



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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LAW SCHOOL	Cornell Law School
ORGANIZATION	Brooklyn Defender Services

Final Reflection:

It's no secret that immigrants' rights are under relentless attack in the United States. What was once framed as a campaign to "keep criminals out" has morphed into a broader assault on fundamental rights: violations of due process in criminal courts, persecution of individuals seeking immigration relief through legal channels, infringements on First Amendment rights, family separation, and deportations to countries with which individuals have no ties or familiarity, to name a few.

During my summer internship at Brooklyn Defenders, I worked on a wide range of issues and cases. I assisted in a competency hearing for a client who should never have been forced to stand trial in immigration court. I worked on a Convention Against Torture (CAT) hearing for someone the government attempted to deport to Haiti, despite overwhelming evidence of the country's inhumane and dangerous conditions. I also worked on cases where individuals were removed from the U.S. before their criminal cases were resolved, essentially before they were found guilty of any crime.

These cases revealed just how uphill the fight for immigrant justice has become. At times, it was disheartening, especially after pouring myself into a legal memo I believed clearly demonstrated the law and precedent were on our side, only for the system to reject it due to the immigration's system overwhelming discretionary power. But the attorneys at BDS reminded me that in unprecedented times, we must lean into innovation and creativity. Technical skills like knowing case law and writing the "perfect" memo are necessary but not always enough.

At Brooklyn Defenders, I witnessed something deeper: collaboration, resilience, and a relentless pursuit of justice. I saw attorneys redefine what "victory" means. I saw them reflect openly and



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honestly about what it means to provide holistic representation, especially when the legal options are limited or bleak. These lessons will stay with me, and I hope to carry them forward in my own practice.

The immigration system is being weaponized. But my time at BDS has only strengthened my resolve to challenge the injustice baked into the system. I am proud of the work I did this summer regardless of outcomes, and I am committed to continuing this fight in the years to come.

Thank you Equal Justice America, Cornell Law School, and Brooklyn Defenders for the opportunity to learn, grow, and contribute. If you'd like to support other aspiring public interest attorneys doing similar work, you can donate.