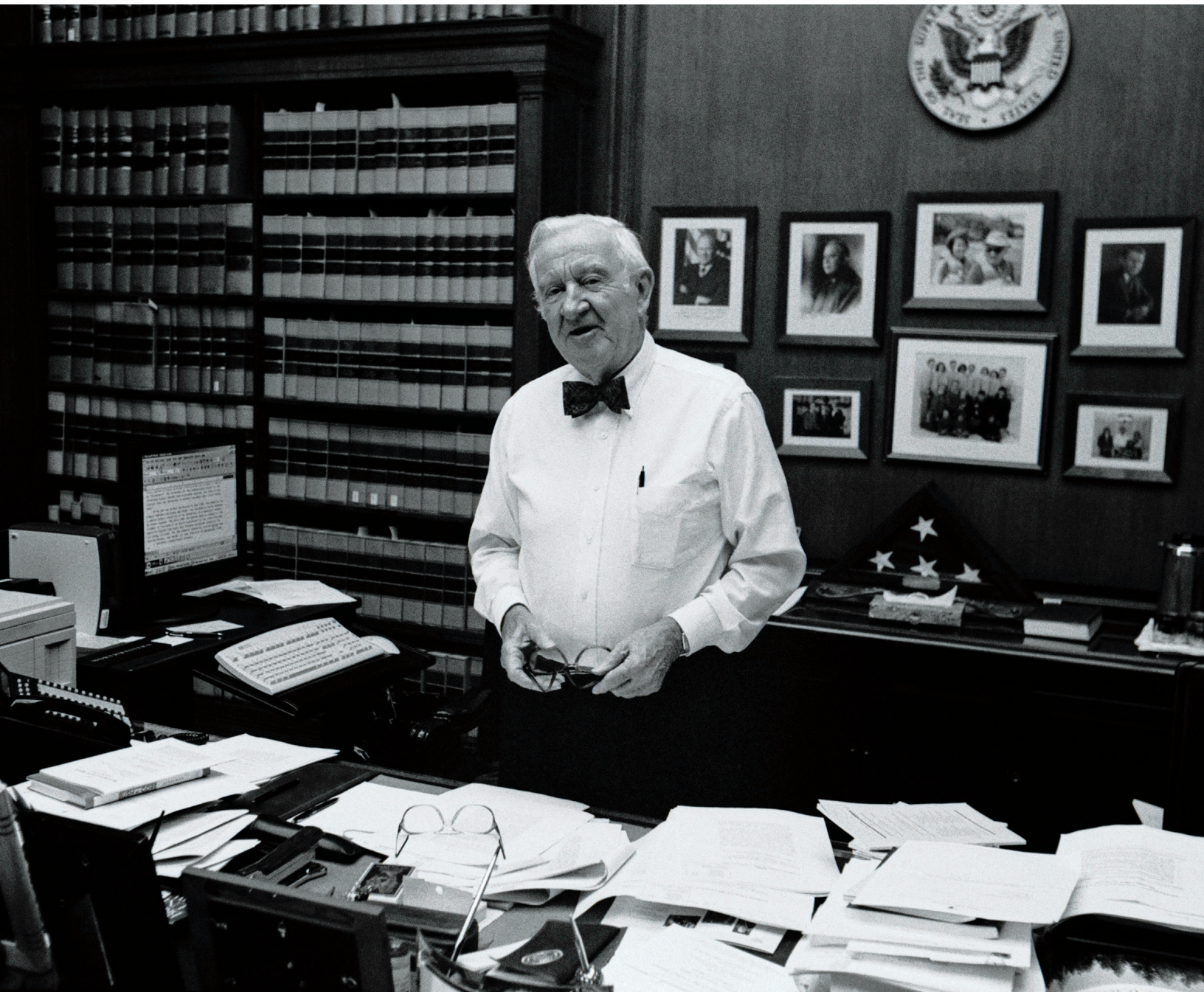




JOHN PAUL STEVENS  
FOUNDATION

# ADVANCING A LEGACY OF JUSTICE: 2026 IMPACT REPORT



We are delighted to share this update about our work at the John Paul Stevens Foundation. Thank you for being a part of the JPSF Community.

