



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



|              |                                   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| NAME         | Melissa Nuno                      |
| LAW SCHOOL   | Chapman Law                       |
| ORGANIZATION | California Rural Legal Assistance |

**Update 1:** I am in my first week at my job at California Rural Legal Assistance and it's been great I am learning a lot.

**Update 2:** Two weeks ago, I started my job at California Rural Legal Assistance. It has been a very fulfilling experience thus far being able to assist low-income individuals in a variety of cases. I am being exposed to various practice areas to be able to expand my knowledge. I work under the Indigenous Justice Program and am excited to keep growing within the team!

**Update 3:** This week I have focused on tasks that expand legal access to non-English speaking individuals. It has shown me how important it is to expand language access and make it more accessible in the legal field. To further my interest in immigration law, I am also supporting with drafting declarations for U visa petitions. I am excited to keep growing in my immigration law knowledge and get hands on experience.

**Update 4:** This week I met with a client and helped her through her wage and hour case. I also completed a training for U-Visas and am assisting in one. I have learned a great deal.

**Final Reflection:** My fellowship with California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my legal education. Throughout the summer, I had the opportunity to work alongside dedicated attorneys committed to expanding access to justice for low-income and underserved communities across California. This experience not only strengthened my legal skills but also reaffirmed my commitment to pursuing a career in public interest law.



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During my fellowship, I worked on a wide range of matters involving employment law, immigration, housing, and language access. I conducted legal research, drafted memoranda, prepared client correspondence, and assisted attorneys with ongoing cases. One of the most impactful projects involved researching California wage and hour laws and equitable tolling to support a client seeking unpaid wages and statutory penalties. I also contributed to matters involving Indigenous language access, which highlighted the barriers many clients face when navigating the legal system and reinforced the importance of ensuring meaningful access to legal services for all individuals.

Beyond developing my research and writing abilities, this fellowship significantly improved my confidence as a law student and future attorney. I learned how to approach unfamiliar legal issues with persistence, think critically through complex questions, and communicate my analysis clearly to supervising attorneys. The mentorship I received throughout the summer challenged me to produce stronger work products while reminding me that effective advocacy requires both precision and empathy.

Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of this fellowship was the opportunity to work directly on issues affecting communities that closely resemble the one in which I was raised. As a first-generation Latina and the daughter of Mexican immigrants, I have seen how language barriers, financial hardship, and limited access to legal resources can prevent individuals from asserting their rights. Working at CRLA allowed me to contribute, even in a small way, to addressing those barriers while learning from attorneys whose dedication to their clients was truly inspiring. Their compassion, professionalism, and commitment to justice demonstrated the kind of lawyer I aspire to become.

Looking back, this fellowship has been an invaluable part of my legal education. It strengthened my legal research, writing, and analytical skills while deepening my understanding of client-centered advocacy. More importantly, it confirmed that the work I find most fulfilling is using the law to serve vulnerable communities and promote equal access to justice. I am grateful for the mentorship, hands-on experience, and meaningful opportunities CRLA provided, and I will carry these lessons with me throughout the remainder of law school and into my legal career.