

444 West 114th Street, Apt. 4
New York, NY 10027
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ve244@columbia.edu

December 19, 2012

Mr. Joseph Smith, Internship Coordinator
United States Attorney's Office
Eastern District of New York
147 Pierrepont Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School and am seeking an internship with the Criminal Division of the United States Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of New York for this upcoming summer. I attended a panel on the U.S. Attorney's Offices in New York this fall at Columbia and spoke with several Columbia students who have participated in internship programs with your office. Given my strong commitment to working in the field of criminal law, and the excellent reviews your office received from other Columbia students, I would welcome the opportunity to intern in your office this summer. As a recipient of guaranteed summer funding from the law school, I am able to accept an unpaid internship³¹.

My interest in criminal law stems from my work in the Speaker's Office for the Illinois House of Representatives. As a staffer for the House Criminal Law Committee, I researched criminal law issues related to pending legislation and reform of the criminal justice system. I had the opportunity to talk with experts and representatives from such diverse groups as state's attorneys, legislators, public defenders, law enforcement officials, academics, community organizers, and reporters. Issues of particular interest were the expansion of DNA databases, racial disparity in drug sentencing, the effects of mandatory sentencing, and the privatization of correctional facilities. I saw the disparity between how criminal justice reforms are perceived and actually enacted into law, and became interested in learning more. Since I have been a law student at Columbia, I have furthered my interest in criminal justice by joining Prison Access Working Group, through which I had the opportunity to visit the Edna Mahon State Prison in New Jersey.

In addition, I have gained practical courtroom experience as a member of the Courtroom Advocates Project (CAP) at Columbia. Through CAP, I have appeared before a family court judge several times while assisting a victim of domestic violence to obtain an Order of Protection. I have also improved my research and writing skills through my law school classes and moot court.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to pursue my interest in criminal law through an internship with your office this summer. Enclosed please find my resume, which highlights my experience and skills. I will forward my transcript and legal writing sample under separate cover when they become available. Thank you for your consideration of my application, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Vladimir Eleryk

³¹ Tip! Do not directly copy this introductory paragraph; make sure you write an opening that will suit your own individual needs!

99 West 89th Street, #3
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ezm999@columbia.edu

December 4, 2012

Ms. Dawn Frank
Legal Aid Services of Oregon
Native American Program (NAPOLS)
1827 NE 44th Avenue, Ste 230
Portland, OR 97213

Dear Ms. Frank:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School and am interested in working for your office this summer. I would welcome the opportunity to help provide legal services to low-income Native Americans and tribes³². As a recipient of Columbia's summer funding, I am able to accept an unpaid internship.

I first became aware of the plight of Native Americans in college, when I spent a summer at the Pascua Yaqui Indian Reservation in Tucson, AZ, helping rebuild homes. In addition to observing the abject poverty of the residents, I spent time at the legal services center, talking to the prosecutor about the conflicts between federal law and tribal law. I also spent time learning about the history of the tribe and their relocation by the U.S. government. Part of my motivation for coming to law school was to help Native Americans, or other Americans in similarly dire situations.

While at Columbia, I have begun to participate in NNALSA (National Native American Law Students Association) Moot Court Competition. This semester I am researching and writing a brief on the issue of Indian mineral rights³³. Next semester I will present my arguments orally in the Moot Court competition. I plan to additionally participate in a pro bono project next semester (during spring break) which will be targeting health and housing issues of low-income individuals. I will be doing intakes and providing referrals to social service agencies and legal clinics in North Dakota, and some of my clients will likely be Native Americans.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to focus on legal issues and advocacy for Native Americans through an internship with your office this summer. Enclosed please find my resume and list of references. I plan to be in Portland over the winter break (December 12- January 5), and would welcome the opportunity to speak with you in person about my application³⁴.

Sincerely,

Eduardo Mazier

³² Tip! It is important to clearly establish the purpose of your letter in the introductory paragraph.

