

# Careers in Private Public Interest Law Firms



OFFICE OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROGRAMS  
UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ABOUT UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW

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UCLA School of Law, founded in 1949, is the youngest major law school in the nation and has established a tradition of innovation in its approach to teaching, research, and scholarship. With a rigorous public interest curriculum, the school is a preeminent training ground for students committed to careers across a spectrum of public interest practice areas.

## ABOUT THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC INTEREST PROGRAMS

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The Office of Public Interest Programs strives to enhance UCLA School of Law's commitment to public service by offering an array of services to students and alumni. The Office's principal goal is to encourage students and alumni to embrace a career that incorporates an ongoing commitment to public service.

## INTRODUCTION

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*“All my life I have believed in the adage, ‘if you seek out what you love, things will work out in the end’”*

-Barbara Hadsell, Partner,  
Hadsell Stormer & Renick LLP,  
UCLA School of Law Class of  
1978

Attorneys in private public interest practice are at the forefront of public interest lawyering. These attorneys practice in every area of public interest law, as they fight for the constitutional rights of incarcerated people, seek accountability for police officers’ use of excessive force, negotiate affordable housing contracts, sue discriminatory employers, and monitor elections. This *Careers in Private Public Interest Law Firms* handbook has been created to help law students and graduates understand how to enter private public interest practice.

The handbook is divided into six parts. Part I discusses private public interest practice by defining “public interest,” setting the parameters of public interest practice, considering the significance of public interest lawyering for profit, and listing factors students might consider when researching firms. Part II contains narratives from UCLA School of Law alumni in private public interest practice. Part III suggests entry points into private public interest practice and provides examples of practice sites. Part IV enumerates how students can secure law school clerkships, fellowships, and post-graduate employment at private public interest practice sites. Part V contains narratives from UCLA School of Law students and recent graduates who have clerked for and whose post-graduate employment is in private public interest firms. Finally, Part VI provides interview tips based on information we have learned from speaking with students and law firm employers.

*“My passions and interests generally aligned more naturally with the workers’ side than the employers’ side, so I started my own firm to serve individual workers. . . Working for yourself representing individuals in employment matters is challenging, but it is ever so rewarding. Knowing that you are making a difference in one person’s life means the world.”*

-Angel James Horacek, Principal  
Attorney, Law Offices of Angel J.  
Horacek, UCLA School of Law  
Class of 2006

## I. PRIVATE PUBLIC INTEREST PRACTICE

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This Part discusses typical private public interest models and factors that set private sector public interest practice apart from nonprofit and government lawyering.

### DEFINING “PUBLIC INTEREST”

There is no bright-line rule to determine what constitutes lawyering “in the public interest.” Broadly speaking, this handbook uses “public interest” in reference to values-driven lawyering done for social impact on behalf of disenfranchised or marginalized communities.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Scott Cummings, who served as faculty director of the David J. Epstein Program of Public Interest Law and Policy Program at UCLA School of Law for many years and has published extensively on public interest lawyering, has discussed the complexities of defining private public interest practice. He writes:

Defining the parameters of the private [public law] firm category is complicated by the range of motivations and practices that lawyers adopt, and how they relate to the already contested notion of [public law]. Some for-profit firms may explicitly self-identify as cause-oriented, while others may not. Of those that do self-identify with [public interest law], some may practice in areas that mirror traditional [public interest law] categories (for example, civil rights, employment, housing, or prisoner's rights), while others may focus on classic plaintiff-side work (for example, personal injury or securities litigation). Also, while some private [public interest law] firms may devote themselves exclusively to cause-oriented lawyering, others may supplement such work with commercial cases in order to help “pay the bills.”

Other commentators have struggled with the definitional problem. In Handler and his colleagues' early study of the [public interest law] industry, they identified so-called “mixed firms” as those “in the private, for-profit sector of the economy [that] devote a significant portion of their resources to activities of the [public interest law] type.” This definition hinged on the degree to which private firms devoted their practice to [public law] “issue areas,” which included employment, environmental protection, civil liberties, consumer protection, housing, education, health care, voting, media reform, welfare benefits, and occupational health and safety. Firms that devoted at least twenty-five percent of their practice to such areas qualified. More recent efforts to define private [public interest law] firms have emphasized firm mission rather than practice areas.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion on the meaning of public interest lawyering, particularly in the context of private sector law firms, see SCOTT CUMMINGS & ALAN CHEN, PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERING: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE 181-84 (2012); Scott Cummings, *Privatizing Public Interest Law*, 25 GEO. J. OF LEGAL ETHICS 1 (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Cummings, *Privatizing Public Interest Law*, *supra* note 1, at 9-10.

Professor Cummings defines private public interest practice as follows:

Building on these approaches, I define the category of private [public interest law] firms to include for-profit legal practices whose core mission is to advance a vision of the public interest that enhances legal and political access for underrepresented groups or pursues a social change agenda that challenges corporate or governmental power. This definition is broad enough to include firms on both sides of the political spectrum, though it would exclude lawyering on behalf of existing structures of power. Further, it encompasses a spectrum of firms with a variety of combined practice types, rather than referring to a fixed model.<sup>3</sup>

This handbook relies on Professor Cummings' suggested approach to defining private public interest practice. Students should recognize, however, that practitioners often use a broader definition than the one provided here. For example, firms contracted to represent cities and state agencies, which might include defense against claims challenging abuse of state power, are often considered within the scope of public interest firms for their involvement in public law. Given the malleability of the boundaries of private public interest practice, students should be sure to thoroughly research the practice areas of firms they are interested in to determine whether the firm's areas of advocacy match their interests. Students should also be sure to verify how a firm allocates time and resources to its various practice areas.

Students should also be aware that attorney *pro bono* work offered by many corporate law firms often provides critical services to immigrants, incarcerated individuals, and other marginalized individuals. Corporate *pro bono* legal work is also often crucial to assisting nonprofit organizations in pursuing impact litigation to change the law.<sup>4</sup> This *Careers in Private Public Interest Law Firms* handbook, however, does not address the nuances of engaging in corporate law firm *pro bono* practice, given the existing emphasis law school career service offices place on entry into corporate firms.

## **FOR-PROFIT PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERING**

The for-profit nature of private public interest practice differentiates it from nonprofit and government public interest practice in notable ways. Operating for profit shapes how private practitioners choose clients, earn income, and build their legal practices. The for-profit structure also gives practitioners greater flexibility in the types of cases they choose to take, because they are not limited by conditions attached to foundation funding or by the politics and legislative rules that restrict government attorneys.

Generally speaking, public interest practice might involve plaintiff litigation, defense against litigation, and transactional law. The remainder of this section considers the different ways each practice generates income, and how income-generation models then shape private legal practice.

Depending on the practice area, plaintiffs' attorneys, both solo practitioners and attorneys at private public interest law firms, rely on attorneys' fees made available through fee-shifting

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>4</sup> See CUMMINGS & CHEN, PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERING, *supra* note 1, at 170-81.

statutes or contingency fees taken from trial verdicts or settlement agreements.<sup>5</sup> Fee-shifting statutes make attorneys' fees available for plaintiffs who bring victorious civil rights, employment, environmental, and other statutory causes of action. Under a contingency fee arrangement, attorneys take a percentage of any settlement agreement or damages won at trial. The plaintiff might pay a small fee upfront to retain an attorney's services, pay nothing if the case loses, or give up a predetermined percentage of any trial win or settlement agreement. Attorneys' fees open the possibility for private sector attorneys to earn a generous income while also fighting injustice.

Plaintiffs' lawyers pay out of pocket for the cost of litigation expenses, and litigation is not inexpensive. As such, attorneys bringing cases on behalf of injured parties must analyze what damages can be won at trial and whether litigation costs might offset any potential settlement or trial victory. Litigation expenditures might include court filings, expert witnesses, deposition expenses such as court reporters' fees and recording equipment costs, travel expenses, and compensation for employees, such as the law clerks, paralegals, legal secretaries, or client intake specialists without whom most cases could not be litigated.

