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Liman Summer Fellow Report

This summer, I interned with the Legal Action Center, located in Seattle, Washington. As a homelessness prevention program, LAC provides free legal advice and representation to low-income tenants who face eviction or housing-related issues. It is currently one of the only services in the King Country area that provides such extensive pro-bono services.

As an intern with the Eviction Defense Unit, I conducted the initial client intakes and screened for potential defenses that could be raised in court. After identifying cases with merit, I assisted the attorneys with preparation for settlements or court hearings. Along with another law student, I also actively participated in the Neighborhood Legal Clinic. Supervised by a volunteer attorney during the clinic, we assisted low-income tenants who had disputes with their landlords. Following the clinic, we conducted a case review with LAC's directing attorney, Mark Chattin, to discuss our best strategies. For the cases that I was assigned to, I drafted demand letters and negotiated payment plans with landlords or property management companies.

My time at LAC really opened my eyes to large flaws in our justice system. While low-income residents have access to public defenders in criminal cases, there are incredibly few legal resources in Washington that provide free advice or representation for housing and other civil cases. While interacting with clients and hearing their stories, I soon learned that stable housing is an essential and basic need that impacts a family or individual's well being. Everyday, I saw how evictions

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could psychologically affect families. Yet although housing is such an essential issue, LAC was one of the few organizations that provided direct representation for clients in negotiations and in court. The vast majority of low-income tenants were left on their own in understanding and filing complex court documents. Since eviction cases occurred on a very tight timeline, many residents were unable to file their legal responses in time for their court date.

Another issue that stood out to me was the lack of understanding in our society for those who face mental disabilities. Many of the clients at LAC had one or more mental disabilities that impacted their relationships with their landlords and neighbors. At first, I found it extremely challenging to put myself in their shoes and understand why they had failed to pay rent or why they had disputes with their neighbors. Yet I soon realized how frustrating it could feel when landlords and even the justice system failed to properly accommodate their disability. By developing working relationships with these clients, I learned a lot about mental health and the limited legal and housing services that exist for low-income residents.

In my time working in the Neighborhood Clinic, I came across many clients who had trouble finding housing due to their eviction record. I learned that regardless of the outcome of the unlawful detainer suit (eviction case), an eviction would stay on the record. Laws like these really made me realize that it was an uphill battle for low-income tenants to maintain their housing. At the end of two months at LAC, I left with complex feelings towards housing law and the dynamics

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of the justice system. However, I left with a clear understanding that this area of law really needed attorneys and legal services.

One of the most memorable experiences of this summer was working on an eviction case for an elderly lady. After numerous house visits and court appearances, I learned a lot about her history, her interests and her personality. In the process of researching defenses and putting together evidence, I became extremely invested in her case. Although we were optimistic going into court, the judge unexpectedly evicted her from the unit. I was extremely taken aback during her trial because I thought that the ruling and procedure had been unfair. However, even though this was one of the most frustrating experiences of my summer, it was one of the most significant because it reminded me why I wanted to pursue a career in law. During this time, I was inspired by the attorneys who continued to appeal or work on other eviction cases, undeterred by the tough and unequal nature of this area. This experience gave me the conviction to acquire the credentials and skills to advocate for those who are marginalized. It made me realize that while this type of job consisted of many uphill battles, it's something that's worth fighting for.

Currently, as a junior in college, I want to further explore the law through internships and classes. My experience with the Liman Program strengthened my resolve to pursue a career in law that allows me the opportunity to litigate and directly interact with clients. Developing personal relationships with clients was one of the best parts of this summer and is something I look forward to in my future career choice. I'm greatly appreciative of the funding provided through the Liman

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Program, which gave me the option to explore public interest law without financial constraints. Not only did I learn so much about housing law and the shortcomings of our legal system, I gained a lot of insight into what my strengths and passions are. At the end of this summer, I can positively say that I am more confident about my interest in law and have a clearer vision for the future.

**photo attached to email



A young woman with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt, black shorts with white stripes, and white flip-flops, is smiling. She is wearing a blue life jacket and holding a blue paddle.

A woman with long red hair, wearing sunglasses and a colorful floral dress, is smiling. She is wearing a blue life jacket and holding a green paddle.

A man wearing a brown cap, a green long-sleeved shirt, and dark shorts is smiling. He is wearing a blue life jacket and holding a blue paddle.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark top and dark shorts, is smiling. She is wearing a blue life jacket and holding a blue paddle.

A woman wearing a pink t-shirt, a light-colored cap, and light-colored shorts is smiling. She is wearing a blue life jacket and holding a blue paddle.