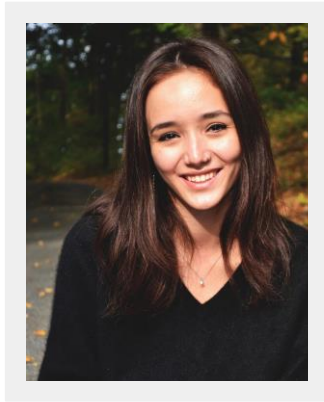




EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



Name: Sophia Slater

Law School: Fordham University School of Law

Organization: Catholic Charities of the
Archdiocese of New York

Update 1: I am so excited to share that I have started my summer internship with @Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, working under immigration and asylum attorneys. I have just completed my first week and look forward to a summer filled with challenging and rewarding work. Thank you to everyone who supported me in the 1L job search! I also had the honor of being awarded a fellowship from Equal Justice America to support my work this summer. I feel incredibly lucky to have such hands-on experience, from conducting client interviews to attending hearings, as well as opportunities to further develop my legal research and writing skills for our clients' affirmative asylum cases.

Update 2: It has been a politically and socially turbulent two weeks, but thankfully the work at @Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York has not let up. I have been able to gain further experience in interviewing asylum seekers, learning to listen with sensitivity and compassion while also making sure to elicit the information necessary for their applications. My supervisors have generously allowed me to take the lead on multiple interviews, allowing me to establish my own rapport with the client and gaining invaluable experience on the way. These experiences gave me deeper insight into what "real lawyer work" looks like and what skills are important to do this work when interacting with clients who have gone through such traumatic experiences.

Update 3: My summer internship at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York with their immigration & refugee representation program continues to be an exciting and fulfilling experience. As I have become more familiar with the work, my responsibilities have expanded to include not only direct interactions with clients seeking asylum but also working with the client to draft their affidavits they will submit to the courts. Sometimes this is made more difficult if there is a language barrier and we have to use an interpreter. In those instances, it is even more important to establish rapport with tone, mannerisms, and body language since verbal communication is not available. I am excited to further hone these skills that will serve me in all areas of the law and make me a better advocate for clients.



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Update 4: As I near the end of my summer internship at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, I am deeply grateful to the organization and its attorneys for providing such an immersive internship program in immigration and asylum law. One of my goals for this summer was to gain experience interfacing directly with clients, a skill that is particularly important when asking asylum seekers to repeatedly recount their life stories and traumatic persecutions. The attorneys at Catholic Charities have provided ample opportunities for me to work toward this goal, and I am excited to continue working to be the best possible advocate for my clients in the years to come. Thank you to everyone who supported me throughout this formative summer!

Update 5: This past summer, I've had the privilege of working with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, working under immigration attorneys with a focus on affirmative asylum cases. One of my goals this summer was to gain more hands-on experience with clients to develop my skills as an advocate. Through this internship, I have had numerous opportunities to interview asylum seekers, learning to listen with sensitivity and compassion while also making sure to elicit the information necessary to complete the clients' asylum applications and related forms. I was also given the opportunity to conduct these interviews by myself, providing invaluable experience in a high-stakes environment. Towards the end of the summer, I was given the opportunity to draft entirely new portions of a client's affidavit in support of their asylum application. This experience put my skills to the test, requiring me to be flexible and personable as I gained the client's confidence and convinced her to trust me with her story. These exceptional experiences and opportunities allowed me to rapidly enhance many of my legal skills that will be important in my future career and cannot be learned in a classroom. It was also extremely gratifying to receive mentorship from attorneys working in immigration law as I was able to gain a clearer image of what a long-term career in this field could look like. I am extremely grateful to all of the attorneys and other interns at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York for supporting me in my internship this summer and providing exciting and engaging projects to work on. I am excited to build on this experience in the coming years and deepen my understanding of immigration and refugee law.

None of this would have been possible without my fellowship award from Equal Justice America, which has long been devoted to funding law students' work in the public interest field. I am extremely grateful to have received this fellowship, and do not take for granted that Equal Justice America's generosity enabled me to participate in this internship that otherwise may not have been financially feasible. There has been a massive influx of migrants entering the United States in recent months, particularly from Central America, many simply showing up at the offices of Catholic Charities and other legal aid organizations in the hopes of receiving legal advice or representation. This crucial work depends on volunteer labor, especially from law students, but those students like myself are often torn between contributing to these important efforts and accepting a paid position. Luckily for us, Equal Justice America generously funds us, so we do not have to make that choice. I hope you will consider supporting the organization in its mission to secure civil legal aid for all who need it, regardless of income, citizenship status, race, ability, gender, or religion.