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Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:

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Update 1: This summer I'm so grateful to have been accepted as an Equal Justice America Fellow, and for the opportunity to work as a summer law clerk at Immigrant Defenders Law Center. I am almost a month into my internship with Immdef, where I am working in the Children's Representation Program.

Within this program, I work with unaccompanied minors facing removal proceedings and provide them with the relief they need to be able to remain in the US. One form of relief available to most of our clients is Special Immigrant Juvenile status, which involves a complex parentage or guardianship state court process before USCIS reviews the case. As a law student aspiring to become an immigration attorney, I didn't expect to become so familiar with local courts, but am grateful for the opportunity to learn how immigration advocacy is relevant and necessary across different legal systems. This lesson means a lot to me, because it reinforces Immdef's overarching mission, which is universal representation.

With only a few weeks into the summer, I have already learned a lot at Immdef, and I am feeling motivated going into the next few weeks of my internship.

Update 2: Hello again LinkedIn! Another week has passed at my law clerk position at Immigrant Defenders Law Center, and in that time, I have continued to engage in new experiences and learning opportunities. Here are some highlights: I made my first appearance at a client's Master Calendar Hearing before the immigration court, drafted a Memorandum of Points & Authorities on one of the most misunderstood legal standards for Special Immigrant Juvenile findings to be submitted to LA Superior Court, and participated in legal consultations with migrants transported from Texas to LA.

I'm still feeling grateful for being able to spend my summer at Immdef with the help of Equal Justice America. I am hoping that by the end of the summer I feel more confident in my advocacy and representative abilities, and that I feel more like a well-rounded immigration attorney.

Update 3: I am officially a month into my summer law clerk position with Immigrant Defenders Law Center.



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Over the past two weeks, I have dedicated most of my time to learning how to prepare initial guardianship filings in probate court. One of these filings is a traditional guardianship filing for a minor under 18 years old, and the other is an AB900 filing for a 19 year old client. The California Legislature implemented AB900 guardianships for 18-20 year olds in recognition that young adults of those ages still need a legal guardian to care for and support them, and this process is especially helpful to Special Immigrant Juvenile applicants of these ages, so that they may be appointed a legal guardian and thereafter pursue SIJS status.

One of the stated goals to my supervisors at the beginning of the summer was to become familiar with the various state court filings Immdef does as part of the SIJS process, and I am grateful to be doing this exact work.

Update 4: I can't believe that I am only two weeks away from completing my internship at Immigrant Defender's Law Center. The summer has been flying by!

Over the past few weeks I have been researching into different Particular Social Groups (PSGs) for several clients who are applying for asylum. This type of research is known as "country condition" research, and involves looking into the issues these client's home countries face and how they are dealing with those issues. For example, I have been looking into the insecurities Salvadorian youth experience in the their homes, and how the government of El Salvador handles issues like domestic and gendered violence.

The development of PSGs has become a vital part of asylum advocacy because of the rigidity of the asylum eligibility categories. People are only able to apply for asylum if they can show a fear to return to their home country based on their race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a PSG. PSGs have never been defined, making it difficult for applicants and their advocates to argue that one part of the applicant's identity (for example, gender) or experience in their home country should qualify as a PSG. This environment makes country condition research an essential part of strengthening applicants' asylum cases.

Update 5: As of last week, my internship with Immigrant Defenders Law Center's Children Representation Project came to an end.

This was the first time I worked exclusively with children, and I did not know exactly what to expect at the beginning of the summer. I wasn't sure how working with children would differ from working with adults. While I still enjoy working with and serving adult clients, I came to really appreciate working with children and their families. I especially enjoyed working with children and their guardians, because I could see that despite not being the child's parent, the proposed guardians I worked with had so much love and concern for the children in their care.

I am also grateful to my supervisors, who gave me opportunities to grow and learn throughout the summer. I became familiar with the state court parentage and guardianship processes as the preliminary step for Special



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Immigrant Juvenile cases, and was able to observe some state court hearings in person. I was able to draft a brief to clarify California law standards of negligence that was approved by the state court judge and which allowed that client's Special Immigrant Juvenile findings to be granted. I also appeared for the first time at an initial Master Calendar Hearing before an immigration judge. All of these experiences were entirely new to me and if not for supervisors who listened to my stated goals, I would not have had these opportunities.

Overall, I have so much respect for Immdef, and am grateful for my time there this summer. Immdef is one of the few nonprofits doing immigration work that is committed to universal representation, and functions almost as a public defender's office. It does not "cherry pick" the best or most easily winnable cases in immigrant court. It is an organization centered around the belief that every immigrant in removal proceedings should have representation, which until this summer, I have never seen another nonprofit commit itself to.

Thank you to Equal Justice America for supporting me this summer before I return to Loyola Law School, Los Angeles as a third year this fall.