



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

LEGAL SERVICES FELLOWSHIPS

## Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



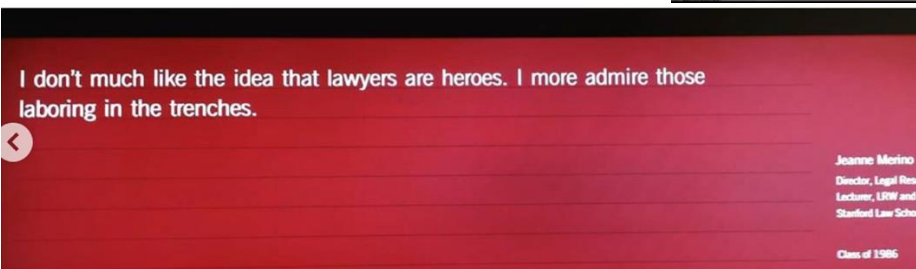
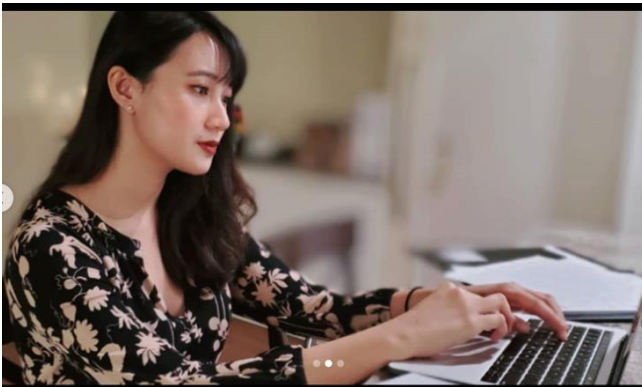
**Name:** Joanne Chua

**Law School:** University of Michigan Law School

**Organization:**  
Public Counsel

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### Update #1:



My first encounter with Public Counsel was through work at my old firm for the case, Franco-Gonzalez v. Holder. Now, I'm excited to be working with them this summer as a law clerk for the Consumer Rights & Economic Justice Division. The need for civil legal aid, the access to it, and the services available are wildly disproportionate. It's an understatement to simply say that legal aid firms/orgs. are

especially swamped during current times. They ALWAYS have been. As much as I wish we could help every client that I talk to, case overload, funding, compassion fatigue, political bureaucracy, etc. are constantly posing obstacles. Yet, every day, I am always invigorated to see the team working around the clock to help low-income communities and PoC — to not only be aware about how disproportionately impacted they are by the law, but to actively fight systems via joined litigation and policy advocacy. The past few weeks, in light of BLM, MMIW, DACA, police brutality, a global health crisis — I have seen them constantly unlearning, redefining, and challenging themselves and others in re: to what legal aid, community partnership, the laws, and the actors that uphold them SHOULD look like and what they should be doing. They are in the trenches.

This summer, I will be posting updates as an EJA Fellow and my time at PC. EJA helps fund students across the nation working in public interest.

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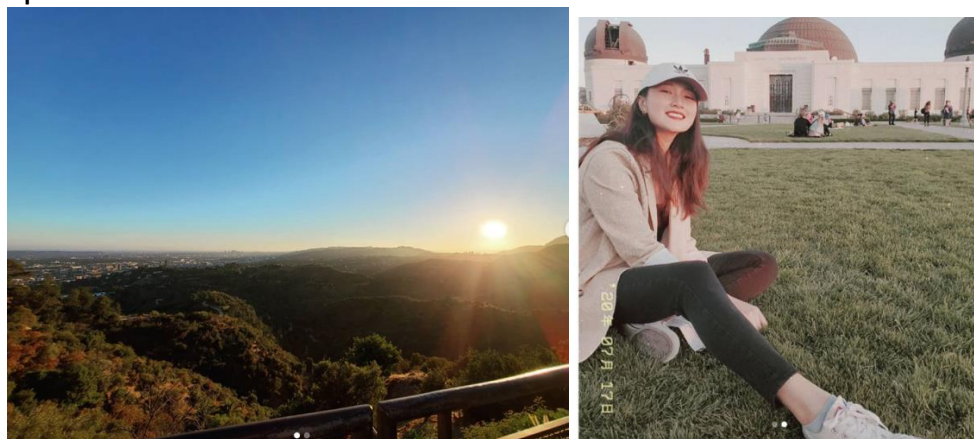
### Update #2:

I'm now halfway through my clerkship at Public Counsel. It has been an incredible learning experience, to say the least. Thus far, some of the projects I've worked on include: juggling several client cases from intake to devising next legal steps, (whether it be responding to a suit or negotiations); creating a comprehensive consumer-facing triage tool for those battling against the potential loss of housing amidst COVID-19 with Abdiel Lewis; joined in submitting policy comments to the Dept. of Business Oversight regarding issues of fraud/predatory practices of the statewide Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program; drafted an emergency letter against a foreclosure (now suspended) and various research memos on novel issues concerning the impact of the pandemic on post-forbearance mortgage and consumer credit reports (AB 1436); and teamed up with a coalition of non-profit and governmental organizations in preparation for the launch of a local and statewide campaign.

Working here has expanded my view of the many hats that a lawyer can wear and the ways we can advocate outside of a courtroom.

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### Update #3:



As I transitioned my cases over, I am reminded that we, as the next generation of lawyers, have the power and vision to reshape the industry and our role in it. My time at Public Counsel has shown me

that lawyers don many hats. We are first responders and at other times, we are others' last hope. We are organizers. Legal observers. Lobbyists. Advocates. Amplifiers. We can be whatever we want. This is not to say that the path has been all rosy. The law as an institution and the US law school system are ruthless. But it does not have to be this way. We can choose not to glorify the status quo that upholds barriers against many. Coming from the Philippines under a corrupt admin., I pursued law with a naive hope of what justice can look like. At the core, it is empowerment of our communities. At its potential, it means reshaping institutions and systems to better serve and open doors. Let us hold on to these naive dreams and hopes and push forward.

Because of remote work, I don't have any current photos so enjoy these old ones. 😊 LA has great views to help de-stress.

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**Update #4:**

I have officially wrapped up my 1L summer with an amazing team of law clerks, staff, and some of the fiercest attorney-mentors I know! The sheer breadth of work I was able to engage in was incredible (case intake and investigation, policy comments to governmental organizations, legal research, campaigning, drafting bills and demand letters, organizing, attending negotiations, etc.) and the amount of compassion they have for each other is admirable. The trust and responsibility that was given to us to first-chair cases and see first-hand our impact on clients was humbling. I truly believe the legal field is open to change and challenge -- our work does not end in advocacy. It merely starts with it. Working in Public Counsel has reinforced my "why I want to be a lawyer", and I hope to continue to give back and empower the communities I care about in different ways.

I also want to shout out my co-worker and EJA fellow, Abdiel Lewis for being an absolute star and amazing partner on various projects this summer!