



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

As some of you may know, I was lucky to be selected as one of this year's Equal Justice America Fellows. This summer, I am working at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC), the largest provider of free legal services in Alameda County. As part of EBCLC's Clean Slate Clinic, I have spent the last couple of weeks working on the *Sanchez v. Caltrans* case, a class action lawsuit stemming from Caltrans's seizure and destruction of property belonging to houseless people living on Caltrans's land. As part of its settlement, Caltrans agreed not only to compensate those who had their property taken but also agreed to reform its policies surrounding the seizure and storage of the belongings of folks living on Caltrans land. My work over the past two weeks has primarily consisted of reaching out to claimants (of which there were just under 1300!) to notify them of the claims administrator's decision and to help them appeal when necessary. Being able to help the community in this fashion has been an absolute pleasure so far!

Update 2:

With the *Sanchez v. Caltrans* appeals deadline being last Wednesday (6/23), the last couple of weeks were unsurprisingly quite hectic. However, despite the daunting task the small team of attorneys/volunteers/interns working on the case faced – going through 1300 claimants to identify those who had been denied, reaching out to the denied claimants, assisting them with filling out an appeal form, collecting signatures (which is quite difficult in a virtual setting), and so forth – I would say we were ultimately quite successful. All in all, we were able to help several dozen claimants submit appeals forms. Hopefully these claimants will finally receive the compensation they deserve for what they lost at the hands of Caltrans. As such, while the past two weeks have been exhausting, the work was incredibly rewarding!



Update 3:

After lots of time/effort invested in the Sanchez v. Caltrans case (we're talking years of effort invested by the attorneys who worked on the case), we are finally approaching the finish line. This past week, we sent the final award spreadsheet to the bank that will be printing the debit cards that the awards will be loaded onto. Once we receive the debit cards, all that will be left to do will be to distribute them. Although distributing 1,000+ awards will be no walk in the park, it will easily be the most rewarding part of this whole process, as the claimants will finally receive some measure of compensation for what they lost/went through due to Caltrans' actions. I cannot wait to start distributing awards on July 26th!

Update 4:

Although this past week was the most hectic of my internship so far, it was also the most rewarding. Last Monday, we were finally able to start distributing awards to claimants. Over the course of four days, we distributed 700+ awards, coming out to roughly 2/3's of all the awards that needed to be distributed! It was great to be able to finally meet all the claimants I had worked with over the phone and to see this process come to a close. Overall, I had an amazing time at the East Bay Community Law Center this summer!