

Columbia Law School Racial and Social Justice Fellowships 2026

The Law School invites applications from second-year J.D. students for the Racial and Social Justice Fellowships for the 2025-2026 academic year. The goal of this fellowship is to provide financial assistance during law school to facilitate students' pursuit of careers in racial or social justice.

Terms of the Fellowship

Awards: Five fellowships of \$25,000 each will be awarded in spring 2026, with grant funds disbursed to the student account in fall of 2026.

Eligibility: Current second-year (2L) Columbia Law School students are eligible to apply. Recipients will receive their funding in the fall of their 3L year. Fellowships will be available to Columbia Law students who intend to pursue racial or social justice legal work immediately after graduation or immediately after a clerkship. Applicants must demonstrate commitment to racial or social justice legal work, an intent to pursue this work immediately after graduation or immediately after a clerkship, and an ability to make a meaningful contribution to this field.

Application Process and Selection: The application deadline is February 22, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Application instructions are included below. A committee of members of the faculty and administration will select the fellows.

The selection committee will consider factors such as the following in assessing candidates:

- Demonstrated commitment to racial or social justice work. This might include:
 - Participation in clinics, externships, or other experiential learning opportunities and/ or participation in classes focused on racial justice, social justice, or public service topics.
 - Work experience, including summer internships and term-time internships as well as work experience prior to and during law school.
 - Participation in specialized Law School programs such as the Max Berger '71 Public Interest/Public Service Fellows Program, Human Rights Institute 1L Advocates Program, or Davis Polk Leadership Initiative.
 - Volunteer experience.
 - Extracurricular activities, including leadership or participation in student groups, affinity groups, moot courts, journals, and pro bono activities.
 - The candidate's reflections on, and aspirations for, addressing racial or social justice issues.
 - Demonstrated skills that will be useful in pursuit of racial or social justice work.
- Personal history and life experience.
- Career goals and anticipated career path.
- Evidence that the fellowship will help the candidate pursue a full-time career in racial or

social justice.

For questions, please contact Erica Smock, dean for the Office of Public Interest/Public Service Law and Careers at els13@columbia.edu.

Application Instructions

Please submit the following documents at cglink.me/2it/s81479. Applications are due on February 22, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Please contact Rebecca Hinde at rh2523@columbia.edu if you have questions with respect to submitting your materials.

- 1) Your resume
- 2) A personal statement (1000 words maximum; **PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME ON THE DOCUMENT**) that describes your commitment to addressing racial or social injustice. This statement should address relevant experience and future aspirations, including postgraduate career plans. (The selection committee does not expect your career plans to be fully mapped out, but it is interested in hearing about your career interests, goals, and expectations and whether you intend to pursue a private sector/corporate position at any point.)
- 3) Two letters of recommendation.¹ It is strongly preferred, but not required, that one letter should come from a Columbia Law School faculty member. These letters may be brief; the selection committee will follow up directly with recommenders as needed.
- 4) An UNOFFICIAL copy of your Columbia Law School transcript. Do NOT upload an official copy.
- 5) Short-answer questions (maximum of 200 words per question; **PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME ON THE DOCUMENT**):
 - a) How would this fellowship enable you to better pursue your career goals?
 - b) How will you use your 2L summer and 3L year to become a stronger candidate for a career in racial or social justice work?
 - c) Please detail your financial need. How will this fellowship affect your ability to pursue racial or social justice work immediately after graduation?
 - d) *Optional*: What distinguishes you from other applicants?
 - e) *Optional*: Please explain any factors that have prevented you from developing a demonstrated commitment to racial or social justice work to date.
 - f) *Optional*: Is there anything else you would like the committee to know about you?

¹ If the recommenders prefer, they can email their letters directly to Rebecca Hinde at rh2523@columbia.edu, but when applying online you will be required to provide recommenders' names, email addresses, and the date by which the letters will be submitted.