



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1: I have now been with Legal Aid of NC's – Farmworker Unit for five weeks as a summer intern. Time flies when you are so busy baby lawyering. In my first couple of weeks at LANC, I was given a research assignment that turned into a memorandum on the viability of affirmative defenses to requirements listed in the Fair Labor Standards Act. Through my research, I gained a wealth of knowledge on the agricultural exemptions to wages listed in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Aside from research, I have been introduced to a vast community of farmworker advocates through trainings and conferences. Did you know that North Carolina is the second-largest host of H2-A guest workers in the country? At the Farmworker Unit, we focus on making sure that these guest workers are protected from wage theft, poor housing, and labor trafficking. We owe the majority of our fresh fruit and vegetables to the labor of farmworkers, so making sure they remain protected and acknowledged is a critical issue that deserves the utmost attention.

I am so excited to continue working in the Farmworker Unit for five more weeks. I am looking forward to assisting in the preparation of a T-Visa application. T-Visas are for individuals who have been victims of human or labor trafficking. A main component of a T-Visa application is the individual's declaration in which the client tells their story of their trafficking experience. Being trauma-informed is incredibly important when working with the client to draft this declaration.

Thank you so much for reading about my time at the Farmworker Unit thus far.

Update 2: Seven weeks ago, I had no legal work experience. Now, my legal work experience has been expanded in more ways than I could have imagined. My internship at Legal Aid of North Carolina's Farmworker Unit has only gotten more exciting. Two weeks ago, I mentioned that I would be working on a T-Visa immigration application for a client. I am happy to share that our unit is looking forward to submitting it in about a week. Working on this immigration application and being able to speak with the client to discuss all the details on the forms and exhibits was a rewarding experience. Hope for a better future is on their mind and seeing the coming together of their immigration application makes it closer to reality. Client interaction and advocacy is at the core of what the Farmworker Unit focuses on.



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In addition to working on an immigration case, I have had increased client interaction through my role as an interpreter and through my tasks of collecting evidence from clients. Client interaction has been a great highlight of my internship experience thus far.

Working alongside experienced, knowledgeable, and caring attorneys has also made all the difference in my learning and development as a future lawyer. I had heard the phrase, “zealous advocacy” a lot in my 1L year but I had not seen that in action until this summer working alongside Legal Aid attorneys. I continue to look forward to all the experiences and assignments given to me in my internship and I can’t wait to share more.

Update 3: I have one more week at my summer internship this summer. I have had such a great experience at Legal Aid of NC Farmworker’s Unit. Since my last update, I was able to submit a client’s T-Visa application to USCIS, began to collect evidence for a U-Visa application, conduct client intake, and analyze evidence for a case that just began in U.S. District Court.

Gaining practical legal experience has been wonderful, but I believe that the best part of this internship has been the clients. Our unit serves farmworkers, folks who work or have worked on American farms to get food from the field to your table. Blueberries, strawberries, tobacco, sweet potatoes, blackberries, tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, and Christmas trees are just some of the things our clients have harvested in North Carolina. Serving this population is important to me because the issues they have faced hit close to home.

As a former farmworker, I know first-hand the difficulty of working from sunrise to sunset, in 100-degree heat, sometimes in rain. It is work that makes me proud to this day. It is important to me to always remember where I come from and having the opportunity to work in the farmworker unit this summer has made life come full circle for me.

Update 4: I have officially completed my internship with Legal Aid of North Carolina’s Farmworker Unit this week. I am very grateful to have interned with a great legal services organization. This summer I was able to work on federal court cases while serving a too often overlooked population. I have further developed my legal research, writing, and analytical skills as well. Interning at LANC has taught me that being a zealous advocate takes passion, patience, and commitment. Wherever my legal career takes me down the road, I hope I can demonstrate not only good research and writing skills, but also passion, patience, and commitment in serving all people.

In my last weeks at LANC, I was able to help prepare a second T-Visa application and finish collecting evidence for a different immigration case. I was also able to assist in preparing several opening memos developed through client intakes. These memos in turn help the attorneys to prepare a civil and/or an immigration case on behalf of our farmworker clients.

I want to say thank you to Legal Aid of North Carolina for hosting me as an MLK intern this summer and thank you to Equal Justice America for selecting me as an EJA Fellow.