



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: Boston University Law School

Organization: Kids in Need of Defense

6/17/20:

This week, I had the opportunity to watch incredible attorneys at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) argue for bail for a 19-year-old young man in Federal Court so that he can return to his family where he can quarantine safely. Immigrant detainees trapped in our detention facilities have very little control over the risk of getting COVID-19 so it was a great victory when the judge granted his release. I also had the opportunity to begin the acceptance process virtually with three young teenagers who fled their home countries and who KIND will be representing in their case for Special Immigrant Juvenile Visas. I am so grateful to be spending my summer with the attorneys and legal staff at KIND.

7/8/20:

In mid-June the Trump administration proposed drastic changes to our nation's asylum laws which would make it nearly impossible for anyone to meet the new requirements. For decades, the United States has welcomed those who had nowhere else to go. We have kept our doors open to those who have fled their home countries with nothing but their lives. We have allowed people who suffered terrible atrocities, violence, torture, to find safety and stability in our border. Through our asylum law, we provided a process to make this country their new home. The proposed changes threaten to eviscerate asylum law as we know it. While interning at Kids in Need of Defense, I have had the opportunity to research and help draft a public comment to these proposed changes. Public comments are a tool used to try to influence the language of the regulations. I spent the past week doing research and compiling stories from individuals who will be unable to receive asylum if these regulations went into effect and who would be forced to return to countries where they will likely be killed. It has been a challenging and powerful last few weeks and I fear what is to come if these regulations are implemented. I feel grateful that I could participate in trying to impact and reverse some of these drastic measures.



7/28/20:

For the past few weeks I have been working very closely with two teenagers who immigrated to the United States without their parents, to help them apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. It has been very meaningful to build trust with them so that they felt comfortable to tell me their painful stories of abuse, abandonment or neglect by their parents in their home country. I look forward to maintaining contact and continuing to work on their cases as a volunteer after the school year begins. Working through video calls instead of in person has definitely added an unexpected challenge but unfortunately due to Covid-19, virtual interviewing will likely continue in the fall so it has been good to gain experience this summer. I appreciate being given the opportunity to build these deeply personal relationships as a summer intern at KIND.

8/14/20:

My time at KIND is coming to an end. I'm grateful to have had this opportunity to learn more about how unaccompanied children can be represented in their process of obtaining Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), granting them greater stability and safety than they had in their home country and the ability to remain in the United States permanently without fear of deportation. Over the next week as I finish up my work, I will have the opportunity to argue, with my supervisor in family court, that a child who I have been working with was abandoned and neglected by her parents in her home country and that she should therefore be declared dependent on the court. My hope is that if I am successful, this young person will be one step closer in their immigration process and will no longer have to live in fear that they will be deported back to the violence that they fled. Working at KIND has been a tremendous learning experience and has inspired me to continue to work with young people who are in need of legal representation. Fighting deportation without an attorney is nearly an impossible task for an adult, let alone a child, and I plan to work to ensure that children do not have to face a judge alone. Thank you Equal Justice America for helping to make this experience possible for me.