

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My fellowship at Public Counsel provided me with skills that I will use in every facet of my career going forward.

First, my ability to listen was finely tuned. Helping low-income and homeless individuals at Department of Public Social Services offices get public benefits strengthened my ability to accurately diagnose issues. For example, I worked with an individual with severe mental distress. He had not showered in 11 days and had not eaten in four days. It was incredibly difficult when talking to him to find out anything tangible. I didn't know if he was in the system, waiting on certain paperwork, or just at the office. I talked to him for ten minutes about absolutely nothing. I played tic-tac-toe with him. We talked about the Chicago Bulls in the upcoming season. After these ten minutes, he finally opened up to me. He gave me a paper that he had gotten four hours ago when he had first come in. He wasn't in the queue. If I had not talking to him he would have waited there for the entire day without being helped. He walked away that day with food stamps.

Second, talking with individuals made me more aware of the things actually going on in the Los Angeles homeless community. I talked with a client who had been in and out of jail and was trying to get food stamps. He was explaining to me that on skid row, everybody knows each other. They all get along and look out for each other. The very next week, I was helping a client who mentioned my first client's name. These two had the utmost respect for each other. This clashed with my previous thoughts about skid row and the homeless population. Skid row is a real community.

My ability to listen and awareness of the low-income and homeless community of Los Angeles were forever changed by this fellowship. Working at Public Counsel was extremely valuable.

Not only was my career helped by this fellowship, but I gained skills that I'll use every single day in my life.

Sincerely,

Cole Lewis  
UCLA School of Law  
Class of 2018