



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: Pausing for a moment of gratitude. My 1L summer job has started, and I feel like I'm finally diving back into the work that made me want to pursue this career in the first place. Concentrating on reconnecting and recentering what matters to me this month 😊 Grateful to Equal Justice America for providing me with the opportunity to continue exploring the immigration law field and for supporting me on this journey.

Update 2: I've just completed the first month of my fellowship and internship with Dolores. I've also just completed my first ever draft of a motion for Safeguards. This motion will hopefully assist a vulnerable client, and help ensure they obtain a set of protections during their hearing before an immigration judge. A couple of weeks ago, I would not have known that these motions ever existed. I would not have been aware that we even had an avenue to try and obtain safeguards for our most vulnerable asylum seekers as they navigate the immigration court system. I've also had the privilege of sitting in during Court Hearings for young migrants and observing my amazing managing attorney conduct Attorney of the Day. She provided them with legal assistance as they figured out the next steps in their proceedings.

After this first month, I'm coming to see how expansive immigration law really is, particularly removal defense. After the work I've done so far and after the amazing events and informational sessions our organization puts together, I've come to appreciate how attorneys working in this field are always advocating for the most vulnerable, in some way or another.

Update 3: These last couple of weeks, I was able to take part in an appeal brief headed towards the BIA. This is the first time I've been able to work on an appeal, and the experience was both challenging and eye opening. When I first reviewed the original petition, I found it surprising it was ultimately denied. It was incredibly strong, and the arguments were well constructed. But, I realized that even the strongest cases run a risk of denial. However, in this line of work, we have to continually fight for our client's cases, down to the very last given opportunity. Only by doing this will we be able to safeguard their right to live in a place of safety and security.



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I have also been able to meet with clients more directly these past couple of weeks. Being able to work with clients face to face, to put a face to their stories, and hear them explain events in their lives, has also been an incredible experience. After working on emotionally heavy declarations with individuals and after interviewing them for their asylum cases, I realized how an attorney has to be able to pick up small signs that a client may be feeling overwhelmed by what they're retelling or hearing. As representatives assisting the most vulnerable in our community, it's crucial we create an encouraging space for clients to share their experiences without feeling wary, so they can feel supported and empowered throughout the process.

Update 4: I've just finished the final week of my internship with Mission Action (formerly Dolores Street Community Services - we actually transitioned to the new name while I was working there!). I'm having difficulties putting into words how I feel. The best word that comes to mind is gratitude.

While working at Dolores, I was extremely fortunate to have some of the most amazing attorneys as supervisors, mentors, and coworkers. Some of the cases I was able to assist with were very emotionally heavy, others were complicated and necessitated strategic planning and in depth research (I think particularly about a CAT BIA Appeal I assisted with). Not once did I ever feel unsupported, or as though I had to figure things out on my own. Every step of the way, my supervisor and team members would check in to ensure I felt like I could turn to them for any kind of question or assistance. However, simultaneously, I was given enough space so I could build connections with clients one on one. This not only helped me build stronger cases, as clients felt more comfortable sharing their stories openly, but it also allowed me to experience a crucial aspect of legal advocacy: the relationship between a legal representative and their client. I am extremely grateful for having had the opportunity to work with such a supportive, and uplifting team that allowed me to grow in this manner as a legal professional.

I am also grateful for having had the opportunity to help others on their journey navigating the immigration system. The threat of deportation and removal can be overwhelming and very frightening. Being able to help others with their defense, and ensure they are not going at it alone, has felt like a gift for me. The experiences I've had this summer assisting others as an intern has only reinforced the fact that I wish to continue on this path for my career.

Update 5: This summer and the work I've been privileged to have taken part in has taught me fundamental lessons about the work I am hoping to pursue and how I can work further towards my goal of becoming the best legal advocate I can be.

The work I was able to take part in has taught me how attorneys working in public interest are an essential lifeline for many, and how it feels like there are never enough of them. There is a clear need for attorneys that assist underserved members of our communities, such as those who face the threat of deportation and removal. Countless people, due to an unfortunate deficit in accessible legal service providers, fall through the cracks and ultimately do not obtain the legal help that they desperately need.



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Recognizing this fact over the summer has reignited a motivation in me to not only ensure the legal field I ultimately practice in assists the underserved, but also that the quality of my work is the best it can be. I was very fortunate this summer to have worked with an incredible attorney as my supervisor. As I assisted with drafting appeals, motions, and declarations, my supervisor took the time to show me areas I could modify in my work to ensure that the material I was filing for our clients was the strongest version.

I greatly admired my supervisor not only for the way in which she guided and mentored me, but also because of her own amazing work. Reading her petitions and getting to watch how she litigated in court on behalf of clients (many of which were children she was representing pro bono) was invaluable experience. Her tutelage has taught me how, due to the fact that our work could very well decide whether a person is uprooted and their lives changed, it's essential the work we produce is strong, compelling, and well-researched. It's crucial we are at the top of our game, as the impact our work has is monumental. I intend to use this understanding as motivation as I continue forward in my career.