

While at Cividep, I'd like to use my training and experience as a class action legal assistant and legal researcher to work with lawyers whose clients are garment industry workers. I want to know what it would be like to represent these workers before a court of law, in negotiations, or when bringing complaints pursuant to agreements between brands and factories.

I'm also interested in helping with Cividep's workers' rights awareness training. One thing I'm particularly interested in and have been considering launching a long term research project on is the average garment worker's awareness of the global supply chain. Do workers know which brands their products are being sold to? Do they know what the final price of these garments is? And if not, what are the barriers to knowing these things?

My grandmother was a first generation Mexican American immigrant who helped support her family with a job in a garment factory in downtown San Francisco, California. She worked in that factory for ten years, and yet her experience and that of her coworkers was barely documented. The fashion industry runs in my blood, and I intend to work in it as a lawyer after pursuing a J.D.

But I personally believe that in the U.S. and Europe in particular, long standing and harmful gender stereotypes and beliefs about how fashion is frivolous consistently prevent fashion professionals from being considered serious, being considered academics, and being regarded as people who are responsible for the health and well being of hundreds of millions of people. I'm applying to work with Cividep because over the course of the past 11 months, I've consistently seen headline stories about the plights of garment workers abroad being ignored and even outright disbelieved. I have the utmost respect for those who are trying to get the world to recognize the gravity of these issues and hold corporations accountable, and I want to assist. I think the best way to do this, because of the separation many consumers feel from labor rights issues in the industry when they are distanced from them, is to work directly with workers.