

CENTER  
FOR EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY

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# Civil Rights Fellowship Report 2025





## *Introduction*

The Center for Equal Opportunity (CEO) was founded in 1995 to promote merit-based, colorblind equal opportunity. For over 30 years, CEO has been one of the only conservative organizations specifically dedicated to issues of civil rights, race, and ethnicity. CEO has produced more than 80 studies on racial preferences at colleges, universities, law schools and medical schools and been instrumental in every effort to overturn racial preferences. Our staff has prepared counsel and provided legal theories used in landmark cases; given expert testimony before local, state, and federal executive and legislative bodies; led efforts with like-minded organizations; and debated the issue on campuses across the country. CEO studies of racial preferences in college admissions helped lay the groundwork for litigation, led to nine statewide initiatives to ban preferences, and shaped public opinion on the issue.

In 2022, CEO launched the Civil Rights Fellowship, a talent development program for aspiring lawyers and leaders in policy and academia, who receive instruction and training in civil rights case law, enforcement tools, and public policy. CEO has since hosted and trained more than 40 law students and young policy leaders in Washington, D.C to learn from the premier conservative civil rights experts in the nation.

CEO's curriculum focuses on America's foundational documents, history, and conservative legal principles. Our instructors include top government officials, legal scholars, litigators, and influential non-profit leaders. CEO provides fellows with media training, including instruction on writing and publishing effective opinion articles, and participating in media interviews on civil rights issues. Our goal is to strengthen the bench of conservative talent in the areas of civil rights, race, and ethnicity and to push back against the race-conscious policies that have infected our institutions for too long.

The program is available for anyone to apply through CEO's online application portal. We carefully select students from many of the top law schools and graduate programs across the country after interviewing the most promising candidates. CEO's program is the first of its kind, creating a pipeline of talent for years to come.

The unrivaled expertise and network that CEO has developed makes it a unique organization for young conservative lawyers to learn, train, and network. We hope to continue and expand this innovative program.

## *Why the CEO Fellowship is Needed*

The bench of conservative talent and litigators dedicated to civil rights, race, and ethnicity issues is extremely thin, posing immediate difficulties and an ongoing threat to our ability to push back against the race-consciousness promoted by the Left. CEO recognized there was no program within which aspiring conservative leaders in this space can be trained to take on roles where they can join our fight. This project has already begun to develop the new generation of leaders fighting for colorblind equal opportunity, which despite recent victories, is still just getting started.

The Left has invested vast resources over the course of many decades to develop an infrastructure of professionals dedicated to advocating for race-based preferences in education and employment. Those institutions have already begun to make cosmetic changes to re-brand their programs to protect racial preferences in college admissions and in the corporate world.

Over the decades, affirmative action transformed from simple outreach in order to grow the pools of candidates for jobs and school admissions to actual quotas and unequal standards applied to applicants by race and ethnicity. Efforts



Linda Chavez, CEO Founder and Jason Riley, *Wall Street Journal* Columnist and CEO Board Member

to broaden the teaching of American history to include more stories of the actual contributions of blacks, Hispanics and others morphed into indoctrination through false narratives describing unrelenting oppression of certain minorities and insurmountable white privilege.

Without a solid grounding in the history of constitutional and civil rights laws, conservatives have failed to effectively counteract these destructive narratives or stand up against the machine of well-trained civil rights professionals on the Left. The result has been a failure to anticipate the next battle as one program falls and another takes its place.



CEO Civil Rights Fellowship 2025 at America's Square in Washington, D.C.

## *What We Offer Participants*

CEO Civil Rights Fellows receive transportation, lodging, meals, stipend, and intensive instruction with some of the most accomplished scholars, practitioners, and government officials in the civil rights arena. The sessions cover:

- The Declaration of Independence, 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution
- Civil Rights law from the Reconstruction era, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Title IX of the Education Act of 1972 and subsequent amendments to these laws.
- Major case law on affirmative action from the *Bakke* decision to *Students for Fair Admission* and *Ames*
- Enforcement of civil rights with emphasis on Department of Justice, the Department of Education, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Current debates on race issues, including why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs run afoul of civil rights laws and the principles of colorblind equal opportunity
- Litigation strategies and effective advocacy to counter the Left

