



JPC Summer Internship Guide

Congratulations! How da body? Welcome to the JPC family. As a new member of the JPC family (or just a prospective new member) you probably have many questions. The purpose of this guide is to replace a few of those questions with answers. We feel like we were moderately successful in achieving this purpose, but also realize you may have some lingering questions after reading this guide. Thus, we welcome you (reader) to contact us (Nic, Alan and Sam) with any other questions you may have. Enjoy the guide.

Disclaimer

This document is written by former interns on the basis of their summer internship experiences. The information is largely based on word of mouth and personal views, and is not well researched nor independently verified. This information in no way represents the views of JPC, or their respective law schools.

Background

The Justice and Peace Commission ('JPC') works with people and communities by providing information and education on rights and the law, assisting with interactions with government and court authorities, helping negotiate small-scale conflicts, and taking certain matters to the court. The JPC Strength of Law project operates under the auspices of The Carter Center and with the official blessing of the Ministry of Justice. The JPC works throughout all fifteen counties of Liberia, however, the Strength of Law project, the project in which you will be involved only operates in Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Maryland, River Gee, Grand Kru, Bong, Lufa and Nimba Counties.

In each of these counties, the JPC employs Community Legal Advisors (CLAs) to accomplish its overall goal of spreading knowledge and resolving conflict. The CLAs in each county will either be stationary, assigned to a specific city, or mobile, assigned to a group of target communities. The JPC does not provide legal services to all communities. Specific communities have been labeled "control" communities. The effectiveness of the Strength of Law project will be determined by comparing the target communities with the control communities. Last year, interns were placed in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh; Harper, Maryland; and Ganta, Nimba.

Day-to-day work varies significantly, and the below section "Responsibilities" deals with workload in much more detail, however, as noted the flexibility inherent to working with the JPC means each intern is likely to have varying opportunities and experiences. Flexibility is the beauty of the JPC program.

Responsibilities

Officially, you have very few formal responsibilities – you won't be hand-fed projects to complete, you won't be given deadlines or even a time to show up at the office.

Working for the JPC will undoubtedly force you to push your personal envelope. You won't be limited to the typical nine-to-five work hours; it is an immersive experience. Day-to-day

work varies significantly, and the below section "Responsibilities" deals with workload in much more detail, however, you will work with clients on child custody cases, property disputes and community wide problems such as lack of drinking water or sanitation. You will also serve as a monitor and trainer ensuring the CLAs perform their duties and increase their own legal capacities through out the summer. Lastly, your work will include odds-and ends – you will likely produce official documents for publication, possibly edit official court opinion, or speak on the radio.

See attached FAQ document to get a taste for the types of law you will deal with as an intern.

Law in Liberia

On paper, the legal system in Liberia is similar to the United States. In practice, it is not so similar. First, Liberia has a dual system of statutory law based on American common law for the modern sector and customary unwritten law for the native areas (rural communities). Check out the Liberia constitution and penal codes (attached).

Weather

If you come at the beginning of the summer, you will catch the end of the dry season.

Liberia is hot in May. Very hot. On the bright side, it's dry. The rainy season starts in June. During this time, it is common for it to rain for days on end. Because of the rain, the dirt roads can become treacherous.

Packing

Things to bring:

- DEET
- Law references (hornbooks) to stock the shelves of the offices.
- Books (IMPORTANT - anything fun to read), cards, etc. You will have spare time.
- Rain gear
 - Rain jacket, Rain pants, Umbrella, Waterproof bag/cover
- Headlamp/flashlight - these will be very convenient for reading and getting around at night. Extra batteries can be purchased in Liberia.
- Camera - you will definitely want pictures to remember your experience.
- Computer - your computer will likely be necessary wherever you are working in Liberia.
- Small radio (can also be purchased in Liberia)
- Water filter (unless you want to buy bottled water the entire time).

Things not to bring:

- Mosquito net, they are bigger, better, and cheaper here. Pick one up in Monrovia for about \$18USD.

- Converters for outlets - generally speaking, the outlets will fit US plugs.
- Liberian dollars - everyone accepts US dollars. Money traders will gladly trade on any street corner if change is needed.

Nice to have:

- Battery powered fan. You can get one that takes a pair of D cells from Amazon for \$10USD. D cells are about \$2USD for 12, and available everywhere.
- A few snacks from home (maybe your favorite candy). You need to put the snacks in a mouse-proof container though.
- Your own sheets/pillow case.

