



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: In just my first two weeks, I have already had the opportunity to help two clients file answers in response to unlawful detainer eviction cases. I also helped another client navigate potential options for leaving a home environment that had become unsafe.

Through this work, I am learning how creative and complex housing law can be. I am learning how important it is to carefully identify the proper affirmative defenses, review notices for legal defects, and explore every available avenue to help clients either remain housed or safely and legally leave an unsafe situation.

This work has also shown me how difficult it can be for tenants to recognize unlawful tactics or errors in notices prepared by landlords or landlord attorneys. That is why legal advocacy in this area is so important. These defenses can be technical and creative, but that creativity is often necessary to protect people who may otherwise be pushed out of their homes without understanding their rights.

Update 2: This summer, I had the opportunity to participate in courthouse clinic at the Hayward courthouse, where I helped a client navigate settlement negotiations in her unlawful detainer case. I went back and forth with opposing counsel, communicating offers and counter offers while trying to advocate for the client's goals and protect as much housing stability as possible. Although we were not able to get the exact outcome the client wanted, which was to remain in her home, I was able to help negotiate a settlement that waived approximately \$10,000 in rent, secured \$3,500 in relocation assistance from the landlord, and gave the client 45 days to move out instead of 30.



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This experience taught me a lot about time management, client-centered advocacy, and the importance of listening carefully to what a client wants while also setting realistic expectations. I learned that part of effective advocacy is being honest about what I can and cannot promise, while still doing my best to negotiate strongly on the client's behalf. I was also given the opportunity to draft the stipulation reflecting the settlement terms. Opposing counsel reviewed and agreed to the terms, and I was able to establish a professional rapport with landlord's counsel through a productive and respectful conversation. This experience helped me better understand how legal advocacy often requires both strong negotiation skills and clear, careful legal writing.

Thank you to Equal Justice America, East Bay Community Law Center, and UC Law San Francisco for supporting my summer work and giving me the opportunity to continue learning through direct client advocacy.

Update 3: At the beginning of my summer internship, I struggled with time management when helping self-represented clients prepare Answers to Unlawful Detainer complaints. What initially took me nearly five hours now takes about two to three hours. I have become much more familiar with each section of the Answer, and I am now more comfortable translating complicated legal language into clear, understandable terms so clients can identify and present their strongest affirmative defenses.

This week also marked my final courthouse clinic, which ran from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. By noon, I had helped secure positive settlements for two clients. For one client facing eviction for nonpayment of rent, I appeared before a judge and requested dismissal of the case. For another client, I negotiated a move-out date, obtained a waiver of all claimed unpaid rent, and helped draft the settlement stipulation. Throughout the day, I felt more confident negotiating with opposing counsel and advocating for the outcomes my clients wanted. To this day, I am even more confident in my abilities, more certain of my voice as an advocate, and especially proud of the way I communicate with and support my clients.

Update 4: Last week, I drafted an application to stay an eviction for a tenant facing an extremely urgent deadline. Unfortunately, the application was not granted. Through that experience, I learned how quickly eviction cases can move, how limited the available time can be, and that even when we advocate as strongly as possible, we may not achieve the outcome we hoped for. Although the result was difficult, I know I did the best I could under the circumstances. Last Friday was also my final day at the East Bay Community Law Center. During my time in the Housing Unit, I learned so much about client-centered advocacy and the many ways attorneys and legal advocates can support tenants both within and beyond the legal system. For the tenant who was evicted, that meant connecting him with community organizations and housing



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resources that could assist him in searching for affordable housing. This experience reminded me that advocacy does not necessarily end when a case ends. Even when the legal outcome is unfavorable, we can continue helping clients understand their options, access resources, and determine their next steps. I am incredibly grateful to EBCLC and Equal Justice America for the opportunity to learn from this work.

Final Reflection: This summer at the East Bay Community Law Center taught me that becoming a stronger advocate requires much more than simply learning the law. It requires patience, adaptability, careful listening, and the ability to communicate clearly with people who may be experiencing one of the most difficult moments of their lives.

At the beginning of my internship, I was still learning how to efficiently prepare Answers to unlawful detainer complaints for self-represented clients. What initially took me nearly five hours eventually took about two to three. Over time, I became more comfortable identifying affirmative defenses, reviewing notices for legal defects, and translating complicated legal concepts into language clients could understand. That growth showed me that legal knowledge is only useful if I can communicate it in a way that helps a client understand what is happening and make informed decisions about their case.

My courthouse clinic experiences also pushed me to become more confident in real-time advocacy. I learned how to negotiate with opposing counsel, communicate offers and counteroffers, draft settlement stipulations, and advocate for outcomes that reflected my clients' priorities. Some cases resulted in meaningful victories, including rent waivers, relocation assistance, additional time to move, and dismissal of claims. At the same time, I also learned that client-centered advocacy means being honest about the limits of what I can promise. Sometimes the best available outcome is not the outcome a client originally hoped for, and part of my role is to advocate as strongly as possible while helping the client understand the options before them.

One of the most important lessons came from a case in which I helped prepare an urgent application to stay an eviction that was ultimately denied. That experience reminded me that advocacy does not always end with a favorable ruling. Even when the legal outcome is disappointing, there are still ways to support a client by helping them understand what comes next, connecting them with housing and community resources, and making sure they do not feel abandoned once the court process ends.

I am leaving this summer feeling more competent and more confident in my ability to become an effective attorney, but also more aware of the responsibility that comes with that role. When a client meets with me, it may be one of the hardest days of their life. They may be facing



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eviction, financial instability, or uncertainty about where they will live next. I am only one part of that larger experience, but I can help them tell their story as clearly and fully as possible, identify the strongest legal arguments available, and make sure their circumstances are meaningfully presented. This summer strengthened my legal skills, but more importantly, it taught me the kind of advocate I want to be: prepared, compassionate, realistic, and committed to making sure clients feel heard and supported.