



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Public Counsel

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### Update 1:

I am in my final year of law school. This summer, I am fortunate to be a law clerk at Public Counsel, a nonprofit public interest law firm in LA. I am also honored to be an Equal Justice America (EJA) Fellow.

Last week, I attended my first Los Angeles Housing and Homelessness Committee meeting at City Hall. I saw a community of housing rights advocates and tenants come together. I heard movement lawyers give public comment about proposed changes to the tenant anti-harassment ordinance. I heard tenants give public testimony about egregious habitability issues, heart-wrenching harassment, retaliatory conduct by landlords, and concerns about the effectiveness and oversight of existing housing programs. My supervising attorney gave public comments at the meeting, and prior to that, we discussed the legal implications, the purpose, and the impact of public comments on advocacy efforts overall. It was exciting to see and experience movement lawyering firsthand. #EJAFellowUpdate

As an EJA Fellow, I am committed to the promise of "justice for all." By working together, we can ensure that no one is left out of the fight for justice, regardless of income or status.

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### Update 2:

While education should serve as a great equalizer, the pursuit of higher learning has left many from marginalized communities burdened with insurmountable debt upon graduation. Nonetheless, access to education and knowledge has consistently played a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty. Historically, women and people of color have faced systemic barriers to education, particularly higher education, sanctioned and protected by the laws of this country. Last year, the Supreme Court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College (SFFA)* put an end to affirmative action in college and university admissions programs. Affirmative action programs offered colleges and universities the opportunity to prioritize admissions from marginalized communities, rectifying some of the



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injustices of our discriminatory past. However, the Supreme Court's decision in *SFFA* signals a shift in perspective, suggesting that sufficient action has been taken.

The *SFFA* decision has ignited several new lawsuits targeting race-conscious initiatives beyond higher education, aiming to extend its detrimental impact to community organizations and nonprofits. As an Equal Justice America Fellow, one of my summer projects is to explore strategies for supporting the crucial equity work of these organizations while navigating the shifting legal landscape in this area.

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### **Update 3:**

Have you ever hired a contractor to repair or renovate something in your home or small business, and either they didn't complete the job or did it poorly, leaving you with even more of a mess to repair? Have you ever had a contractor lie to you about their credentials only to find out --after you've paid them-- that they didn't have the knowledge or experience to complete the job? These are real issues that many people struggle with. However, those with the means and access to legal counsel will simply hire an attorney to handle it. But for those with little financial means, this is a nightmare scenario where access to justice is elusive at best and nonexistent at worst.

One of my projects this summer has been helping small and micro businesses recover from predatory and fraudulent contractors. The need for civil legal aid is urgent, as 80% of those living in poverty who require civil legal services don't have access to it. This #EJAFellowUpdate helps to spread awareness about the access-to-justice gap and the work done by EJA Fellows to help close it.

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### **Update 4:**

My summer work at Public Counsel as an EJA Fellow has ended. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to learn and work alongside such amazing attorneys and advocates dedicated to public interest law and social justice. In a few weeks, I'll start my final semester of law school. Thank you for being on this journey with me-- all of your love, encouragement, and support has meant the world to me.

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### **Update 5:**

This summer, I was fortunate to be a law clerk at Public Counsel, a nonprofit public interest law firm in LA. I was also selected as an Equal Justice America (EJA) Fellow. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to learn and work alongside such amazing attorneys and advocates dedicated to public interest law, legal aid, and social justice. Thank you for walking the walk and showing me what true client-centered, trauma-informed, anti-racist advocacy and allyship looks like. I am ready to serve.