



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: As a Law Clerk with Public Counsel's Opportunity Under Law project, I have supported complex impact litigation involving the rights of youth in detention and foster care systems. My work has included conducting legal research on federal class action litigation, consent decrees, and remedial frameworks addressing healthcare access and disability accommodations in carceral settings, which informed a proposed preliminary injunction in ongoing litigation. I reviewed and analyzed extensive case records, pleadings, and supporting documents for multiple matters, including evaluating dependency court records and client histories to assess potential class representatives for systemic reform litigation. I have also assisted attorneys with citation verification and legal research on settlement approval requirements, minors' compromises, and California procedural law. In addition to litigation support, I have participated in trauma-informed advocacy training, public interest fellowship programming, and professional development initiatives focused on legal aid, civil rights, and public interest careers.

Update 2: I have continued supporting Public Counsel's OUL team through legal research, factual investigation, and litigation support. Much of my work has focused on class certification, where I reviewed plaintiff declarations to identify evidence of ongoing harm, researched case law to distinguish unfavorable precedent, and analyzed Supreme Court decisions cited by opposing counsel. I also drafted a client narrative by synthesizing court records and identifying areas for follow-up, completed a citation check for a pending filing, and researched publicly available education data to support a Freedom of Information Act request related to a Bureau of Indian Education school.

One project that stood out was drafting a client narrative for one of our foster youth plaintiffs. Reviewing the client's history underscored how legal representation extends beyond legal arguments—it requires understanding a person's lived experiences and ensuring their story is



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accurately presented to the court. That assignment reinforced the importance of careful, client-centered advocacy.

Outside of my research assignments, I observed proceedings in the California Superior Court, the U.S. District Court, and the California Court of Appeal, where judges candidly discussed their approaches to fairness, equity, and judicial decision-making. These experiences have reinforced the critical role legal aid organizations play in ensuring that individuals and communities who might otherwise lack access to justice have dedicated advocates working to protect their rights through both individual representation and systemic reform.

Update 3: During this period, I participated in several professional development and litigation support opportunities through Public Counsel's Opportunity Under Law team. I observed proceedings at both the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Central District of California, including appellate arguments and a probation violation hearing involving a corporation previously prosecuted for fraud. Following these observations, I met with Judge Holly Thomas and Judge André Birotte Jr. in chambers to learn about their professional journeys, judicial philosophies, and transitions from public service and advocacy roles to the bench. I also hosted one of my former eighth-grade students for a two-day shadowing experience, introducing him to careers in law through meetings with attorneys and judges and opportunities to observe federal court proceedings. In addition, I attended oral argument in *L.T. v. ICE* at the Riverside Federal Courthouse in support of Public Counsel's named plaintiffs and legal team, assisted with litigation strategy in *Ocean S.* by Shepardizing authorities cited in the parties' motion to dismiss briefing to identify any relevant subsequent treatment, and began drafting a Freedom of Information Act request in the *Stephen C.* matter seeking school-level performance, attendance, discipline, and special education data not otherwise publicly available.

Update 4: I supported litigation across several matters through legal research, drafting, and case preparation. For *Ocean S.*, I conducted a comprehensive review of the defendants' Motion to Dismiss the Second Amended Complaint by Shepardizing every case cited in the parties' briefing to determine whether any authorities had been overturned, affirmed, questioned, or otherwise affected by subsequent case law, and summarized any relevant developments. I also drafted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request seeking school-level report card data for the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 academic years, along with additional non-publicly reported education data. Finally, I assisted the litigation team preparing for oral argument in the *Fontana* sidewalk-vending litigation by developing concise case summaries of authorities cited in the preliminary injunction briefing to support arguments on the pending motions to dismiss and motion for a preliminary injunction.

Final Reflection: This summer, I served as a Law Clerk with Public Counsel's Opportunity Under Law (OUL) project, supporting impact litigation on behalf of youth in immigration detention and



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foster care. Over 10 weeks, I moved between legal research, factual investigation, citation work, and courtroom observation, and the throughline across all of it was learning what it actually takes to hold systems accountable at scale.

The clearest example was *L.T. v. ICE*. Early in the summer, I researched remedial plans from major carceral healthcare and disability litigation, cases like *Parsons v. Ryan*, *Jensen v. Thornell*, and *Armstrong v. Newsom*, to help draft language for a proposed preliminary injunction addressing conditions at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center. I later supported the class certification reply by combing through plaintiff declarations for evidence of ongoing harm and distinguishing unfavorable precedent the government had cited. On July 16, Judge Sunshine Sykes granted the preliminary injunction, provisionally certifying a general class and a disability subclass covering everyone detained at Adelanto. Watching research I had contributed to become part of a court order that will change daily conditions for over 1,500 people made concrete something I had only understood in the abstract before: legal research is not an academic exercise but a tool that reaches directly into people's lives.

Other matters taught me different parts of the same lesson. In *Ocean S.*, reviewing dependency court records to evaluate a potential named plaintiff and then drafting a client narrative for a child reminded me that impact litigation still rests on individual stories, and that representing someone well means understanding their history as carefully as the law. Shepardizing the defendants' motion to dismiss briefing was slower, more procedural work, but it reinforced how much litigation strategy depends on quiet diligence rather than dramatic argument. Drafting the FOIA request in *Stephen C. for Havasupai Elementary School* data and preparing case summaries for the Fontana sidewalk-vending oral argument, showed me how the same research instincts apply across very different postures: settlement enforcement, administrative advocacy, and motion practice ahead of a hearing.

The court observations and mentorship this summer shaped me as much as the casework did. Sitting in on Judge Pánuco, Judge Vera, Judge Birotte, Justices Richardson and Goorvitch, and Ninth Circuit Judge Holly Thomas gave me a range of honest perspectives on judicial temperament, equity, and the discomfort that comes with discretion. Being part of the Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship cohort connected me to a broader community of people building public interest careers, and hosting my former eighth-grade student for two days of shadowing let me pass along, in a small way, the access I was being given this summer.

I came into this summer wanting to test whether systemic reform litigation was the right fit for me. I am leaving with a clear answer, and a genuine appreciation for how much patience, precision, and care that work demands.