## **PARTICIPANTS' SCHOOLS**

American University College of Law  
 Arizona State University Law School  
 Ave Maria School of Law  
 Baylor University School of Law  
 Brigham and Young Law School  
 Campbell University Law School  
 Emory University School of Law  
 George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School  
 George Washington University School of Law  
 Georgia State College of Law  
 Harvard Law School  
 Marquette University School of Law  
 Michigan State University Law School  
 Notre Dame Law School Seton Hall  
 University School of Law South Carolina

Joseph F. Rice School of Law  
 Southern University Law Center  
 St. Mary's University School of Law  
 Stetson University College of Law  
 Southern University School of Law  
 University of Colorado Law School  
 University of Florida Law School  
 University of Indiana Mauer School of Law  
 University of Maryland Carey School of Law  
 University of Miami School of Law  
 University of North Dakota School of Law  
 University of South Carolina School of Law  
 University of Wisconsin Law School  
 Wake Forest University School of Law  
 Washington and Lee University School of Law

## OUR PARTNERS

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The instructors in our fellowship come from a broad swath of the conservative movement, including current and past government officials, journalists, public policy organizations, and academics. They bring with them not only their vast experience but firm grounding in conservative legal thought. Among those who have led seminars are:

- **J. Christian Adams**, President and General Counsel, Public Interest Legal Foundation, and Commissioner, USCCR
- **David Bernstein**, Professor of Law, Antonin Scalia Law School
- **Braden Boucek**, Director of Litigation, Southeastern Legal Foundation
- **Zhonette Brown**, Senior Litigation Counsel, NCLA
- **Elizabeth Busch**, Professor of Politics and Co-Director of Christopher Newport University's Center for American Studies
- **GianCarlo Canapara**, Former Senior Legal Fellow, Heritage Foundation
- **Linda Chavez**, Chairman, Center for Equal Opportunity
- **Mark Chenowith**, President and General Counsel, New Civil Liberties Alliance
- **Roger Clegg**, Former President and General Counsel, Center for Equal Opportunity
- **Greg Dolin**, Senior Litigation Counsel, NCLA
- **Eric Dreiband**, Former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Department of Justice; Partner, Jones Day
- **Sharon Fast Gustafson**, Former General Counsel, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- **Todd Gaziano**, President, Center for Individual Rights
- **Mike Gonzalez**, Senior Fellow, Heritage Foundation
- **Gail Heriot**, Commissioner U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Professor of Law University of San Diego Law School
- **James Ho**, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit
- **Stephen Kent**, Media Director, Consumer Choice Center
- **Craig Leen**, Partner, K&L Gates, Immediate Past Director, OFCCP
- **Cory Liu**, State District Judge, Texas, Adjunct Professor at the University of Texas School of Law
- **Andrea Lucas**, Commissioner, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- **Kenneth Marcus**, Former Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education; Founder and Chair, Louis D. Brandeis Center
- **Dan Morenoff**, Executive Director, American Civil Rights Project
- **Rachel Morrison**, Senior Fellow, Ethics and Public Policy Center
- **Russ Nobile**, Senior Attorney, Judicial Watch
- **Sarah Parshall Perry**, Senior Legal Fellow, Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, Heritage Foundation
- **Mark Perry**, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, and Professor Emeritus of Economics, University of Michigan
- **Jason Riley**, Columnist, *The Wall Street Journal*; CEO Board Member
- **Ian V. Rowe**, Author, Agency, and Co-Founder, Vertex Partnership Academies
- **Maimon Schwarzschild**, Professor of Law, University of San Diego School of Law
- **Ilya Shapiro**, Director of Constitutional Studies, Manhattan Institute
- **Alison Somin**, Senior Legal Fellow, Pacific Legal Foundation
- **Eli Steele**, Director and Producer, "What Killed Michael Brown?"
- **Stuart Taylor**, Co-Author, *Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It's Supposed to Help and Why*
- **Craig Trainor**, Nominee Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Housing and Urban Development
- **Hans Von Spakovsky**, Senior Legal Fellow, Meese Center for Legal and Judicial Studies
- **Devon Westhill**, Nominee Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and former President for the Center for Equal Opportunity
- **Wenyuan Wu**, Director, Californians for Equal Rights Foundation

