Legal Clerkships: 2013/14 School Year and Summer 2014

Spend your semester or summer at one of California’s leading civil rights law firms. Our law clerks play a crucial role in high profile litigation and policy advocacy to advance economic and racial justice. In turn, we are committed to providing high quality training and supervision to help advance the career goals of our clerks and to foster a true community of public interest lawyers. We seek law students both at our main office in San Francisco and at our Sacramento office, which specializes in legislative advocacy and community engagement.

Our Mission
Public Advocates, a non-profit law firm and advocacy organization, challenges the systemic causes of poverty and discrimination by strengthening community voices in public policy and achieving tangible legal victories advancing education, housing, and transit equity. Public Advocates focuses on strategic policy reform, collaboration with grassroots groups representing people with low incomes, people of color and immigrants, communication, and litigation, “making rights real” across California since 1971.

The Legal Clerkship Program
Our Legal Clerkship Program exposes students to the diverse strategies of our impact work in an environment geared to their development as future lawyers committed to the public interest. Law clerks are assigned to a supervising attorney who has primary responsibility for giving constructive feedback in a positive learning environment. Public Advocates works to ensure that clerks have assignments that address a variety of skills and training goals. We engage students in a wide range of our work to promote equity and systemic change including: major civil rights impact litigation from development through trial and appeal; legislative, administrative, and policy advocacy; coalition work with grassroots organizations; and media and communications. Clerks have assisted in drafting briefs, participated in litigation meetings, attended administrative hearings, met with policy makers, organized public meetings and trainings, conducted cutting-edge policy research, and helped to build and strengthen relationships with various coalition partners.

Qualifications
We value law students who have a demonstrated commitment to working with low-income communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities. We expect summer clerks to work full time for ten weeks and semester clerks to work at least 14-16 hours a week (spending at least two days in the office). Our 2012-13 class included Anne Bellows (Berkeley), Chase Sackett (Yale), Megumi Tsutsui (Harvard), Matt Nickell (Harvard), and Robert Graham (Hastings). We have also had recent clerks from many other schools, including NYU, Stanford, UCLA, University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law, Santa Clara, and The University of Arizona.

Application Timeline
Applicants should provide a one- to two-page cover letter explaining (1) specific interests and qualifications (please do not simply recap your résumé); (2) experiences and commitment to working with low-income communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities; (3) reasons for applying to Public Advocates; and (4) whether they are volunteering or seeking academic credit. In addition, include a résumé, writing sample, and list of references. Send your materials to: Sam Tepperman-Gelfant, Director of the Legal Clerkship Program, at stepperman-gelfant@publicadvocates.org (and CC: Princess Masilungan at pmasilungan@publicadvocates.org).

We are currently accepting applications from 2Ls for summer 2014, and we will start accepting 1L applications in December. Applications for semester positions are welcome at any time before the semester begins. We encourage you to apply as early as possible for both semester and summer clerkships as space is limited and we fill positions on a rolling basis.

More details are available at www.publicadvocates.org

Public Advocates is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer. We welcome and encourage applications from those who will enhance our staff diversity.
Former Law Clerks’ Comments about the Legal Clerkship Program

Public Advocates’ commitment to supervision and training is evidenced by its successful internally-funded fellowship program and its well-established legal internship program, guided by Sam Tepperman-Gelfant, senior staff attorney. Law students’ feedback from their final internship evaluations is consistently positive:

“This was the best summer I could have asked for. I got the chance to see administrative law operate in real life, and I learned about the communities I care about. My supervisor gave me challenging assignments that required creative analysis of how affordable housing arguments can fit within a given legal framework. During this summer, I learned about housing, transportation, and education equity issues, and I also made lifelong friends. Public Advocates attracts sharp-witted and kind-hearted law students from across the country. I feel privileged to have worked among such awesome law clerks and full time attorneys.” (Annie Lee, Harvard, Class of ’14)

“I appreciate the fact that the staff at PA went out of their way to mentor us. Not only did my supervisors give me thoughtful feedback on the assignments I turned in, but the rest of the staff also made time to share information about substantive policy areas and career issues. I came away from my internship with better writing and clearer professional aspirations, and I got to spend time with a really great group of people!” (Mindy Lu, Yale, Class of ’14)

“[My supervisor] was very attentive to my education experience, checking in consistently to make sure I was getting what I’d hoped to out of the internship experience. He provided background materials to bring me up to speed on a wide range of issues, and he made sure to contextualize my assignments, zooming out to give me a broad view of the issue so I could see where my work plugged in. He was always receptive to my questions along the way.” (Imron Bhatti, UC Davis, Class of ’14)

“I appreciated the conversations I had with staff that helped me to see how the work I was doing fit into a larger litigation strategy. […] I also enjoyed learning about an entirely new subject area and advocacy strategy. I feel like I was dropped right into the middle of an exciting project, and got to see all of its moving parts.” (David Kane, UCLA, Class of ’13)

“[PA] is a great place to get a feel for housing, education and transit work and to learn the nitty-gritty of the challenges affecting low-income communities in California; and, it’s a great place to get a sense of what lawyers do when they do policy-advocacy.” (Nayna Gupta, Stanford, Class of ’13)

“[PA] was inspiring for me [because I saw] that there are ways in which I can help struggling communities. I really like the work that I did, and I like feeling like what I was doing was both useful and important.” (Felipa Quiroz, Berkeley, Class of ’12)

“[My supervisor] was very open in allowing me to work on assignments that I was interested [in] and passionate about. I did not even have to remind [her] about the types of assignments that I wanted to do because she made it a priority to ensure that I received the most value from this internship. I really appreciated the mentorship, the tremendous amount of support, and attention to my needs that [she] provided.” (Carolyn Kim, Santa Clara, Class of ’12)

“[My supervisor] always tried to touch bases with me from time to time, despite being very busy. She struck the right balance between guiding me and allowing me to learn and develop on my own. I specifically liked that my supervisor understood what I needed to get out of the internship from an educational standpoint.” (James Baker, Harvard, Class of ’13)

“I learned a great amount here and admire the fact that this organization has people with BOTH good minds and good hearts.” (Genevieve Bonadies, Harvard, Class of ’13)

“I would recommend Public Advocates to other interns because I believe the organization cares about inspiring the next generation of public interest lawyers. Also, the work projects assigned to interns actually impact the litigation, and interns can potentially see the fruits of their hard work.” (Micah Moon, Berkeley, Class of ’12)

“It was a really inspiring learning experience to be around a group of talented people who are working so tirelessly at huge goals. It was definitely a lesson about the way the nonprofit and public interest world works, and in what it means to commit to a career in public interest law.” (Leah Kang, Harvard, Class of ’12)

“I have enjoyed the feeling of truly being part of the office and valued for my ideas. I have felt like my contributions have been valuable. [My supervisor] has very much engaged me in the work he is doing, and thinking through the process with him.” (Jonah Minoff-Zern, Golden Gate Law, Class of ’11)

“I was fueled by passions around the critical issue of basic racial and economic justice, and I was completely engaged in learning the contours and layers of the issue. I was so glad to get to see the interface between coalition advocacy and legal strategies.” (Liz Jackson, Berkeley, Class of ’11)