³³ Tip! If you don't have any past legal experience related to the employer's work, talk about your non-legal experience, as well as activities and classes that you intend to participate in during law school to demonstrate your commitment to the issue.

³⁴ Tip! Including the dates when you will be in a city or region that is outside of New York is a good way to signal to public interest employers that you are serious about the position and the area, and that they have an unusual opportunity to meet you in person.

Amy R. Chiu
444 W. 114th St., #44
New York, NY 10024
(212) 555-5544
Amy.Chiu@law.columbia.edu

January 15, 2013

Maria Smith, Internship Coordinator
ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10004-2400

Dear Ms. Smith,

I write to apply for the ACLU Reproductive Freedom Project summer internship. I am a first-year law student at Columbia Law School, and plan to pursue a career in health policy. Because my primary area of interest and study is reproductive health, I would welcome the opportunity to intern at the Reproductive Freedom Project this summer. I have received a stipend from Columbia for the summer, so I am able to accept an unpaid position.

I developed an interest in reproductive health and women's rights when I worked as a peer educator for Planned Parenthood of Central Texas. This interest was refined in college, where I studied the physiology and technology of reproduction as a Biology major, and learned more about the connection between women's health, reproductive rights and development in courses on bioethics and public health. During my senior year, I built upon my science background by conducting research and analysis on court decisions in "wrongful life" causes of action for a seminar on Reproduction and the Law. While at Columbia, I have done some research on women's health for the Women's Link Worldwide Project. This coming semester, I will expand my understanding of the legal issues in reproductive and women's rights through participating in a forum with Columbia's Health Law Society.³⁵

In addition to my background in reproductive health policy and law, I have spent three summers interning with a law firm in Austin, Texas. As a litigation department assistant at Brown McCarroll, I worked with attorneys and legal assistants to prepare discovery materials and develop expert witness testimony for trial. My familiarity with the mechanics of litigation has been enhanced through eight years of participation in mock trial competitions at the regional and national levels.

I would be delighted to have an opportunity apply my background in reproductive policy and litigation to help protect reproductive rights through the ACLU summer internship. I have enclosed a copy of my resume, a short writing sample, and a list of references for your review. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Amy R. Chiu

³⁵ Tip! You are in control of your experience! Seek opportunities to develop skills relevant to jobs of interest to you. A commitment to a specific future project is almost as good as past experience, particularly for a 1L.

Mario Garcia

mg2222@columbia.edu 420 West 112th Street, #3A, New York, NY 10027 (646) 111 - 1111

December 18, 2012

Earthrights International
1612 K St., NW, Ste 401
Washington DC 20006

Dear Ms. Caliaz

I am a first-year law student at Columbia Law School, and am seeking a legal internship in South America this summer. Dean Ellen Chapnick suggested that I contact you, given your recent initiative with the Center for Economic and Social Rights in Ecuador, to establish the Amazon School for Human Rights and the Environment. I plan to pursue a career in environmental law and wish to learn about efforts to protect South America's unique natural treasures from the threats brought by economic development. I also have an interest in how environmental regulation can improve public health and promote human rights. I have received a stipend from Columbia for the summer, so I am able to accept an unpaid position.

Although my professional experience to date pertains to the area of public health, my desire to work on environmental conservation developed from my deep appreciation for the natural world. Having been raised in Puerto Rico, I was exposed early in life to the negative impact of urban sprawl, the tourism industry, and pharmaceuticals on the island's coastline and diminishing rainforest. My passion for sustainable development increased as I learned about massive deforestation in the South American rainforest and the decline of the Galapagos Islands. I recognize the powerful role the law can play in precluding or regulating business practices that promote corporate interests over natural resource protection and public wellbeing.³⁶

During the last couple of years I worked for a public health policy research center called the Center for Health Research. I had the opportunity to hone my investigative skills by reading governmental reports and gained experience in analytical writing by contributing to journal articles. As a result of my interactions with practitioners and policy makers, I was able to better understand the different factors that affect public health. This multidisciplinary approach demonstrates my ability to comprehend contextual and systemic issues when addressing new challenges. My experience invigorated my interest to pursue social justice, a concern in line with protecting the environment.

