



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2025

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

#### Final Reflection:

This summer, I was grateful for the Equal Justice Fellowship's support in my internship with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) in Tacoma, WA. I spent the summer with the Detained Immigrant Advocates Unit, where we worked with clients detained at the Northwest ICE Processing Center. The attorneys and legal advocates there were amazing people who made it their goal to help as many detained folks as possible. This included both taking on full representation cases to help clients get legal status, as well as helping unrepresented folks prepare for hearings and file applications and motions before the court.

For most of the summer, I worked with one client from Afghanistan and represented him in his application for asylum. His hearing was at the end of the summer, so I spent the summer working with him to gather evidence, writing his declaration telling his story, and preparing him for his hearing. While working with him, I came to understand the challenges of preparing somebody for a hearing while they were detained.

My client fled to the U.S. after being attacked and threatened multiple times by the Taliban. He arrived in the U.S. last fall and was detained, despite having no criminal history, and was forced to wait in detention until the end of July for his hearing. Meeting with him to prepare was difficult in the detention center; I often had to wait several hours to get in, because there were not enough attorney-client meeting rooms, and my client was struggling emotionally after such a long period of detention. In addition, his family in Afghanistan continued to be threatened and attacked by the Taliban in their search for my client.



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I also witnessed how language and cultural barriers could negatively impact a case. For example, my client told his story in a very specific manner, and when asked a question, would try to give more context to explain his answer. The Immigration Judge didn't like this, despite this being a common method of storytelling in Afghanistan, and thought my client was not being responsive to her questions. I was very surprised at her lack of understanding about cultural differences, and this experience increased my awareness of the necessity of cultural competency in legal work.

I'm very grateful to EJA for making my work this summer possible. Through EJA's sponsorship, I was able to help my client win Withholding of Removal—and learn so much about our legal system in the process. I am passionate about migrant justice and committed to a career in advancing the rights of non-citizens. My experience working with detained individuals this summer taught me the unique vulnerabilities detained folks face in the immigration system and strengthened my belief that immigration detention should not exist. I hope to continue working in public interest immigration law, and the connections I made this summer have helped me along this path.

Upon entering the legal field, I plan to zealously advocate for my clients and inform my practice through centering the voices of those directly impacted by harmful policies. With EJA's sponsorship, I was able to help a client achieve legal status and grow in my understanding of the law's impact on individual's lives. NWIRP's dedication and commitment to migrant justice is inspirational, and I am grateful to have had EJA's support in working with them.