A downside of for-profit public interest lawyering is that some private public interest plaintiffs' attorneys may find they must turn down meritorious cases when litigation costs are likely to exceed available monetary damages. To cover the costs of litigation, including for meritorious cases unlikely to win attorney's fees high enough to compensate for the costs of litigation, some public interest firms and solo practitioners find creative ways to design their practice models. Practitioners might dedicate some of their practice to less risky issue areas, such as labor and employment law, to compensate for the greater legal and procedural hurdles that must be overcome to win prisoners' rights or police brutality cases. Practitioners might even branch into practice areas not traditionally considered "public interest," such as personal injury cases. Practitioners might also secure contracts with labor unions or other institutions that serve the public good to ensure a continuous income stream. Practitioners might branch into policy advocacy, consulting, or other non-litigation practice areas. Practitioners are also likely to simplify and streamline their business management practices to be as efficient as possible.<sup>6</sup>

As noted before, depending on how one chooses to define "public interest," some private public interest litigators may also find themselves partially working as defense attorneys. Some cities and other local governments choose to contract city attorney and other legal services out to private attorneys. Private attorneys may thus defend cities against claims brought by businesses, members of the public, or others, including claims of excessive force or discrimination. Similarly, if a firm represents a union, private public interest attorneys may find themselves defending it as an employer if a union member files a grievance against the union.

Instead of litigation, some private public interest attorneys engage in transactional work. This might include negotiating and drafting union employment contracts or real estate development contracts that mandate inclusion of low-income housing units. Cities may also contract private

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<sup>5</sup> For more detailed information about attorney's fees for private public interest attorneys, see *id.* at 186-96.

<sup>6</sup> For an extensive discussion of models that firms use to litigate risky mission-driven cases, see Cummings, *Privatizing Public Interest Law*, *supra* note 1, at 184-85.



public interest attorneys to negotiate and draft contracts on behalf of agencies or other municipal entities. Transactional public interest legal practice may generate funds through government contracts or by offering sliding scale payment options.

## **FACTORS LAW STUDENTS SHOULD CONSIDER**

The following is a non-exhaustive list of factors law students and graduates should consider when pursuing legal clerkships or post-graduate employment in private public interest firms:

### **THE NATURE OF A FIRM'S PUBLIC INTEREST PRACTICE**

Private practitioners are not limited in the types of cases they may take on beyond the ethics rules that bind all lawyers and statutes that limit available causes of action. As such, private practitioners have greater flexibility in how they choose cases and structure their practices as compared to those in the nonprofit or government sector. Great flexibility also means that a practice can be structured such that only a small proportion of its cases might be classified as public interest. For example, a firm could provide plaintiff employment law and personal injury services where the firm's practice centers on car accidents instead of workers' rights or consumer protection. Alternatively, the majority of a firm's practice might center on advising public clients on regulatory matters and providing contracted city attorney services while a minority of the firm's practice is in business law or corporate defense. Students should research firm practice areas to ensure a given firm fits their interests and meets their expectations.

### **TRIAL WORK**

Students interested in litigation and trial work should find out whether the firm or the solo practitioner they are interested in working for takes cases to trial. Most civil litigation consists of written pre-trial motions and the vast majority of cases settle before trial. As such, unlike in the criminal law context, civil litigators can often avoid trial by settling cases beforehand. Some firms accept lower settlement agreements as a means to avoid trial completely. Students interested in trial work should find out whether a firm they are interested in takes cases to trial when unable to reach a satisfactory settlement agreement. Typically, small to mid-sized firms that take cases to trial are likely to take at least one trial to court per year, if not more.

### **CASELOADS**

Different firms have different approaches to handling caseloads. Some practitioners pride themselves on only accepting cases or clients they can give full attention to while others take on as many cases or clients as possible. Aspiring private public interest attorneys should be aware that it is just as possible to experience burnout from overwork at a private public interest firm as any public defender or nonprofit attorney might. Students should research the firm they are interested in to get a sense of attorney caseload and work-life balance.

### **LEGAL SUPPORT**

Because private public interest firms vary in size, the level of investigative support that practitioners have can greatly vary. Larger firms, which may have as many as thirty or more lawyers, might have multiple paralegals and legal secretaries, while smaller offices and solo

practitioners may have two, one, or even no staff members available to assist with reviewing discovery, interviewing witnesses, preparing litigation documents, and submitting court filings.

## TRAINING

Private public interest firms usually do not have formal training programs for law students or young attorneys. Some firms, however, may offer mentorship programs. Private sector attorney associations, such as the California Employment Lawyers Association, frequently offer litigation and substantive law trainings for young attorney members. Law students can also look for summer fellowship programs that offer opportunities to learn and train at law firms.

As many private public interest firms are small to mid-sized, law students and graduates should pursue other avenues to seek training opportunities as they will be expected to dive right into the work once at a firm. If opportunities are not available directly in the private public interest setting, students should seek work experience that will develop their skills and improve their knowledge of the issue area in which they want to practice. Judicial clerkships, for example, are greatly valued by public interest firms, as are opportunities in government and nonprofits that convey a continued commitment to the public interest.

## HIRING AND PROMOTION PRACTICES

In pursuing a summer or permanent position at a particular firm, it is important for aspiring private public interest attorneys to be familiar with the firm's hiring practices. Budgetary constraints and infrequent openings may make it difficult for students to secure post-graduate employment at a firm where they clerked during a summer. There are, however, many firms that do hire recent law school graduates. Law students and recent graduates should not be afraid to express their interest in post-graduate employment to associates or partners at firms where they clerk. They should also not be afraid to express their interest in post-graduate employment to associates and partners they have met at conferences and networking events, particularly if the student has built a relationship with an attorney. Regarding promotion practices, many firms offer associates the prospect of becoming senior associates and partners. Individual firms have different rules and practices about how associates can advance within their firms.

## SALARY AND BENEFITS

The salary and benefits available to a private public interest attorney can range widely. A first-year attorney at a private public interest law firm can expect to earn between \$40,000 and \$90,000, depending on factors such as the firm's geographic region, length of existence, and practice area(s). Students pursuing post-graduate employment with private public interest firms should expect to receive and should negotiate for a salary package that includes benefits. Students should also consider negotiating for post-verdict bonuses, particularly if the student is negotiating post-graduate employment at a firm with a lower starting salary.

The more seasoned private public interest attorney can earn into the hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and beyond. Plaintiffs' attorneys can land huge jury verdicts or repeatedly negotiate large settlement offers for injured clients. Law firm associates may also have the opportunity to buy into firms through partnerships.

## LOAN REPAYMENT

It is important to consider whether one's work at a private public interest firm will make one eligible for loan repayment assistance programs, such as federal programs and the UCLA School of Law Loan Repayment Assistance Program.

In the past, a firm's eligibility as a public interest employer has been made on a case-by-case basis for the UCLA School of Law Loan Repayment Assistance Program. A student interested in pursuing a post-graduate position should discuss this matter with their career counselor and the UCLA School of Law's Financial Aid Office to determine whether a firm is likely to be eligible, with the understanding that no final decision can be made until the committee reviews their UCLA School of Law Loan Repayment Assistance Program application. For more information on the UCLA School of Law Loan Repayment Assistance Program, visit <https://law.ucla.edu/alumni/alumni-services/loan-repayment-assistance-program/>.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAW STUDENTS

Law students working at private public interest law firms during the summer or throughout the school year can generally expect to perform legal research and writing tasks and conduct investigatory work. However, offices vary in what they assign law students to do. For instance, some offices may primarily assign law students to research and write memos, while others may also provide law students with opportunities to draft complaints, discovery motions, and other litigation documents or review evidence gained through discovery. Some firms may also provide law students with the opportunity to attend depositions, court hearings, trials, or press conferences for high profile cases. To the extent possible, students should seek opportunities to draft litigation documents or attend litigation proceedings.

Law students able to secure a legal clerkship with a solo practitioner are likely to receive invaluable legal training. Solo attorneys by definition have few if any other attorneys with whom they can share their client workload. As such, a law student working for a solo practitioner, particularly a practitioner who cares that the law student learns the tools of the trade, will likely have the opportunity to draft litigation documents such as complaints or objections to the opposing party's requests for production.

Law students should expect to be paid for work done for private sector attorneys, which typically ranges between \$10-\$25 an hour depending on the firm's size and geographic location. If asked how much a student would be willing to clerk per hour, students should not undervalue the cost of their labor.

## II. ALUMNI NARRATIVES

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Attorneys enter private public interest practice from a variety of avenues. Some attorneys begin their careers at a private public interest firm, while others segue into one from the nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors, or by launching their own solo practice. Part II features short essays from distinguished UCLA School of Law alumni in private public interest practice. These narratives exemplify how individuals can take very different paths into private public interest practice and pursue very different types of public interest work. Each of these lawyers has found

fulfillment in their careers and share a clear commitment to zealously advocating for their clients and fighting injustice.

