



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



Name: Margaret Min (she/her/hers)

Law School: Washington University in St. Louis School of Law

Organization: New York Legal Assistance Group

Update 1: With summer 2022 in full swing, so too does the case load for legal aid organizations serving local communities. Especially during the summer months, with many children on summer vacation and the temperature rising, the need for legal services becomes essential for many clients to secure basic living needs, including safe housing, childcare and support, and the like. At NYLAG, I have been working with clients who are seeking immigration status after facing intimate partner violence (IPV). Many of the clients have children and are seeking legal aid for the protection of their family, especially since their children spend more time in the home during summer months. Thus far, I have conducted client meetings in Spanish to learn the personal narrative of the clients. I have witnessed the resilience of these individuals in face of personal trauma and systemic trauma imposed upon them by the overly complicated immigration procedure that perpetuates cycles of poverty of specific communities. Throughout the summer, I am working on asylum cases, U-Visa cases, battered spouse waivers, and VAWA self-petitions to ensure that these individuals can gain crucial access to immigration status that fosters their liberation from coercive relationships. Even in the few weeks I have been at NYLAG, the importance of equitable legal services has become even more clear than ever before. I am hopeful that organizations like NYLAG and Equal Justice America will continue to fuel the engine towards equity in legal services.

Update 2: My summer legal internship is in full swing at New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). I've been collaborating with clients for asylum cases, U-visas, and VAWA self-petitions. I recently submitted my first U-visa application on behalf of a client to USCIS last week and am now working on several VAWA self-petitions and an asylum case. The most meaningful experience thus far has been client meetings and collaboration. Over just a few short weeks, I've built rapport with these individuals and have had the privilege of listening to their personal narratives and their resilience. It is truly a privilege to serve as their advocate. Their experiences have further impassioned me to pursue legal equity in my career and ensure that communities receive outstanding legal advocacy, which is their fundamental right. I am so grateful to EJA for their support and dedication to community empowerment.



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Update 3: I am at the halfway mark of my summer experience at New York Legal Assistance Group. I've been working tirelessly with clients to provide them with immigration support and domestic violence law support. This summer has been particularly complicated due to the changing climate of immigration law. There have been several changes in standards pertaining to DACA applications and Temporary Protected Status applications that create great uncertainty for the clients hoping to gain immigration status. I've observed that many clients, in addition to the legal support they need, need the emotional support and reassurance during this volatile political time. I have been privileged to be able to provide any small amount of support to them to navigate the legal field and be an empathetic ear to listen to their stories.

Update 4: The last few days have been intense. My supervising attorney and I at New York Legal Assistance Group represented an individual seeking an Order of Protection against their former partner and abuser. Their partner had leveraged their status as a wealthy, well-connected professional to seek an OP against our client by excluding our client from their apartment, even though the abuser did not reside there and had their own apartment. For several days our client was excluded from their home, sleeping on the floor, with no access to her documents for their upcoming immigration proceedings nor medical resources to support her physical injuries resulting from the abuse. With the tireless effort of the NYLAG staff, we secured an OP for the client to ensure that they had housing and access to their resources. Now more than ever, in lockdown and the pandemic, survivors of IPV are forced to stay in the same spaces as their abusers. I strive every day to ensure that these individuals are safe in their spaces. EJA ensures that I am able to do that.

Update 5: After an incredible summer, I leave New York Legal Assistance Group humbled and determined to continue the fight for greater legal equity. Through my experiences, I learned the power of empathy, trust, listening, and collaboration. I learned that successful legal advocacy employs a client-centered approach that addresses the multifaceted needs of each client. Although I am sad to leave, I am hopeful that, alongside the future lawyers supported by EJA, I will continue my passion for community empowerment.