For three decades, the Stevens Fellowship program has been dedicated to creating a more just and equitable future. Today, the John Paul Stevens Foundation embodies this vision by administering the largest public interest summer fellowship program in the United States. With over **150 Fellows** accomplishing more than 50,000 hours of crucial advocacy work each year, we are an essential engine of transformation in the realm of public interest law.

We have experienced tremendous growth since Justice Stevens presented the first three fellowships in 1997 at his alma mater, Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. There is now a community of over **1,200 alumni** fellows! Taking our cues from Justice Stevens, our evolution has been thoughtful and strategic. We added law school partners methodically, starting first with connections from the JPS Clerk community. We accelerated that growth in 2010 when Justice Stevens retired and the Foundation incorporated.

But our transformational change took place in 2021 with an investment from the Crankstart Foundation. We focused on expanding to law schools with the **greatest need and highest possible impact**, including investments at six historically Black colleges and universities, as well as law schools in underserved regions of the country.

We are once again at an inflection point with the Foundation. With a full complement of staff, a dedicated and engaged Board of Directors, and an alumni community across the country, **we are poised for the next phase of growth.**

Our Stevens Fellows often share how their experience working in public service during law school changed the trajectory of their careers. Similarly, our JPS clerks share how the experience of working with Justice Stevens made an indelible impact on the lawyers and citizens they are today.

We have both an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure generations of lawyers continue to benefit from Justice Stevens' passionate support of justice and public service.

Thank you for being a part of nurturing the next generation of lawyers dedicated to protecting and promoting democracy, access to justice and equality.



**Teresa Wynn Roseborough**  
Board Chair



**Sara L. Woods**  
Executive Director

**VISION:**

# The John Paul Stevens Foundation seeks to build a more just and equitable society.



**MISSION STATEMENT:**

As a living tribute to Justice John Paul Stevens, the Foundation works to protect and promote democracy and the rule of law, access to justice, and equality by supporting law students, lawyers, and others working in the public interest.

**WHAT WE DO:**

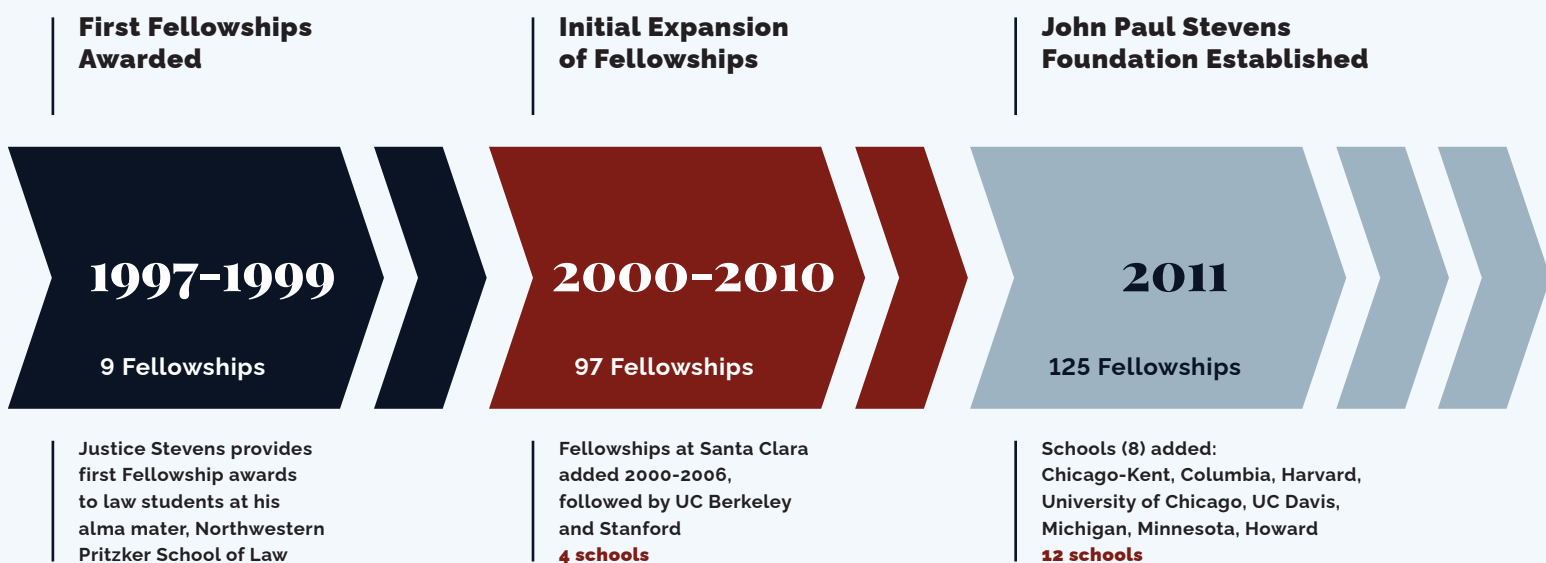
Through the Stevens Fellowship, the Foundation provides financial support, professional development, and networking opportunities to law students working in otherwise unpaid summer public interest law internships. The Fellowship reflects Justice Stevens' deep belief that a dynamic and effective justice system depends on a cadre of trained and committed lawyers doing public interest work.

