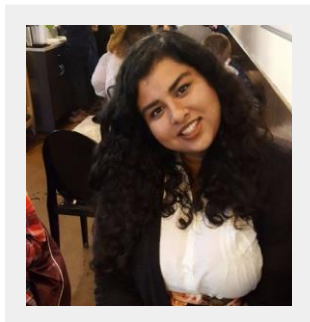




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Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

During my first couple of weeks working with the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center I have already had so many incredible hands-on experiences. Straight away we were entrusted to work directly with clients, fielding intake calls in multiple languages and working directly with attorneys on cases. Currently, I am working on a U visa case for a client who is the victim of domestic violence. Her optimism, despite her story, fills me with hope and reminds me of why this work is important. As a South Asian woman, and the daughter of immigrants, I can't help but be reminded of the stories of other woman in my community, including my mother, who similarly left their home countries after having arranged marriages to live in a foreign country with people they hardly knew.

More specifically, I am excited at the direct work I get to do on her case. I am currently helping our client's sister draft an affidavit in support of her sister's petition. This work presents a unique set of challenges, as her sister lives abroad and while she is proficient in English there are still cultural and some language barriers we have to navigate around as I explain what information we need from her. I am really excited by this opportunity to develop my client skills.

Update 2:

After a few weeks with the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center the type of work that I get to do is broadening. One of the most exciting things I did was to run a naturalization clinic about an hour outside of DC with an attorney. After shadowing an attorney conduct an intake and naturalization questionnaire, I got to work one on one with clients to conduct their client intake and set them up with our naturalization software and answer questions she had about the process. The level of responsibility and control I was allowed to have during the experience was both nerve-racking but also exciting. It was a true exercise of my client-interaction skills to be able to navigate the conversation, be kind, but also keep the appointment on topic and on schedule for our other clients. Something that also struck me was a man who came in without an appointment. He told us that he had come to the library every day hoping that we would be there, as he knew that we frequently had



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legal clinics at this library. While his legal issue was not pertinent to naturalization, the attorney I was with still gave him her card and asked him to call our office. It reminded me about the importance of our work and the effect that it can have to completely change people's lives.

Update 3:

As we enter the second half of the summer I have become more confident conducting client intake calls, especially ones where we need to use a translator. Those tend to be the most difficult, as it is often hard to convey not only the precise question to the client but also it is difficult to communicate culturally. Often I will ask very specific questions like "when did you arrive in the United States" and instead of the date that they entered the country, I will later learn that they gave me the date that their asylum application was approved. Something that I am getting better at is feeling comfortable asking follow up questions to make sure that I am getting the most accurate information, or communicating more thoroughly with the interpreter and the client to make sure they understand why I am asking the questions that I am. At first, delving into the details made me feel uncomfortable, because it meant that we would stay on the phone for another 20-30 minutes on top of what was already a long intake call, however I soon realized that it was necessary and would later make me a better and more efficient advocate.

Update 4:

A large client of the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center is a tenant's association comprised of Asian and black residents of a primarily low income/section 8 housing building. During the last few weeks of our internship we went to a tenant's association meeting and conducted inspections of client apartments to write a self-inspection report to provide to the owner's of the building to motivate them to invest in repairs for the building, something they had been avoiding to incentivize tenants to move out so they would be able to sell the building. The inspections were both interesting and fun, as we often needed to use translators who we called on our phones but also attempt to stay as uniform as possible among the different teams of inspectors to ensure that we were able to write an accurate report.

Update 5:

Looking back at my time with the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center over the past summer, two things are immediately striking: (1) that I enjoyed my experience much more than I anticipated and (2) that I gained many more skills than anticipated. On the first point, I did not anticipate enjoying pro bono work as much as I did. I came into this internship expecting to feel burnt out, overworked, and overwhelmed. However, in part because of how my organization managed the work load I found that I felt none of these things. Sure, we had a lot of clients, but I genuinely enjoyed the challenged of making client calls and conducting intakes. Often they were difficult for a range of reasons. For example, some clients were often frustrated with the language barrier and as a result became overwhelmed and frustrated. In other situations it was clear that I needed to be more precise with the translator to get my point across. At other points the difficulty was with the subject matter – doing a client intake with a woman who has experienced domestic violence is always difficult and the



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guilt that comes from asking someone to relive those experiences multiple times for you is always hard. However, regardless of such difficulties I still loved making calls. They were often the best part of my day because there was something really compelling about the human connection that made it worth it at the end of the day. In terms of skills, in particular I think my attention to detail improved. I had always thought of myself as really precise and of attention to detail as one of my strong suits, however working with a translator to build a client's case or write an affidavit for them was a new experience that required me to continue to work on this skill. In particular, with clients who did not speak English and required me to use a translator to work on their case. I also thought it was important to learn about the realities of the way that pro bono works in the legal community and the ways that different teams of people or resources can be used to support an individual who has been harmed. As a legal aid organization, we were a small part of many resources that, for example, a crime victim, used to get assistance from the legal system. We worked often with social workers, people in city government who ran victim compensation funds, city police officers and prosecutors. Each individual part was necessarily to a victim's recovery. Even further, I saw how difficult it is for individuals to navigate the system, especially with limited resources and limited English competency. Overall, I will take from this experience tangible skills that I learned working with clients but also structural knowledge on the ways that our legal system affects others.