



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1: I'm so grateful for the chance I have to intern at the New York Legal Assistance Group this summer as an Equal Justice America Fellow.

NYLAG does remarkable work by providing civil legal services in New York City to people in poverty and in crisis. The organization is dedicated to leveling racial and socioeconomic injustice, and I feel lucky to work around attorneys that are so passionate about this cause.

So far, I have been able to meet several of our clients and assist them with legal work to protect them from domestic violence and help them gain legal immigration status. The strength of my clients in rising amidst trauma that their abusers have inflicted on them inspires me.

Many immigrant survivors of domestic violence fear that if they report the abuse they have experienced they will face deportation. Abusers may even use a survivor's immigrant status as a way to threaten them into submitting to abuse. There are legal remedies available to help immigrants in these situations, but immigrants often face further barriers in their ability to access them.



Update 2: In light of the Fourth of July, I wanted to share some of my recent experiences working with immigrants at NYLAG. For many of my clients, living in the United States means everything.

One of my clients is a migrant from China who fled during the One-Child Policy. Though this policy is no longer enforced, gaining status will help my client gain freedom from the risk of deportation. Deportation would disrupt the life my client is working to rebuild for herself and her family in America.


I am also helping with a case about a child whose mother died while trying to flee with the child to the United



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States. For the mother, arriving in the United States would have meant a life free from both her abuser and a society that normalizes abusive relationships. Her child deserves a brighter future.

Freedom is not free. Immigrants often cannot afford a lawyer and wait in uncertainty for three to five years before USCIS approves their applications. Support the work of Equal Justice America in providing legal services to immigrants and others in this country that need them the most.

In the words of a beloved American song, “this land was made for you and me.” 

Update 3: I can't believe that my time interning at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) is going by so quickly! One aspect of the internship that I have particularly enjoyed is being able to work with Mandarin speaking clients.

Last week, I worked with another NYLAG unit to assist elderly Chinese clients in filling out power of attorney and health care proxy forms. These empowering documents allow people to make choices in advance about who will be able to make important health care and financial decisions on their behalf. During the event, I helped an elderly Chinese man (pictured with permission) to fill out the documents. I felt touched by how much his ability to make these choices meant to him.

This week, I attended court and watched an attorney from my office defending a Chinese survivor of domestic violence. The opposing party made some racist comments, which reminded me that the fight for racial equality is unfortunately ongoing.

New York City's Chinese population is vibrant and strong, and I feel honored to interact with members of it through NYLAG.

Update 4: Hi everyone! I completed my summer internship at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), where I mainly assisted immigrant survivors of domestic violence. I want to share a few final thoughts about my experience.

First, I am grateful for the examples of the attorneys I met at NYLAG. Watching them repeatedly show up for their clients both in and outside of court inspired me. I am also appreciative of the time they spent mentoring me in a mock trial. These attorneys' effective advocacy styles heightened my vision of the type of lawyer I want to become.

Second, my internship taught me that there is still so much work to do to confront societal injustice! This reality confronted me most bluntly when I conducted intake calls with people our organization could not help. Some of the callers were hesitant to take legal action out of fear that their abusers would retaliate against them, placing them in even graver danger. Other callers worried that they would not be able to survive financially if they separated themselves from their abuser. Both of these scenarios broke my heart.

Legal aid is one part of the equation to ending abuse, but it alone is not enough. We need everyone's efforts! We can each contribute to a better society by working to eradicate abuse in our personal lives and communities.

To support the work of attorneys and students in fighting for this and other inspiring causes, consider donating



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Update 5: Hi everyone! I just wanted to take a moment to share about my transformative internship at the New York Legal Assistance Group - NYLAG this summer.

For background, I am currently a law student and have summers off to get real-world experience through interning. The organization that I interned at, NYLAG, is a non-profit in New York City that provides free legal services for people who can't otherwise afford a lawyer. NYLAG helps clients with a wide variety of legal issues, but I specifically assisted immigrant survivors of domestic violence.

The work that I did involved helping immigrants file VAWA and U-Visa applications, which are forms of relief that immigrant survivors of domestic violence may qualify for. Some of my internship duties involved interviewing clients, helping them write affidavits, and taking notes at their family court appearances.

The clients that I interacted with are courageous and friendly. Amidst the immense suffering they experienced, they resiliently fight to provide better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Here are a few of my insights from working with them:

1. Many immigrants coming to America do so out of desperation. Several of my clients left their home countries because they or their family members would be killed if they stayed. Immigrants often suffer trauma not only in their home countries, but on their migration journeys and after their arrival in the U.S. as well. I believe that they deserve a compassionate welcome in the U.S., not the broken immigration system we have today.
2. Abuse is not limited by people's race, gender, or socioeconomic status—it affects people throughout society. Some of the worst abuse incidents I came across restricted victims from being able to access legal help at all. In one example, this happened because cops didn't believe a man that had experienced abuse. In other scenarios, survivors might be in more danger if they sought legal action and their abuser found out.

Though these realities are depressing, we each have the ability to create a brighter future. We can be the difference within our own circles of influence by listening to others, building equal relationships, and supporting organizations that assist immigrants and survivors of domestic violence. If you have the means, consider donating to the Equal Justice America Fellowship which helps people gain access to free legal services. And, most importantly, if you are a survivor of abuse, you are not alone. You matter, and your voice does too!

