked with the Lawyers' Committee's Educational Opportunities program from September 2013 through April 2014. Janyll provided extensive legal writing and research for ongoing litigation, participated in coalition work and assisted with parent and attorney training to promote equal access to educational opportunities for disadvantaged students. She was also heavily involved in the South Jersey Educational Reentry Program, where she prepared due process complaints and hearing requests for special education and general education court-involved youth who were experiencing problems with their educational placement upon reentry into the community. "My fellowship provided me with the opportunity to explore all aspects of educational advocacy from litigation to direct legal services to policy and community outreach."

The hands-on experience Janyll received during her fellowship with the Lawyers' Committee helped her obtain position as a staff attorney with Advocates for Children of New York at the conclusion of her fellowship. At Advocates for Children, Janyll represents low-income parents and students in special education matters in the New York City area and trains parents, youth and professionals on education rights. "My fellowship really prepared me for the career I always wanted. I knew I wanted to advocate for the educational rights of children and needed to get hands on experience with multiple approaches to providing access to education. As a part of the Educational Opportunities team, I had the unique opportunity to see the relationship between direct legal services and its immense impact on systemic approaches to change."