## BARBARA HADSELL '78

### Partner, Hadsell Stormer & Renick LLP, Pasadena, California

I started law school perhaps a little later than is the usual trajectory. After obtaining a Master's in English Literature and living for two years in La Paz, Bolivia, a precipitous decline in the U.S. economy led me to the more practical pursuit of obtaining a law degree from UCLA School of Law in 1978. While there, I became an active member in the school's National Lawyers Guild Chapter.

During law school, I interned for several months at the Federal Public Defender's (FPD) office, where I assisted in defending persons accused of bank robbery and cattle rustling. The internship resulted in my first job following graduation – joining the trial attorney with whom I had worked at the FPD and who had since left that office. I had several interesting experiences as an associate practicing criminal defense, but soon decided I wanted to be on the affirmative, rather than the defensive, side of justice issues. When a chance came up to join a firm headed by a leftist legend in Los Angeles progressive legal circles, I jumped at the chance.

The firm was then called Margolis, McTernan, Scope, Sacks & Epstein. I had first clapped eyes on Ben Margolis, the compelling founder of the firm with John McTernan, in the late 1930's, when he stood on top of a table in the law school and engaged in a fiery speech denouncing the woeful absence of people of color in the school. Luckily for me, my first research assignment as a law clerk at the Margolis firm was for Ben. He liked what I did and ferreted out that I was an attorney rather than a law student. The very next day, the firm hired me as a full-time attorney. All my life I have believed in the adage, "if you seek out what you love, things will work out in the end"; this experience did nothing to dissuade me from that conviction.

I was with the Margolis firm until it dissolved in the late 1980's, at which point Ben Margolis, John McTernan and I joined a newly-formed plaintiffs' civil rights firm, Litt & Stormer, where I became a partner. That firm disbanded after a few short years, but, while in existence, was a magnet for young, energetic attorneys itching to engage in progressive legal practice.

In 1991, Dan Stormer and I formed a new firm, Hadsell & Stormer, which continues to exist to this day, having undergone various name and member changes. Hadsell & Stormer steamed out into the legal harbor uncertain of the voyage ahead– neither Dan nor I had a proverbial financial pot to pee in, so we borrowed a little bit, wrangled the blessings of our respective anxious but nevertheless supportive spouses, and launched our firm. As it turned out, we had a lucky launching, as within just a few short weeks and on the same day, we each received large jury verdicts. Dan's victory came in a glass ceiling case, which resulted in the then-highest award for workplace sex discrimination. My federal trial was one of the first of its kind involving charges of sexual harassment and retaliation brought by two of the very first female patrol officers in the Long Beach Police Department. It returned a multi-million dollar verdict within approximately 90 minutes of deliberations. When the chairperson announced the verdict, joy, elation and disbelief played out on my two clients' faces all at once: "The jury believed in us!" It is a look I will never forget. An even more surprising consequence was that the entire affair was made into a TV movie, *Hostile Intent*, with the actress Holland Taylor portraying me. It is definitely quite odd to see

yourself depicted in a movie, decked out in smart attire ensconced in a very large and impressive office (neither of which has been ever associated with me).

I still love the work. In part, that is due to a marvelous law partner and to the vow we made each other years ago and have kept – take on any case we really like, vary what we do and do it for as long and as hard as we can, sticking with what we consider to be the progressive side of things and have fun doing it. Loosely translated, this has meant we have engaged in a multi-faceted practice that has included a variety of human rights, housing, civil rights, and employment cases. We have been extremely fortunate to work with talented and energetic co-counsel here in Los Angeles and across the country, including many non-profits such as Legal Aid Foundation, Western Center on Law & Poverty, the ACLU, Public Counsel, Inner City Law Center, Electronic Frontier Foundation, EarthRights, and The Center for Constitutional Rights. The list goes on.

Of course, the journey has been challenging at times; not all clients and causes are vindicated; not all cases are won; not all judges are fair; not all litigation is inspiring. But we have never lost sight of our original goal and the work remains, for the most part, soul-satisfying.

My advice: believe in something and then just go for it!

[ANGEL JAMES HORACEK '06](#)

**Principal Attorney, Law Offices of Angel J. Horacek, Culver City, California**

When I applied to law school, I envisioned a career working as a commercial transactional attorney, focusing on helping small businesses incorporate and navigate a path from start-up to established firm. However, I have always been interested in social and racial justice issues. Accordingly, I was one of the few law students who pursued specializations in both Critical Race Studies and Business Law and Policy.

During the OCI process, I accepted a second-year summer associate position with a small firm, since I wanted to maximize hands-on work experience. I also accepted an offer to join that firm following graduation. While studying for the bar, I learned that my firm was being subsumed into a larger firm with headquarters on the East Coast. This gave me the opportunity to service larger clients with California commercial litigation matters, which occasionally dealt with employment issues.

I found employment matters dynamic, interesting, and volatile. For each case, I had to learn what business the client was in, the position the employee held, what regulations applied to that employment, and other ancillary matters. It was so much more interesting than commercial litigation. So many factors are in play in employment litigation, and particularly employment litigation relating to unlawful discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and whistleblowing.

I found that my passions and interests aligned more naturally with the workers' side than the employers' side, so I ended up starting my own firm to serve individual workers in order to represent the people.

My business does not lend itself to many repeat clients. Working for yourself representing individuals in employment matters is challenging, but it is ever so rewarding. Knowing that you

are making a difference in one person's life means the world. As such, I am more than willing to discuss my career path with anyone interested in discussing further.

### CHRISTIAN SCHREIBER '06

#### Partner, Olivier Schreiber & Chao LLP, San Francisco, California

Prior to law school, I worked as a legislative aide and investigator in the California State Senate. I helped draft anti-predatory lending legislation, analyzed affordable housing bills, and investigated Enron's role in the California electricity crisis. It was important work, though I experienced the familiar frustrations of a deliberative legislative process that seemed to recognize the scope of a problem but managed to offer, at best, only partial solutions.

The incremental approach always weighed on me. Where corporate greed seemed so patently on display, I often remarked that I wished someone would "just sue" this or that company. If sweeping change eluded lawmakers, then surely, I thought, such change could be achieved by litigators. My perspective then was colored by the lore of social change made through our judicial system. I believed entire industries could be moved by brave plaintiffs, creative lawyers, and virtuous judges. It's the reason I went to law school. And after ten years in private practice, doing mostly class actions, this remains one of my core beliefs. But nothing is ever so simple.

My impulse to right every wrong has not diminished. I still spend my days "just suing them." But the lesson I've learned is that in private practice you must strike a balance between righteous cases that pay the bills, and high-stakes, high-risk public interest cases where the prospect of being awarded fees – if there is such a prospect – is probably years away. Make no mistake: most contingent-fee plaintiffs' lawyers would be quick to characterize their practice as a "private public interest practice." There is risk in taking cases on contingency, and implicit in most contingent-fee arrangements is the recognition that the client cannot afford to pay the lawyer on an hourly basis. Today this is true of the vast majority of individuals.

One of the unfortunate realities of a private practice is letting go of a client in need because their case isn't "economical." Yet it is also true that the most successful private public interest firms can pursue public interest cases precisely because they have mastered those economics. For any public interest case I take on, I expect the road will be long and the legal issues will be novel. This is exciting. The cases are hard and hard-fought. Our opponents almost always have deep pockets and the will to fight. But miscalculations can be ruinous. Litigation is expensive and resource intensive. Tilting at windmills may grab headlines, but it doesn't always advance the law. Losses can do real harm to lawyers and their clients, and they allow bad actors to patrol the boundaries of an unfavorable existing landscape.

We make the same strategic legal considerations as our non-profit allies. But we are subject to market forces that non-profits are not. We cannot fundraise or receive donations. When we partner with non-profits, we pay for experts and other litigation costs. Our for-profit status cuts both ways. While many of my clients are poor, low-wage workers or individuals who were formerly incarcerated, others are middle class consumers with straightforward claims. Many non-profits cannot represent clients who make even a modest income.

Ideally the relationship is symbiotic. For example, together with another firm and a legal aid organization, I represented hundreds of janitors who were victims of wage theft. These workers

cleaned the stores of a large national retailer, but the retailer engaged in a subcontracting scheme that resulted in insufficient margins to pay the janitors. The retailer obtained the benefit of the workers' labor without assuming any liability for the working conditions or wages. In 2013, we decided to test a new law that created liability for any company "up the chain" that failed to fund the higher-level contract at a level sufficient to comply with labor laws. After years of litigation, we obtained a settlement for the janitors and reformed the companies' contracting practices. But few settlements are unqualified successes, and this was no exception. The janitors received some of their wages, but not all. And though the national retailer benefitted from the labor of these workers, it did not bear any of the cost of the litigation.

