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12-27-2011

Where to Begin Researching Civil Rights Law

Rebecca Mattson

Penn State Law, ram6023@psu.edu

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Recommended Citation

Mattson, Rebecca, "Where to Begin Researching Civil Rights Law" (2011). *Law Library Faculty Works*. 9.
http://elibrary.law.psu.edu/library_faculty/9

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THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

Research & RESOURCES

Where to begin researching civil rights law

Martin Luther King Jr. was an icon of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Although he was not the only person pursuing equal treatment for all, he is, perhaps, the most well-known.

In August of this year, a memorial to King was erected in Washington, D.C. In just a few short weeks, we will commemorate his birthday. The civil rights movement of the 1960s, though not the first of such movements, spawned numerous legal case decisions as well as federal and state anti-discrimination statutes.

When researching civil rights and anti-discrimination law, it may be difficult to know where to begin. There are numerous sources available, ranging from the broad overview to the specific, detailed analysis.

A researcher unfamiliar with civil rights law and history might want to begin by accessing the civil rights webpage Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School (www.law.cornell.edu/wex/Civil_rights). This site provides the researcher with a broad discussion of civil rights law, ranging from the ratification of the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution through the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The site also links to other sites on employment law, New York civil rights law, and international civil and political rights law.

Another good resource that provides an overview of the topic is the National Archives' discussion of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/). This site provides a history of the Act and the formation of the EEOC under Title VII.

However, a more in-depth analysis of a particular area might be needed. There are numerous treatises available:

- **Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Litigation: The Law of Section 1983, 4th**, by Sheldon H. Nahmod, provides a detailed discussion of 1983 litigation. This three volume treatise includes relevant Supreme Court cases and discussions from both plaintiff and defendant points of view.

- **Federal Civil Rights Acts, 3d**, by Rodney A. Smolla, is a two-volume set that provides a comprehensive overview of federal civil rights law. The books discuss in detail the civil rights statutes and how they have been interpreted by the courts. This set covers voting rights, housing discrimination, religious freedom, and employment discrimination, to name a few.



By **REBECCA MATTSON**

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Columnist

- **Housing Discrimination: Law and Litigation**, by Robert G. Schwemm, is a useful treatise discussing many important issues in housing discrimination. The book offers detailed discussions and examples of cases under the Fair Housing Act.

- **Employment Discrimination Law and Litigation**, by Merrick T. Rossein, is a three volume set for the researcher interested in employment discrimination and/or workplace harassment. This set offers discussion on issues that arise under the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title VII, as well as numerous other civil rights statutes. The set also provides model harassment policies and the complete text of some selected statutes.

- **Disabilities and the Law**, by Laura F. Rothstein and Julia Rothstein, discusses disability law in the context of education, employment, housing, public accommodations, transportation and health care. This treatise examines the law under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation act, as well as other disability rights laws.

- **State and Local Government Civil Rights Liability**, by Ivan Bodensteiner and Rosalie Berger Levinson, is a four-volume set covering grounds on which state and local governments and officials might be subject to liability under civil rights law. This treatise covers Section 1983 liability as well as employment discrimination, housing discrimination and disability rights law.

For current news on civil rights litigation, go to the website for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

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(www.eeoc.gov). The website not only discusses news and developments in employment discrimination law, but it also offers discussions tailored to employees as well as employers. The EEOC also provides access to the full text of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by current legislation.

Finally, the New York Division of Human Rights also has a useful website (www.dhr.state.ny.us). Here, you can read the full text of anti-discrimination laws in New York state, such as laws

regarding housing discrimination and employment discrimination, as well as procedural law surrounding filing a complaint and attending a hearing.

Rebecca Mattson is a research librarian at Harris Beach PLLC. She holds a Juris Doctor from the University at Buffalo Law School and is a candidate for a Master of Library Science at the University at Buffalo. She is a member of the New York State Bar, Monroe County Bar Association and the American Association of Law Libraries.