I would be delighted to discuss my qualifications with you in further detail. I have enclosed a copy of my resume. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mario Garcia

³⁶ Tip! Remember to think about how your experiences can be relevant. This 1L has no environmental experience, so he draws upon his personal experience growing up in Puerto Rico as an explanation for his interest.

ABEL ASSEFA ZENAWI

874 West 119th St #10B New York, NY 10027 • 301-267-8514 • az5412@columbia.edu

Deepa Bijpuria, Immigration Staff Attorney
Tahirih Justice Center
201 N. Charles St., Ste 920
Baltimore³⁷, MD 21201

December 5, 2012

Dear Ms. Bijpuria:

I am a first-year student at Columbia Law School seeking a summer 2013 internship with your organization. As a graduate of University of Maryland, I would welcome the opportunity to return to Maryland this summer and participate in the work of Tahirih Justice Center. As an African immigrant, I truly understand and believe in your mission of protecting immigrant women and girls from violence, and I would be honored to use my legal training for this goal. I have received funding from Columbia for the summer and therefore can accept an unpaid internship.

As both an immigrant from a war-torn region in Africa³⁸, and as an anthropology student studying the effects of regional strife on Africa's youth, I have become aware of the social and economic effects that violence can have on individuals. Although my experience has focused on the impacts of war, rather than gender-based violence, my knowledge and commitment to eradicating the effects of violence would serve me well at your organization. While at Columbia, I intend to continue to focus on the issue of violence. I have joined the African Law Students Association, and am organizing a panel of guest speakers next semester, focusing on legal tools to eradicate the effects of violence on the individual. I also look forward to taking classes such as African Human Rights Systems in Comparative Perspective, Anthropology and the Law, Gender Justice and various health law classes. I also plan to participate in an immigration externship and possibly an externship on prosecution of domestic violence crimes.³⁹

³⁷ Tip! 1L's should try to be geographically flexible, and apply to organizations that are in cities/regions that are less popular with Columbia Law students, such as Baltimore in this case. If you have a personal connection to the region, make sure to mention it in your letter, as that will strengthen your application.

³⁸ Tip! Although it can be helpful to show familiarity with the issues the organization works on, you need to be careful how much information you provide. Abel fled from a war torn region and immigrated to the U.S. Although gender violence was not something he was fleeing from, he has seen first-hand the effects of violence on women, and has experienced first-hand the struggles of assimilating in the U.S. Although some employers may think this helps his application, other employers may worry that he is not objective and would be too emotionally impacted by helping clients. Therefore, he was careful in this letter to mention his immigration status, but not delve into all the details.

³⁹ Tip! Even if you don't have any directly relevant experience, you can still write a good cover letter. Try to think about how your past experiences are relevant to the job you are applying to. Don't highlight your lack of experience; instead draw parallels with other experiences you have had, or identify similarities. You can also talk about things you plan to do in the future. Abel has no previous legal experience and had to work to support himself so never did any interesting internships. He has never done work with women immigrants, or on gender

My past experiences have provided me with skills that would serve me well as an intern at Tahirih Justice Center. Despite having to work for four years to pay for my tuition and housing, I was able to maintain a high GPA at University of Maryland, and was accepted into the Anthropology Honors Program. While pursuing my honors degree, I honed my research and writing skills through writing my thesis, *The Economic and Social Ramifications of Conflict on Youth in War-Torn Africa*. Through my work at the Giant Supermarket and Walgreens, I proved to be a dependable employee and was recognized for my hard work and exemplary customer service. These experiences also enabled me to learn to interact with different types of people with different needs, and would help me with client intake at your organization. Additionally, my cultural background and language skills would be an asset if I had the opportunity to work with African immigrant clients. Finally, while working as a research assistant, I led outreach efforts to Native American populations, which trained me well for any outreach I would need to perform as a summer intern with Tahirih Justice Center.

