

2026-2028 Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Civil Rights Fellowship

[The Cochran Fellowship](#) was created to honor the extraordinary legacy of Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr., whose distinguished career embodied dedication and commitment to civil rights. This highly selective two-year fellowship is designed to cultivate the next generation of civil rights litigators by immersing early-career lawyers in all aspects of complex civil rights litigation. Fellows learn not just by observing but by taking on meaningful responsibility in a collaborative team environment, supported by close mentorship and active supervision.

About NSBHF

Since its founding in 2000, NSBHF has stood at the forefront of civil rights litigation. Our groundbreaking development of legal theories in wrongful conviction cases has shaped the field, resulting in landmark recoveries for our clients and significant accountability for systemic misconduct.

By using civil discovery to expose the truth behind wrongful convictions, founding partners **Barry Scheck** and **Peter Neufeld** (together with the late Johnnie Cochran) pioneered a path that transformed civil rights practice. Today, partners **Nick Brustin**, **Anna Benvenuti Hoffmann**, **Emma Freudenberger**, and **Amelia Green** lead the nation's premier civil rights trial practice, securing record-setting verdicts and settlements through client-centered representation.

What To Expect As A Cochran Fellow

At NSBHF, we intentionally focus on a small number of the most consequential cases, and we commit the full force of our team and resources to win. For a Cochran Fellow, this means unparalleled, hands-on experience from day one. Fellows join case teams led by partners and senior attorneys, participating at every stage of litigation: from pre-filing investigations through depositions, trial, mediation, and appeals. With our national scope, Fellows travel across the country to work alongside the nation's top civil rights lawyers – litigating in places like Philadelphia, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and Boston, communities with deep histories of racist policing and systemic injustice.

The Cochran Fellowship is more than training, it is a rare opportunity to help shape the future of civil rights litigation while honoring the legacy of one of its greatest champions.

A Typical Fellow Will Experience:

Pretrial Preparation & Trial

Fellows participate actively in all aspects of our high-profile and high-stakes trial preparation. Many fellows have examined witnesses and argued motions at trial.

Depositions

NSBHF proves misconduct through depositions. Fellows take their own depositions under a partner's supervision and second-chair depositions of lead defendants.

Substantive Legal Writing

Fellows are trained to be persuasive advocates, navigating complex legal doctrines and marshalling facts to help our clients win. Fellows work with partners to draft briefs in trial and appellate courts.

Factual Development

Fellows take the lead on case development from the ground up, reviewing police files and testimony to find contradictions and overlooked leads, crafting detailed federal complaints, and working with investigators around the country to track down and interview witnesses.

Client Advocacy

Fellows develop close relationships with clients from day one, acting as advocates to tell their stories. This includes Fellows working closely with our staff social worker to support our clients.

Expert Work

Fellows work closely with nationally renowned experts in the forensic sciences, false confessions, and psychology, among other fields.

Other Opportunities

Fellows travel and gain courtroom experience in different jurisdictions, argue motions, negotiate with opposing counsel, and manage discovery in federal court.

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Who Should Apply

We are looking for fearless advocates for our clients, whether at a deposition, in brief writing, or in the courtroom. Although many Fellows are former judicial clerks, there is no clerkship requirement. We seek candidates who have demonstrated excellence in any number of ways, whether through clinical work, other social justice experience, or litigation experience at another law firm. Successful candidates are committed to holding officers accountable for their misconduct.

NSBHF is committed to serving its diverse clients and ensuring an office environment that is welcoming and respectful to people of all backgrounds. We strongly encourage applicants from all cultures, races, educational backgrounds, life experiences, socio-economic classes, sexual orientations, ages, genders, and physical abilities to apply. We welcome applicants with personal or family experiences with the criminal legal system and/or incarceration. Further, NSBHF supports the rights of job candidates and employees to engage in protest and political action on social justice and human rights matters, including in support of Palestine. As an equal opportunity employer, NSBHF does not discriminate in the firm's employment practices.

2026-2028 Fellowship Application Period

Applications for the 2026-2028 Cochran Fellowship are accepted between **Wednesday, October 1, 2025, and Saturday, November 1, 2025**, to start Fall 2026. For more information on the Cochran Fellowship and how to apply, please visit: <https://nsbhf.com/cochran-fellowship/>.

Please note: Interviews for the 2026-2028 Cochran Fellowship will take place in person with NSBHF arranging travel.

How To Apply

Please email fellows@nsbhf.com with the following documents in PDF format:

- Resume;
- Cover Letter (discussing your commitment to civil rights/social justice and your long-term goals);
- Transcript;
- Writing Sample; and
- List of References.

Compensation and Benefits

- Salary: \$120,000 (gross) in Year 1, and \$130,000 (gross); in Year 2
- NSBHF Student Loan Repayment Assistance to enable talented lawyers to hold the fellowship regardless of financial means, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per month (gross);
- Comprehensive Medical and Dental Coverage;
- Relocation Assistance for Fellows moving to the NYC Metro area;
- Paid Time Off;
- 401(k) Plan;
- Wellness Program; and
- Charitable Contribution Match.