



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

I chose to work at the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles this summer because I was truly wowed by the different work groups, and how much work they do for equal access in the legal field in a single non-profit. This summer I have had the honor of doing some amazing work, and sitting in on meetings with like-minded advocates. So far, I have had the opportunity to work in my very own case in an SSI overpayment ALJ judge hearing. I am helping my client be reimbursed for an SSI overpayment notice received without any actual calculation as to how they got to the amount. I was able to gather a declaration from him, and it showed me how much he truly needs are help, and simply how great of a person he is. I also because I am an LEIF fellow had the honour to present myself to the LAFLA board of directors. Although I do NOT like public speaking, I know that as a lawyer I will need to do this, so why not start now. Lastly, I have attended great talks and meetings. I have attended whole families' meetings, as well as other meetings regarding lafla's SOS initiative like Reimagine child safety. Today 06/17/22I had the absolute honour to attend an All staff meeting. At this meeting I was able to get training on Racial Justice in the workplace both externally and internally, I also had the privilege of listening to the amazing Charity Chancellor-Cole. If you are reading this GO LOOK HER UP RIGHT NOW. I am not kidding; her story is amazing. As a black woman, it is rare to see other black woman in the legal profession. However, any opportunity I am given I am truly thankful for. Lastly, at today's event I was able to get some insight into LAFLA's SOS initiative. I will have the honor of helping my supervisor and Racial Justice team produce a White Paper for the support over separation initiative. I am very happy with my summer so far, and I know for a fact I have chosen the right non-profit to work for this summer!

Update 2:

The last two weeks at LAFLA, I have worked on various projects. One of the projects I have worked on has been assisting those in need of criminal record expungement documents get their required documents. Often times client's cases tend to get closed out because they did not retrieve the required documents and were unresponsive when an attorney attempted to follow up. My role this summer will be to follow up with clients, help them obtain their documents and hopefully work on their petitions. I also am a LEIF fellow, so I have been working on my LEIF writing assignment. In my LEIF writing assignment, I am discussing the effects of incarceration and specifically how they relate to legal services. One example being "Mr.Lopez" who came very close to have his grandchild taken from his home, based on the fact that he had a very old criminal record. The



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effects of incarceration can affect someone's life for the rest of their life. Luckily, LAFLA was able to settle "Mr. Lopez's" case, but it still is an example of the consequence of a conviction. Further, I have continued working on my brief and declaration for the SSI overpayment case I have.

Update 3:

The last two weeks at LAFLA I have worked on multiple assignments. One of my favorite assignments was my LEIF project. My LEIF project talks about the effects of incarceration, specifically the names that follow those with past convictions and how this can affect their lives. In my writing assignment, I talk about my own personal story with my family, as well as two of my clients at LAFLA who have faced the detrimental post-incarceration effects. My writing assignment is important to me because I hope to change how people look at incarcerated people. In a criminal justice system that is supposed to be about rehabilitation, it is important to look at the bigger picture of one's incarceration. I have also been working on a Racial Justice Curriculum, in which the new LAFLA attorneys will have to take. This curriculum will be at least one year long, with one training a month. Lastly, I have been working on a research assignment. The research assignment has been pretty tricky, but nonetheless, I am grateful to be gaining research skills.

Update 4:

My last two weeks at the legal aid foundation were very fulfilling. I got to turn in my first brief for an actual client in order to get his social security over payment waived, so that he can later get retroactive social security. I also turned in my op-ed piece on the affects of incarceration, specifically the affects of putting labels on individuals who have been incarcerated. I also got to work on a disability case, in which we had a two day turn around. This allowed me to collaboratively work with my racial justice team in order to help out a client who had her case transferred many times. Lastly, I turned in my recommendations for the racial justice curriculum at LAFLA. Being that diversity is such an important factor in the legal field, it was awesome to be able to have input into LAFLA racial justice curriculum.

Update 5:

My experience at the legal aid foundation of Los Angeles was very rewarding. I was able to do an array of activities from legal research, client interviews, writing briefs, as well as an impactful writing piece. The most memorable part of working at LAFLA was the diversity I was exposed to. The LAFLA is a very diverse work environment and although black women make up a very small portion of the legal community, it did not feel like such at LAFLA because I was exposed to many black female attorneys. I really enjoyed the trainings I was able to sit on in regard to diversity in the work place. I even got to help create the racial justice curriculum for LAFLA attorneys.

I also really enjoyed doing client interviews. One of my clients had a very interesting life story. It was great to be able to do the client interview to get a great glimpse into who he was beyond his legal issues. At the end of the day legal clients are way more than their legal issues and as a future advocate I want to make sure I am fully representing my clients. Working at LAFLA gave me first-hand experience into doing this.

I also enjoyed being able to be a LEIF fellow. I got to meet many attorneys who may not have the exact life path I have had, but who all face adversity and still ended up being successful. This gave me an enormous amount of motivation. Being a LEIF fellow also allowed me to do the work I wanted to do in the community without having to struggle financially or take out loans that I did not want to. Being a LEIF fellow also allowed me to



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work with my peers. This was an incredible experience because in a way me and my peers gained a mentor in each other. It was great to give someone advice on their LEIF project, as well as get advice on mine.

I also enjoyed being able to write my own briefs. When I was writing my own briefs for real clients it really gave me perspective into what advocacy is like. I was able to go through huge case files, and pull out the important facts, and gather additional facts to represent my client. I also learned how important grammar is in the legal field, which will be very important in my future career.

What I enjoyed the most was my LEIF writing piece. In my LEIF piece I wrote about my personal experience with the criminal justice system as it relates to the incorrect labeling of those who have faced convictions. I liked that LAFLA allowed use to write or do a project on whatever spoke to us. I hope my published piece can change the way people look at those who have faced past convictions.

Overall, this summer at the legal aid foundation I was able to gain mentors, I was able to be a mentor, I was able to be an advocate, and I learned of the importance of working with a team.