The case also exposed shortcomings in the law. Like many pieces of legislation, the drafters could not have foreseen all the ways in which the law might be challenged. Uncertainty and ambiguity pushed further compromise. I understood the challenge that the bill's authors faced but was still frustrated by these consequences. The settlement was the largest ever achieved under the law, but our success was just another incremental step. It also led me to a familiar place. I walked away thinking about how to change the law. "Better legislation could make sweeping change possible." Echoes of my former self.

### III. POINTS OF ENTRY INTO PRIVATE PUBLIC INTEREST PRACTICE

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Part III contains a non-exhaustive list of the diverse methods through which law students can break into private public interest practice.

#### **ON-CAMPUS RECRUITMENT**

Many private public interest firms attend campus recruitment programs and events, including summer, fall, and spring on-campus interviews ("OCI") and public interest hiring days. Because their attendance might not be well known, be sure to read carefully the lists of participating entities in recruitment events. Further, like corporate firms, some public interest firms hire second-year summer associates for permanent post-graduate positions. Given the opportunity, students should ask about a firm's post-graduate recruitment practices.

#### **FELLOWSHIPS**

Fellowships are an important method for breaking into private public interest practice. Part IV of this Guide, *Preparing for a Career in Private Public Interest Practice*, contains a list of some post-graduate fellowships to which interested students can apply.

#### **DIRECT APPLICATION**

To the extent firms do not participate in campus recruitment events or broader fellowship programs, students can directly submit application materials to firms at which they want to work. Many firm websites have a "Careers" or "Employment Opportunities" page that state whether the firm has any vacancies for clerkships or permanent full-time positions. If a firm's webpage is

silent on the matter, students should consider directly inquiring with someone at the firm. In regards to permanent positions, many firms hire on a need-basis and may not know their hiring capacity until closer to the hiring period. Application materials generally consist of a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and list of references.

## **SOLO PRACTICE**

Many private public interest attorneys turn to solo practice at some point in their legal careers. Solo practice comes with benefits that include being able to take cases one finds most interesting, not needing to report to higher authority, and not having to share profits across a firm. One of the downsides to solo practice is that the solo practitioner must manage a business while also managing a practice.

Solo practitioners, particularly when first establishing themselves, often co-counsel with firms or other solo practitioners to pool resources and talent. A solo practitioner may be one attorney who works alone or who works with a staff of paralegals, legal secretaries, or law clerks.

Although less common, some solo practitioners start their practices straight out of law school. The benefit of this route is again the great flexibility the attorney has to choose clients, create their own work schedule, and otherwise make decisions without having to be accountable to anyone beyond one's clients and legal ethics considerations. The downside of starting a solo practice right out of law school is the recent graduate's lack of experience with court procedures, substantive law, case management, and perhaps even small business management.

## **NETWORKING**

Networking is very important for individuals seeking entry into and success in private public interest practice. To the extent possible, law students should attend conferences in the practice areas that interest them most. They should join relevant attorney associations and committees, as well as their corresponding email listservs. Professional associations, such as the Los Angeles County Bar Association and the National Lawyers Guild, often have volunteer opportunities for students to attend bar association events. 2L and 3L students should contact the Office of Career Services and/or Office of Public Interest Programs about the possibility of using various school funds to offset expenses related to attendance at a workshop, symposium, or conference, as well as costs related to organizational student memberships. Organizational memberships provide an opportunity for students to meet lawyers practicing in the areas they want to work in and express to them their interest in working within a particular practice area or at their firm.

Building rapport with practicing attorneys also allows students to ask if their firms offer clerkship opportunities during the summer and/or school year. Do not be afraid to ask for employment opportunities even where they do not ostensibly exist, because an attorney or a firm may be willing to help create an opportunity for you or update you about opportunities as they arise. Be sure to follow up with attorneys who offer to help you and do not hesitate to do so more than once if you receive no response as attorneys may simply not have the capacity to be immediately responsive. Your mentors and career counselors are available to help you navigate the etiquette of connecting and following up with attorneys.



The Office of Public Interest Programs, Office of Career Services, faculty, and alumni are other great resources for identifying attorneys at relevant public interest firms who can be connected with students. Finally, students should strive to maintain a relationship with their supervising attorneys and other contacts from summer employment, semester-long externships, and volunteer activities.

## **PRACTICE SITES**

This section highlights the work of some private public interest firms that reflect the diversity of practice models in the private public interest sector. The firms included below are not static and may undergo a change in their staff, name, and/or structure after the publication of this handbook. This list is also not meant to be exhaustive, as there are many exemplar public interest law firms and solo practitioners throughout the nation. While this list is not comprehensive and many of the firms listed are based in California, this should provide a solid jumpstart for students interested in researching and identifying additional public interest firms.

### **BEESON, TAYER & BODINE, APC**

Beeson, Tayer & Bodine has offices in Oakland and Sacramento and has represented labor unions and collectively-bargained employee benefit plans in California for over seventy-five years. While the firm specializes in working with labor unions, its practice areas also include employment law, education law, and bankruptcy law. UCLA School of Law alumni Susan K. Garea and Peter McEntee are attorneys at Beeson, Tayer & Bodine. Learn more about the firm by visiting <http://www.beesontayer.com/>.

### **BEST BEST & KRIEGER**

Best Best & Krieger has offices in Northern and Southern California, as well as in Washington, D.C. It has a wide range of practice areas that include labor and employment law, bankruptcy law, environmental law and natural resources, education law, trusts and estates, municipal law, and business law. UCLA School of Law alumnus Christopher J. Diaz is an attorney at Best Best & Krieger. Learn more about the firm at <https://www.bbklaw.com/>.

### **CHAVEZ & GERTLER LLP**

Chavez & Gertler LLP is located in Mill Valley and specializes in class action litigation. Its practice areas include consumer protection, employment wage and hour, and personal injury. UCLA School of Law alumnus Christian Schreiber is a former partner at Chavez & Gertler LLP. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.chavezgertler.com/>.

### **ETHICA LEGAL COUNSEL**

Ethica Legal Counsel is located in Santa Monica and outsources in-house counsel for socially conscious and ethically-minded companies and entrepreneurs. Its services include providing business legal essentials and analysis, developing employment packages, building client-vendor relationships, and establishing benefits corporations and/or social enterprises. Ethica Legal Counsel was founded by UCLA School of Law alumna Amanda R. Canning. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.ethicalegalcounsel.com/>.

## FRANCO LAW GROUP

Franco Law Group is located in downtown Los Angeles and specializes exclusively in the practice of immigration and nationality law. Its attorneys have experience in all areas of immigration, including asylum, temporary visas, citizenship and naturalization, residency, deportation and removal, and judicial review. Franco Law Group was founded by UCLA School of Law alumna Delia L. Franco. UCLA School of Law alumnus Sergio A. Perez is also an attorney at Franco Law Group. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.francolawgroup.com/>.

## GILBERT & SACKMAN

Gilbert & Sackman is located in Los Angeles and represents unions, labor-management trust funds, and employees. Its practice areas are labor law, pension and employee benefits law, and class action employment law. UCLA School of Law alumni Pamela Chandran, Joseph L. Paller Jr., Ryan Spillers, Michael D. Weiner, Travis S. West, and Joshua F. Young are attorneys at Gilbert & Sackman. Learn more about the firm at <http://gslaw.org/>.

## GOLDFARB & LIPMAN LLP

Goldfarb & Lipman has offices in the Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego, and it represents both public and private organizations. The firm's practice areas include real estate, affordable housing, land use, municipal law, community economic development, public finance, and employment. UCLA School of Law alumni William DiCamillo, Luis A. Rodriguez, and Rafael Yaquian-Illescas are attorneys at Goldfarb & Lipman LLP. Learn more about the firm at <https://goldfarblipman.com/>.

## HADSELL, STORMER & RENICK LLP

Hadsell, Stormer & Renick has offices in Pasadena, downtown Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area. It is dedicated to seeking justice for those who have suffered abuse at the hands of police, prisons, employers, and other violators of civil rights, workers' rights, and human rights. The firm recently negotiated a legal fund to provide legal services to members of UNITE-HERE Local 11. UCLA School of Law alumni Springsong Cooper, Barbara Hadsell, and Joshua Piovio-Scott are attorneys at Hadsell, Stormer & Renick LLP. Learn more about the firm at <http://hadsellstormer.com>.