Language

It's super fun to both be speaking English and not understand the other person at all, right? Right??? Below is a collection of some common phrases. For a more-than-you-ever-need-to-know look into Liberian English check out the guide *An Introduction to Liberian English* (published in 1981).

- Bossman = this is you.
- Small, small = a little bit
- How da body? = What's up?/How's it going?
- Kiss meat - snails, but not the huge jungle snails, only the small river snails
- -O = added to the end of words to show endearment e.g. good morning-o.
- The sun is hot = yes it is . . . very hot
- Coal tar = paved road. Once you leave Monrovia you won't use this work much.
- I am begging you = come on, cut me some slack; use when haggling
- I am coming = I am getting to my point; or I haven't left yet but will leave soon.
- Eating the money = spending a lot.
- Bushmeat - meat from the jungle: deer, porcupine, groundhog monkey
- Bush - the jungle. Full of monkeys. And cobras. Seriously.
- Trying small - a big job will take a while.
- German plum - Mango
- Back bite = to talk behind someone's back.

Culture

History

- Liberia (Republic of Liberia) was founded and colonized by freed American slaves with the help of a private organization called the American Colonization Society in 1821-22, it was created on the premise American slaves would have greater freedom and equality there. These colonists formed an elite group in Liberian society, and, in 1847, they founded the Republic of Liberia, establishing a government modeled on that of the United States, naming Monrovia, their capital city. The nation is officially home to 3.5 million people, but as you will soon learn statistics mean little here. As

you will soon see first hand, Liberia is recovering from the lingering effects of the civil war and related economic dislocation, that began with the 1980 military-led coup that overthrew then-president Tolbert.

Day to day life

- Kids go to school or to work in the markets - parents out the fields or office. Women may stay home and wash clothes, cook, etc. Church on Sunday (Liberia is about 50% Christian).

Liberian handshake

- It's all about the snap. You probably wont master it no matter how long you stay in Liberia. But don't worry if a Liberian is on the other side of the shake, he'll make you look good.
- The idea is to snap your finger using the other person's finger. So instead of putting pressure with your middle finger against your thumb, you brace their finger with your thumb, and put pressure with your middle finger against their braced finger.

Food

- Delicious does not even begin to describe Liberian food (thick sarcasm). Palm Butter, fufu and soup, bush meat, palm wine, potato greens, Cassava, butter pear (avocado) bioled eggs, fish, plantain, mango, corn sugar cane.

Communication/Phone

There are several network providers in Liberia: Cell Comm, Comium, Lonestar, and Libercell. It seems like most people use Lonestar, and the Carter Center has likely already purchased Lonestar sim cards for your use.

For Lonestar, local text messages cost about \$0.01, local calls are about \$0.05 to \$0.10 per minute and long distance calls are about \$0.20 per minute. Local calls are cheaper. Internet costs \$1/hour, but you will need to get your phone setup in Monrovia, unless it is a specially supported phone. If your phone is specially supported, you can activate Internet by texting "lcc" or "lccinternet" to 1166.

You can purchase a cheap cell phone in Monrovia for about \$35USD. Alternatively, you can bring a GSM phone from home. Make sure that the phone is unlocked, or you can get someone to unlock it in Liberia.

Internet is a bit harder to find - in most large cities look for an internet cafe. Libraries and the UN are also good (free) internet resources.

Safety/Police

There is an enormous problem with corruption and misconduct among the police (LNP) in Liberia. All the police have been trained by UNPOL, and some have gone abroad for

training. However, UNPOL finds itself frustrated because LNP do not follow the training that they have been given.

One of the problems is that some of the LNP are well known by locals to be former criminals and human rights violators. Following their normal procedure, the UN had posted photos of the recruits in the neighborhoods, but people were afraid to report them.

Another one of the problems is that the LNP officers are not getting paid on time. Due to corruption in higher levels of the government, wages are delayed by months, and operating costs are sometimes not covered. This is damaging to the moral of the officers, and adds to the temptations of accepting bribes and other forms of misconduct. Police officers feel justified in accepting bribes because the blame should be laid on the Government. Their argument is that the government is putting them in the position where they must take bribes in order to feed their family.

Generally the police will try to do as little work as possible, and get money when they can. It can be difficult to get them to write reports, follow up on investigations, or payback illegal fees they may have charged. You will need to "put fire on their backs", and tell everyone that they should get receipts for anything and everything that they give to the police.

Courts

The courts also suffer from corruption, and misconduct. The lower courts are extremely poor. Magistrates and justices of the peace are sometimes illiterate, ignorant of the law, and willfully disregard the law. They will often charge illegal court fees, rule on cases outside of their jurisdiction, and pass judgments inconsistent with the law.

