



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This summer, I am working with the Bankruptcy Assistance Project at Legal Services NYC, where I help New Yorkers file for bankruptcy and get a fresh financial start. This is new territory for me, and stepping outside my comfort zone has turned out to be really rewarding.

My commitment to this work comes from a belief in financial justice and equity. Predatory lending and mounting medical debt can devastate families. I believe everyone deserves access to the tools they need to address debt without shame or unnecessary barriers.

Over these first few weeks, I've had the chance to work directly with about 10 clients, learning to navigate the bankruptcy process from intake through filing. It has meant building an entirely new skill set, from understanding the nuances of bankruptcy law to learning how to communicate complex legal processes clearly to clients who are often dealing with one of the most stressful periods of their lives.

I am grateful to my colleagues and mentors at Legal Services NYC for their patience and guidance as I learn the ropes, and for trusting me with real client responsibility.

Update 2: A few weeks into my summer with the Bankruptcy Assistance Project at Legal Services NYC, the part of this work I've come to appreciate most is how much of it is problem-solving. Each person walks in with a different mix of debts, assets, income, and fears about what they stand to lose, and figuring out the right path forward means really listening before I can even start applying the law.

A lot of what I do now is get familiar enough with the process, and with each client's specific circumstances, to translate one into the other. Bankruptcy can feel like an opaque system to



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someone going through it for the first time, so I try to make it as clear as I can by grounding every explanation in outcome. For example, I can explain what exemption can protect the car they need to get to work every day.

I'm grateful to be trusted with that responsibility and to my colleagues at Legal Services NYC for continuing to help me build the judgment this work requires.

Update 3: Much of my focus right now is on preparing clients for their meetings with the trustee of their bankruptcy estate. That means getting every number right, anticipating questions, and making sure each client is informed and confident rather than overwhelmed.

But what I've found equally important is recognizing when bankruptcy isn't the right path at all. For some clients, I've been steering them toward debt consolidation plans that better fit their specific circumstances and help them avoid a stressful legal process entirely. Serving a client well sometimes means telling them they don't need the service you're offering. That kind of holistic, client-centered approach is something I'm proud to be developing this summer.

Financial justice isn't one-size-fits-all, and the most important skill I'm building isn't legal knowledge alone — it's learning to really listen to where each person is, and meet them there!

Update 4: As my summer with the Bankruptcy Assistance Project at Legal Services NYC comes to a end, these last few days have been about something different: not taking on new clients, but making sure the ones I've worked with are set up to finish strong without me.

That has meant organizing case files, writing detailed handoff notes for my supervisor, and having honest conversations with clients about what's left in their journey. It's a smaller, quieter kind of work than filing a petition, but it matters just as much. I have been intentional in handling the transition process with care.

Saying goodbye this week has been more emotional than I expected. Several clients, when first meeting me, were nervous and ashamed of their financial situation, unsure whether anyone was actually on their side. Watching them leave with a plan, and with some trust restored in the process, has been really meaningful.

I'm truly grateful to my colleagues and mentors at Legal Services NYC and to the clients who let me be part of one of the hardest chapters of their lives.

Final Reflection: I start my final year of law school on Monday. Before then, I wanted to share one last update about how my summer at LSNYC's Bankruptcy Assistance Project went:



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Looking back now, I see that the hardest (and most important, I think) part was learning to sit with people in the middle of what is often one of the most humiliating moments of their lives, and to help them believe that this process could actually help them.

No two situations were alike. One client was recently separated and left holding the bag on years of back taxes. Others had been chased by debt collectors for years. What they had in common was fear, of judgment, of losing what little they had left, of trusting a stranger with something so personal.

That fear was the real challenge of this fellowship. Bankruptcy law is precise, but it's also opaque to the people it's meant to protect. I learned to translate it so that a client could understand not just what was happening to their case, but what it meant for their life. People were ashamed of needing bankruptcy, but also of not understanding it.

The victories were often quiet ones: a client realizing, for the first time, that they weren't going to lose their car. Someone was relieved when I explained that a debt they'd been losing sleep over could be discharged or wasn't even collectable in the first place. But the moment that will stay with me came on one of my last days. A client I had worked with from the very beginning, someone who was extremely nervous, thanked me for my support, guidance, and patience, and told me the world needed more people like me. She said God bless you and wished me well on the rest of my law school journey. I was so touched I wanted to cry.

What I think clients remember, and what actually restores their trust in a system that has often failed them, is being seen and treated with patience and respect. I'm leaving this fellowship with a much clearer sense of the lawyer I want to be: one who can hold both the technical rigor of the law and the humanity of the person standing in front of me. I'm deeply grateful to Equal Justice America and to Legal Services NYC for giving me the chance to practice that this summer.