*"[As a summer law clerk at Hadsell Stormer & Renick LLP,] I extensively researched and prepared motions and other documents to be filed in court. I also observed depositions, oral arguments, and court hearings[.]"*

Sabine Jean, UCLA School of Law Class of 2017

## KAYE MCLANE BEDNARSKI & LITT, LLP

Kaye McLane Bednarski & Litt, LLP is located in Pasadena and specializes in civil rights and criminal defense cases. UCLA School of Law alumni Barry Litt, Ron Kaye, and David S. McLane are partners at Kaye McLane Bednarski & Litt, LLP. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.kmblaw.com/>.

## LAW OFFICES OF ANGEL J. HORACEK

Law Offices of Angel J. Horacek is located in Culver City and specializes in employment and civil rights law. The firm's practice areas include labor and employment law, wrongful termination, whistleblower retaliation, sexual harassment, as well as disability, race, pregnancy, and age discrimination. The firm was founded by UCLA School of Law alumna Angel J. Horacek. Learn more about the firm at <http://horaceklaw.com>.

## V. JAMES DESIMONE LAW

V. James DeSimone Law is located in Marina Del Rey and specializes in civil rights. It has an emphasis on employment discrimination and harassment cases, employment wage and hour class action cases, and police misconduct and brutality cases, which include wrongful death, excessive force, false arrest, and personal injury cases. The firm was founded by UCLA School of Law alumnus V. James DeSimone. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.vjamesdesimonelaw.com>.

## LAW OFFICES OF STACY TOLCHIN

Law Offices of Stacy Tolchin is located in downtown Los Angeles and specializes in complex immigration cases. It represents noncitizens throughout all stages of the immigration process, including before the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, Immigration Court, the Board of Immigration Appeals, the U.S. District Court, and the Court of Appeals. The firm was founded by UCLA School of Law alumna Stacy Tolchin. UCLA School of Law alumna Morgan Brewer is also an attorney at Law Offices of Stacy Tolchin. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.tolchinimmigration.com>.

## OUTTEN & GOLDEN LLP

Outten & Golden has offices in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. and specializes in employment law. It represents employees, executives, and professionals with a broad range of work-related issues, including discrimination and harassment, employment contracts, compensation, leaves of absence, privacy and technology, terminations, wage and overtime, and whistleblowing and retaliation. UCLA School of Law alumna Sabine Jean is the 2017-2018 Public Interest Fellow at Outten & Golden. Learn more about the firm at <http://outtengolden.com>.

## RICHARDS, WATSON & GERSHON

Richards, Watson & Gershon has offices in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Orange County, Temecula, and the Central Coast and provide public law services. It has several practice areas that include municipal and public agency law, eminent domain, real estate, public finance, and environment and natural resources. UCLA School of Law alumni Saskia Asamura, Toussaint Bailey, Rochelle Browne, Robert Cecon, Ginetta Giovinco, Amy Greyson, Brendan Kearns, Maricela Marroquín, Whitney McDonald, Emily Milder, Jennifer Petrusis, Diana Varat, and Laurence Wiener are attorneys at Richards, Watson & Gershon. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.rwglaw.com/>.

### ROSEN BIEN GALVAN & GRUNFELD LLP

Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP is located in San Francisco and specializes in complex litigation. Its practice areas include commercial litigation, civil rights and civil liberties, white-collar criminal defense, first amendment, employee benefits litigation, antitrust and unfair competition, trade secrets and intellectual property, and legal malpractice. UCLA School of Law alumni Ben Bien-Kahn and Cara E. Trapani are attorneys at Rosen Bien Galvan & Grunfeld LLP. Learn more about the firm at <https://rbgg.com/>.

### ROTHNER, SEGALL & GREENSTONE

Rothner, Segall & Greenstone is located in Pasadena and represents labor unions, labor-management trust funds, and employees with wage and hour and civil rights claims. In the past, the firm has also taken free speech, taxpayer, and open government cases. UCLA School of Law alumni Glenn Rothner, Jonathan M. Cohen, Maria Keegan Myers, and Hannah S. Weinstein are attorneys at Rothner, Segall & Greenstone. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.rsgllabor.com/>.

### SCHONBRUN SEFLOW HARRIS & HOFFMAN LLP

Schonbrun Seplow Harris & Hoffman LLP has offices in Los Angeles and Pasadena and specializes in employment, civil rights, criminal defense, and personal injury. Its practice areas include employment law, wage and hour, civil rights, police misconduct, wrongful convictions, international human rights, personal injury, and class actions. UCLA School of Law alumni Michael D. Seplow and Wilmer J. Harris are attorneys at Schonbrun Seplow Harris & Hoffman LLP. Learn more about the firm at <https://www.losangelesemploymentlawyer.com/>.

### SHUTE, MIHALY & WEINBERGER, LLP

Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP is located in San Francisco and specializes in government, land use, renewable energy, and environmental law. Its practice areas include environmental and natural resources, land use and planning, local government law, regulatory takings, local ballot measures, and clean energy. UCLA School of Law alumni Amy J. Bricker, Rica V. Garcia, and Andrew W. Schwartz are attorneys at Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.smwlaw.com/>.

### SIAS CARR LLP

Sias Carr LLP is located in Los Angeles and specializes in criminal defense, civil rights and police brutality violations, and personal injury cases. UCLA School of Law alumni Peter L. Carr, IV and Na'Shaun L. Neal are attorneys at Sias Carr LLP. Learn more about the firm at <http://siascarr.com/>.

### STRUMWASSER & WOOCHEER LLP

Strumwasser & Woocher LLP is located in Los Angeles and represents a broad range of public agencies and officials, citizen groups, and private individuals and corporations. Its practice areas include administrative law and regulation, constitutional and civil rights law, environmental and land use, labor and employment, education, health care law, public utility law, elections,

insurance regulation, and state and local government. UCLA School of Law alumni Dale Larson, Andrea Sheridan Ordin, and Michael Strumwasser are attorneys at Strumwasser & Woocher LLP. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.strumwooch.com/>.

### TEUKOLSKY LAW

Teukolsky Law is located in Pasadena and specializes in representing plaintiffs in employment disputes. Its practice areas include wrongful termination, harassment, severance agreements, discrimination, protected leave, failure to accommodate a disability, and unpaid wages. Teukolsky Law was founded by UCLA School of Law alumna Lauren Teukolsky. Learn more about the firm at <http://www.teuklaw.com/>.

### WEINBERG, ROGER & ROSENFELD

Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld is headquartered in San Francisco, California and has offices in downtown Los Angeles and Sacramento, California and Honolulu, Hawai'i. It represents unions, employee benefit plans, and employees. UCLA School of Law alumnus Carlos Almendárez is an attorney at Weinberg, Roger & Rosenfeld. Learn more about the firm by visiting <http://www.unioncounsel.net/>.

## IV. PREPARING FOR A CAREER IN PRIVATE PUBLIC INTEREST PRACTICE

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This Part provides general background on how students can pursue a career in private public interest practice. Although it is organized according to class year, students and graduates may find the entire discussion useful. Please note, however, that the information provided below should only serve as a guideline as there is no one precise roadmap or timeline on how to best pursue a career in private public interest practice.

### 1L STUDENTS

#### COURSEWORK AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students entering law school typically have a set curriculum for the entire first year, so 1L students should focus on building a resume that shows a dedication to public interest work through extracurricular activities. 1L students should start to get a sense of whether they feel drawn to litigation or transactional work and what issue areas spark their interest. Mock trial and moot court competitions are excellent opportunities for students to strengthen their oral advocacy skills and gain trial-like experience. As journals are a marker of good writing, students should weigh their interest in writing on to *UCLA Law Review* or joining the staff of another student-edited journal at the law school.

*“As far as opportunities go, Los Angeles has one of the highest densities of labor law firms in the country so there are jobs available. Students can get politically involved with the movement through organizations such as the UCLA Labor Center and the National Lawyers Guild, which has a Workers’ Rights Committee.”*

- F. Benjamin Kowalczyk, UCLA School of Law Class of 2017

1L students should also take advantage of networking opportunities when they can. These might include attending public interest networking events or private firm networking events where plaintiffs' attorneys may be present. Many law schools, foundations, and attorney associations offer scholarships or volunteer opportunities for students to attend conferences and other networking events for little to no cost. When given the opportunity to network, 1L students should be mindful to take business cards from attorneys working at firms that interest them and subsequently follow up with the attorneys for possible 2L summer or semester clerkships.

