

# Meet our 2017 Global interns

In 2017, the Castan Centre will be sending five high-achieving Monash Law students to human rights organisations across the globe. Prior to their departure, they receive cross cultural training and generous financial assistance to make the opportunities available to the widest possible number of students. Here, four of the students talk to Caitlin McInnis about their upcoming trips.



Our 2017 Global Interns: Nicola, Amy, Jessica and Gemma

**Nicola Silbert** will intern at the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva. ISHR supports human rights defenders around the globe and conduct research, undertake strategic international litigation and participate in policy development and lobbying.

## What human rights issues are you most interested in?

For me, the most significant issues are the vast and diverse human rights challenges caused by climate change and environmental destruction. People who are more vulnerable, such as refugees, women and people in developing island states are most exposed to the risks of climate change. Our environmental situation affects important civil, political, cultural, economic and communal rights. I find it particularly motivating that by acting swiftly and collectively, we have the ability to avoid or resolve many of these human rights issues.

## What are you most looking forward to on your internship?

I am looking forward to learning the practical skills necessary to advocate for and support human rights defenders and to contribute to ISHR's meaningful work. I am particularly interested in understanding the gap between activists and human rights defenders on the ground and the UN mechanisms of supporting them. I am also excited to meet and learn from passionate and intelligent human rights advocates.

## What is your dream job / career?

I aspire to create positive change through my career. I would love to advocate for human rights and the environment, either through legal practice, policy reform or diplomacy.

Jessica Fitzgerald will be the first Castan Centre intern to work at the South Africa Litigation Centre. The SALC promotes and advances human rights and the rule of law in southern Africa, primarily through strategic litigation and capacity building.

## What human rights issues are you most interested in?

My particular interests in human rights include working at a strategic level to create stronger legal protections for rights, and in securing a means of redress for victims of violations. This stems from my firm belief that the existence of and enforcement of rights necessarily requires that violations be remedied. I am especially interested in working to secure redress for victims of torture, victims of enforced disappearances, and victims of violations that occur during war, including refugees.

My recent research has been in examining the ability of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2008 (Vic) to impute a duty on the Victorian government to investigate human rights abuses, which unfortunately it currently does not. I have also researched possible ways to strengthen protections for civilians during war, in order to prevent the commission of sexual violence by non-State actors.

## What are you most looking forward to on your internship?

I am most looking forward to using my skills to contribute to the creative strategies SALC employ for choosing and conducting strategic human rights litigation in Southern Africa, including navigating the national, regional and international rights mechanisms, and advocating for victims. I am also looking forward to using my knowledge and skills to contribute to the SALC's fantastic work in the criminal justice space, in encouraging the Southern African states to adhere to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) call for better co-operation and to undertake domestic prosecutions for rights abuses.

## What is your dream job / career?

My dream career would be working for an international body which works to strengthen the rule of law and protect human rights at a strategic level. On the prevention side, I would love to work with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or UNHCR to strengthen rights protections for vulnerable people during times of conflict, repression or other upheaval. On the opposite side, in assisting victims to gain access to justice, I would love to work in strategic prosecutions at the International Criminal Court or strategic litigation at an organisation like REDRESS (London), who assist torture victims to assert their right to a remedy. Alternatively, once I have gained some field experience, I would be interested in a career in academia, to contribute to the conceptual development of rights enforcement and protection globally.

**Gemma Hallett** will intern with Human Rights First in New York. Human Rights First advocates on a broad range of human rights issues, including the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers.

## Why did you apply for the Internship?

Firstly, I'm excited to have the opportunity to work with HRF's

Refugee Representation Team. After achieving High Distinctions in International Refugee Law & Practice and Administrative Law, this year I put my passion for refugee rights into action as a paralegal at the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC). Considering the increasingly anti-refugee rhetoric in the US and worldwide, the opportunity to experience the practical realities of US immigration law and the unique experiences of refugees in the American region will be invaluable.

I am also eager to learn more about HRF's work advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. I am passionate about LGBTIQ+ advocacy against the backdrop of an increasingly conservative political environment. Being exposed to these issues at HRF will equip me to understand these issues from a global perspective, and to be a better advocate for this community when I return to Melbourne.

Finally, I am excited to work on HRF's Pillar Project. Having studied International Human Rights Law, and a minor in Human Rights Theory in my Arts degree, the opportunity to gain a first-hand insight into the often hypocritical stance of the US on domestic human rights issues will be an incredible insight into the challenges and opportunities for human rights law advocacy in the US.

### Why are you interested in Human Rights generally?

My passion for human rights stems from my upbringing, having always been encouraged to stay true to my values of equality and integrity, and to stand up for those who are treated unfairly. These traits naturally led me to pursuing my education in law, politics and human rights. In recent years, I have sought out opportunities to use my voice and privilege as a tool for advocacy, speaking out on issues close to my heart. In doing so, I have gained legal experience in criminal and civil matters, victims of crime compensation and refugee law, alongside seven years of non-legal work experience.

As I near the start of my legal career, I believe that an interest in human rights is a crucial characteristic for all lawyers to have. Being able to frame my work through a human rights lens and having the courage and knowledge to stand up for those being treated unfairly is what excites me about embedding human rights advocacy in my career – whatever path that it may take.

### What human rights issues are you most interested in?

As I mentioned above, I'm particularly passionate about human rights issues affected marginalised groups. As well as my interest in advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and refugees, I have a strong desire to pursue a career that furthers the human rights of women. This lifelong passion was fostered during a semester abroad in Paris studying intersectional gender and development, and gender and queer law, at Sciences Po (The Paris Institute of Political Sciences). Working at the International Women's Development Agency, serving on the Board of Minus18, and serving as Director of Social Justice & Equity of the Monash Law Students' Society have also shaped my passionate stance on women's human rights.

**Amy Myers** will intern with the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York. Founded in 1966 by a group of attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, The Centre for Constitutional Rights has been actively involved in the creative use of law to facilitate positive social change with the aim of empowering poor and disadvantaged communities who currently have few protections and limited access to legal resources.

### What human rights issues are you most interested in?

I am most interested in the human rights issues of racial profiling, police brutality and government accountability.

### What are you most looking forward to on your internship?

I am looking forward to learning about how CCR addresses deep systemic problems through strategic litigation. I will be attending protests and educational seminars in New York City with CCR and am looking forward to bringing back new ideas to the Monash legal community.

### What is your dream job / career?

After my studies I am planning on pursuing my human rights interests in the Northern Territory, to work on what I see as the most pressing human rights issue in Australia – Indigenous disadvantage and access to justice.

You can follow the interns while they are on assignment through the **Global Interns Blog**. You can see profiles all of our 2017 interns **on our website**, including our Bennelong Indigenous Intern Madelaine King (pictured above), who will be featured in our next newsletter.

*The Global Interns program is supported by Daniel Besen, Sylvia & Michael Kantor, the Nordia Foundation, the Bennelong Foundation, the Monash Law Faculty's Student Mobility Fund, and MyriaD Consultants, which conducts the cross-cultural training.*



Our Bennelong Indigenous Intern Madelaine King