I would appreciate the chance to speak with you further about my application. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Abel Assefa Zenawi

violence/domestic violence issues. He has never worked with legal clients, or done advocacy or policy work, yet he does not dwell on how he is NOT a good fit with the organization; rather he focuses on how his past experience would translate to being helpful for this office.

Angelica Vega
115 5th Ave.
Queens, NY 12121
212-993-5465
av1654@columbia.edu

October 2, 2012

Mr. John Kim
Advancement Project – California Programs Office
1910 W Sunset Blvd Ste 500
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Dear Mr. Kim:

I am a second-year dual degree student (law and social work) at Columbia University. I am writing to express my interest in working at the Advancement Project this upcoming summer. I learned about the Advancement Project through a panel on “Nontraditional and Holistic Approaches to Legal Change” which was sponsored by Columbia Law School’s Social Justice Initiatives office. I would be honored to help further the Advancement Project’s agenda of innovative social change by interning at your office this summer.

I am committed to using a broad set of tools to effect legal change. Thus far, I have explored both impact litigation and community organizing as means of promoting justice. More specifically, at the Migrant Farmworker Justice Project, I worked with a small group of attorneys challenging labor abuses through large class action suits in federal court. This strategy produced definite results for the farmworkers, yet the entire process seemed disempowering since the individual voices of the farmworkers were not heard. In contrast, as a volunteer at The Workplace Project last year, I saw immigrant workers being empowered to find creative solutions to their problems through community organizing. Although these alternative pressure tactics were often the workers’ only available option, there were many instances in which I thought a lawsuit might have been more powerful to effect long-lasting change. As someone interested in making the law accessible to those most affected by its shortcomings and abuse, I would like to explore the ways in which lawyers can work *with* communities and still achieve large-scale impact through the law.

I believe my unusual skill set would serve me well at the Advancement Project. Apart from my strong policy background and legal research, writing, and analytical skills, I bring my social work training, and experience working in direct client services. As a family therapist, I have sharpened my interviewing and counseling skills. As an organizer, I have gained practical experience identifying key concerns within a community and mobilizing community resources around those issues. Finally, as someone who is both bilingual and bicultural, I consider myself particularly qualified for work within the Latino community and immigrant communities in California, and sensitive to broader cultural diversity.

Enclosed please find a detailed resume highlighting my experience and education. I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further about my interest in the Advancement Project. Thank you, in advance, for your time.

Sincerely,

Angelica Vega

MIA JOHNSON

333 W 113th St. • New York, NY 10027
Mia.Johnson@law.columbia.edu • 212-555-1212

Director, Administration Management and HR Division⁴⁰
LEGAL HONORS PROGRAM
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of General Counsel, Room 10245
451 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

September 2, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a third-year law student at Columbia Law School. I write to express my interest in joining the Legal Honors Program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) next year. I am deeply committed to increasing access to affordable housing and promoting healthy, safe, and prosperous communities. I would be honored to pursue this commitment at HUD.

My diverse professional and academic experiences have fueled my interest in housing policy and my strong interest in joining HUD's Legal Honors Program. As a paralegal for the Alabama Law Center for the Homeless, I represented clients seeking public housing, appealing denials, facing eviction, and navigating the Hope VI relocation process. I later joined the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities to gain a state policy perspective on the issues HUD works to address. My work at O'Melveny & Myers exposed me to the investor and developer side of housing policy and community development. Finally, while in law school, I have pursued course work in housing and community development policy, land use law, and local government law in order to explore the field of law and policy I would encounter at HUD.

In addition to fostering my passion for housing and community development work, my experiences have given me the legal and policy skills to effectively contribute to the work of HUD. At O'Melveny & Myers, I analyzed complex federal legislation and examined intricate state housing programs. As an editor for the Journal of Legislation and Public Policy, I honed my skills as an effective researcher and competent writer. Through my work on policy matters for the Office of Congressman John Lewis and the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, I have experience drafting legislation, navigating the legislative process, and evaluating proposed legislative reform.

