



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Jada Bourne
LAW SCHOOL	The George Washington University Law School
ORGANIZATION	Public Counsel

Update 1: This summer I was selected for a fellowship with Equal Justice America. For over 30 years, the EJA has supported law students who spend their summer volunteering at public interest organizations. This summer, I will be completing my fellowship at Public Counsel's Opportunity Under Law Project.

Opportunity Under Law is Public Counsel's community-based impact litigation project representing individuals and communities facing significant structural inequalities and discrimination. I am excited to work with them on a number of civil rights issues including housing equity, disability rights, education equity, veterans' rights, and youth justice.

I am just three weeks into my clerkship and have already learned so much about the process of class action litigation, trial preparation, and client representation. I look forward to the challenges and learning experiences ahead, and to contributing to the impactful work of the Opportunity Under Law Project!

I am grateful to be a part of Public Counsel this summer and thankful for the support of Equal Justice America.

Update 2: I am approaching the halfway mark of my Summer Clerkship with Public Counsel and am excited to share my second EJA Fellow update. As a clerk in the Opportunity Under Law Project, I've had the chance to observe many aspects of the litigation process. In the past four weeks, I've experienced everything from depositions and discovery to settlements. Observing seasoned attorneys and their passion for clients has been truly inspiring.

I've enjoyed the hands-on experience that being at a Public Interest organization has provided. I've received in-depth training in legal research and writing, the document review process, and deposition preparation. The Opportunity Under Law team has given me a window into what it means to zealously advocate for clients amid intense and complex litigation. While it has been



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

challenging, it has also been incredibly rewarding and exciting.

I look forward to continuing to grow and learn in the second half the summer with Public Counsel and EJA.

Update 3: My summer as a Law Clerk at Public Counsel is flying by, and it's time for my third EJA Fellow update!

During my time working on impact litigation in Public Counsel's Opportunity Under Law (OUL) project, I've come to appreciate that public interest litigation is truly a community effort. The OUL project collaborates with other internal teams, as well as pro bono teams from big law firms and other public interest organizations. In addition to attorneys, the work done by a litigation team would be impossible without the paralegals and social workers whose invaluable contributions hold everything together!

Working in public interest law demands not just academic and professional skills, but also the compassion and training necessary to engage with real people. This summer, I've had the opportunity to attend various trainings and speak with dedicated professionals who excel in client engagement. Understanding the skills needed to work with clients experiencing trauma, and learning how to show up for others as a trustworthy advocate, has been an invaluable opportunity.

This summer has been incredibly enriching, enhancing my understanding of both the legal field and community building! I'm excited to continue learning and contributing to such important work.

Update 4: My summer with Public Counsel is drawing to a close, and with it, I'm excited to share my fourth EJA Fellow update! During my time working on pro-bono cases with the Opportunity Under Law project I've gained invaluable insights into pro-bono representation and public interest lawyering. One of my biggest takeaways is the importance of listening. Effective lawyering isn't just about knowing the law; it's about truly understanding the needs and stories of those you serve.

This summer, I witnessed every decision being made with the client in mind. Litigation lawyers must be strategic when communicating the law, but ultimately, those choices must reflect the client's lived experience. Listening to your clients with empathy and attention to detail can make a significant difference in the strategies you choose and the impact you make.

I've had the privilege of working alongside passionate and dedicated professionals who exemplify these principles daily. I'm grateful for this experience and look forward to applying these lessons in my future endeavors as an advocate for justice.

Update 5: My amazing summer with Public Counsel has come to an end, and I am excited to reflect on my experience in my final EJA Fellow update! Working with Public Counsel and participating in Equal Justice American's fellowship program has not only strengthened my



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passion for public interest law and plaintiff-side litigation but also allowed me to contribute meaningfully to cases focusing on advancing civil rights and social justice.

This summer, I had the opportunity to work on two significant cases with the Opportunity Under Law team: one advocating for disabled veterans seeking access to housing and health care, and another focused on securing safe, stable housing and supportive services for transition-age foster youth. Both cases highlight the importance of legal advocacy in holding institutions accountable for failing to meet their obligations to vulnerable communities. These cases demonstrate how important legal intervention can be in protecting the rights of those so often overlooked.

Throughout this experience, I've come to appreciate how collaborative public interest litigation is. The OUL Team worked closely with various Public Counsel projects, pro bono partners, paralegals, and social workers. Seeing how diverse perspectives and training came together to advance justice for our clients was always interesting. Additionally, I learned the importance of remaining calm and flexible when on these cases. When working on complex class action cases, there are many moving parts operating all at once. Whether it's changes to client circumstances, changes to the law, changes to staffing, or anything in between, lawyers must have a vision for adaptability. While working with pro-bono clients, I often saw this implemented as taking the extra step to meet clients where they are, both in terms of physical location and emotional empathy.

I'm incredibly grateful to Public Counsel and the Equal Justice America fellowship for making this experience possible. A special thank you to everyone on the Opportunity Under Law team for the incredible mentorship, guidance, and kindness you all extended to me during my clerkship.