# IMPACT

**For nearly three decades, the Foundation has strengthened the pipeline for law students doing public interest work by:**

- Investing in **1,250+ Stevens Fellows** through financial support and invaluable public interest and networking opportunities;
- Providing **\$4.1+ million** in Fellowships;
- Partnering with **38 law schools**, and
- Enhancing the work of **330+ public interest entities** from legal aid organizations and public defender offices to government and advocacy agencies through **400,000+ hours** of public interest legal work

## JPSF Timeline



## PARTNER LAW SCHOOLS

Campbell Law School  
 Chicago-Kent College of Law  
 Columbia Law School  
 Emory University School of Law  
 Florida A&M University College of Law  
 Fordham University School of Law  
 Georgetown University Law Center  
 Georgia State University College of Law  
 Harvard Law School  
 Howard University School of Law  
 Indiana University Maurer School of Law  
 North Carolina Central University School of Law  
 Northwestern Pritzker School of Law  
 Santa Clara University School of Law  
 Seattle University School of Law  
 Southern University Law Center  
 Stanford Law School  
 The University of Chicago Law School  
 Thurgood Marshall School of Law  
 UC Berkeley School of Law  
 UC Davis School of Law  
 UCLA School of Law  
 UDC David A Clarke School of Law  
 University of Alabama School of Law  
 University of Florida Levin College of Law  
 University of Georgia School of Law  
 University of Idaho College of Law  
 University of Illinois College of Law  
 University of Michigan Law School  
 University of Minnesota Law School  
 University of Mississippi School of Law  
 University of Oklahoma College of Law  
 University of Pittsburgh School of Law  
 University of Washington School of Law  
 USC Gould School of Law  
 Washington University in St. Louis School of Law  
 Willamette University College of Law  
 Yale Law School

## Class of 2025 Key Metrics

# 158 Fellows

135 Public Interest Employers

26 States

66% Identify as Female

57% Identify as First-Generation Professional or Graduate School

54% Identify as BIPOC

31% Identify as LGBTQIA+

### Continued Expansion of Fellowships

### HBCU Expansion

### Transformative Expansion of Fellowships & Nonprofit Pilot

## 2012-2020

550 Fellowships

Schools (12) added:

2012: Emory  
 2013: Florida, Fordham, Oklahoma, UCLA, Yale  
 2014: University of Washington  
 2016: Georgia  
 2020: Georgetown, Georgia State, USC, UVA  
**24 schools**

## 2021

631 Fellowships

Schools (6) added:

Washington University, Florida A&M, NCCU, Southern University, Thurgood Marshall, UDC  
**30 schools**

## 2022-Present

1,258 Fellowships

Schools (9) added:

2022: Indiana, Seattle, Alabama, Idaho, Illinois, Mississippi, Pittsburgh, Willamette  
 2024: Campbell  
 2022: Nonprofit Pilot launched at Brady, Capital Appeals Project, N. CA Innocence Project, Regional Public Defender for Capital Cases  
 Fellowships increased at 11 existing schools  
**38 schools**

# Juan Gonzalez

Fellowship Year & School:

**2014 | Howard University School of Law 2015**

Summer Placement:

**Legal Aid Society of NYC**

Current Role:

**Senior Staff Attorney, Young Center  
for Immigrant Children's Rights**

Impact Area:

**Immigration Rights & Children's Advocacy**



**As the first attorney in my family, I always knew I wanted to work for my community with a lens of the public interest. The Stevens Fellowship was the essential bridge to that career.”**



## THE CATALYST

Growing up in Brownsville, Texas—a border community—Juan was deeply influenced by the low-income and educational challenges within his environment. As the first attorney in his family, he felt a clear calling to serve his community through the lens of public interest. This commitment led him to Howard University School of Law, where he sought out opportunities to turn his passion for advocacy into a professional reality.

