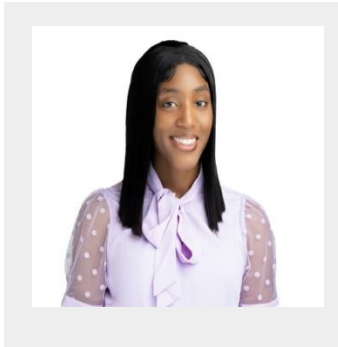




Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



Name: Anony Walton

Law School: Wayne State University

Organization: Legal Services of South-Central Michigan

Update 1: I am excited to announce that as of May 31, 2023, I have begun a summer clerkship with Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM) as part of the Michigan Advocacy Program. I am further grateful to receive funding from Equal Justice America to support my work this summer.

LSSCM provides advice and representation to low-income families, individuals, and older adults in over 10 counties within the state of Michigan free of charge! In my short time with LSSCM, my experience has been nothing short of fulfilling. I have had the opportunity to assist with their bi-weekly Walk-in Eviction clinic and offer individuals assistance in their times of need. During these clinics, the Attorneys provide clients with advice, resources for assistance, and much more. I look forward to continuing this work throughout the summer.

Equal Justice America is a nonprofit organization that helps fund law students working in public interest, which in turn increases the number of lawyers who strive to ensure everyone has access to justice. If you would like to donate to ensure this organization can continue to fund students in public interest, please donate.

Update 2: EJA Fellow Update-- A week of wins!

This week, I feel as if I made an impact on the lives of two individuals and it makes everything worth it.

Win #1: Application to Set Aside Conviction Approved !

On June 27, 2023, I had my first hearing! My first chance to practice (with supervision, of course!) Though I was nervous, I did very well. Relief was granted and this client will be able to obtain his CDL to better provide for his family. One of my arguments was the purpose of the Michigan Expungement Statute is to essentially give

individuals a second chance at life. I believe that our system is far too focused on Retaliation instead of Rehabilitation and this hearing was the perfect chance for me to prove what rehabilitation looks like.

Win #2: Conditional Dismissal of a Termination of Tenancy

This week, a client called because she received an Eviction notice and her 2nd hearing was within 72 hours. At first, opposing counsel was not willing to work with her. After reviewing her court documents, I, with the assistance of my supervising attorney, was able to offer this client a few options of how to settle her case, including requesting the case be dismissed. The client took our advice and opposing counsel offered her a conditional dismissal, giving her exactly what she wanted! She was so grateful for our assistance, she even offered to buy me dinner.

These may be small wins to some, but for me it means that the work I am doing is beneficial. It is a reminder that I am needed in this profession, and it makes the stress of earning this degree worth it!

Update 3: EJA Fellow Update—I guess compromise isn't always the solution.

In the past few weeks, I have spent a generous amount of time preparing for a mediation. The entire purpose of is to allow the parties to come to a solution without the need for legal intervention. Though that may be the purpose, it is not always the outcome.

On the day of mediation, my supervising attorney and I came up with a mediation plan. We made sure we had pictures to confirm our position and other evidence. We went into this mediation with the hopes that the opposing side would be willing to settle as the damages were estimated to be high, upwards of 80,000.

Unfortunately, we were sadly mistaken. The opposing side was not willing to settle, and it became very likely that this would go to trial. While I would have liked to have a successful mediation, and I am excited to be able to participate in trial before my clerkship is over!

Update 4: EJA Fellow Update—You win some, you lose some.

This would be an adequate quote to sum up these last few weeks. When working in public interest, it is normal to want to help everyone, but sometimes we just can't.

Starting with my wins:

1. Conducted my first solo intake during our bi-weekly walk-in clinic: Typically, the summer clerks just shadow clinic and take notes to prepare us to be able to conduct an intake on our own. This day was my turn to take the reins. After hearing what brought the client in, I consulted my supervising attorney and assisted the individual in responding to the Itemized List of charges.
2. Reached a Settlement agreement in a lockout damages case: In my last update I mentioned that the mediation did not go as planned. However, it seems as if the opposing party had a change of heart. After several conversations with our client and opposing counsel, we reached a settlement that will allow our client to move into a suitable place and feel adequately compensated for her loss.

Now on to the loss:

1. The case may be dismissed: Over the entire duration of my clerkship, I have been working tirelessly preparing for Quiet Title Action trial. Hours spent reviewing documents, drafting subpoenas, and much more. In this case, the judge preferred to hold an evidentiary hearing on just a singular issue—the validity of the deed. My supervising attorney and I spent the entire night preparing for this hearing. Unfortunately, the judge did not rule in our favor and this ruling may have cost us our entire case.

Whatever the outcome, I am grateful for the experience I gain from each encounter.

Update 5: EJA Fellow Update-- The end of an Era.

As the summer comes to a close, all I can say is wow. 10 weeks and 350 hours later, I completed my Summer Clerkship with Legal Services of South-Central Michigan on August 8, 2023. It is bittersweet and feels so surreal.

As I take the time to reflect, I cannot help but feel grateful for this experience. Though I came into Legal Services with some legal background, I had very little knowledge in the areas this organization serviced. However, I was eager to learn, and all of the attorneys and summer clerks were just as eager to teach me. No two days were the same when it came to Legal Services and I am grateful for the variance. I began this summer with one goal, which was to gain as much experience as I could. Without a doubt, I did just that. To name a few of my projects and tasks from over the summer:

- Open a Decedent Estate
- Draft Quiet Title Actions
- Draft a Motion for Change of Custody and Proposed Order
- Assisted with Evidentiary Hearings
- Argued my First Case
- Assisted with a Mediation resulting in a Settlement

And the list goes on. However, I found the most fulfillment in working with the bi-weekly walk-in eviction clinic. These people were coming in on their worse days, facing homelessness, and a 20-minute conversation could change their trajectory. While there were days where I could not do anything, sometimes all those individuals needed was someone to speak to, and even that simple conversation brought a smile to their face. I have always said my work should make a difference in the lives of those I come in contact with. Working with Legal Services reminded me that these are real people, with real issues. So, to Legal Services and my clerk cohort, thank you! I could not have imagined spending my summer anywhere else.