

Dear Dan Ruben,

I firstly want to thank you, the team at Equal Justice America, and the generous donors that have made it possible for me to be supported in my legal career. I apologize for my difficulties with managing my responsibilities this past summer with respect to the reporting requirements, as this fellowship has been of critical importance for me and my family. I came into the legal profession as the first in my immediate network to even apply to law school, and I have only been able to remain committed to the work I am passionate about due to the generosity of organizations such as yours. To have made it thus far and be able to sincerely say that I have remained committed to community-centered work is deeply meaningful to me and aligned with my values and ideological theories of change.

This past summer, I served as a law clerk on the Community Development Project (CDP) at Public Counsel. As people who are familiar with the public interest landscape in Los Angeles might know, the CDP team at Public Counsel has historically contributed to major efforts in support of nonprofit development, street vendors' rights, and small business protections.

On the nonprofit side, I was able to work with several community members in a variety of ways. One client, Michael Villa, is the Executive Director of El Mundo Paz which is an arts-based cultural development program aimed at educating youth about the history of Latino Culture. After my initial call with Michael, I was invited to speak with the remainder of the organization's Board of Directors and address questions about filing to achieve 501c3 tax exempt status and securing copyrights for their educational materials. I also helped Hiram Sims with his organization, the Community Literature Initiative, as well as Aaron Leonard, with Pure Hearts R Us, by supporting both of their organizations in reviewing their bylaws and articles of incorporation. For Hiram, his organization already had tax exempt status for the past six years within the state, whereas Aaron's organization was seeking to relocate its legal status from out of state. What was so insightful about all of these experiences was seeing how the same barriers for each of these individuals required specific and individualized solutions. I was able to better realize and appreciate the vast need for direct services for seemingly routine challenges.

My supervisors at Public Counsel also encouraged and enabled me to contribute to their ongoing efforts in the street vendors' work. From the first week onwards, I was able to participate in coalition meetings that included representation from vendors, partnering nonprofit organizations, as well as other legal aid organizations discussing both long standing as well as day to day challenges that the community was facing. During one of

the meetings, the vendors mentioned that there were several neighborhoods where they were facing constant surveillance, harassment, and the seizure of their property due to raids coordinated by several Los Angeles regulatory agencies. I was able to work directly with my supervisor on brainstorming and eventually producing a Public Records Act Request which seeks to provide our coalition with the information that will empower vendors to proactively exercise their rights and conduct their business. I also researched StreetsLA's complex policies and governing ordinances to better understand how street closures impact vendors who are given permits to vend and participate in farmer's markets. This work is precisely what I hope to continue to be apart of moving forward with my career, as I am incredibly passionate about the intersection between local governance and community-centered work. It was challenging to navigate numerous policies, conduct research on agencies whose information wasn't readily available, and communicate my findings in a way to community members such that it would be both understandable and generative.

Lastly, I worked with another supervisor by doing research on what the positive and negative consequences of bankruptcy would be for small businesses who were facing the extreme pressures imposed by the pandemic. Although I didn't work directly with clients on this project, it was yet another experience that I was able to taken on which demonstrated the importance of being flexible and proactive as a public interest lawyer. The pandemic has impacted all of us in myriad ways, and especially the marginalized and vulnerable. I was grateful that the bankruptcy research was an opportunity for me to compare this current fiscal crises to the Great Recession, because moments of mass struggle often share commonalities with previous generations which has been evident with labor movements, racial justice reform, and other major social justice efforts. I believe skills and intellectual challenges that I was tasked with taking on with these assignments will largely be translatable to whatever work I contribute to moving forward.

I want to reiterate how much of a privilege it is to be amongst the legacy of public servants under the Equal Justice America Fellowship. There is a long history of this work and will only continue to be addressed by people like us who understand the need to respond to the call to action. I am so grateful that your organization has supported my desire to continue to be able to respond to that call, and I am all the more excited about where my career will take me from here on out.

Sincerely,

Latrel Powell