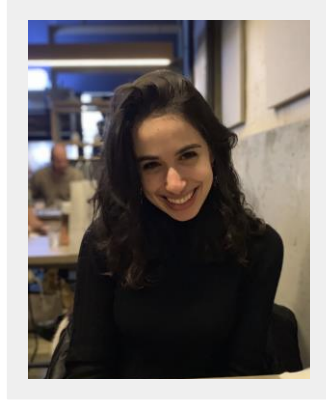




EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



Name: Michela Wehl

Law School: New York University

Organization: Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers

Update 1: I'm in my second week of my internship with Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers and am already learning a ton about the family regulation system and how it operates in my home state of California. I'm just getting acquainted with all the many different players and dynamics that attorneys in the field have to navigate. It's also been very exciting to be at the office as the Supreme Court upheld ICWA - it was surprising good news and inspiring to see how concretely it will impact people's lives.

Update 2: The last few weeks of the internship at LADL have really picked up! I've started to get more comfortable with all the players of dependency court in California, and to dive more into substantive work. I completed a research assignment from supervisor to determine whether he could rely on the opposing side's own evidence if they were charging his client under certain sections of the statute. Turns out - he can! I also got to observe him conduct an eventful trial where multiple different experts were called. And then he won!

Update 3: My supervisor has been on vacation for the last couple weeks, so I've gotten to work with a different senior writ attorney. It's been a great experience to get to observe another attorney's style and learn from how she breaks things down for clients.

Update 4: In my last couple weeks of my internship my supervisor returned from vacation, and I worked with him to ease the transition back with his clients. I continued to provide translation services to our Spanish speaking clients and assisted with developing arguments for contested hearings.

Update 5: In my months at Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers (LADL), I had the privilege of being part of an organization deeply committed not only to family representation but also to anti-racist representation. LADL's



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mission is to represent parents in juvenile dependency proceedings in Los Angeles County, ensuring that families remain united and that parents receive the best legal representation and support possible.

My varied professional experiences since college have continued to solidify my commitment to combating inequality in whatever way I can. Family defense, in particular, resonated with me because of the ways it operates at the intersection of racial, economic, and gender-based oppression, among others. The recent evolution of family defense as a field and the growing public awareness of the inherent violence and racism in family regulation systems have been particularly inspiring.

One thing I will take away from my time at LADL is the significance of the "vertical" representation model. In juvenile dependency proceedings, where cases can extend over many months or even years, LADL's commitment to consistent legal representation for parents is essential. I saw firsthand how building long-term relationships with clients enhances trust and fosters effective advocacy. This commitment to clients' well-being is a principle I intend to carry forward into my future work.

Another eye-opening aspect of my internship was the differential treatment of Native children and families within the family regulation system. This stood in stark contrast to the lack of such distinctions in other legal contexts. Learning about the intricacies of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and witnessing the various stakeholders' attitudes towards it shed light on the profound impact it can have on families.

In terms of my future work, my experience at LADL has solidified my desire to explore defense work in other areas of the law, such as public defense. LADL helped me understand what holistic defense can look like, and I intend to carry that with me, whether I am working in family or public defense in the future. I believe that zealous advocacy means not only defending the legal rights of clients but also addressing the broader systemic issues that contribute to their involvement in the legal system, and I am grateful for the opportunity I had to witness that kind of advocacy this summer.