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Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Greater Boston Legal Services

Update 1: I am thrilled to be an Equal Justice America Legal Services Fellow this summer while I work at Greater Boston Legal Services after my 1L year at Northeastern University School of Law.

I am lucky to spend my summer with the dedicated staff and attorneys at GBLS, who advocate for the basic necessities of all residents of the Boston area. While working in the Immigration Unit, I'm learning about immigration law and, specifically, the asylum process. So far, I've gotten to interview a client and draft an affidavit for a gender-based asylum claim, draft a memo in support of a race-based asylum claim, apply for a refugee travel document, and begin to draft a memo for a First Circuit appeal. Each day, I've loved that I get to interact with clients and think analytically to come up with the best legal arguments. I am looking forward to the rest of my time at GBLS! Thank you GBLS and EJA for making this summer possible for me.

Update 2: Since my last post, I have officially filed my first piece of legal writing with immigration court -- a memo in support of a client seeking asylum. I am grateful to my supervisor for the invaluable feedback as I wrote (and rewrote) drafts. It's gratifying to put the research & writing skills I learned during my 1L year into advocating for clients. I feel fortunate that I get to spend my summer learning from the compassionate, driven, and knowledgeable attorneys at GBLS.

Update 3: In addition to the client services, research, and writing I have enjoyed getting to do in the immigration unit this summer, I have also been glad to have access to the work of other units at Greater Boston Legal Services.

For example, this week, I attended my first lobbying day at the Massachusetts State House. The last time I was in there was for a field trip in elementary school, so it was invigorating to be at the state house now as a law student. We were advocating for a bill that would ensure incarcerated people have access to a non-expired state ID before being released from prison, called H.2460/S.1551: (The STARTT Act). This basic necessity would help people rent apartments and get jobs after leaving prison, thus helping to reduce recidivism rates. It was a



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learning experience for me as I had not known how accessible it is to enter the state house and speak with the aides of our senators and representatives. It was helpful to take a step back and see the bigger picture of where our laws. I hope to continue to use my advocacy skills in micro and macro ways in the future and I am grateful for GBLS opening up doors for me to experience all kinds of the work they do.

Update 4: When Trump was running for president, I was in my second year of teaching middle school in Lawrence, MA. My students at the time, the majority of who are immigrants or children of immigrants, were frightened. There were rumors that ICE was going to show up to school if Trump won. Growing up, my teachers would never tell us who they were voting for, but with Trump running, I had to make it clear to my students that I did not align myself with the vile words he was spewing. The day after the election was horrible for both teachers and students. We tried to reassure our students that in Massachusetts you are still safe because the people in power here don't believe the same things as Trump.

While I believe those words I was telling them are true, six years later I am learning from the attorneys that I work with how much immigration processes changed during Trump's presidency. Clients would show up for ICE check-ins, as they are told to do when they are in removal proceedings and be detained or given ankle monitors with no due process. It genuinely was a lot harder to win humanitarian cases. Government attorneys were no longer given discretion to stipulate asylum for particularly sympathetic cases, or stipulate any part of a case before a hearing. And this is not to mention policies like the Muslim Ban, Remain in Mexico, and Title 42 that were put in place during Trump's presidency. Now, during Biden's tenure, things are flipping back (somewhat) and immigration attorneys have more hope and ability to use the law creatively to help clients.

The ever-changing nature of immigration law is a challenging and fascinating part of what I have learned throughout this summer. I am grateful to my supervisor and other GBLS attorneys who have taken time to help mentor and educate me about immigration law this summer.

Update 5: As I wrap up my internship with Greater Boston Legal Services, I am deeply grateful for the clients, attorneys, staff, and fellow interns I got to learn from this summer. I am motivated by the work that is being done everyday to advocate for immigrant rights. I am deeply inspired by the journeys many of our clients have embarked on to come to this country.

This summer, I have gotten to write a memo about an asylum case, assisted a client in getting a refugee travel document, prepared a client for direct and cross examination for a hearing in front of an immigration judge, interviewed a client weekly to create a strong affidavit for an indigenous, political, and gender based asylum case, filed multiple case filings, attended a green card hearing, and worked on an appeal to the first circuit.



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I think I have not even fully comprehended how much I learned this summer. Not only did I get to practice and sharpen skills like legal research and writing, but also the soft skills of how to work with a client in a trauma informed way and how to balance a case load.

I also feel like I know more about what I want in my career. I felt really at home in this kind of work and am really looking forward to one day working as an immigration attorney in this kind of work.

There were times I also felt frustrated by the entire system. It is SO SLOW and so frustrating for clients. The court is not at all sensitive to how trauma affects people and part of the work felt like we were forcing clients to relive trauma over and over again. It is something I knew would be something that bothered me about working in the law, but I have to also use these skills to advocate for changes in the law. I found I enjoyed legal writing (at times) more than I thought I would. I also found I enjoyed that it is possible to advocate and change the law through working with local politicians. In all, I felt really like I got a taste of being a lawyer that works in legal services in immigration.

I hope to use this experience to ground me as I enter my 2L year. This summer has reminded me of why I made the decision to go to law school and I can't wait to get to work!

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