My experiences before and during law school have given me a passion for housing and community development as well as the technical skills to contribute to the important work of HUD. I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my application for the Legal Honors Program. I hope to have the opportunity to speak with you further about my interests and experiences.

Sincerely,

Mia Johnson

⁴⁰ Tip! If a job posting specifies that applications be sent to a specific address (as in this instance with no name) do not use the name of the individual who may be reviewing your application since you must always remember to follow the directions specified in the job posting.

SAMPLE 3L COVER LETTER (For Externship Applications)

HOWARD OMWANGO

202 Frederick Douglass Blvd, Apt. 22 • New York, NY 10026
howard.omwango@law.columbia.edu • 999-555-1212

March 18, 2013

Justine Olderman
Director of Externship on Holistic Defense
Bronx Defenders
860 Courtlandt Avenue
Bronx, NY 10065

Dear Ms. Olderman

I am a third-year law student at Columbia Law School, and I want to fight police misconduct and prosecutorial overreaching as a public defender. I am writing to apply for The Bronx Defenders Externship on Holistic Defense. I had the opportunity to speak with Kathryn Dyer, and I am impressed with The Bronx Defenders' successful implementation of the vision of a holistic defender organization. I would feel honored to contribute to your work through the externship this fall.

Since enrolling at Columbia, I have spent much of my time working at defender organizations. Last summer, I worked in the felony unit of the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. There, I conducted initial interviews with clients, drafted motions to suppress evidence, and undertook investigations. I formed strong relationships with clients for whom I was working, and I continue to keep in touch with many of these resilient individuals. When I returned to New York, I began working in the criminal and housing units at the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem. Building on my experience in San Francisco, I have grown more familiar with the gravity of the collateral consequences of a criminal record. Many clients have told me that they prefer a jail sentence with a short exclusion from public housing over one that imposes no jail time but does carry a long period of ineligibility for public housing. The preference is not a surprising one, but hearing this directly from our clients has increased my sensitivity to the value of holistic defense. My experience as a spring break law clerk in the appellate division at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia has provided me with further insight into the complete lifecycle of a client's journey through the criminal justice system, from arrest to conviction to appeal to release.

I am also deeply committed to addressing the broader policy and institutional barriers that confront opportunity-starved communities. I have spent much of this academic year working with Columbia's Center for Institutional and Social Change, examining the opportunities for collaboration between defender organizations and reentry organizations. Troubled by the difficulties that individuals reentering their home communities face, I am currently drafting a proposal for reentry organizations that identifies low-cost, high-impact opportunities to collaborate with defender organizations. This strategic planning work builds on my three years as a non-profit consultant with the Rockefeller Group. In that capacity, I undertook similar work in collaboration with foundations and non-profit organizations. The unifying focus of all Rockefeller's clients was their commitment to serving disadvantaged populations. It was through interviews and focus groups with individuals from low-income communities that I first began to witness the broadly sweeping hand of a criminal justice system that so often works injustice.

I would be honored to bring my experience and perspective to The Bronx Defenders in the fall. I hope to speak with you soon.

Sincerely,

Howard Omwango

SAMPLE GRADUATE COVER LETTER

April 4, 2013

Amy Carroll, Deputy Director
Center for Popular Democracy
133 St. James Place
Brooklyn, NY 11238

Dear Ms. Carroll,

I write to express great interest in the Staff Attorney position with the Center for Popular Democracy (“CPD”). Throughout my career, I have worked to defend the civil rights of marginalized communities, including immigrants, people of color, and low-wage workers who face a host of rights violations at the hands of people in positions of power. As an immigrant and committed public interest advocate, I deeply appreciate the CPD’s passionate and cutting-edge agenda to collaborate with community-based organizations and assist community members in setting advocacy priorities, pursuing policy proposals, and building power within the community to propel change for the long term.

