



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2025

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Anya Neumeister
LAW SCHOOL	University of Virginia School of Law
ORGANIZATION	Just Neighbors

Final Reflection:

Throughout my time at Just Neighbors I was able to observe and participate in the majority of the different stages of case work beginning with the initial filing and ending with the ultimate decision reached. My experience this summer feels unique on account of all the changes to the immigration landscape under President Trump, so at times, it felt like I was learning with the attorneys on the team as they navigated new complexities and an increased hostile environment. One of the biggest matters I worked on concerned proxy marriages and at what point consummation of a marriage is required for legitimacy. This answer was of particular importance to one of our clients who had multiple kids with his now wife but chose to get married to her after coming to the United States and working to support his family. Their marriage was under the jurisdiction of a foreign government, and unfortunately, it did not satisfy the requirements for a legitimate marriage in accordance with the United States' definition for the visa he was seeking. To qualify as a legitimate marriage, the United States requires that consummation occurs after the ceremony. While there is no explicit definition of what constitutes consummation, it can be inferred that no consummation could have occurred if two people have not been in the same space following their marriage ceremony. Thus, despite having children with his now wife, our client faced the obstacle of proving a legitimate marriage had occurred, and it was my job to explore proxy marriages and their legal treatment.

Another matter that I worked on involved preparing the updated country condition report for an asylum case. This applicant had been waiting over six years for review of his application, and by chance this summer, he received notice of an interview time for him and his daughter. I was tasked with tracking the history of the country's changes and preparing that portion of the brief.



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He and his daughter (as a derivative) were ultimately granted asylum about two weeks after I had finished my internship!

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to serve members of the DMV area as they seek legal ways to reside in the United States. Just Neighbors' mission centers around providing immigration legal services to low-income immigrants, asylees and refugees, and I was able to work with a variety of clients with different circumstances and needs. Since the other two legal interns were not proficient in Spanish, I was able to do more direct client interaction since many of our clients are monolingual Spanish-speakers.

I would not have been able to afford to do this internship without EJA's financial support, and I am so grateful to this fellowship for allowing me to pursue work that I am passionate about doing. Being at Just Neighbors gave me a deeper understanding of the different facets of immigration work, and I feel confident that I have both reaffirmed my commitment to working with immigrant, asylee, and refugee populations and am now more equipped to serve people seeking these legal services.