



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Jason Osorio
LAW SCHOOL	American University Washington College of Law
ORGANIZATION	Catholic Charities D.C.

Update 1: During the first few weeks at Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, my internship has expanded rapidly in terms of my assignments. I was recently assigned my first U visa filing, as well as the task of preparing an I-589 asylum application for a pro se client. Working on these matters has pushed me to grow as a legal advocate while grounding me in the human realities behind immigration law.

One of the clients I'm assisting is a survivor of a violent crime who has spent years trying to regain stability. As I worked through the U visa narrative and supporting evidence, I saw how emotionally taxing the process can be for someone already carrying trauma. Even identifying the right documents or explaining past events requires navigating systems that are confusing and often retraumatizing. Helping organize their story and guide them through each step felt like a meaningful way to restore some sense of agency.

I am also supporting an asylum seeker who is filing pro se. English is not their first language, and the I-589's dense, technical questions can be overwhelming. Sitting with them to clarify timelines, articulate the core of their claim, and translate their experiences into the legal framework highlighted how essential accessible legal aid truly is.

These experiences have reinforced my commitment to public-interest immigration work and the importance of ensuring that vulnerable clients are not left to navigate life-altering processes alone.

Update 2: Over the past several weeks at Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, my internship has pushed me to grow both technically and personally. I was recently assigned a U visa case, which has given me a deeper understanding of how survivors of crime navigate a system that is often overwhelming, retraumatizing, and difficult to access without support. Working through evidence collection and helping shape the client's narrative has shown me



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how much trust and vulnerability this process requires, and how meaningful it can be to offer clarity and stability during such an uncertain time.

At the same time, I have been assisting a pro se asylum seeker with their I-589, a task that has highlighted how inaccessible immigration law can be for individuals without representation. The form itself is dense and technical, and helping the client articulate their claim, organize timelines, and understand what the government is asking for has been a powerful reminder of how essential legal aid is. Many of the individuals we serve are fleeing violence, instability, or trauma, and the fear they carry — especially under the current administration — is palpable.

These experiences have reaffirmed my commitment to public-interest immigration work. Being able to sit with clients, listen to their stories, and help them navigate processes that directly affect their safety and future has been deeply fulfilling. This internship continues to show me how vital compassionate, accessible legal services are for immigrant communities, and how meaningful even small acts of guidance can be.

Update 3: Over the past several weeks at Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, my internship has pushed me to grow both technically and as a person as I take on increasingly complex forms of humanitarian relief work. I am currently assisting with a U visa case, which has required evidence collection, trauma informed interviewing, and a deeper understanding of how victimization and cooperation with law enforcement intersect in immigration law. At the same time, drafting a VAWA declaration has challenged me to translate a client's lived experience into a narrative that is both legally persuasive and authentically their voice. It has reminded me how much trust clients place in us to tell their stories with dignity and the importance of building a rapport with clients. I am also assembling a pro se I-589 filing, which has allowed me to witness firsthand how complex navigating the legal system alone can be and the importance of pro se assistance for those who are unrepresented. Finally, working on a cancellation of removal case has shown me the high stakes of removal defense and the importance of building a thorough record that captures hardship, community ties, and long-term residence. Together, these projects have deepened my commitment to client centered advocacy and sharpened the practical skills I need to serve immigrant communities with care and competence.

Update 4: My internship work has pushed me into some of the most complex yet thrilling spaces of immigration practice. At the last minute one of my tasks shifted and rather than an immigration court filing we are now doing a USCIS filing in hope of terminating immigration court proceedings after some newfound information we attained. What began as a defensive posture became an opportunity to reposition the case, reduce exposure, and create a different pathway for our client. That shift reminded me how fluid immigration practice can be, and how much creativity matters when advocating for clients whose lives are shaped by systems that rarely feel flexible. At the same time, i am currently updating a U- visa declaration which requires



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me to slow down and ensure the client's story and voice are clear yet still their own. Drafting another declaration for an asylum case brought a different challenge: capturing years of hardship and persecution in a way that is both legally persuasive yet true to my client's experience. These cases have solidified my passion for immigration work and serving vulnerable communities. Together, these experiences have deepened my commitment to trauma informed lawyering and reminded me why this fellowship matters.

Final Reflection: Over the course of my summer internship at Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, I had the opportunity to work directly with clients seeking some of the most critical forms of humanitarian relief available under U.S. immigration law. The breadth of the work I engaged in from asylum to VAWA, U visas, and removal defense, gave me a deeper understanding of both the legal complexity and the stakes involved in every case.

One of my primary projects was helping compile an affirmative asylum filing, a process that required careful organization of evidence, attention to detail, and sensitivity to the client's experiences. Working through the I-589 form and drafting a detailed declaration pushed me to translate traumatic personal histories into a clear, legally sufficient narrative. It was a powerful reminder of how inaccessible the asylum process can be without support, and how essential it is to approach these cases with patience and compassion.

I also assisted in gathering evidence for a U visa filing, which involved navigating medical records, and personal documentation to build a strong evidentiary record. This work highlighted how survivors of crime often face significant barriers in accessing justice, and how legal advocates can help restore a sense of agency, and often be a source of support, by guiding them through a system that is often retraumatizing. Additionally, I helped edit a VAWA self-petition declaration, an experience that underscored the importance of trauma informed interviewing and narrative drafting. Ensuring that a client's voice remained authentic while meeting legal standards.

Finally, drafting a motion to waive minor presence for a of removal case introduced me to the procedural side of removal defense and the high stakes involved when clients face the possibility of being separated from their families and communities, especially for those who have established a life for themselves in the country for the past decade.

Through all these projects, I learned that effective immigration advocacy requires not only legal skill but also humility, patience, and a deep respect for clients' resilience. This internship strengthened my commitment to public interest immigration work and affirmed my desire to continue serving immigrant communities in the future.