



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: LA Center for Law and Justice

Update 1: Hello! I know I have shared so much but it is update time! I have been awarded the Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship Award 2022.

Currently, at LACLJ, I have been working on SIJS cases and helping our young survivors gain access to work permits. I am grateful that I can work with my community and provide access to resources they would not be able to afford for free.



Update 2: These past two weeks have allowed me to reflect on what it is to help our community. Before joining LACLJ and pursuing law school, I worked as a JusticeCorps member. I was always in contact with my community and would help inform them on their next steps.

With LACLJ, my capacities have expanded. I am now able to not only help them with legal issues, but help support clients in all other aspects in their life. It is so important that domestic violence survivors not only receive legal help, but help with housing, public benefits, and so much more. LACLJ provides a holistic approach and I am grateful I can be part of that journey for some of our clients.

As far as my work, I have a continuous project working with SIJS clients who are not eligible for a VISA and help them get a work permit. With every application I finish, I feel immense joy to help them achieve another step in their long journey.

My days are also filled with continuous training as immigration is always constantly changing. Being able to see



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the inner workings of ICE and CBP is something I was not sure I would ever get exposure to, but I am glad I have to better understand the system.

Update 3: As my externship is coming quickly to a close, I am learning so much about immigration law. Recently I was given a task to write a request for prosecutorial discretion for a Joint Motion to Recalendar Removal Proceedings and for Dismissal. I was able to gain knowledge by researching the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) as well as reading the Doyle memo to better understand what the process is for requesting prosecutorial discretion.

I also have been checking in with clients who are currently waiting for the U-Visas to be processed. Many of them have been waiting for more than 5 years, so reaching out to them every year has allowed them to feel connected to Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice and not forgotten. Further, due to LACLJ's holistic approach, we get to reevaluate them for any services they may need including public benefits, and/or connecting them to social services. We try to make the experience less daunting and allow them to feel supported even when we're just waiting for some news from immigration. I feel completely blessed to be able to call them and help connect them with the services they need.

Update 4: My time has come to a close. As I leave LACLJ, I realize all the skills I have improved on and that I am taking with me. Most importantly, I leave LACLJ with knowing that I have made a huge impact. I was able to complete eight Special Immigrant Juvenile Employment Authorization applications, one Adjustment of Status application, and checked in with over 30 clients about their U-Visa cases.

However, I also leave with knowledge about the non-profit world and how important it is to do self care to continue doing the work LACLJ does. Working with domestic violence survivors is tough due to secondary trauma. However, it is more tough for me because I recognize my family, friends, and community whenever I hear their stories. I understand the compassion and empathy that is needed in this work but I have also come to understand how to use that same compassion and empathy on myself. I am grateful for all the lessons and knowledge with LACLJ.

Because today was my last day, our office hosted a picnic at the Los Angeles State Historic Park. It was my first time there but being around colleagues and friends with my family was an amazing way to spend my last day. I am thankful to all my co-workers and now friends who also made this experience special.

Update 5: This is my last and final update for the summer! The Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice has truly made an everlasting impact on my life. I've learned so much about immigration law but also, I have learned to care for myself in order to care for others.

I am grateful for the experience with LACLJ and being able to know that I have had an impact on the lives of my community. As I mentioned before, I have been able to help over 7 Special Immigrant Juvenile's to apply for their Employment Authorization Cards, 1 Adjustment of Status, and 1 U-Visa Declaration. I was able to also contact over 30 U-Visa clients to further check on them about their cases and ensure they're getting the help they need. Further, I was able to create multiple cover letters, and conduct legal research on niche issues.

I was able to conduct legal research on admissibility issues, and learn more about adjustment of status and



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VAWAs. I was able to learn more about the process set up to help domestic violence survivors and it is extremely grueling and long. After experience domestic violence, survivors are expected to wait a minimum of two years for VAWA recipients and a minimum of five years for U-Visa recipients to hear back from immigration. The level of anxiety and fear one can have during this process is especially high.

I plan to take with me the compassion and empathy for clients but also for myself into my future work as I return to school. I realize that this work is not easy, even though it is fulfilling. I understand what a healthy work-life balance looks like and what it is like to be able to care for your clients to the fullest extent, but also giving yourself that care. When people come for help, they're coming at a time of need. They deserve to have people who truly care for them and fight for them. To be a better advocate, you have to know to advocate for yourself.

I am excited to return to Southwestern Law School with the skills and knowledge I have gathered. I will be participating in the Street Law Clinic to help at-risk youth learn about the law while also providing resources they need to successfully transition to independent living and adulthood. I am excited to put to use all the skills I have learned this summer with LACLJ to my clinic work and see how I can continue creating an impact!

If you're compelled to, please donate to EJA! Thank you so much Equal Justice America for giving me the opportunity to really enjoy what I do and not have to worry about my finances this summer.