



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

My internship for Summer 2023 begins at a highly tense time in the political arena in the U.S. As an aspiring immigration attorney, the current migration influx in New York City renders immigrant representation critical. With the fast-moving changes and implementation of new regulations, it is crucial to stay up to date with the political climate and on-the-ground practices. Through the state's New York Immigrant Family Unity Program (NYIFUP), I have the privilege of working with some of the most resilient clients in removal proceedings. My few weeks in the position thus far has fortified my passion for equitable advocacy and transparency of the law for all.

Update 2:

Summer is in full swing at Legal Aid Society. Because of New York's universal representation program for immigrants in removal proceedings, attorneys in the Immigration Law Unit are constantly balancing multiple cases at various stages of trial. My supervising attorney alone has three trials, several bond hearings before an immigration judge, and several appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals. And I have the privilege of assisting her and her clients. New York City is facing a crisis-level influx of migrants who face abysmal living conditions, marginalization, and inaccessibility of resources. My small role in supporting these individuals, to remind the broader community that we are all deserving humans, seems more important than ever.

Update 3:

A former professor connected me with a researcher conducting interviews with asylum advocates for her forthcoming capstone project. For her, our interview was data in her project; for me, our conversation compelled me to reflect on what drives me to be in the immigration arena. Through the hardships and uncertainty of immigration law and policy for individuals seeking a future defined beyond their immigration status and for advocates working within a complicated, unfair immigration system, I am constantly reminded of the power of community. In the adversarial immigration court process, I find solidarity and hope in collaboration with



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advocates fighting for the same fundamental right of migration. In the uncertainties, I take root in knowing that there are others who understand and are willing to share their experiences and knowledge, whether in writing an asylum brief, or leaving space to debrief after a frustrating proceeding. I am grateful for those who take part in this solidarity. I hope that I pass this hope and perseverance to those with whom I advocate and collaborate for a future defined on their own terms.

Update 4:

With my basic experience in immigration law last summer, I have learned so much about the nuances of immigration defense through my work this summer. Asylum law, alone, is extremely complicated and is highly dependent on the facts of the case, even the immigration judge that presides over the proceedings. This summer, I've working on detained and non-detained cases with circumstances, such as a criminal history, that further complicate the process of seeking immigration relief. I have found motivation in the community of attorneys and advocates within my organization in the fight for immigration equity, the fight to dismantle stereotypes and discrimination based on immigration status, and from the clients, who remind me every day of the importance of human connections.

Update 5:

As I enter my third year of law school, I've been reflecting on how my experiences learning this summer has shaped my perspectives about immigration law and legal equity. I've learned that the cohort of advocates in New York City alone consists of some of the most resilient and empathetic individuals. Of course, immigration defense has its systemic flaws, and they won't change overnight; as long as we exist under the current immigration regime, there will always be a need for immigrant defenders at increasing needs. With the support of those around me, I've learned that connections with the community and advocates are critical to resilience. With the support of Equal Justice America, I have faith that, one day, we will learn to acknowledge migration as a human right, and that we are a nation of immigrants.