



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Northwest Justice Project – Farmworker Unit

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**Update 1:** This summer, I am excited to work as a legal intern in the Farmworker Unit at the Northwest Justice Project in Yakima, WA. My role has already allowed me to participate in impactful outreach efforts. We travel to various communities across Central Washington, providing essential information to agricultural workers about their rights and available support.

This internship is particularly meaningful to me because I come from a family of farmworkers. Witnessing the Northwest Justice Project's commitment to advocating for farmworkers has been incredibly inspiring. Recently, we faced a significant challenge: around 100 H-2A visa workers visited our office seeking legal aid. They had fallen victim to fraud by a company and appeared to be victims of trafficking. They were initially promised jobs in the United States; however, upon arrival, they were informed no positions were available but were encouraged to work without proper permits. We promptly conducted legal orientations and processed as many intake assessments as possible to address their urgent needs.

This experience has been both demanding and profoundly fulfilling. I look forward to continuing to contribute to the Northwest Justice Project's mission and supporting the farmworker community throughout the remainder of the summer.

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**Update 2:** I am nearly halfway through my internship, and it has been an incredible experience. As a member of the Farmworker Unit at the Northwest Justice Project, I participated in a 3-day outreach trip in late June to Northern Washington. During this trip, we visited some of the largest labor camps in the state to distribute resources to agricultural workers. Many of the workers we spoke with had just arrived on H-2A visas.



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Additionally, I had the honor of appearing on the KDNA radio show to discuss the work NJP does in Spanish and to provide information about the H-2A visa. Currently, I am working on a memo exploring the new warehouse law, which outlines guidelines for employers when implementing quotas. This memo aims to help workers in the community understand their rights and empower them to speak up. I am excited to continue this important work while engaging with the farmworker community.

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### **Update 3:**

These past couple of weeks, I have been assisting the farmworker unit in conducting intake interviews with individuals who were brought to Washington state on fraudulent visas. These individuals may qualify for immigration relief under deferred action. The Northwest Justice Project is collaborating with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project to organize a legal clinic for these H-2A workers, enabling them to secure employment and stay in the US without facing deportation. My role includes conducting initial screenings to determine their eligibility for deferred action based on findings from a labor agency investigation.

Additionally, I am in the process of preparing a PowerPoint presentation for warehouse workers. This presentation aims to educate them about the new warehouse and quota law, empowering them to understand and effectively utilize this legislation for their benefit.

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### **Update 4:**

Over the past few weeks, I have been drafting a legal research memo concerning a sexual harassment claim. My primary focus has been on investigating whether stalking behavior can be classified as creating a hostile work environment under the Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD). WLAD provides comprehensive protections against various forms of discrimination in settings such as employment, covering aspects like race, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and any sensory, mental, or physical disability. Specifically, in cases of sexual harassment, the law addresses unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive enough to foster a hostile or abusive work environment.

A significant part of my research involves defining stalking, examining its implications, and assessing how repeated and unwanted behaviors, such as persistent following, fit into the legal framework of sexual harassment.

In addition to my research, I had the invaluable experience of interacting with clients by joining a phone call with an attorney representing them. These clients, having been victims of stalking, are also eligible for U visas—a form of relief available to victims of certain crimes who assist law enforcement. I participated in a call where the attorney prepared them for their U-visa law enforcement certification interview.



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I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work on this project. Being a part of the farmworker unit at NJP this summer has been an enriching experience, allowing me to make meaningful contributions while gaining profound insights into legal advocacy for vulnerable populations.

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**Update 5:** I have concluded my internship at the Northwest Justice Project. In my final week, I had the opportunity to contribute to the Deferred Action for Labor Enforcement (DALE) Clinic, hosted in collaboration with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. This clinic offered essential support to H2A workers facing significant labor issues by providing Deferred Action status, which allows them to remain in the U.S. while their employer is investigated for labor law violations. This work was particularly meaningful as it involved assisting the same workers who had visited the NJP office earlier in my internship, having been victims of visa fraud.

My role involved researching out-of-state organizations to support these workers who had moved and were unable to return to Washington for the clinic. By identifying resources and assistance in their new locations, I helped ensure that these individuals could access the support they needed, despite their relocation.

Throughout the summer, I gained extensive experience in labor and employment law, particularly its intersection with immigration issues. I worked on various projects related to workers' rights, which deepened my understanding of the complex challenges faced by immigrant workers, including legal protections and workplace abuses. These advocacy assignments provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues faced by farmworkers. The outreach trips exposed the isolation and limited access to resources experienced by many farmworkers. Working on the sexual harassment case highlighted the legal challenges in addressing workplace abuse and underscored the importance of robust legal frameworks. Developing community education materials demonstrated the critical role of disseminating information and ensuring that workers are aware of their rights.

Throughout the internship, I developed critical legal skills, including effective client communication, enhanced legal research and writing abilities, and a deeper understanding of zealous advocacy. The internship provided a practical, real-world experience that complemented my academic studies, offering insights into the specific legal challenges faced by farmworkers and allowing me to apply legal theory to practice. This experience also broadened my understanding of public interest law and reinforced my commitment to advocating for marginalized communities.

The internship highlighted the significant impact that lawyers can have in advancing social justice and protecting vulnerable populations. I observed firsthand the ethical and professional



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responsibilities of public interest lawyers, including the necessity for empathy, dedication, and a solid commitment to advocating for clients' rights. This experience deepened my appreciation for the role of public service in the legal profession.