Both during and since graduating law school, I have been committed to using the law as an instrument of social change and helping give a voice to individuals outmatched by the system. During my Skadden Fellowship with the ACLU Immigrants’ Rights Project, I observed first-hand how the very existence of immigrant communities, particularly workers, is increasingly under siege in this country. When Arizona passed SB 1070, I participated in a large coalition of advocacy organizations that helped mobilize the community’s opposition to the law and filed suit to prevent the law from going into effect. Likewise, in response to the increasing reliance on immigration detainees, I investigated and helped initiate a lawsuit challenging the illegal detention of a naturalized mother of three with the goal of exposing the racial profiling and due process violations attendant to detainer practice. While at the Legal Aid Society, when resource constraints prevented others from doing so, I took on the case of a hard-working grandmother and widow who had become ensnared in the web of immigrant detention. I worked with her daughters, friends, and former employer to draft affidavits and assemble evidence for a parole petition, which, despite all odds, succeeded in convincing immigration authorities to release her.

Working on these and other cases, I honed a number of important advocacy skills that would serve me well as a Staff Attorney at the CPD. I have extensive experience communicating with different audiences, from talking with clients who are experiencing profound and at times deeply personal challenges, to community advocates and co-counsel in collaborative campaigns. My fellowship required that I delve into new topics quickly and efficiently and help devise legal and communications strategies on how to proceed. In all my positions, I have been tasked with a great deal of writing, such as drafting district and appellate court briefs and memoranda analyzing clients’ legal and factual questions. I have worked on legislative advocacy as well, including providing a briefing to Congressional staffers in the wake of Republican House members’ introduction of anti-immigrant legislation.

I believe the CPD’s objectives of helping build community-based infrastructure, develop leadership at the grassroots level, and create momentum for community-driven progressive change are well-calibrated, critical interventions in which I would be honored to assist. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sharma Phuyal

Miao Tian

201 Avenue A, Apt. 4, NY, New York 12111 · miao.tian@gmail.com · 212-852-7413

June 15, 2013

Jennifer Rodriguez, Deputy Managing Attorney
The Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Practice
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

I am writing to express my interest in a position as a Staff Attorney at The Legal Aid Society. Since graduating from Columbia Law School in 2004, I have worked as a litigator at the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP (“Paul Weiss”). In private practice, I have undertaken a number of projects (some in conjunction with your organization) involving families in the legal system and have acquired broad litigation experience, which has solidified my intent to transition into a career focused on protecting and asserting the rights of parents and families.

As you can see from my enclosed resume, I have long pursued opportunities to make a positive impact in the lives of families. Before law school, I worked in the entertainment industry, but elected to attend law school out of a desire for a career in which I would directly impact individuals’ lives and the public good. While attending Columbia Law School, I represented children in foster care in permanency and immigration hearings, in connection with the Columbia Child Advocacy Clinic and the Juvenile Rights Practice of the Legal Aid Society. It was during these experiences that I became acutely aware of the profound complexity of the personal and systemic factors that affect families, and the enormous opportunities for committed advocates to improve outcomes for families and children involved with the courts and public agencies.

At Paul Weiss, I have taken primary responsibility for a range of matters touching on family law and child welfare. I researched and wrote memos on children’s rights for the Children’s Rights Litigation Committee of the ABA. I also represented a child in foster care, providing advocacy in court and making his voice heard by the agencies charged with his care. As mentioned, I have also had the opportunity to litigate custody and visitation issues in collaboration with The Legal Aid Society, which provided further insights into the practical challenges and potential for injustice faced by parents in the legal system. My practice has also enabled me to acquire crucial civil litigation, project management, and research and writing skills, while exploring a variety of substantive practice areas.

While I have been fortunate to have had varied and challenging experiences in my legal practice, I now seek to focus my work exclusively on family advocacy. I believe that my commitment to asserting the rights of parents and families, combined with my broad experiences and skills, would serve me well at The Legal Aid Society. Thank you in advance for your time, and I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you.

Sincerely,

Miao Tian