## *What and Where?*

To best leverage the resources of our extensive network of allies and to provide the fellows with a richer experience, CEO negotiated conference room space at the following locations for the fellowship sessions that follow:

### THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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- Post-Civil War Constitutional Amendments and Major Civil Rights Legislation
- Past and Present Controversies: Titles VI, VII, and IX, and the VRA
- A Walk Down Memory Lane: Shifting Politics on Civil Rights and Race Preferences

### NEW CIVIL LIBERTIES ALLIANCE

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- Litigation Strategies and Civil Rights Enforcement
- Interview with Sharon Fast Gustafson: Civil Rights Enforcement in the Workplace
- A View from the Inside: DOJ Enforcement

### THE FEDERALIST SOCIETY

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- Affirmative Action, Race Preferences, and Federal Court Jurisprudence
- DEI, Social Justice, and Critical Race Theory
- *Fair Weather Originalism: Judges, Umpires, and the Fear of Being Boomed*
- *Special Screening of Created Equal: Clarence Thomas in his Own Words*

HERE IS WHAT SOME OF THE FORMER FELLOWS HAVE SAID ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE FELLOWSHIP:

*“The Fellowship was brilliantly organized, from its structure to the speakers, from the selected Fellows to the purposes of the program. I entered the program with a passion for civil rights and equality under law, and left with an even deeper understanding of the history of anti-discrimination, the challenges ahead, and the many ways lawyers and civically active individuals can help advance equality. The speakers, discussions, and fellow participants broadened my perspective and sharpened my sense of purpose. I came away with a network of colleagues and friends whose dedication inspires me...Thank you again for the opportunity, the encouragement, and the example you set through this Fellowship. I look forward to carrying what I learned into my work.”*

Sam Foer, Washington and Lee

*“Sometimes, especially in the current climate, I feel ostracized for my conservative beliefs. I am often pressured to keep silent and fall in line. But this experience has enlightened me that there are others out there like me who are able to see past the smoke screen—who are able to think independently—who fight for justice, despite any social price.”*

Melissa Buss, Marquette School of Law

*“I learned as much in four days as I had in the entire past semester of school. More importantly, it helped me finally find an answer to the dreaded question ‘what kind of law do you want to do.’ I know now that I want to do public interest law.”*

Peter Abernathy, Antonin Scalia Law School

*“You did a fantastic job bringing in amazing speakers and sharing a lot of information in such a short time.”*

Anthony Perricolo, Harvard Law School

*“The Civil Rights Fellowship instructors, presenters and fellows combined an excellent mix of talent and expertise. This opportunity was very meaningful to me.”*

Ladisa Onyilogwu, Director Senior Services,  
Fulton County, Georgia

## *Past & Present Fellows*



**2022 FELLOWS**



**2023 FELLOWS**



**2024 FELLOWS**



**2025 FELLOWS**

## *Where CEO Fellows Are Now*

The CEO Civil Rights Fellowship is already providing tangible results. Just since our program's launch in 2022, students who have completed CEO's fellowship have already gone on to become law clerks, prosecutors, law firm associates, and federal and state government employees. One former CEO fellow has gone on to form his own non-profit promoting colorblind opportunity. Others have written opinion articles on race and have helped CEO draft amicus briefs challenging racial preference programs. Three former fellows have joined CEO as year-long Legal Fellows. It is clear that CEO's unrivaled expertise and network is succeeding in developing young conservative lawyers and policy leaders to continue our fight for colorblind equal opportunity.

The Center for Equal Opportunity is a nonpartisan, nonprofit conservative civil rights organization founded in 1995 that studies, develops, and disseminates ideas that promote colorblind equal opportunity and nondiscrimination in America by:

- Conducting studies of racial and ethnic preferences in college admissions;
- Challenging public and private institutions that promote racial and sex preferences;
- Filing legal briefs in federal and state courts to contest the impermissible use of race, sex, and national origin in education, employment, and contracting;
- Influencing public opinion through writing, speaking, and media appearances; and
- Monitoring and advising on government action—at all levels—to ensure proper adherence to colorblind and nondiscriminatory policies.



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Visit CEO at [www.ceousa.org](http://www.ceousa.org)

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