The circuit court judges are all law school graduates (we think...), so they follow the law much more closely, but like the rest of Liberia, corruption is a problem.

Most of the lawyers are in Monrovia, and there are very few in the other counties. Many of the lawyers left during the civil war and have not returned. The Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law in Monrovia is graduating new lawyers. They are trying small – there are scholarships and job opportunities to work in the judiciary system as public defenders, county attorneys, city solicitors, and magistrates. However progress is slow.

Inside the actual court, people are quite casual. The lawyers will joke around with each other and the judges, and also get into animated arguments.

City Specific

Ganta

Ganta is the second largest city in Liberia. Despite this, Ganta is still significantly behind Monrovia, in terms of living conditions. For more information on Ganta, contact Sam Schultz (SamuelCSchultz@gmail.com), who worked there in the summer of 2009 for 10 weeks.

- Police - the biggest thing that you are likely to notice is that the police are understaffed, disorganized, and lacking in resources. That said, they are reasonably cooperative.
- Court - in my experience, we had various complaints about the magistrates and judges taking bribes and asking for money that they shouldn't be. If that is still true, then you will likely be spending some time monitoring the courts in Ganta.
- Market - the market sells many things and offers an easy place to purchase food, soccer jerseys, backpacks, and many other things you might need.
- Leprosy Colony - there is a rehabilitation center for lepers in Ganta. Do not worry, leprosy is not contagious and the rehab is a great place to buy unique souvenirs for yourself or your family - they sell hand-carved wooden sculptures, necklaces, etc., so it is a rare place to get a Liberian souvenir. Just beware, they will try to bargain with you in US dollars but only bargain in Liberian dollars. Also, remember, they see you are foreign and will start very high in the negotiation process.
- Food/Drinks - there are a couple of places to buy a quick meal (Abuja serves a mean chicken and rice) and a handful of places to buy a drink. Each of these places is reasonably similar so don't worry too much about where you go at first. In the end, you will find the place you like best.
- Sports to play - there is a pickup basketball game in the Methodist compound area most days with almost exclusively Liberians (but they love to have foreigners show up), so if you are interested just ask around. Also, there is a NGO pickup soccer game sometimes during the week so again, if you are interested ask around.
- Sports to watch - most weeks, there will be some sort of soccer game being played in Ganta. Ganta's team is quite talented and a lot of fun to watch, so I highly recommend it. Also, the tickets are cheap, as most things in Liberia, so you should at least try this once.
- Exchanging money/charging your cell phone - there are booths to change your money and charge your cell phone all over. Just ask what their rate is and go with the highest.
- Internet - your first option is the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). JPC has an alliance with the NRC, so if you talk to them, they should allow you to use their internet free of charge. If that doesn't work, you can use one of the internet cafes. There are two internet cafes. The first is run by the UN - it is reasonably reliable and probably the faster of the two cafes. The second is located near Batu Quarter.
- Other NGOs - there are various other NGOs in the area so if you are looking for some other Americans or Canadians you should check the other NGOs out. Also, it is probably a good idea to have some kind of relationship with the other NGOs, just to help you keep up with what's going on in Liberia.
- ICE SCREME YOU SCREME WE ALL SCREME FOR ICE CREAM! A steal at 10 LD.
- Overall, Ganta is a very cool place to live. It might be overwhelming at first but on the whole (from my experience), the people of Ganta are not looking to take advantage of you - most want to help you and be your friend (since there aren't many foreigners to befriend for them).

Harper

Harper is a cool little beach town. Pleebo to the north is where most of the commerce happens. It's a beautiful place, and people are very friendly and relaxed. You can get into Harper from Monrovia by plane or car. Car takes a long time, especially during rainy season, so it is usually done by plane. WFP planes come to Harper twice a week, and you

can ride them for free when there is a spot available. There are also commercial flights twice weekly for about \$300 USD.