### WHEN AND WHERE TO APPLY

It is not crucial for 1L students to spend their summer at a private public interest firm. Although first year students may find that many opportunities are limited to rising 3L students, there are a number of summer clerkships available for 1Ls in private public interest practice. One opportunity, for example, is the Peggy Browning Fellowship for students interested in advocating for workers' rights. 1L students should research firms in the geographic location in which they want to work to get a sense of how many of those firms offer summer clerkships.

Students should use summer employment as an opportunity to work in an issue area that interests them and determine whether that area of advocacy is a good fit. In addition to gaining clarity as to the type of work they enjoy or dislike, student should use summer clerkships to strengthen their research and writing, as well as other skills valued by private public interest firms. 1L students unable to find summer employment in the private sector should seek employment that will enable them to further explore their burgeoning interests in litigation, policy, or transactional work.

### SUMMER PREPARATIONS FOR 2L YEAR

During their 1L summer, students should make plans to participate in summer and fall on-campus interviews (OCI). Summer OCI usually takes place in August and bidding takes place in July. When the Office of Career Services begins sending out emails for summer OCI, students should review and research the firms that will be interviewing to see if any public interest firms will be participating. Students should similarly prepare for fall OCI, which usually takes place in September. Fall OCI is particularly important because, in comparison to summer OCI, a broader range of public interest firms participate.

1L students interested in working at a private public interest firm should dedicate some time to researching the firms in the geographic region in which they wish to work. Most firm websites will have a "Careers" or "Employment Opportunities" tab that will state whether the firm hires summer clerks and, if so, how to apply. If a firm's webpage is silent on the matter, students can consider reaching out directly to the firm to inquire about summer or semester clerkships. Sometimes connecting with firm attorneys can also be useful in inquiring about 2L summer clerkship opportunities. This is best facilitated if done through a direct introduction and conversation at a networking event or through an email introduction from a third party like a professor or career counselor.

## 2L STUDENTS

### COURSEWORK AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

2L students have a significant amount of flexibility in selecting courses to build a strong resume for applications to private public interest firms. 2L students interested in litigation are strongly encouraged to take Evidence during their second year, while students interested in transactional work should consider Advanced Contracts courses. All 2L students are advised to enroll in subject matter courses that interest them, such as civil rights, labor, employment discrimination, municipal, or environmental law. 2L students should also consider taking clinical courses that give them hands-on experience in civil litigation or transactional matters such as real estate contract drafting.

As for extracurricular activities, students will want to be mindful of the same goals presented in the 1L section above and choose activities that show a commitment to public interest work. 2L students should also actively seek out networking opportunities, such as conferences and on-campus mixers where they can meet attorneys working at firms and in issue areas that interest them. To the extent possible, 2L students should also apply for semester-long clerkships, which are often paid and may segue into post-graduate employment. Research assistant positions are also available during the summer and semesters and provide an opportunity for students to continue developing their research skills and exploring legal areas of interest.

### WHEN AND WHERE TO APPLY

There are various avenues for students to secure employment at a private public interest firm during their 2L summer. As discussed in the 1L section above, 2L students can prepare to participate in summer, fall, and spring OCI and apply to fellowships that place students at private public interest firms. 2L students can also directly submit application materials to firms early during the school year, whether or not the firm advertises available law clerk positions. Application materials generally require a public interest-oriented resume, a writing sample, a list of references, and a cover letter clearly articulating the student's interest in the firm. The cover letter and email to the firm should also clearly articulate whether the 2L student is interested in a summer or semester clerkship (or both). 2L students should plan on contacting or following up with firms throughout the year because firms and solo practitioners without established clerkship programs may not know their hiring capacity until closer to the hiring period.

The following is a brief, non-exhaustive list of fellowship and summer clerkship opportunities to which 2L students might consider applying. To the extent that a firm is not affiliated with a broader program, students should visit individual firm websites to determine whether they are hiring summer clerks.

- **Employee Justice Summer Clerkship:** Students apply and interview through the fall on-campus interview process. This opportunity places law clerks at plaintiff-side employment law firms that are members of the California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA). Firms agree to pay summer law clerks at least \$8000 for a total of ten weeks over the summer. Learn more at <http://www.fair-foundation.org/fellowships.html>.

- **Haywood Burns Fellowship:** Haywood Burns Fellows are placed at public interest organizations engaged in legal, political, and educational advocacy in a wide range of issues including voting rights, union rights, workplace health and safety, prison reform, LGBT advocacy, protestor defense, international human rights and more. Fellows may be placed with National Lawyers Guild attorneys in the private or nonprofit sectors. Learn more at <https://www.nlg.org/fellowships/>.
- **Peggy Browning Fellowship:** This summer fellowship program takes place at labor-related organizations around the country, including firms, unions, nonprofits, and other worker advocacy organizations. 1L and 2L students are eligible to apply. Fellowship stipends provide a minimum of \$6,000 per student for a ten-week employment period. Learn more by visiting <https://www.peggybrowningfund.org/fellowships/for-law-students>.
- **AFL-CIO Law Student Union Summer:** The Law Student Union Summer provides students with the opportunity to work at AFL-CIO affiliated unions where students represent union member interests and organize both existing and potential union members. Learn more at <https://aflcio.org/about/programs/law-student-union-summer>.

*“To bridge my interest in private practice with my commitment to public interest, during my 2L summer, I was a Peggy Browning Fellow at Murphy Anderson PLLC, a union-side labor firm in Washington, DC.”*

- Daysi Alonzo, UCLA School of Law Class of 2017

2L students should also determine whether the offices they are interested in hire entry-level attorneys or offer paid post-bar clerkship positions after graduation. Spending a summer at a public interest firm does not guarantee that a student will be hired after graduation. At minimum, working for a particular firm during 2L summer will give a student insight into the timing for applications and interviews, familiarity with private public interest practice, and perhaps contact with other private public interest firms that may hire straight out of law school.

### THE 2L SUMMER EXPERIENCE AND PREPARING FOR 3L

The type of work assigned to 2L students over the summer can vary significantly between firms. Some firms will have students research legal issues and draft memoranda as the majority of their summer work. Other firms will give students the opportunity to draft litigation documents, such as complaints or pre-trial motions. Some firm clients are individuals, whereas other firms might have government agencies, unions, or other organizational entities as clients. Some firms work on a range of practice areas, while others hone in on one. Students should be sure to ask employers during the interview process what tasks they typically assign law clerks.

In preparation for entrance into post-graduate private public interest, students should again check which firms are interviewing for post-graduate employment during summer and fall OCI and other on-campus hiring events. Students can join available email job listservs and be even more diligent about attending attorney association conferences and mixers, such as the California Employment Lawyer’s Association annual conference, to meet attorneys in the student’s field of interest.



## 3L STUDENTS

### COURSEWORK AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

3L students should follow the same guidelines stated above for 2L course selection and extracurricular activities.

### WHEN AND WHERE TO APPLY

While different firms and fellowship programs have different application timelines, 3L students should try to make contact with places of interest by early August. Ideally, one should apply to fellowship programs and firms that are actively hiring, but 3L students should also follow up with attorneys they have networked with in the past to see if anyone might be interested in hiring them or knows of firms hiring recent graduates. Because private public interest firms tend to be small-to-mid-sized firms that hire on a need-basis, 3L students' job search may extend well into the spring semester. 3L students should regularly check firm websites for open positions and application instructions listed under their "Careers" or "Employment Opportunities" pages.

### FELLOWSHIPS

There are a number of fellowships for which 3L students can apply. Fellowships are particularly worthwhile because they give fellows an opportunity to gain invaluable work experience and training, provide funding, and are regarded highly by the public interest community. The following list is a non-exhaustive sample of fellowship opportunities for students interested in pursuing private public interest work after graduation:

- **American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA) Fellowship Program:** A three-month post-graduate fellowship program where the fellow spends the first month in a private plaintiff-side firm, the second at a corporate defense firm, and the final month clerking for a judge in chambers. Learn more at <https://www.abota.org/index.cfm?pg=BecomeAFellow>.
- **Altshuler Berzon LLP/National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) Fellowship:** This is a one-year fellowship focused on environmental law based out of San Francisco, CA. A major portion of the fellow's time is spent working on cases brought jointly by NRDC and Altshuler Berzon enforcing federal and state environmental statutes. Learn more at <http://altshulerberzon.com/nrdc-fellowship/>.
- **Bernabei & Kabat Civil Rights Litigation Fellowship:** This is a one-year fellowship based out of Washington, D.C. Learn more at <http://bernabeipllc.com/civil-rights-litigation-fellowship/>.
- **Foundation for Advocacy Inclusion & Resources (FAIR) Fellowship:** Fellowship enables a new attorney to work full-time for two consecutive six-month terms at (1) Legal Aid at Work and (2) a law firm affiliated with California Employment Legal Association. Learn more at <http://www.fair-foundation.org/fellowships.html>.

