



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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**Update 1:** Hey everyone: Just a quick update, I am proud to announce that I am an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer! As an EJA fellow I am helping further their mission of providing accessible legal services and pro bono advocacy to those who otherwise would not be able to access the law. As some of you know I am working at Resilience Force this summer where I have already learned so much and have got the chance to engage in the discovery process of a case.

I have been an advocate for the immigrant community and immigration reform for years and have worked on immigration cases ranging from asylum to deferred action. However, my short time at Resilience Force has helped exposed me to a new area of law where advocating for immigrants is also necessary, employment. I am proud to work alongside attorneys who are fighting cases to hold employers accountable for exploiting immigrants for their labor. This serves as a great reminder that all areas of the law can intersect with immigration, and we need to take a holistic approach at immigration reform because we are more than just here to stay, we are here to prosper.

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**Update 2:**

Hey Everyone, it's time for my second update as an Equal Justice America Fellow.

My time at Resilience Force continues to show me the importance of supporting the workers who help rebuild and repair in the wake of climate disasters. The past couple of weeks I have been working on compiling all of the facts and familiarizing myself with all the different labor and civil rights abuses that some of these workers have unfortunately had to endure.



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I have also had the chance to speak with these workers a bit more. The moments when I get to interact with clients are truly special and profoundly meaningful and each interaction is a reminder of why I chose this path. Since court cases take years and a lot of that time is spent preparing for court it can become easy to sometimes lose sight of the purpose and impact this will have in these individuals lives. This is why I love the approach that Resilience Force takes, which is to create group chats where we constantly keep the workers informed about what's going on in court and we have meetings where we provide each other updates and check up on each other every three months.

Being a public interest attorney who interacts closely with clients isn't just about legal representation—it's about building relationships, fostering hope, and making a positive impact that extends far beyond the courtroom

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### **Update 3:**

I can't believe it's already time for my third update as an Equal Justice America Fellow. As I continue work with Resilience Force to help represent workers who rebuild America after natural disasters, I am learning about different avenues we can take to further advocate for change and avoid exploitation. The past few weeks I have been researching various government oversight committees with the goal of understanding their role in catalyzing change. This research has also been in efforts to find an oversight coming who can help us with a systematic problem we have noticed of resilience workers being exploited.

I have been used to taking a more individualized client-based approach in previous cases, I have worked on, however reaching out to Congress Oversight Committees would be a more community-based approach because we would be able to tackle the root of this issue, and this would impact more individuals than a single case would. Making these oversight committees aware that they have a problem that is falling through the cracks and working together to come up with a solution would not require policy change but would have very positive effects to end the exploitation of workers. Moving forward, I am eager to apply the knowledge and insights gained to contribute meaningfully to advancing policies that promote equity, justice, and sustainability.

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### **Update 4:**

It's time for another update as an Equal Justice America Fellow. As I continue work with Resilience Force to help represent workers who rebuild America after natural disasters, I keep finding new ways to advocate for workers and for the past couple weeks it has been through legal research which has been helpful to identify where the law falls short and fails to protect workers.



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Over the past few weeks, I've been deeply engaged in researching the legal aspects of pay for travel time. This investigation aimed to clarify the legal standards and uncover inconsistencies across various jurisdictions.

My research revealed that while the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) offers some guidance, there's considerable variability in how travel time is compensated, with states applying different rules. This patchwork approach often leads to inequities among workers. Additionally, the lack of clear definitions between "work time" and "travel time" complicates enforcement and compliance.

To address these issues, I recommend advocating for standardized federal regulations to ensure consistent application and clearer definitions to resolve ambiguities since there is so little caselaw.

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## **Update 5:**

It's time for my last update as an Equal Justice America Fellow, time flies. If you have been following my posts, you know I have been working with Resilience Force to help represent workers who rebuild America after natural disasters. This fellowship has been an enriching experience, deeply aligning with my commitment to immigrant advocacy and labor rights. Through the summer I had a plethora of experiences like doing legal research for questions about travel time compensation and sanctions for tampering with evidence to working my way up the chain of command at the US Army Corps of Engineers to advocate for exploited workers and make sure changes are in place to avoid exploitation.

My favorite experience this summer was exploring how to address systemic issues of exploitation to promote client-based advocacy, I learned so much about government oversight committees and how much power they have. At the beginning of the summer, I did not know anyone or anything about the US Army Corps of Engineers but I began researching and we began working our way up the chain of command. I started with the employees who actually drafted the contract that labor violations were observed on and we ended up talking the Colonel who was in charge of the whole contracting division. In such little time we were able to take huge steps which would not have been possible had we taken the lengthy court route. This community-based approach aims to tackle the root causes of labor abuses and catalyze broader policy changes. By working with these committees, we can address gaps in oversight and develop solutions that have a wider impact than individual cases alone.

Another thing that I enjoyed about this summer was being able to explore the law across state lines. My previous experience in immigration was all focused on California or the Ninth circuit. However, because Hurricanes are the one of the biggest natural disasters I worked on I was able



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to do legal research for states like Michigan, Florida and Louisiana. This helped me see not only how carefully crafted California laws are but the lack of workers protection laws across the nation.

Overall, this summer has been a journey of growth and learning. My experience with Resilience Force has deepened my understanding of the intersections between immigration, labor law, and public advocacy. I especially want to thank Kerry for being such a great mentor and guiding me along the whole process of exploring a new area of the law I could not have done it without her. As I move forward, I am eager to apply these insights to advance equity, justice, and sustainable practices.

If you're interested in supporting Equal Justice America and helping fund public interest projects like mine, please donate. It is crucial that law students are able to receive funding for public interest projects to further protect those that are less advantaged and would otherwise not have access to the law. Thank you for your support and interest in my work!