



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: Boston University School of Law

Organization: Greater Boston Legal Services

Week of June 15th

My first three weeks as an intern @ Greater Boston Legal Service were filled with readings, research, and training. I was surprised by the number of cases and the diversity of subject matter that come through daily intakes, ranging from immigration, family, employment, and housing. However, the overwhelming majority of clients' needs were related to the COVID-19 crisis. Clients are all in despair because some of them had zero income for the past twelve weeks. However, due to the scarcity of legal resources, some of their appeals after denial of benefit do not get resolved for weeks and weeks. I felt frustrated sometimes because I cannot solve their problems immediately.

On the other hand, I also believe this crisis presents an opportunity for us. Though what we are doing right now is mostly responding to the crisis, however, this is also a great chance for us to connect with our community. We get to talk to people who may not even know our existence before the pandemic. Being interactive to the community and helping them sort out their COVID related problems opening the door for other legal issues in the future. We need your support Equal Justice America to help more people in our community.

Week of July 6th

Over the past few weeks, I saw up close how social injustice created conditions that adversely affect one of the most marginalized and neglected members of American society- the Asian immigrant populations. As an organization dedicated to working with these people, the Asian Outreach Unit (AOU) @Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), often acted as bridges between these clients and justice. We helped so many clients who barely speak any English to apply for food stamps, unemployment benefits, and SSI. It is always extremely rewarding when those clients thank us for the little things we have done. However, there are always moments of frustration when I could not help some clients either because they are undocumented, or their claims are time-barred.

It is from those clients I came to realize that direct services sometimes might not be enough. There are countless low-income residents who could not receive comprehensive legal help due to lack of resources. Without an



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attorney guiding them or representing them, many of them simply did not know about their legal rights.

For these reasons, the community lawyering model AOU has adopted becomes most critical. By working closely with the community leaders, this collaborative approach would not only provide more directed legal services but also empower the poor and underserved communities with the tools necessary to bring about the needed changes. Please consider supporting Equal Justice America who make those changes happen.

Week of July 27th

It's hard to believe that I am approaching the end of my internship—time truly flies. For my third reflection, I want to focus on some of the problems I have seen during my day to day work @Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS). Since my unit-AOU is specialized in providing direct legal services to the lower-income Asian community in the Greater Boston area, I realized how language barriers have prevented many immigrants from claiming their rights. For example, nearly all of the clients who needed help with unemployment insurance (UI) were unaware that they were entitled to such benefit until some friends told them, when employers failed to inform them in the first place.

However, when these workers tried to apply for benefits, all of the applications are in English, but workers with low English proficiency are usually among those who were impacted the most during the pandemic. Moreover, problems with language access do not only manifest in UI applications. From my eight weeks of internship, I have seen this issue coming up in voting rights, health care, and even sometimes adequate legal representation during criminal trials. Therefore, if you want to support Equal Justice America who sponsors the continued service of GBLS and many more community legal aid organizations, please consider supporting us.

Week of August 10th

This summer was a particularly unique summer to be @Great Boston Legal Services, partially because we are in the midst of a pandemic that disproportionately affects minority populations. I was exposed in many areas of law that were not covered in the 1L doctrinal curriculum; I was able to improve my legal research skills by conducting case law researches related to deportation and hate crimes; I participated in community organizing meetings to learn the struggles and the success of the Asian immigrant life in Boston; I also had ample of opportunities to interact with clients to improve legal, language and political access of the community. I was also given the chance to interact with a lot of community organizers and lawyers to reflect on how to establish trust and bond between Asian-Americans and other communities of color, given that we are also in the midst of a major political movement.

Throughout the summer, I have witnessed how a lack of legal access has exacerbated issues with unemployment, domestic violence, housing, voting, and disability rights. I also realized larger systemic inequalities will not disappear after a few individual direct services. To solve those problems, require sustained community-based efforts, we, and essentially all the legal aid services organizations, are essential players to bring those changes. With your small contribution to Equal Justice America, more and more law students and lawyers could provide crucial legal services to the community and individuals.