



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

**Summer 2025**

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



<b>NAME</b>	Mykal Juan Pacheco
<b>LAW SCHOOL</b>	UC Davis School of Law
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Open Door Legal

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### Final Reflection:

As my 1L summer wraps up, I have been thinking a lot about where I started - and how far this journey has already taken me.

Before law school, I worked as a Frontline Partner for Open Door Legal (ODL), meeting guests and clients in crisis, often trying to connect them to resources and make sure they knew that they were being seen and heard. I was not a lawyer. I was not even a law student yet. But I understood the value of being present, listening with compassion, and treating people with dignity.

One tenant I met back then was facing eviction and living in incredibly difficult circumstances. He was forced to move out of his home of 40 years, with almost no money to his name, leaving him on the streets. Eventually, he was able to find sustainable housing, but not without struggling for a while. I was the first person who ever called him by his first name - and remembered it. That stuck with him. It stuck with me, too. One of the last times I saw him, he was sitting down on the street, unable to walk due to surgery. We snapped the first picture below as we were speaking to each other, and I was assisting him to become a registered voter to exercise his rights. He asked that I cover his leg, which had undergone the operation.

Fast forward to now - after a full summer of eviction defense work at ODL as a legal intern - I saw him again. He is still here. He is alive, stable, and thriving. When we saw each other, he smiled, and we caught up for a little bit. After that, he got out of his wheelchair and stood up just to take a picture with me. It was a full-circle moment I will not forget. Back then, we built a respect and understanding for one another before I could really do anything for him. Now, I am



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in law school at the University of California, Davis - School of Law, and I am learning how to fight for clients like him in the courtroom.

This summer, I had the incredible opportunity to work on behalf of tenants facing eviction, often while managing severe mental illness, language barriers, and long histories of institutional harm. I drafted reasonable accommodations, helped clients apply for rental assistance, laid out case strategies, attended settlement conferences, and sat with clients for hours to explain their rights and their options.

I am grateful for what I was able to contribute. I am especially grateful for the support of Equal Justice America, which made this internship possible and helps fund law students committed to public interest work.

To my supervisor Alison Levy, thank you for your generosity, brilliance, and mentorship. Your words mean the world to me: "Can I just say a word about our very own @Mykal Pacheco? He's been my intern this summer, and WOW...I'm at a loss for words..."

This experience has affirmed what I already knew: this work is necessary. It is also urgent and deeply human.