



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2025

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Manhattan Legal Services

### Final Reflection:

This summer, I had the privilege of working with the Immigration Unit at Manhattan Legal Services (MLS) of Legal Services NYC (LSNYC) under the supervision of Lynn Ventura. Although I interned in the unit during a particularly turbulent time for the practice and the organization as a whole, Lynn ensured that I had a wonderful experience and received extensive face-to-face interaction with clients and other legal practitioners at MLS.

My first project was in conjunction with another intern from CLS for a client fleeing his home country due to severe homophobia. The other intern drafted most of the asylum application, while my main task was to draft the client's U-visa application relating to a violent crime to which our client was a witness. Later in the summer after the other intern had to leave MLS, I also completed the asylum brief. Both tasks related back to the skills that I had hoped to nurture even before starting law school, including narrative building and interdisciplinary direct services. I was able to work closely with Lynn and the caseworker at MLS to build up our client's case, and I was grateful for the opportunity to give him hope during these especially challenging times.

After completing work for this client, I pivoted to a guardianship petition for a young girl who left her home country with her father after they both received death threats for the father's political activism. As a law student who is also very interested in family law, I deeply appreciated its intersection with immigration law in this case, and it was fascinating to learn more about the administrative processes behind permanent residency through the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) pathway. Outside of this case, it was also quite informative to discuss SIJS with other immigration attorneys in LSNYC and the intersection of federal and state law, as well as



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the practical and psychological implications of legal abandonment (beyond the immediate benefits it provides in the context of permanent residency).

The work I completed this summer reflected the realities of public interest law in all of its glories and occasional horrors. I left the internship truly believing that this is some of the most important work that any lawyer could do – but also with the knowledge that its heavy subject matter is difficult enough to eat away at even the most optimistic of entrants to the field. But the significant client interactions and earnest conversations with Lynn (and other attorneys) over the summer primed me well for my family defense clinic this semester, which may have otherwise been too emotionally overwhelming for me. Through the lessons I learned at MLS, I am now better at practicing self-care and self-love in the name of sustaining myself in the long run for the people I have yet to meet and represent.