



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

**Summer 2025**

## **EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT**



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Northeast Justice Center

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### **Final Reflection:**

First, I want to thank you and Equal Justice America for supporting my work this summer. I am proud of the work I did supporting and learning from the dedicated attorneys at the Affirmative Litigation Unit at Northeast Justice Center. Much of my time was spent learning through direct observation about various aspects of working in legal aid, and about legal work in general. Early in the summer, I attended a forum at which my supervisor, Ethan Horowitz, updated the residents of a manufactured housing community (MHC) about a putative class action that he and the unit are advancing on their behalf. I spoke to some of these residents myself, and it was meaningful to learn about how invested they were in the lawsuit and how significant it was to them to have someone fighting on their side. I would later see some of these same residents at a state legislative committee hearing, where I was taking notes on a proposed bill that would strip key protections from MHC residents. I was once again inspired by the passion of the many community members who had taken the time to appear at this hearing virtually and in person to testify in support of their rights. I met a different set of community members near the end of the summer, when I watched another attorney in the unit argue in support of a motion for partial summary judgment in a different MHC case. Not only did each of these experiences teach me something new about the practice and creation of law, they also reinforced to me the duty we have as attorneys to zealously represent our clients, who will always be far more directly invested in their own cases than we can ever be.



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That duty of zealous representation also loomed large in one of my major research projects this summer. My supervisor tasked me with diving deep into the ethical and practical conflict between the requirements of zealous representation and candor to the tribunal, with a specific focus on how lawyers should navigate that conflict in deportation proceedings. He was concerned about the common practice among immigration lawyers of denying their client's alienage without a factual basis for doing so. The trouble is that if the attorney concedes alienage, they have proved the most important part of the government's case for them, but if they deny alienage without a factual basis, they are likely violating the duty of candor and potentially risking professional sanctions. Through my research, I confirmed my supervisor's suspicion that denying alienage without a factual basis is ethically dubious at best. Not wanting to leave our attorneys and other immigration practitioners without a way to put the government to its burden, I investigated further and found that respondents in immigration court can remain silent in response to questions about their national origin. Although this silence can form the basis of an adverse inference against them, that inference alone is not enough to find them deportable; instead, the government must have some additional evidence. This research ultimately became a memo I wrote for the attorneys in our unit to advise them on their ethical obligations and inform them of the middle-ground option of silence. I greatly respect my supervisor's commitment to keeping his attorneys far away from potentially unethical conduct, and I am proud that my work will advance that goal while still providing our attorneys with a way to put the government to its burden.

In addition to that research project, I collaborated with another intern on a project investigating the legislative intent behind Congress's 1996 updates to the Immigration and Nationality Act. This was my first foray into legislative history research, and it was a valuable experience for me and my fellow intern. Our findings will help the attorneys in our unit make a case for an interpretation of that law that differs greatly from the Trump administration's interpretation, which it is currently using to detain and deport thousands of people who have been considered legally admitted under past administrations. I am grateful that because of EJA's support, I was able to spend my summer conducting research to support vulnerable members of our local and national community and learning how to continue doing so in the future as a practicing attorney.