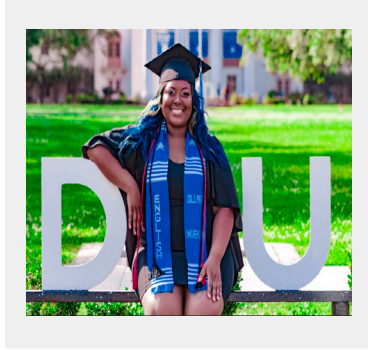




## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Amira Bell-Jetton

**Law School:** University of CA-Hastings

**Organization:** Children's Law Center of CA

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### Update 1:

This summer I have been awarded the opportunity to intern and shadow at Children's Law Center of CA in Sacramento County. This organization provides legal representation and advocacy to youth who become a part of the foster care system (dependency court). This organization's work is personally important to me because of my shared experience with the family and court. Although my experience was in family court and we are working in dependency court, each system has children involved whose wants and needs are often overlooked by the desires of the parents. Children are often discounted with a lack of consideration because their voices do not tend to matter in situations like these. I am excited to work alongside Children's Law Center because they are advocates of the youth who have been or may be at risk of being harmed, either emotionally and/or physically. I believe everyone should have a voice, especially those who are incapable of using it on their own. Since beginning my internship on June 7, I have witnessed a number of hearings and trials. I am excited to continue to learn the ins and outs of the dependency court system. I hope you all will follow me on this journey as I continue to grow in my desired field.

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### Update 2:

For those who may not know, I just recently completed my 1L year at UC Hastings Law and will be continuing on to my 2L beginning in August. This summer I have been granted the opportunity to intern with Children's Law Center of California (CLC), for Sacramento County. CLC is a non-profit organization that provides legal representation advocacy to foster care youth, who are formally called dependents. Dependency court differs from family court in the dependency court deals with matter specifically pertaining to youth who are placed into foster care because they are being harmed or there is a substantial risk that they will be harmed in various categories.

As an intern for CLC I have had the honor and privilege to shadow my attorney supervisor in and out of court. While it can be disheartening to witness the numerous the emotional stories lived by some of these children the work is very rewarding because at the end of the day the child(ren) is advocated for. In my personal experience, children's voices tend to be silenced, especially when mom and dad "think" they are doing what's best.



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Children's voices matter and the work that CLC does to ensure the outcome is what's in the child's best interest is necessary. I'm excited to see what the second half of my internship will be.

Of course, being that CLC is a un-paid internship, all of the work I am completing is voluntary. However, with the help of Equal Justice America (EJA), I have been awarded a legal service fellowship to help sustain me during the summer. EJA provides fellowships to law students or volunteers who work with public interest organizations. Their goal is to assist and allow those people a cushion so they can focus on their civil work without stressing on financial responsibilities. Many people cannot afford civil legal aid and EJA ensures those individuals can continue to receive the aid they deserve.

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### **Update 3:**

Just wanted to give an update on my summer internship with Children's Law Center of California. So far, working for CLC has been an eye-opening experience. Just recently this past Tuesday, I was able to participate in Drug Family Court with my supervisor attorney. Drug Family Court is for parents who struggle with substance abuse and DFC is a stipulation of their reunification with their children. Many would believe Dependency court dealt with similar cases, but each case is different. Addiction is a hard topic to discuss and battle to fight but many parents and children suffer because of it. Some parents are compliant and willing to do what's necessary to have their children returned, while there are some parents who are so deep in their addiction, they struggle to prioritize their health and their children. It's saddening to witness, but It further proves/shows why the work CLC does it so very important for not only our communities, but for our children.

If you love me or just feel inclined to help support this cause, please click the link below and donate to Equal Justice America. The work and fundraising they do substantially contributes to the fight of "justice for all" and I believe everyone has the undeniable right to equal legal representation. Thank you.

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### **Entry 4:**

This past summer I had to the educational opportunity to intern with Children's Law Center of CA based in Sacramento, CA. This organization provides legal representation to foster care youth once they have been detained by the State and considered Dependents to the department. As an intern, I was able to gain valuable experience with dependency court trials and proceedings, as well as participate in client/witness interviews. Much of the work assigned to me involved direct contact with clients, some of whom were minors, while others were what are considered "non-minor dependents." What I've learned from this experience, is while it is important and a goal of the attorney and department to reunify the children with their parent, it is always the child's best interest that supersedes any other. Witnessing some of these trials was a heart-wrenching experience, but working under my attorney supervisor, Katherine McLoughlin, demonstrated to me that the first is for the children. Many times, these children do not have adequate advocates in their corner, and they suffer because of it. CLC makes it their mission to provide the best advocacy to and for the child/client to place them in a better situation than they were previously. I have gained so much legal dependency knowledge from this position, and I cannot wait to take what I've gained on my next path in my journey. Children's Law Center is/was a wonderful organization to intern with and I am happy to have experienced my 1L summer with them. Thank you to Children's Law Center, as well as Equal Justice America who provided me with the resources to work alongside a nonprofit organization. Without EJA, I would not have been able to provide my assistance to such a great and determined organization.