Columbia Law School announces the David W. Leebron Human Rights Fellowship which honors the Law School’s former Dean (1996-2004) and his commitment to providing meaningful experiences in human rights law. This annual Fellowship will enable a Columbia Law School graduate to spend one year working in human rights either in the United States or abroad. Proposals for the fellowship are due by 3:00 p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2016.

Terms of the Fellowship

The Leebron Fellowship will be awarded for a one-year term, beginning within five months of graduation. The Fellowship is available to graduates of Columbia Law School who are (1) members of the Class of 2016, pursuing a JD or LL.M degree, including those who will graduate in October 2015 and February and May 2016, and (2) current state or federal judicial clerks whose clerkships will terminate by Fall 2016.

The Fellowship is designed to enable a Columbia Law graduate interested in pursuing a career in human rights law to gain practical experience working with a human rights organization. Through this year of practical training, the Fellowship aims to provide the graduate with the skills necessary to start or advance a career in the field of human rights law, whether in academic life, in governmental, intergovernmental or nongovernmental organizations or agencies, or as legal practitioners specializing in human rights work.

The fellowship carries a stipend of $45,000 a year and must begin within five months after graduation or completion of a clerkship.

Qualifying Placements

Host organizations must be engaged in human rights law advocacy. In most cases, these organizations or agencies will be involved in human rights education, monitoring, reporting, litigation, grassroots mobilization, or other forms of advocacy. They may be involved in human rights work in general or in specific areas of the human rights movement such as, but not limited to, women's rights, children's rights, labor rights, refugee rights, humanitarian law, transitional justice, health care and so on. Most qualifying organizations would identify themselves as part of the broader, universal human rights movement, relying on the norms declared in international and regional treaties and declarations.

Qualifying placements may include organizations embracing new and interdisciplinary directions in the human rights movement, such as those following in substantial part a rights-based approach to work in economic development, humanitarian relief, media, health or environmental activism. In special circumstances, the Selection Committee may accept a proposal for work within a governmental or intergovernmental human rights organization.

Qualifying placements will also include not-for-profit organizations in the United States at which the majority of the Fellow’s work will be using the international human rights law paradigm to combat domestic social justice issues.
Application Procedure

Applications must be received by Social Justice Initiatives no later than 3:00pm on Monday, February 1, 2016. Applications may not be submitted by fax or e-mail. You may mail or hand deliver the application to:

Social Justice Initiatives
Columbia Law School
Box B-26
435 West 116th Street
New York, NY 10027

The application should consist of SEVEN STAPLED COPIES of the following in the indicated order.

1. A current résumé.

2. A personal statement (1,000 words maximum) about the applicant’s relevant experience, interest, and future aspirations with respect to public interest and human rights legal work. The statement should include a discussion of the place of the fellowship in the applicant’s career plans.

3. A project description including: (3 pages maximum)
   a. a description of the host organization or agency and its work in the local and international context;
   b. a description of the applicant’s project and its relation to the work of the proposed host organization; and
   c. an estimated budget (to demonstrate feasibility).

One letter of recommendation, preferably from a Columbia Law School faculty member or a supervisor at a relevant organization, plus identification of two persons who would serve as references.

4. A copy of the applicant’s Columbia Law school transcript (unofficial is acceptable).

5. Indicia of a bona fide interest from your host organization (email or other communication acceptable).¹ OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED.

Selection

The Fellow will be selected by a committee of Columbia Law School faculty, administrators, and human rights practitioners. A Fellow and an alternate will be selected by Thursday, March 31, 2016.

¹ The committee understands that projects and/or host organizations proposed in this application may be tenuous or uncertain prior to an award of funding. The committee will allow changes to the Fellow’s project or host organization as long as they are within the parameters of the Fellowship as outlined in this notice of application.