

Working at Texas Civil Rights Project (“TCRP”) the summer before my 3L year was a great experience. This was the first non-profit that I had ever worked for. Still, I wasn’t sure what I would discover through working at TCRP when I began. Working here not only taught me more about civil rights law, it taught me more about how to run a small legal office.

My experience last year consisted of working with a medium size firm and a judge at a courthouse. Needless to say, I knew nothing about how to run a small business establishment. I immediately gravitated to the down to earth hard working personalities of the paralegal and the head attorney. The office in Houston had barely been open a year at the start of my internship and just opened an office near my school, which was fantastic. My jobs at TCRP consisted of writing press releases, answering research questions, formatting and tweaking old letters to meet the needs of new clients, making informational pamphlets in order to inform veterans of their rights to specific medical assistance, handling constituents and inputting prospective cases in the computer, as well as the ADA campaign where we assisted those with physical handicaps by going to cites and taking pictures of noncompliant areas of establishments in order to file complaints against them. Additionally, I would follow up on cases, clients, and other things. We attended meetings, press releases, and helped set up the offices for different events. I worked an array of jobs and did a lot of traveling around Houston to deliver documents, gather information, and the like. It was great and refreshing to have a job that didn’t require me to remain in the office every day of the week.

I really was touched by the cause behind a lot of the work that we did over the summer. Specifically, some of the immigration work that we did concerning those who died crossing the border was intriguing. I couldn’t believe that the small Texas counties located right outside of the border were simply burying bodies instead of first giving them an autopsy to locate their families. It was unnerving to know that counties were so callous towards immigrants that they would blame public funding for their carefree attitude towards informing the deads’ loved ones of their death. Seeing the flaws with government entities was eye opening and has helped me at my current position working for another nonprofit called the innocence project during the school year. I am able to show more empathy towards clients and able to keep a level head with overwhelming clients’ situations or their personalities. I also feel that my research skills have improved. I also learned how firms with limited resources make decisions on which clients have a good case and which ones do not. Additionally, I witnessed how they budget their funds so they get the most bang for their buck. All in all, this experience has allowed me to become more confident and at home working for a small firm. The skills I learned will also benefit me if I want to start my own firm one day.

Melany Whiting  
Texas Southern University

# TEXAS CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT - HOUSTON

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August 28, 2103

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

*Via email to:* [katie@equaljusticeamerica.org](mailto:katie@equaljusticeamerica.org)

**Re: Evaluation of Melaney Whiting—Texas Civil Rights Project**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I would like to begin by thanking Equal Justice America for lending support to students who, in turn, can rely on their support during their work to benefit the community. Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) heavily relies on the generosity of organizations like yours to maximize the services it provides to low-income populations.

Ms. Whiting spent approximately 11 weeks working full-time for our office. During her time here, she worked on a number of matters. Like every TCRP summer law clerk, Ms. Whiting engaged in helping to organize, investigate, and litigate on behalf of disabled individuals who had been discriminated against merely because of their disabilities. Ms. Whiting was asked to speak with the clients, investigate the issues, draft letters to offending institutions to attempt to amicably resolve the matters, and—if that failed—draft documents necessary for litigation.

During her time with TCRP, Ms. Whiting helped with all aspects of litigation, including: reviewing discovery responses, preparing complaints to be filed in federal court, preparing discovery requests, and drafting motions. In addition, she was asked to make several different requests under the Texas Public Information Act to various entities to assist with our litigation efforts. With enough time, Ms. Whiting was able to complete all the assigned tasks.

In addition, Ms. Whiting learned to process intakes for new cases, document them in our organizational database, and discuss them with our legal staff during our litigation meetings. By the end of her term, Ms. Whiting showed tremendous improvement in her ability to process and analyze civil rights cases. In several instances, I entrusted her to follow up with potential clients to request and analyze further information about the clients' potential cases. For example, in one matter, we had a complaint from an individual who had complained about rough treatment at the hands of law enforcement. Ms. Whiting took the information and relayed it to us at the litigation meeting. She was then instructed to follow up with the individual to get any documentation or recording of the incident—which he claimed to have. Once again, she was able to successfully complete the follow up, request and receive all the relevant documentation and recordings, and analyze the case.

It was a pleasure to have Ms. Whiting here this summer. As you already know, every bit of assistance an our organization like TCRP can get goes a long way to extending the limited resources we have. We sincerely appreciate your efforts in providing us with individuals who, in turn, can work to better our communities.

If there is any more information I can provide, please feel free to contact me at the phone number above or via email at [amin@texascivilrightsproject.org](mailto:amin@texascivilrightsproject.org). Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amin Alehashem".

Amin Alehashem