## THE FELLOWSHIP SUMMER

In 2014, Juan spent his fellowship summer at the Legal Aid Society of NYC focusing on landlord-tenant issues. He worked directly with individuals facing extreme hardship, managing intake processes that were often emotionally taxing. While law school provided the theoretical framework, the fellowship offered an “on the ground” education in the human side of the law, teaching him how to navigate difficult conversations with empathy and skill.

## THE CAREER TRAJECTORY

Juan is now a Senior Staff Attorney at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, where he advocates for children in government detention and immigration courts. He identifies his most significant impact as the reunification of children with their families, particularly those who have endured over a year in detention. Witnessing the profound transformation and progress these children make once they are returned to their loved ones remains the driving force of his work.

**To Juan, the legacy of Justice Stevens represents a constant push toward the progress of rights. He views himself as part of the “Stevens Fellowship Family,” noting that the connection has remained strong through foundation outreach and his own participation in Alumni panels. He remains deeply thankful for the Justice and the donors who continue to fund this vital work.**

## THE VALUE OF THE STEVENS FELLOWSHIP

Juan states clearly that without the Stevens Fellowship, he would not have been able to take his summer position or pursue this specific career path. The fellowship served as the necessary bridge between his legal education and his long-term goals in public service.

## ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Juan encourages future fellows to remain visionary: “There’s still a lot of places to be creative in the law. How can we be creative in building the world we want to be, as opposed to what it is now?”

# Elizabeth (Liz) Leiserson

Fellowship Year & School:

**2016 | Yale Law School 2017**

Summer Placement:

**ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project**

Current Role:

**Program Director, Eviction Right to Counsel Program,  
Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland**

Impact Area:

**Housing Justice and Eviction Defense**

## THE CATALYST

Liz Leiserson's commitment to public service was deeply influenced by her Nashville roots and her parents, both of whom worked at Legal Aid in Tennessee during the 1980s. While she initially considered a career in international human rights following her time in the Peace Corps, her early law school experiences shifted her focus. She realized she preferred the tangible impact of domestic direct services, driven by a desire to make her hometown better for all residents.

## THE FELLOWSHIP SUMMER

During her 2016 Stevens Fellowship at the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, Liz worked on a critical case aimed at establishing the right to counsel for children in immigration proceedings. This experience served as a "defining moment" for her. While she valued the chance to work on impact litigation, the summer confirmed her desire to pursue a career in direct legal services, where she could see the immediate results of her advocacy on behalf of individual clients.



**Fellows' energy, passion, and dedication are a boon for our offices, and help legal aid agencies continue to evolve in the way we serve our communities."**

## THE CAREER TRAJECTORY

Liz returned to Nashville and worked in direct legal services. She now leads the Eviction Right to Counsel Program. Managing a team of 15, she has achieved significant results, including saving local residents \$3.4M in the program's first year alone. She now thrives in the center of coalition building and advocacy, viewing housing as a basic human right and a perennial issue for the community.

## THE VALUE OF THE STEVENS FELLOWSHIP

The Stevens Fellowship served as a pivotal transition from Liz's law school experience to her professional career. It allowed her to refine her career path by confirming her dedication to direct service over impact litigation. This clarity eventually led to her current leadership role, where she continues the legacy of public service modeled by her family and mentors.

## ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"Think outside the coasts—there's a lot of opportunity and need in the middle part of the country, rural areas, and red states. Clinics and summer experiences are a valuable source of experience for figuring out what you want to do."

# Mirna Torres

Fellowship Year & School:

**1997 | Northwestern Pritzker School of Law 1999**

Summer Placement:

**New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty**

Current Role:

**Foreign Service Officer (American Diplomat),  
U.S. Department of State**

Impact Area:

**International Diplomacy, Refugee Rights & Immigration Law**



## THE CATALYST

Mirna entered law school with a clear vision of using the legal system to advocate for those without a voice. As an early recipient of the Stevens Fellowship in 1997, she sought to span the divide between legal theories and the practical application of the law to empower those with limited access to legal services.