- **Leonard Weinglass Fellowship:** The Weinglass Fellowship is open to all National Lawyers Guild members who have graduated from law school in the past five years. Learn more at <https://www.nlg.org/members-only/weinglass-fellowship/>.
- **Murphy Anderson PLLC George R. Murphy Public Interest Fellowship:** This is a one-year fellowship based out of Washington, D.C. Learn more at <http://www.murphypllc.com/employment/>.
- **The Paul H. Tobias Attorney Fellowship Program:** This is a two-year fellowship based out of Oakland, CA. Learn more at <http://employeeightsadvocacy.org/about/join-our-team/>.
- **Outtan & Golden Public Interest Fellowship:** This is a one-year fellowship based out of New York City. Learn more at <http://www.outtengolden.com/law-firm/fellowships>.
- **Relman, Dane & Colfax, PLLC Relman Civil Rights Fellowship:** This is a one-year fellowship based out of Washington, D.C. Learn more by visiting <http://www.relmanlaw.com/docs/FellowshipApplication.pdf>.
- **Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger Fellowship:** This is a three-year fellowship based out of San Francisco, CA. Learn more at <http://www.smwlaw.com/hiring/fellowships>.

Additional job search resources for 3L students include:

- **American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA):** AILA’s “Recent Postings” page lists current job opportunities. Interested students will need to create a student members account to access the postings. Learn more at <http://www.aila.org/>.
- **LCC Hiring Hall:** AFL-CIO Lawyers Coordinating Committee publishes monthly online job postings. Students can also opt to include their resume in the LCC Resume Bank, which requires a sponsor through an LCC attorney or affiliated professor. Learn more at <http://lcc.aflcio.org/public/career-corner/hiring-hall/>.
- **National Lawyers Guild (NLG):** The NLG homepage has a “Referral Directory” tab that includes contact information for attorney members, many of whom work for public interest firms. Learn more at <https://www.nlg.org/>.
- **UCLA School of Law’s Symplicity Job Board:** The job board is accessible with to all UCLA Law students. Learn more at [https://law-ucla-csm.symplicity.com/students/?s=home&signin\\_tab=0](https://law-ucla-csm.symplicity.com/students/?s=home&signin_tab=0) and contact the Office of Career Services with any questions.
- **Public Service Jobs Directory (PSJD):** PSJD is a database of public interest employers in the United States and abroad. To find public interest law firms, click “Search,” under “Advanced Search” select “Search for Employer Profiles,” and from there, select “Law Firm—Public Interest Focus” as the employer type. From there, you can narrow your results based on particular practice areas. Each entry includes contact information, a description of the firm, and a link to the website and job opportunities, if available. Visit <https://www.psjd.org/>.

## V. STUDENT NARRATIVES

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The following UCLA School of Law student narratives illustrate the variety of ways in which students can enter private public interest practice, and include tips and strategies interested students can implement during law school to secure public interest employment in the private sector. These student narratives shed light on how students can pursue their dedication to a wide variety of public interest issue areas through private sector employment.

### DAYSI ALONZO '18

Prior to law school, I was a fellow at a legal non-profit and served as a political appointee for the federal government. These experiences, combined with my personal background, informed my decision to attend UCLA School of Law, where I enrolled in both the David J. Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy and Critical Race Studies specializations.

I started 1L with a general interest in civil rights issues. Instead of exploring a specific issue area, I used my 1L summer to improve my general understanding of the legal system through a federal judicial externship in the Central District of California. During my externship, I researched a wide variety of legal issues, drafted proposed orders, and engaged in weekly docket discussions with the judge, clerks, and my fellow externs. My time in chambers not only improved my legal research, writing, and analytical skills, but also sparked my interest in litigation.

My 2L year was a formative one in that, while pursuing coursework related to my specializations, I learned what kind of lawyer I want to be and in what areas of law I want to practice. In *Rebellious Lawyering* with Professor Gerald López, I was encouraged and challenged to redefine myself as a rebellious, rather than just a public interest, lawyer. It was also in this course where I first considered practicing in the private public interest setting after hearing Professor López's anecdote about founding a law firm specializing in criminal defense, civil rights litigation, and community mobilization. Similarly, in *Employment Discrimination Law* with Professor Noah Zatz and while working on my *UCLA Law Review* comment under his guidance, I homed in on my passion to advocate for workplace justice alongside working people.

To bridge my interest in private practice with my commitment to public interest, during my 2L summer, I was a Peggy Browning Fellow at Murphy Anderson PLLC, a union-side labor firm in Washington, D.C. As a Fellow, I drafted memoranda regarding statutory research, administrative agencies and regulations, as well as alternative dispute resolution proceedings. My interest in labor and employment law was particularly reinforced by the firm's growing wage-and-hour practice and the mentorship I received from the attorneys. My experience at the firm also motivated me to seek practical opportunities to supplement theoretical concepts taught in the classroom. I have volunteered in El Centro Legal's Workers' Rights Clinic and will be a law clerk at Hadsell Stormer & Renick LLP during the fall semester of my 3L year.

### RICA GARCIA '17

I came to law school committed to pursuing a career focused on environmental justice. As an advocate, my goal has always been to help protect and promote the interests of underprivileged communities of color facing environmental and economic injustices.

Growing up in a low-income, immigrant community in California, I experienced and witnessed different forms of inequality, motivating me to seek solutions to these injustices. As an undergraduate, I studied environmental policy and urban planning and its impacts on low-income communities of color. I continued to pursue this interest at UCLA School of Law, where I took courses on critical race theory, civil rights, and workers' rights, as well as a community economic development clinical course. I also pursued a joint degree with a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning to further study community economic development.

During my first summer, I interned at the National Center for Youth Law, focusing on juvenile justice reform. I also had the opportunity to intern at a private public interest firm focused on civil rights—Schonbrun Seplow Harris & Hoffman, LLP. In addition to learning more about juvenile justice reform and civil rights, both of these experiences allowed me to see different modes of advocacy used to address social injustice, including litigation and public policy.

In my following summers, I interned at environmental organizations, including the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE). I worked on multiple environmental issues at the NRDC, including research on the intersection of affordable housing, transportation, and environmental policy. At CRPE, my work was focused on environmental justice issues, including conducting research on potential worker safety violations for using oil and gas wastewater for agricultural irrigation. These experiences deepened my understanding of the need for stronger advocacy by and on behalf of communities that face barriers to employment and housing and lack access to justice in the face of environmental harms.

I will be completing a post-graduate fellowship at Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP for three years in San Francisco, California. Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP is a private public interest firm focused on government, land use, renewable energy, and environmental law.

## SABINE JEAN '17

Coming into law school, I knew that I wanted to be a civil rights attorney. At that time, I had no idea what that truly meant or how to go about become one. From my time as a leader on my college campus to working for Teach for America to ensure educational equity, I have always had a passion for working on social justice issues. I have also seen and worked with marginalized communities in my hometown of Brooklyn, New York. I came to UCLA School of Law enrolled in the Critical Race Studies specialization. I soon started doing research and attending events on everything I could find related to civil rights litigation.

When searching for a 1L summer position, I spoke to professors who had practiced at private civil rights firms and 2Ls who had interned at small public interest firms during their 1L summer. One such person was my *Civil Procedure* professor, Joanna Schwartz. After speaking with her about her career path, I considered the firm Schonbrun Seplow Harris & Hoffman, LLP (Schonbrun Seplow), a small civil rights firm she had worked with through her *Civil Rights Clinic*. There were two students who I worked with on the Student Bar Association, both members of the David J. Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy (EPILP), who had interned at that firm during their 1L summer. One of these students recommended me and, after a phone interview, I was hired. This was a testament to the community I formed at the law school and the willingness of other students to help those passionate in public interest law.

At Schonbrun Seplow, I worked directly with Paul Hoffman on some of the firm's pro bono litigation matters involving issues of civil rights and international human rights, while also partnering with organizations like The Innocence Project. I attended settlement conferences and multiple oral arguments at the Ninth Circuit. I drafted a memorandum on police obligations under *Brady v. Maryland*, pertaining to turning over exculpatory evidence, to see when the law was clearly established in the Ninth Circuit. I also drafted memoranda pertaining to international human rights violations, particularly the Alien Tort Statute, and obligations of universities under Title IX. I enjoyed participating in all of the firm's work and built relationships with some of the attorneys that will last a lifetime. During that summer, I also transferred into EPILP.

