



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This summer, I am finally doing something I've wanted to do for a while now: working in immigration law. (Or interning, at least!)

The team at The Resurrection Project (TRP) has been incredibly welcoming, and I'm already learning a lot. I'm working on TRP's Midwest Immigrant Defenders' Alliance (MIDA) team. MIDA is a coalition of organizations offering free representation to people in immigration detention, most of whom have criminal records that put them at risk of removal. Unlike in criminal cases, noncitizens in removal proceedings aren't guaranteed a lawyer. MIDA is trying to change that. We think no one should be deported simply because they couldn't afford an immigration attorney.

Separately from MIDA, my team also takes U-visa and asylum cases, which secure legal residency in the U.S. for victims of crime and persecution.

I'm looking forward to this summer and grateful to TRP for a wonderful experience so far. I'm also grateful to Equal Justice America, an organization that offers grants to students and attorneys pursuing the public interest. EJA is helping fund my summer internship and is doing the same for other law students across the nation. Funding like EJA's matters so public interest lawyers can provide free representation to those who need it.

Update 2: "Justice work is paperwork." A professor shared this quote with me in the fall; he in turn had heard it from the leader of a justice-oriented nonprofit in Honduras. In recent weeks of my internship at The Resurrection Project, as I have become more familiar with the forms and evidence needed for various immigration claims, I have thought often of this phrase. The U.S. government is not eager to hand out immigration benefits, so we need paperwork to prove to the government that a client's claim is credible: that they really suffered from violence or crime, that they have a real fear of returning to their previous home, that they really haven't left the U.S. since arriving the first time, or even that they're really married. Every legal brief, every



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client's story is supported by paperwork. Sometimes astonishing amounts of it. Not every day is exciting as going to court, but getting the details right is just as important to the work of legal representation.

Update 3: This internship update will be a little different - last week I was on vacation with my family, and this week The Resurrection Project had a retreat for the full-time employees, so I got a couple extra days off. In these couple of weeks, I haven't done many tasks or attended many meetings, BUT rest is also a necessary part of the work, as my supervisor, Andres, often reminds me. Many of us who work in America - whatever your job is - feel a pressure to push ourselves to the brink in our work and even feel guilty when we take breaks. I certainly do! In the nonprofit sector in particular, it's easy to feel you don't deserve a break because the work you're doing or the community you're serving is just more important. But rest is necessary to make any career sustainable, and it's important to remember that work is just one part of life, not our only purpose as humans. I'm grateful for some time off and excited for the work still to come this summer.

Update 4: Last week, I got to meet two clients in person whose U visa applications I've been helping with through my internship at The Resurrection Project. They each came in for a final review of their papers and to sign everything - immigration is one of the few areas of law that still requires mostly paper filings rather than digital. It was satisfying to see the culmination of a lot of hours of work. It was also refreshing to meet the flesh-and-blood people who until now I've only encountered through documents, emails, and phone calls. Even - maybe especially - for those of us who do this work habitually, it's always important to remember that applicants for immigration benefits are not just a collection of IDs and checked boxes. They're not problems to be solved or passive recipients of help. They're people. They make small talk, get new jobs, stay in touch with friends, and put their kids to bed. They have good memories and bad memories. They experience joy and loss. And these two were kind enough to shake my hand and let me sit in on a meeting with their lawyer, my supervisor. I'm grateful for the chance to meet them as they make their way in a new place.

Update 5: When I started as a summer intern at The Resurrection Project, I had the skills I'd developed in my first year of law school and a passion to advocate for immigrants who find themselves in a complex legal system. What I did not have was any experience with forms, court proceedings, or legal precedent related to immigration.

TRP and the Midwest Immigrant Defenders Alliance (MIDA), a coalition that provides legal counsel to people in immigration detention, helped me gain that experience. I had the chance to shadow client meetings and court hearings. I also got hands-on experience by drafting a bond motion and an asylum brief, doing legal research, compiling a country conditions report, preparing forms, and corresponding with clients.

I gained legal knowledge about how to argue for a case and how to know whether there is even a case to be made. I learned practical tips for appearing in court, for filing documents by mail, and for building trust and rapport with clients.



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Maybe most important, I'm starting to learn how to keep going in this work. I've learned resilience from clients: they have been through a lot before, during, and after their journeys to the U.S., yet for the most part, they are full of hope and determination to build a new life here for themselves and their families. I've also learned resilience from my supervisor, Andres Diaz, and my coworkers. They have spent years handling heavy caseloads and hearing heavy stories, which can lead to burnout and even secondary trauma. But they find the strength to keep going by supporting each other, staying connected to their reasons for doing the work, and taking breaks when they need them. Andres often says, "Life is a marathon, not a sprint," and I'm trying to take that to heart as an eager student who hopes to have a long career in the public interest. A big thank you to MIDA, Andres, paralegal Liz, and the whole team at TRP for this chance to start working in immigration law. And if you've been reading these updates throughout the summer, thank you!

Also thanks to Equal Justice America for supporting me with some extra funding and a network of public interest attorneys and students.