## THE FELLOWSHIP SUMMER

Mirna's fellowship at the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty was a foundational "defining moment." During this summer, she worked with dedicated public interest lawyers in New Mexico, who taught her the importance of using the law to help the most vulnerable. A highlight of the experience was receiving a personal, hand-signed letter from Justice Stevens congratulating her on her work—a letter she framed as a reminder of the importance of her summer experience.

## THE CAREER TRAJECTORY

After graduating law school Mirna was awarded an Equal Justice Works Fellowship and established the Violence Against Women Act Immigration Project—the first project in the State of New Mexico devoted to providing free legal representation to immigrant victims of gender-based violence and trafficking. She went on to work for U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman and served as the Advocacy and Legalization Director for the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, where she helped launch numerous immigration legal programs across the U.S. Fulfilling a lifelong dream to work overseas, she joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 2009. She has served as a labor, human rights, political and economic officer in five countries; as the U.S. Counselor for the Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability in Papua New Guinea; and regional coordinator for population, refugees, and migration in Southern Africa.



**I wanted to be that person who could stand up for someone who didn't have a voice. Having a law degree gives you a certain power and a responsibility to use it for good—to navigate systems that are otherwise closed off to the people who need them most."**

**To Mirna, being a Stevens Fellow represents a lifelong connection to a legacy of service. She views the fellowship as making her entire career trajectory possible.**

## THE VALUE OF THE STEVENS FELLOWSHIP

The Stevens Fellowship was an essential launchpad for Mirna's career in public service. It provided the financial support and professional validation—symbolized by Justice Stevens' personal encouragement—that allowed her to pursue advocacy work immediately out of law school. This early support created a ripple effect, leading to a decades-long career in public services.

## ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"Vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness. Don't feel you have to be the "perfect expert" from day one. When you are honest about your inexperience and limitations, you give veteran public interest lawyers the opportunity to support and mentor you."

# Nicholas (Nick) Webber

Fellowship Year & School:

**2008 | Santa Clara University School of Law 2009**

Summer Placement:

**Watsonville Law Center**

Current Role:

**Supervising Attorney,  
Colorado State Public Defender**

Impact Area:

**Public Defense**



## THE CATALYST

Before law school, Nick's path was guided by a deep desire to advocate for those in need.

While studying in Ecuador, he considered becoming a Jesuit priest before realizing that the law provided a more direct toolkit for advocacy. His time working at a homeless shelter further solidified this drive; he saw the immense need and realized he wanted to do more than provide temporary aid—he wanted to be a voice for the underserved.

## THE FELLOWSHIP SUMMER

During his summer at the Watsonville Law Center, Nick worked directly with farmworkers who faced significant barriers to justice, including housing instability and long-term health issues. A defining moment occurred when he helped a family whose son had passed away after being exposed to pesticides. While the small clinic didn't have the resources for massive impact litigation, Nick sat in the family's living room and handled the "small" details—like figuring out how to transfer the title of their late son's truck to his mother. This experience served as a powerful reminder of the humanity at the core of legal work.

**"To me, being a Stevens Fellow means using the tools I have to help folks hold on to their humanity. Justice Stevens' legacy of paying it forward shows up in my work every time I take the time to truly listen to a client, ensuring they know they have someone they can finally rely on."**



**The Stevens Fellowship was a way to manifest the value of helping people into a lifelong career. It allowed me to pursue my dreams and focus on the 'why' behind going to law school."**

## THE CAREER TRAJECTORY

Today, Nick serves as a Supervising Attorney for the Colorado State Public Defender. His career is defined by "walking the path" with clients to ensure they never feel alone in a terrifying legal system. Beyond his individual casework, he is invigorated by mentoring the next generation of public defenders, teaching them to remain professional and compassionate advocates without letting ego or disappointment with the system get in the way of their clients' needs.

## THE VALUE OF THE STEVENS FELLOWSHIP

The Stevens Fellowship served as the essential bridge between Nick's law school experience and his career goals. Without this support, he would have been forced to take a non-legal job during the summer to pay the bills, missing out on the foundational connections and experiences that allowed him to pursue public interest law full-time.

## ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"The way that I survive in this work is community—build a family of people around you who want to do this work. It's hard work, and you need that grounding to remind you of how far you've come and the achievements you've made."

# Michael Ortega

Fellowship Year & School:

**2020 | University of Chicago Law School 2021**

Summer Placement:

**Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**

Current Role:

**Program Counsel, Economic Justice Project, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights**

Impact Area:

**Civil Rights**

## THE CATALYST

While working as a research assistant for a jail diversion program, Michael noticed a recurring pattern: everyone with the power to make policy decisions for those in need held a law degree. Inspired by a judge who used his position to make a tangible difference, and later motivated by the story of his grandfather—who, exiled from his native Cuba, abandoned his dreams of becoming a lawyer—Michael shifted from neuroscience to pursue a career in law.

## THE FELLOWSHIP SUMMER

During his fellowship, Michael worked on critical voting rights litigation. This experience not only confirmed his commitment to public interest law but also directly connected him to the Chicago-based civil rights work he continues today.

**I became a lawyer because I saw that it gave you access to rooms where decisions about people's lives were being made. Law is the language of power, and I learned to speak that language to help change people's lives for the better."**

## THE CAREER TRAJECTORY

Today, Michael serves as Program Counsel at the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, where he focuses on supporting nonprofits doing important racial justice work from anti-DEI legal challenges. Alongside his colleagues, he represents Illinois nonprofits in a high-stakes litigation effort against the Department of Education after they abruptly cut \$60M in grants to low-income rural and urban community schools across the state. Within days, Michael and the team secured a hearing and negotiated an agreement that provided essential stability for the affected children and organizations.

## THE VALUE OF THE STEVENS FELLOWSHIP

The Stevens Fellowship acted as a vital bridge for Michael; without the funding, he would not have been able to take the summer position that launched his career in civil rights. The foundation has continued to support him through professional development, such as negotiation advice that empowered him to advocate for himself.

## ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"We need to prepare ourselves for the struggle of a lifetime.

We need lawyers who aren't just content

to do good within our current systems.

We need lawyers who are dreaming

up new systems, new laws, new

policies that don't just manage

injustice, but abolish it."



# How to Support

## MAKE A GIFT TO THE FOUNDATION

Partner with us today by making a gift to the John Paul Stevens Foundation, enabling us to invest in the pipeline of trained and principled public interest lawyers nationwide.

### WAYS TO GIVE

#### Donate by Credit Card or Check

To contribute directly to the Foundation, you may donate online by credit card at <https://jpstevensfoundation.org/donate> or mail a check, payable to the John Paul Stevens Foundation, c/o Third Plateau, 127 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94710.



#### Gifts from Donor Advised Funds

To contribute from your donor-advised fund (DAF), you can recommend a donation through DAF Direct. If your DAF sponsoring organization does not participate in DAF Direct, please have them direct your gift to the John Paul Stevens Foundation, EIN: 27-2556295, c/o Third Plateau, 127 University Drive, Berkeley, CA 94710.

### OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

#### Donate Securities

To contribute securities, you may transfer them directly to our Merrill Lynch brokerage account. Please contact Sara Woods, Executive Director, for account information.

#### Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA (QCD)

QCDs can be made by IRA owners who are age 70½ or older. Your QCD must be made directly from your IRA custodian to the John Paul Stevens Foundation on your behalf.

#### Employer Matching Gifts

A great way to double your impact! Check to see if your employer matches your gift to the John Paul Stevens Foundation.

#### Recurring Monthly Gifts

Recurring gifts provide sustainable, long-term support. Recurring gifts can be set up through our website at <https://jpstevensfoundation.org/donate>

#### Tribute Gifts

Donate in honor of or in memory of someone special in your life.

#### Leave a Legacy

Include the John Paul Stevens Foundation in your will or trust, or by making the Foundation a beneficiary of retirement assets such as an IRA, 401(k), or life insurance policy. In doing so, you'll be providing long-term financial support to ensure our students thrive for generations to come.

<https://jpstevensfoundation.org/donate/planned-giving>



## JOHN PAUL STEVENS FOUNDATION

The John Paul Stevens Foundation  
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