

August 28, 2024

Dear Dan Ruben,

This past summer as a legal intern at the Community Justice Project in Miami, FL, has been incredibly rewarding. CJP is a movement-based organization with long standing relationships with communities in South Florida. Some of the CJP partners I worked with this summer include Beyond the Bars, Family Action Network Movement, and WeCount. I worked on an array of tasks involving legal research, direct services, and community organizing. As someone interested in working long-term as a movement lawyer, it was great to see how CJP approaches lawyering. CJP is disciplined in what movements they decide to get involved in and center legal work around already existing campaigns and demands led by organizers. This is a perspective that I think is really important to hold on to as a movement lawyer because it can be easy to be pulled in all sorts of directions and not end up actually adding value to movements when you are not disciplined in how you participate as a lawyer.

Along the same vein, I also got a lot of experience with working in coalitions. I think coalition work is at the heart of movement work and is something I will be participating a lot more in in the future. As part of CJP's work supporting partner organizations, I did a number of intakes for eviction defense, immigration, and workers' rights. With the Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC), I participated in an immigration drive helping people fill out N-400 applications for naturalization. CJP also has a biweekly eviction clinic held in conjunction with the Miami Workers' Center. One of CJP's main campaigns this summer has been supporting mobile home park tenants as they face mass eviction as the park landlord seeks to rezone the property the park is on. I helped canvas the park in order to inform tenants of their rights and later, at the Miami Workers' Center, did several intakes for tenants facing immediate eviction. Aside from this, I also participated in a wage theft workshop with Beyond the Bars where I did intakes for local workers facing wage theft. These experiences showed me the importance of combining direct services and organizing with impact litigation as part of the overall framework of movement lawyering.

In addition to working with community partners, I also did a substantial amount of research around the Live Local Act, which is described as the most aggressive affordable housing bill to have passed in any of the 50 states. The Live Local Act first passed in 2023 and recently was amended earlier this year. While it purports to increase affordable housing, it does so by preempting local zoning regulations. So long as developers abide by an affordable housing set aside, they can build near anywhere they want and to much greater heights than allowed under local zoning regulations. This has caused many in Miami to fear that the Act will lead to a new wave of gentrification. As community organizations gear up to grapple with the influx of new Live Local projects, they have also asked CJP for assistance. In partnership with WeCount, I did research on community benefit agreements (CBAs) and the rental assistance demonstration (RAD) process. This culminated in a presentation to relevant partners at WeCount. I also had a long-term research project which focused on breaking down the differences between the 2023 and 2024 versions of the Live Local Act and figuring out where community organizations could still use local governmental powers to influence developments.

Overall, I had an informative and fruitful summer at CJP, and I foresee myself using the skills I learned here in my future career in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Fu

JD Candidate '25, NYU School of Law