



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Greater Boston Legal Services

Update 1: I'm incredibly grateful to Equal Justice America for awarding me an EJA Summer 2022 Legal Services Fellowship. I'll be rotating with both the Family Law and Immigration Law Units at Greater Boston Legal Services this summer. As I complete my sixth week with the Family Law Unit, I am happy to share I have had the opportunity to help draft and file 209A restraining orders, motions to impound, divorce pleadings, review U-Visa and VAWA applications, counsel survivors of domestic violence on divorce matters, and watch trials in Suffolk and Middlesex Probate and Family Court. I have received invaluable lessons about the practice of public interest law and direct legal services in Massachusetts from the managing attorney, staff attorneys, and other members of the Family Law Unit. Although I don't know what my future holds, I can only hope to work at an organization that is as dedicated to serving indigent survivors of domestic violence and immigrants as GBLS.

Update 2: As I approach the half-way mark of my internship with Greater Boston Legal Services, I cannot help but reflect on everything I've learned these past couple of months. I've been fortunate enough to help several Central American and Haitian clients draft asylum applications, work authorization applications, and fee waivers in conjunction with GBLS' Immigration Law Unit and the Immigrant Family Services Institute Inc. I have also attended multiple trainings on Asylum Law, U and T Visas, the Violence Against Women Act, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Next month I will be researching firm resettlement resources for Haitian asylum applicants who previously resided in South America and helping my supervisor to prepare for an immigration court hearing. I look forward to continuing to learn from the holistic, empathetic, and diligent practitioners at GBLS and cannot wait to see what the next 7 weeks will hold.

Update 3: I was fortunate enough to conduct intake at REACH, a domestic violence service center in Waltham, MA, and support Latina survivors of domestic violence by assessing their family and immigration law issues. It was both heart wrenching and awe-inspiring to listen to their tales of woe and discuss their decision to



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divorce their abusers and seek immigration support. I was able to utilize my knowledge of family and immigration law to determine whether they needed support obtaining restraining orders, divorces, child support, or U Visas. It has been incredible to witness the partnership between GBLS' Family Law Unit and REACH, which resulted in the creation of the Latina Know Your Rights Project (LKYR). LKYR is a unique project which connects Latina survivors of domestic violence residing in Middlesex County with GBLS' legal services and REACH's community services.

Additionally, I drafted numerous pro se asylum applications in conjunction with the Immigrant Family Services Institute Inc. (IFSI). IFSI, a community organization primarily serving Haitian immigrants, is in Mattapan, MA. It was an honor to assist families seeking asylum in the United States with their asylum, work authorization, and fee waiver applications. Lastly, I had the opportunity to assist my supervisor in preparing for a client's immigration court hearing for his asylum case.

Update 4: I've thoroughly enjoyed working in the immigration unit at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) this summer. I'm especially grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in a lobbying event and raise awareness of the STARTT Act (—relative to Successful Transition and Re-entry to Tomorrow for Incarcerated Persons) in the Massachusetts State House.

This bill would provide IDs to people who are incarcerated at least 30 days before they return to their communities. Every person needs an ID card but many people in prison or jail are released without an ID card. Their IDs may have been lost or thrown out when they did not return home because they could not post bail or were sentenced to jail or prison. People with substance use issues or who were homeless also sometimes lose their ID's during prior periods of instability or homelessness. Getting a new ID is often an onerous and very long process which blocks opportunities and sets people up for set-backs failure. IDs are needed to rent an apartment, open a bank account, qualify for a job, get an occupational license, enter certain buildings, get a library card, and access government benefits or programs, including but not limited to subsidized housing and public assistance. Without an ID, someone may be denied entry to a sober home or halfway house which then can make sobriety almost impossible. I'm grateful to the CORI Unit for informing me of the existence of this bill and hope to participate in future lobbying events for prison reform.

Update 5: As I write my final #EJAFellowUpdate as an Equal Justice America Summer 2022 Fellow, I cannot believe that I have completed my first co-op at Greater Boston Legal Services with both the Immigration Law Unit and the Family Law Unit. I would like to thank Equal Justice America first and foremost for supporting aspiring public interest practitioners to pursue internships at legal services organizations. I could not have accepted an unpaid position without their generous financial support. Furthermore, I would also like to thank Northeastern University School of Law's Center for Co-op & Career Development for supporting me throughout the arduous application process and ultimately helping me secure a co-op with Greater Boston



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Legal Services. Many of you may know that I have wanted to work at Greater Boston Legal Services since I moved to Boston, and I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to do so this past summer.

As an intern with the Family Law Unit during the first half of the summer, I was able to draft and file 209A restraining orders, motions to impound, divorce pleadings, review U-Visa and VAWA applications, counsel survivors of domestic violence on divorce matters, and observe trials in Suffolk and Middlesex Probate and Family Court. I have also gained substantial experience drafting affirmative and defensive I-589s, I-765s, and I-912s, interviewing and counseling clients, conducting legal research, drafting an internal memorandum, and observing an immigration court hearing while interning with the Immigration Unit in the latter half of the summer. During my last week, one of my supervisor's clients also won their asylum case and the family could not have been more thrilled. It was incredibly heartwarming to witness the end of their long-fought battle to remain in the U.S. I am elated that my first co-op experience was so positive and allowed me to provide direct services to indigent immigrant clients seeking humanitarian immigration relief. I can only hope to one day to work at an organization as supportive of immigrant rights' advocacy as Greater Boston Legal Services.

I feel reinvigorated and ready to return to school to complete my 2L year at Northeastern University School of Law. Although I am not sure what my future holds, I hope to continue volunteering with local immigrant serving nonprofits and continue supporting immigrants as they navigate the complex legal immigration system. If you feel compelled to support Equal Justice America's efforts to fund legal public interest internships, please feel free to donate to Equal Justice America.