

# CHINYERE EZIE

Civil Rights Lawyer | Activist | Consultant

## **EDUCATION**

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### **Columbia University School of Law**, New York, NY

Juris Doctorate, *with honors*, May 2010

Honors: Alexander Hamilton Scholar (Full Merit Scholarship); Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar; Jane Marks Murphy Prize Recipient; Parker School of Foreign & Comparative Law Recognition of Achievement in International Law

Activities: Editor-in-Chief, *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*; President, Columbia Outlaws; Conference Chair, African Law Students Association; Domestic Violence Prevention Courtroom Advocates Project

### **Yale University**, New Haven, CT

Bachelor of Arts, *cum laude*, Sociology & International Studies, May 2006

Honors: Frank Memorial Prize for Outstanding Senior Thesis in Sociology

## **EXPERIENCE**

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### **Center for Constitutional Rights**, New York, NY

*Senior Staff Attorney*, October 2018 – Present | *Legal Intern*, Spring 2009

Litigates racial justice, gender justice, and LGBTQ+ rights cases in federal court. Regularly presents on legal issues at conferences, law schools, and in the news media.

### **U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**, New York, NY

*Trial Attorney*, October 2016 – October 2018

Litigated employment discrimination cases on behalf of diverse plaintiffs, with a focus on LGBTQ rights. Managed all aspects of complex litigation in federal court, including brief-writing, oral argument, and trial advocacy. Lead Attorney on *EEOC v. United Health Programs of America et al.*, a religious discrimination case that resulted in a \$5.1 million dollar jury verdict in the Eastern District of New York and a historic injunction.

### **Southern Poverty Law Center**, Montgomery, AL

*Staff Attorney*, September 2014 – October 2016

Litigated groundbreaking civil rights cases in state and federal court with a focus on constitutional rights and LGBTQ matters. Expert in legal issues related to sex discrimination in the areas of healthcare, employment, housing, and education. Lead Attorney for Ashley Diamond, a transgender woman whose lawsuit concerning Georgia's refusal to provide her gender dysphoria-related care or protection from sexual assault led the U.S. Department of Justice to affirm the constitutional rights of transgender prisoners to medical treatment, and Georgia to agree to a monetary settlement, early release, and significant policy changes. Served as counsel for persons facing an array of civil rights violations, including transgender employees subjected to employment discrimination, individuals denied same gender marriage recognition, and an intersex child subjected to medically unnecessary sex-assignment surgery. Also engaged in policy advocacy and worked in coalition with members of impacted communities.

**Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP**, New York, NY

*Associate*, Fall 2011 – August 2014 | *Summer Associate*, Summer 2009

Engaged in complex litigation in state and federal court—drafting complaints, briefs, and motions, conducting depositions, and managing fact and expert discovery. Maintained an active *pro bono* docket, including a *Bivens* litigation on behalf of a man from the Dominican Republic maliciously prosecuted, Bronx residents affected by policies of stop and frisk, and a transgender woman subjected to gender discrimination.

**Hon. Victoria A. Roberts, Eastern District of Michigan, Detroit, MI**

*Research Assistant*, Summer 2011

Conducted legal research, prepared bench memoranda, drafted opinions, and attended hearings.

**Hon. Eric L. Clay, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, Detroit, MI**

*Law Clerk*, Fall 2010 – Summer 2011

Conducted legal research, drafted bench memoranda and opinions, and attended oral argument.

**American Civil Liberties Union–National Office**, New York, NY

*Law Clerk*, Summer 2009

Conducted legal research and drafted memos in support of the LGBT HIV/AIDS Project.

**Columbia Human Rights Clinic**, New York, NY

*Clinical Student & Teaching Assistant*, Fall 2008 – Spring 2010

Engaged in curriculum development, participated in proceedings before the Inter-American Commission, and completed diverse initiatives concerning human rights in the Americas and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Open Society Institute Justice Initiative**, New York, NY

*Legal Intern*, Summer 2008

Researched treaties and case law on international war crimes, analyzed materials in French and English, and drafted research memos.

**Kenya Human Rights Commission**, Nairobi, Kenya

*Legal Researcher*, Summer 2004; Summer – Fall 2005

Conducted research and drafted reports on pre-trial detention and due process violations in Kenya and human rights abuses in export processing zones.

## **HONORS & AWARDS**

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**The LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York (LeGaL)’s 2022 Community Excellence Award**, 2022 Recipient

**White House Fellows Program Regional Panelist**, 2021 Panelist

**Fordham Law School Outlaws Trailblazer Award**, 2021 Honoree

**Go Magazine, 100 Women We Love**, 2020 Honoree

**NYC Bar Association’s Arthur S. Leonard Award for Distinguished Service on Behalf of the LGBTQ+ Community**, 2020 Honoree

**Council of Urban Professionals (CUP) Catalyst in Law, 2019 Honoree**

**National LGBT Bar Association, Top 40 Lawyers Under 40, 2016 Honoree**

**Myra Bradwell Award for Distinguished Columbia Law School Alumnus, 2016 Recipient**

**J. William Fulbright Scholar, 2006 Recipient**

Completed a year-long quantitative and qualitative study on export-led development in Mauritius, surveying 1000 export processing zone workers, and convening focus groups in six languages with the help of a research team.

**Cohen Public Service Fellow, 2005 Recipient**

Conducted field research on urbanization and industrialization in Kenya; helped found an apparel workers' collective that engages in HIV/AIDS education and outreach in Nairobi slum communities.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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Chinyere Ezie, *Disrupting the Discrimination to Incarceration Pipeline for Trans People of Color*, ST. THOMAS L. REV. (FORTHCOMING)

Chinyere Ezie, *Not Your Mule?: Disrupting the Political Powerlessness of Black Women Voters*, 92 COLORADO L. REV. 659 (2021).

Chinyere Ezie & Richard Saenz, *Abuse and Neglect of Transgender People in Prisons and Jails: A Lawyer's Perspective*, PLI Chronicle (2020).

Chinyere Ezie, *Deconstructing the Body: Transgender and Intersex Identities and Sex Discrimination—The Need for Strict Scrutiny*, 20 COLUM. J. GENDER & L. 141 (2011).

Chinyere Ezie, *Discourses on Self, Work and Globalization among Kenyan Apparel Workers*, 6 YALE J. SOC. 6 (2006).

## **BOARD AFFILIATIONS**

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Vice-Chair and Board Member, Transgender Law Center, 2016 to Present

Treasurer & Founding Board Member, National Trans Bar Association, 2016 to Present

## **ADMISSIONS**

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Admitted to Practice in New York State, the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York, and the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.