- The police station is located near the UN HQ, on a little hill. The regional Commander is McCarthy, the local commander is Cole, and the deputy commander is Anderson. The police can be slow, and difficult to get to come.
- The courthouse doubles as the city hall, and is located near the JPC building. The prison is right next to it. It is closed undergoing renovations, and may be finished by the time you read this. The courts have been moved to the youth center, and the city hall has been moved to the Presidential house.
- Food/Drink - You get get food at Sophie's Spot, which serves food for about 200LD a meal, during lunch time. There are a couple of other restaurants nearby. Dinner food is only available on prior request. For drinks, there is Salome's, and a couple of other bars in that area. You can get a large club beer for about 170LD (?). There is a Pakistani restaurant in the UN Barracks. It's a great deal, and good for a change of pace. \$2USD for lunch/breakfast. \$3 for lunch with meat.
- Throughout the day and part of the night, there are coffee stands around town. You can usually get eggs, spam, sardines, bread, and spaghetti. In the evening, there is street food available. Delicious, fresh, fried fish is available. There is also meat sticks (really good), fried plantains, and sometimes fried potatoes.
- History - Maryland has a long history and reputation for ritualistic killings. Every year there are several people found dead with body parts removed. This practice is known as Boyo, and was brought to Liberia by the Congos (Americo-Liberians). Back in the 70s, the Tolbert Government cracked down on these killings, arresting, trying, and ultimately hanging seven people. The hangings were done in the empty field directly across from the City Hall. After the executions, there were no more ritualistic killings in Maryland for ten years. The killings came back after about 10 years.
- Safety - While foreigners have never been targeted for these ritualistic killings (so you probably won't need to worry too much about being targeted), they have had a major impact on the citizens of Harper. People are afraid that they will become the next victim. This is also part of the reason why many people avoid coming to Maryland, and it is so difficult to get lawyers to come and work in Maryland. It was only in late 2009 that the county managed to recruit that a city solicitor and a public defender. It is widely believed that the killings are done or ordered by a secret society of high status citizens. There has been little investigation into this. It is also widely believed that "African Science" (a form of magic) would be the most suitable way to find the culprits.
- UNMIL - Headquarters are located in the former Tubman museum. They have continuous power and internet. The UNMIL Barracks are located near the City Hall. Good food too!

For more information on Harper contact Alan at alancheuk@gmail.com. He lived in Harper for 9 weeks in 2009 (and 1 week in Pleebo).

Zwedru

Zwedru is awesome! Deep in the interior, one of the best places to truly become a Liberian. The entire city is centered around what locals call the "triangle" the intersection of three roads (all paved!) in the middle of town. Pretty safe town, although there is a large jungle

area between the downtown area and most of the residential areas. One forigner working for Right2Play was the victim of an armed robbery during the summer of 2009.

- Food - Egg sandwiches and tea (ovaltine) are served at most of the shacks located around the perimeter of the triangle. Mayo optional, most will include tomato or avocado (butter pear) if in season. Dinner is possible at Cash Bar and other places next door and fried fish is always served at Florida. Florida and Cash are also the best bars in town - Club beer and Heineken.
Another great option is eating at the UNMIL base locate on the outskirts of town. Dr inks will be cold if you can here the generator running. Several bakeries also exist in and around the triangle - banana bread, coconut twists and donuts all available at good prices. Grand Gedeh favorites include bitter root and bush meat.
- Sports - Soccer everywhere. Try challenging other NGO's in town to matches. Lots of fun and a great way to bond. A covered basketball court is available for use at the Multilateral High School. Indoor soccer is also fun to play on the court - grab a few desks from the hallway to serve as goals. The high School garden also grown some hard to find fruits - e.g. watermelon.
- Courts - Circuit court is located on a hill a short walk from downtown (next to the radio tower). Municipal Court is attached to the same building (the former City Hall). Limited seating space, and everything goes real slow because of the need for everything to be typed on manual typewriter. Should dress-up to some degree while visiting the court.
- Prison - Short drive out of town is the largest prison in Liberia. The warden spent several years living in Pennsylvania and is very friendly. The prison is part of a food growing program, with huge pineapple and rice field located outside. Mass escapes are fairly common.
- NGOs - Merlin is a great resource, try to meet for of the foreign staff - they have Internet and a great cook.
- JPC office - Located a the Catholic High School, narrow room with no electricity. Good central meeting place for the monitors and Parish staff. Key is usually kept in an envelope stapled to the door. A new office was being built closer to the triangle - likely it is still only halfway built.
- Around town - Checkpoint on the north side of town, but not on the side headed to Harper, thus if you leave make sure to take your documents. Around Grand Gedeh are several cool, but remote places to visit, including some mining camps, and Sam Doe's hometown (complete with bombed out mansion). The northern edge of Grand Gedeh is bordered by a large river. Buy catfish here, people will love you.
- Airport - UN flights come regularly - interns can try to get on the flight lists, but even then flying on UN plans is difficult. Somewhat easier to use the UN planes to transport documents to/from the regional office in Harper.

For more information on Zwedru contact Nic at nmarkman@umich.edu. He lived there for 10 week during the summer of 2009.