During my 2L year, I began to learn more about private plaintiff-side law firms through various events hosted on campus and conversations I had with Professor Scott Cummings during the EPILP 2L seminar. I interviewed with the California Employment Lawyers Association (CELA) during fall on-campus interviews. I pursued my interest in civil rights and employment litigation as a summer law clerk, through CELA, with Hadsell Stormer & Renick LLP, an employment and civil rights firm. There, I extensively researched and prepared motions and other documents to be filed in court. I also observed depositions, oral arguments, and court hearings, and participated in learning opportunities led by the firm's partners. I felt a sense of trust and camaraderie among the attorneys and was grateful to be a part of that. I worked on cases involving police shootings, workplace discrimination, and so much more. While the firm was fast-paced, the law clerks were able to slow down and learn from attorneys who had each been successful in their own right, whether they had three years or over forty years of experience.

Since my 1L year, I have taken courses in employment discrimination, civil rights, critical race studies, and community lawyering. I also participated in the *Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic* with Professor Schwartz in which I worked on police accountability cases with Sias Carr, LLP, another small civil rights firm. These courses have laid the foundation for what I believe will be a long career in public interest law. I will begin my career in New York as the Public Interest Fellow for Outten & Golden LLP, a private plaintiff-side employment law firm.

## F. BENJAMIN KOWALCZYK '17

I moved to Los Angeles specifically to work in the labor movement while I studied urban policy in college. During the next five years, I worked for a variety of community-based organizations and with labor unions as a part of one of the most vibrant and progressive labor movement communities in the country. Throughout this work I constantly collaborated with lawyers affiliated with the David J. Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy (EPILP) and Critical Race Studies Program (CRS) at UCLA School of Law. Thus, when I decided to attend law school, the choice of which school to attend was a simple one.

Initially, I envisioned a career as an attorney in some type of non-traditional, community-based practice. This was partly based on my formative study of Gerald López's scholarship on rebellious lawyering, as well as my experience working with attorneys like Victor Narro at the UCLA Labor Center and Madeline Janis at the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy. After starting law school, however, I realized it was critical for me to hone the hard lawyering skills, like research and writing, with which most law students and new attorneys struggle. I decided the best place for me to do that during my first summer was at a union-side labor law firm. I pursued that path through a Peggy Browning Fellowship at the firm Gilbert & Sackman in Koreatown, Los Angeles.

During my second summer, I worked at a similar labor law firm, Rothner, Segall & Greenstone, in Pasadena, California. In November of my third year, I accepted an associate position at the labor law firm McCracken, Stemerma & Hollsberry, LLP, where I began working after law school.

I have been committed to the labor movement my entire professional life, following three generations of organized labor in my family. While I pivoted slightly during law school, in so far as my role in the movement, the dynamic nature of organized labor has allowed me to build a career as an attorney while working with a lot of the same communities and organizations and in some of the same spaces that I have long been a part of. I found that I really enjoy practicing labor law and believe that it is in that role that I can best impact the movement. For students that are interested in labor law practice, the number one advice I have is to get involved and show your personal investment in the movement. The first question I have been asked in nearly every interview is “why do you want to work for unions?” The programs, faculty, and proximity to the Los Angeles labor movement at UCLA provides students with a unique opportunity to get involved and build a career in organized labor.

As far as opportunities go, Los Angeles has one of the highest densities of labor law firms in the country so there are jobs available. Students can get politically involved with the movement through organizations such as the UCLA Labor Center and the National Lawyers Guild, which has a Workers’ Rights Committee. Also, summer fellowships through the Peggy Browning Fellowship Program go beyond just a job opportunity and include an annual conference as well as a deep network of alumni working within the labor movement. Lastly, the Lawyers’ Coordinating Committee of the AFL-CIO is an organization of union-side labor lawyers from across the country and their “Hiring Hall” is an important resource for opportunities in the field. There is no movement that has a greater potential to shift the balance of power in favor of working people in this country and I encourage all public interest-minded law students to consider a career working for working people.

## VI. INTERVIEWING TIPS

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When hiring for summer or post-graduate opportunities, hiring attorneys from private public interest firms use interviews to assess candidates’ academic record, research and writing skills, and experience in the firm’s practice areas. Private public interest firms differ from other private sector opportunities in that they look for a commitment to public interest in addition to strong academic qualifications. As discussed in Part IV, clinics, summer employment, externships, and other activities can indicate a strong passion in the relevant areas of law pertinent to a specific private public interest firm.

Hiring attorneys will also evaluate whether an applicant is a good fit for the firm. Because most private public interest firms are smaller firms, individual attorneys and law clerks greatly impact the firm’s success and financial stability. For this reason, it is not uncommon for named partners to personally interview law clerks and new hires.

Because every public interest firm is unique in its goals and who its clients are, students should use their application materials to highlight why they are qualified and why they would be a good addition for each firm they apply to. Cover letters and resumes should be tailored to reflect the needs and practice areas of the firms. A cover letter and resume for a civil rights litigation firm

should read differently than materials for a municipal law firm contracted to defend cities from civil law suits. To the extent it is required, students should present a writing sample that displays skills that align with those sought by the firm, and one that is preferably a work product from a practice setting. If references are requested, students should aim to include at least one employer or professor who can speak to their practical skills. The Office of Public Interest Programs' *Public Interest Resume Guide*, as well as the various resources available on the Office of Career Services' MyLaw page, can provide guidance as to how to best prepare application materials.

Once an interview is scheduled, students should re-familiarize themselves with the firm's attorneys and recent work. While this may be done through online research, students are also encouraged to reach out to mentors, faculty, and peers who may be knowledgeable about the firm's practice and general reputation. Finally, mock interviews with the Office of Career Services can provide constructive feedback in preparation for the actual job interview.

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Based on previous questions hiring attorneys have asked students, interviews with private public interest firms often center around one important inquiry: "Why public interest?" Some variation of this question is often the first one asked because private public interest firms want to make sure interviewees are genuinely interested and committed to public interest work. Whether interviewing for a summer law clerk position or a full-time attorney position, interviewees should anticipate and be prepared to address the following general topics:

### **GENERAL INTEREST IN PUBLIC INTEREST WORK**

- Why are you pursuing public interest work?
- Why are you interested in this specific area of law?
- Why do you want to practice in a private law firm as opposed to other public interest organizations or a government agency?
- What about your background has led you to want to pursue this work?
- Have any personal experiences significantly contributed to your desire to do this work?
- Can you tell us about your previous job experience? What did you enjoy the most? What did you learn from it?

### **INTEREST IN WORKING AT THE INTERVIEWING FIRM**

- How did you find out about our firm?
- Why are you interested in our office?
- (If a firm has multiple offices) Which office to you prefer? Do you have a geographical preference?
- Why do you want to be in this city?
- Where do you want to practice after law school?

### **INQUIRIES ABOUT SPECIFIC SKILLS**

- Can you tell us about your research and writing skills?
- Do you work well with fast-paced deadlines?
- What is a strength you possess? Can you give us an example of how it has helped you in practice?

- What is one of your weaknesses? Can you give us an example of when it presented challenges in a work setting?
- Do you feel comfortable working with different entities in the legal field? (e.g., attorneys, paralegals, etc.)
- Do you see yourself doing litigation or transactional work?
- Why should we hire you over other qualified candidates?

### HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS

- What would you do if you realized you have two court appointments at the same time?
- What would you do if you found out a fact about your client that they did not want to disclose and were asking for your legal advice?

### COMPATIBILITY

- What is your favorite movie?
- Who is your favorite musician?
- What is your go-to karaoke song?
- What do you do in your free time?
- What has been your favorite class in law school and why?

## CONCLUSION

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Private public interest law firms represent an effort to bridge private practice and contributions to the public good. As Professor Cummings and Professor Chen write: “[These] firms are, quite literally, in the business of pursuing justice.”<sup>7</sup> They provide an alternative, and sometimes a complement, to the work of nonprofit groups and government agencies. Despite the varying definitions of what precisely constitutes a public interest firm, private public interest firms tend to adhere to and work toward achieving their own vision of social change. As such, many attorneys who work in the private public interest setting continue to be invested in the cases they work on and appreciate doing so alongside other passionate public interest lawyers.

This handbook provides a guide to pursuing a career in private public interest practice. Our hope is that through this resource, law students may become interested in this career path, more equipped to apply for positions, and, ultimately, private public interest attorneys who seek to benefit our communities.

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<sup>7</sup> CUMMINGS & CHEN, PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERING, *supra* note 1, at 182.