

Talking Points: Daniel Carlston

2021 CHARLES J. BEARD, II DIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

Daniel Carlston, Tufts University alum and current student at Columbia Law School, has been selected as a recipient for Foley Hoag's 2021 Charles J. Beard, II Diversity Fellowship. Dan has a background in cognitive and brain science, and looks forward to exploring the intersection between psychology and law. In his interview, Dan discusses what fields have piqued his interest and what he wants to learn moving forward.

How did you become interested in law?

I didn't always know I wanted to be involved in the legal profession. I went to Tufts for my undergraduate degree, and I was enrolled in an interdisciplinary cognitive and brain sciences major. I became interested in the interaction between social psychology, cognitive science and law - like how those factors affect the criminal justice system and jury selection. When I went to Melbourne, Australia for a semester abroad, I enrolled in several law courses, and that was where my interest really began.

What would you like to explore during your time at Foley Hoag?

In my short time here already, I've gained a lot of experience. I would like to explore different practice areas and types of work, and discover what area is a good fit for my skills and my personality. Foley Hoag has allowed me to do this so far, and offers a lot of flexibility with its summer program. Everyone at Foley Hoag is welcoming and easy to work with, and it's been a smooth process. So far, I've worked on several projects ranging from patent litigation, civil rights litigation, mergers and acquisitions and even some pro bono work with the Foley Hoag Foundation.



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How do you hope to incorporate your knowledge of cognitive sciences and your past experiences into your practice as a lawyer?

Cognitive science and social psychology bleed into everything in some way. My knowledge of these areas has led me to see how things like implicit bias and the shortcuts our brains take are present in the legal profession as well as life in general. This knowledge makes me think critically about my daily actions, and helps me better understand the way I think, learn and work. It also has made me better at tackling new tasks in unfamiliar environments, and helped me recognize things like bias more easily. Additionally, I spent time working at a Community Health Research lab. This experience assisted me with health law – I learned about the many legal difficulties that accompany the healthcare field. While there, I did some research on Alzheimer’s and dementia, and learned about the legal challenges surrounding those illnesses, such as informed consent and documentation of end-of-life treatment plans.

While at Foley Hoag, what do you wish to achieve?

First and foremost, I want to build a reputation as a reliable and trustworthy legal professional, both for clients and others at the firm. I’d also like to become more involved with pro bono work and DE&I efforts at Foley Hoag. I think it’s important to give back to our communities and listen to the voices of underrepresented and marginalized people, and to open doors for them. Foley Hoag’s clear commitment to DE&I is excellent, especially the fact that they have an appointed director—Rosa Nunez—and a dedicated space to tackle these sorts of issues. However, there is always more work to be done!

Why is immigration policy important to you, and how has your research on racial bias and the criminal justice system impacted your legal career?

I still want to learn more about immigration and the social justice system. Implicit bias and social cognition play out in very real, tangible ways when it comes to these topics. I’m especially concerned by the sheer volume of detentions and deportations of members of the Southeast Asian community, specifically in the Boston area recently. I am committed to forging positive change in the field.