



Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Angelys Torres

Law School: Drexel University Kline School of Law

Fellowship: LatinoJustice PRLDEF Southeast Regional Office Intern

Entry 1: June 13, 2019

For those of you who may not know, this summer I have been selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow and afforded the opportunity to intern at LatinoJustice PRDLEF Southeast Regional Office in Orlando, FL. To help keep you all in the loop, here is my first update. As a young girl, I often inquired about my ancestors' lives to try and understand how far we have come in the fight for civil rights. In these last couple of weeks, I have really been able to see how those rights, or lack thereof, manifest for so many different people especially the LatinX community. The fight for civil rights is not just a fight for equality, but a fight to give others an opportunity to live a just life. This Friday will mark the end of my third week with LJP and it has been busy! I have been able to research on a variety of different projects including criminal justice reform, discrimination, and language access. I have also been able to meet a few clients and observe intake interviews, which has really helped me ground my research into something tangible. I am looking forward to the weeks to come at LJP.

As a side note, public interest attorneys do some of the most impactful work yet are still not recognized to the same extent as corporate lawyers.

Entry 2: June 27, 2019

I am half way through my summer and I thought this would be the perfect time for another update.

Attorney, lawyer, counselor. These are all words used to describe the work people with law degrees do. As I have learned over the last couple of weeks, lawyers use their judgment to balance these different roles in order to properly serve their clients. At LatinoJustice, many individuals contact the organization seeking legal assistance after their civil rights have been violated. This can be stressful, emotional, and mentally taxing. Part of a good lawyer's professional responsibility is to walk them through these emotional hardships. Another is being able to provide them with legal representation, giving clients a voice where they may not otherwise be heard. Lawyers are advocates, presenting their clients' stories seeking legal redress and challenging the law's interpretation to



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better serve their client's interests. Lawyers are also activists fighting injustice in the streets, the courts, and in the legislature seeking real reform and change. In these last few weeks, a number of clients have left feeling hopeful simply because they have been heard. With all the trauma, strife, and fear in the world today, we should all take a little more time to genuinely listen to one another.

Entry 3: July 24, 2019

Do you need a little break from the Mueller hearing news? Here's my third update.

I had not realized how social justice lawyering can be inextricably tied to politics until I started interning at LatinoJustice PRLDEF. With the constant myriad of Congressional hearings, protests, and tweets and the influence of public perception and pressure on the legislature, it's no wonder lawyers are tied to the political realm. From the island of Puerto Rico, where government corruption has fired up community action, to the crisis at the border where thousands of children are kept in cages and depend on pro-bono volunteers for basic needs and legal advocacy, to the millions of people deprived of the right to vote due to felony convictions even after debts have been paid, a lawyer's job may be impacted by political action. As laws and policies change, sometimes with the stroke of a pen, so too does the function of lawyers. The one constant amidst the political unrest and turmoil is a lawyer's obligation to seek truth and fairness. It has become clear to me as individuals and parties move in and out of political office, that all lawyers should work to uphold the rule of law, justice and equality for all, irrespective of who is temporarily occupying the White House or the Governor's mansion.

Entry 4: August 9, 2019

Time's up! For my final update I thought I would share some of the amazing work I have been so fortunate to participate in this summer with LatinoJustice PRLDEF.

In the last 10 weeks, I practiced my legal writing and research skills byway of various projects including criminal justice reform, the evolution of felon voting rights, justice for Puerto Rico, and employment discrimination. I created immigration 'know your rights' materials with the amazing LJP interns in New York, which will be presented at a community town hall with other Latino Immigrant Protection Coalition partners. I observed several intake and client meetings to learn how counseling styles can differ, yet achieve the same goals. I joined webinars and brown bag lunch panels to learn about current issues and how lawyers can play a unique part in finding solutions. Most importantly, I learned about an area of law that is crucial to living in a just world, especially for communities of color. Impact litigation was not an angle I had yet considered, but have found myself intrigued by the practice and look forward to exploring it more in my future. LatinoJustice PRLDEF gave me an opportunity to explore civil rights while serving my LatinX community, meet some incredibly talented lawyers, and find community with my peers. For that, I am grateful to have spent my 1L summer with LatinoJustice PRLDEF.