



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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Final Reflection:

My last week at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) was bittersweet. I was sad to leave, but as I reflected, I realized how much I accomplished – from calling the Social Security offices, contacting different medical facilities to build up client cases, or simply listening to clients. One client in particular will stick with me.

I met her at my first administrative hearing held in the Thomas P. O’Neil federal building in Boston. Though I’ve passed by it numerous times, I never expected to be part of an event within it. The O’Neil family’s name is woven into Boston’s history, from the tunnel to the main library at my alma mater, Boston College. It felt fated for me to be there.

After passing the security point and riding the elevator to the sixth floor, my supervisor and I waited for our client in a Zoom room. Until that point, I only connected with her through phone calls and emails. When she walked into the waiting room, I immediately began talking to her like I knew her for years because in many ways, I did. I had read through her case, documented her medical visits, and reviewed past hearing decisions. But it wasn’t just that, I believed her, empathized with her, and wanted her to feel affirmed.

I knew this hearing would be stressful for her because much of her livelihood depended on the SSA’s decision. To redirect her anxiety, I talked to her about anything other than the hearing and her medical record. We talked about parking, banana bread, and Labubu’s. By the time we headed into the hearing, she was ready to speak openly.



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The joy I felt from helping her feel at ease was the same joy I experienced when assisting other clients at GBLS. While I have gained much in skill, such as fortifying my legal research and writing, client management, and document reviewing, what I am most proud of are my abilities to connect with people from different backgrounds, identify their needs, and quickly find solutions for them. Many things offer instant gratification, but serving people in this capacity has been the most fulfilling by far.

I hope that more students will be able to lean into this line of work and feel that they are making a difference. With the help of Equal Justice America, more students can.