



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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| <b>ORGANIZATION</b> | Texas RioGrande Legal Aid                |

### Update 1:

I haven't always known I wanted to be an attorney. Still, the older I became, the more I witnessed the legal obstacles many underrepresented, rural, and low-income communities face. Some obstacles I've seen from personal experience and others from experiences told to me by others, and each of those stories ignited a fire within me to become an advocate for justice.

This summer, I am furthering that mission and desire after being selected as an Equal Justice America fellow, which has allowed me to return home to the Rio Grande Valley as a Law Clerk for the Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA)! At TRLA, I am clerking for the Domestic Violence and Family Law division while also being able to work on other civil cases as well. In the two-week span that I have been at TRLA, I have thoroughly enjoyed interacting with Spanish-speaking clients, translating documents to Spanish, sitting in on hearings, and performing research for various cases. I have also spent time with the wonderful attorneys, paralegals, and support staff who are making TRLA and this summer incredibly memorable!

Overall, I'm excited to see what the rest of the summer has in store for me at TRLA, as I am committed to the promise of "justice for all." By working together, we can ensure that no one is left out of the fight for justice, regardless of income or status.

If you would like to help support this commitment to justice by fighting for a more fair and equitable legal system, please consider donating to Equal Justice America via my fundraising page and help grow their ability to support law students around the country who are here to help those who need it most! [#EJAFellowUpdate](#)



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## Update 2:

[#EJAFellowUpdate](#)

It's been four weeks since I began my journey with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA), and the experience has been nothing short of transformative. From day one, I've had the privilege of working alongside attorneys whose passion and dedication to justice are truly inspiring. These professionals go above and beyond to advocate for those who need it most, and their commitment has fueled my own enthusiasm for the legal field.

One of the highlights of my time here has been assisting in drafting motions to compel discovery responses from opposing counsel. This process involves requesting the court to order the opposing party to provide necessary information that they have failed to disclose voluntarily. It's a crucial step in ensuring that all relevant facts come to light, enabling a fair and just resolution of the case.

In addition to this, I've had the opportunity to attend court hearings, witnessing firsthand the impact of our work. Seeing clients successfully obtain divorces and protective orders has been incredibly rewarding, as these legal victories often mark significant turning points in their lives, offering them safety and a fresh start.

Beyond the courtroom, I've also engaged in community outreach. Partnering with another non-profit, we've worked to connect low-income community members with vital legal services. This outreach is essential in raising awareness and providing access to justice for those who might otherwise be overlooked.

Overall, these past four weeks have been an enlightening and empowering experience, reinforcing my commitment to the promise of "justice for all." I am excited to continue learning and contributing to TRLA's mission of providing high-quality legal services to those in need.

If you would like to help support this commitment to justice by fighting for a more fair and equitable legal system, please consider donating to [Equal Justice America](#) via my fundraising page and help grow their ability to support law students around the country who are here to help those who need it most!

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## Update 3:

[#EJAUpdate](#)

Last week, I collaborated with a fellow law clerk on a presentation to educate advocates and workers about the Deferred Action for Labor Enforcement (DALE) program. Our aim was to raise awareness of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's new and streamlined process for eligible workers to request deferred action.



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The DALE program supports the mission of federal and state labor enforcement agencies by facilitating the cooperation of workers negatively impacted by abusive labor practices. DALE provides temporary relief from deportation and work authorization to eligible workers who report certain labor violations. My colleague and I outlined the program's purpose, and eligibility criteria, as well as the benefits the DALE program may provide qualifying workers.

Using real-life examples and case studies, we illustrated the positive impact of DALE, making the information relatable and impactful. We encouraged active participation, inviting questions and discussions to ensure everyone understood the program's benefits and procedures. We also provided practical guidance on applying for DALE protection and distributed informational handouts in Spanish and English.

The advocates' and workers' enthusiastic and grateful responses underscored the importance of supporting labor enforcement agencies and community partners. This experience reinforced our commitment to serving vulnerable populations in exercising their rights, securing fair treatment, and improving workplace conditions for all workers!

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## **Update 4:**

#EJAUpdate

Last week, I had a transformative experience with the domestic violence and family law team at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) that reinforced the idea that many legal battles unfold outside the courtroom and that thorough preparation is crucial for success.

Following the denial of our motion for continuance two weeks ago, we quickly focused on gathering evidence, issuing subpoenas, and preparing witnesses for today's hearing. Our team's diligence ensured that every detail was covered, reflecting our unwavering commitment to our clients.

On the day of the hearing, my supervising attorney arrived with exhibits in hand, accompanied by our client and witnesses. In stark contrast, the opposing counsel appeared without evidence or witnesses to support their case. This disparity truly underscored the significance of our meticulous preparation.

Recognizing our readiness, the opposing counsel sought an agreement that resulted in favorable terms for our client even before the hearing began. This experience deepened my appreciation for the hard work that goes into each case, ensuring our client's best interests are always prioritized. I am grateful for the invaluable insights gained this week at TRLA and look forward to applying these lessons in my future legal career.



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## **Update 5:**

### #EJA Update

As my summer internship at @Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) has ended, I reflect on an incredibly impactful and rewarding experience. Working with the domestic violence and family law team has been both challenging and enlightening. I've had the opportunity to work on real cases that affect real people, learning the complexities and nuances of legal processes that directly impact the lives of those in our community.

During my time here, I've been able to see firsthand the immense dedication and hard work that goes into providing legal services to those who need it most. The attorneys, staff, and volunteers at TRLA are truly passionate about their work, and their commitment to justice is inspiring. I've learned so much from their expertise and dedication, which has reaffirmed my passion for pursuing a career in law.

One of the most meaningful parts of this internship was being able to directly assist clients, providing them with the support and resources they needed during some of the most challenging times in their lives. Whether it was preparing legal documents, conducting research, or simply being a supportive presence, each task felt significant and impactful.

I am grateful for the mentorship and guidance I received from everyone at TRLA. Their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences has been invaluable, and I am leaving this internship with a deeper understanding of the legal field and a renewed commitment to advocating for justice and equality.

As I move forward in my career, I will carry the lessons and experiences from this summer with me. Thank you, TRLA, for an unforgettable summer and for allowing me to be a part of your important work.