

For most, people of Low SES, the impoverished multitudes left out of the American dream access to legal services occurs if they commit and are charged with a felony. Legal services carry a hefty price tag, leaving the impoverished without access to justice on the closed side of the courthouse doors. Legal injustices are a two-fold problem which includes the biases juries hold against minority populations, which are often low SES. Here, further research is needed to document biases juries hold and act upon in court cases involving criminal and civil issues. Next, the justice gap is defined as low-income individuals who do not have access to civil legal services.

Representation is needed for various needs, including fair housing, equal pay, custody arrangements, wills, and contracts. A study in 2022 found that ninety-two percent of low-income Americans do not receive the civil legal help needed.¹ Seventy-four percent of low-income individuals experienced at least one civil legal issue.² Thirty-nine percent experienced five-plus civil legal issues without access to legal services.³ The impact of these civil legal issues translates to distress in finances, relationships, safety, and physical and mental health in fifty-five percent of low-income Americans. For example, in the case of domestic violence, victims must file their restraining orders, and the legal aid services available to assist in a divorce, even with children, offer a class to file their divorce papers.

Attorneys are concerned about the justice gap and do what they can, usually pro-bono work in the community. A few attorneys start not-for-profits in their communities to bridge the justice gap. Legal not-for-profits are needed, yet many do not focus on public policy work. Focus

¹ Legal Services Corporation. 2022. The Justice Gap: The Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans. Prepared by Mary C. Slosar, Slosar Research, LLC.

² *Supra*.

³ *Supra*.

on research and changing laws by the legal non-profit organizations is needed. My plan, my law school goal was to help poor people by starting a legal non-profit in Washington State. As I went through law school, I realized that direct services are needed but not enough to bridge the justice gap. To address the need, public policies will need to be addressed on the national, state, and county-wide levels. Legislation will need to address funding access to legal services for the most vulnerable legal populations, the impoverished. The research will support advocacy for funding legislation. The ideal not-for-profit, I intend to form will address (1) research about low SES, (2) scientifically controlled variable research studies primarily focused on mock-juries minority biases (2) legislation advocacy, (3) community-based services, and (4) selection of specific pivotal cases to set precedence in the justice system.

Not-for-profit management and founding are an art form as well as a skill set. To be successful, to advocate for the underprivileged to gain regular and consistent access to the judicial system, public policy education is needed. Without a firm foundation in public policy and not-for-profit management, these realities may not come into being. Respectfully, I ask Evergreen to believe in the possibility that legislation can fund and facilitate the necessary legal services for the underprivileged. Help me learn, grow, and develop into the leader needed to address the justice gap in Washington State.