



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

**Summer 2025**

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



<b>NAME</b>	Yanli Wang
<b>LAW SCHOOL</b>	Columbia Law School
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Legal Aid Society of San Diego

---

### Final Reflection:

This summer at the Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD) has been an intense and eye-opening journey. In my daily work across several clinics, including conservatorship, TRO, and unlawful detainers, I was confronted with the reality that for many people, access to justice is not a guarantee but a lifeline. My role was often to prepare court forms, draft declarations, and explain legal procedures to clinic participants, but what impressed me the most was the courage and vulnerability the clinic participants showed in moments of crisis.

One case that stands out involved a woman seeking a domestic violence restraining order. She was overwhelmed, scared, and unsure how to articulate the abuse she endured. Sitting with her, I guided her through the declaration process, helping her put painful experiences into words the court could recognize. It was not my job to decide the outcome of her case. But by giving her a clear, structured statement, I helped ensure her voice was heard. Moments like that reminded me how small interventions can create real access to justice.

At the conservatorship clinic, I observed the stark tension between protecting vulnerable adults and preserving their autonomy. Families often came in distraught, unsure how to navigate a process that is both legally complex and emotionally charged. By assisting with petitions and explaining next steps, I saw how critical it is to make the law understandable for people who are already under immense stress. It also taught me how law is not just a set of rules; it is a framework that shapes deeply personal decisions about care, control, and dignity.

The eviction cases I encountered highlighted another dimension of injustice. Tenants facing unlawful detainers often walked in at the edge of losing their homes. Assisting them with responsive pleadings and clarifying the timeline of proceedings highlighted the urgency of this



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

work. A missed deadline or incomplete form could mean immediate homelessness. The responsibility of ensuring accuracy under those circumstances sharpened my attention to detail and my ability to communicate clearly under pressure.

Professionally, this summer solidified my commitment to public interest work. I learned to balance empathy with efficiency, to listen closely while moving cases forward. Personally, I was humbled by clinic participants' resilience. Many came in during their darkest moments, yet they left with renewed hope simply because someone had taken the time to explain the law, prepare their paperwork, and connect them to resources.

This fellowship has shown me that equal justice is not abstract, it is built through daily acts of service, patience, and persistence. Supporting fellowships like this ensures that law students can be more financially confident when stepping into these pro bono spaces, bridging the gap between the law and the people it is meant to protect. I leave this summer more determined to use my legal education to stand with those who would otherwise face the system alone.