



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This summer, I have the immense privilege to work with asylum-seekers and survivors of gender-based violence this summer at the Greater Boston Legal Services and Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program. Witnessing and navigating the often arbitrary and deeply violent legal apparatus that judges the worth of my immigrant neighbors firsthand, I am incredibly honored to have a small role in resisting the administration's relentless attacks on the immigrant community.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from experienced practitioners and fierce advocates for the immigrant community here in Massachusetts. I am so lucky to have the support of Equal Justice America and Boston University School of Law to enable me to do this meaningful work this summer.

Update 2: This summer, I have the immense privilege to work with asylum-seekers and survivors of gender-based violence this summer at the Greater Boston Legal Services and Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program. Witnessing and navigating the often arbitrary and deeply violent legal apparatus that judges the worth of my immigrant neighbors firsthand, I am incredibly honored to have a small role in resisting the administration's relentless attacks on the immigrant community.

In the last few weeks, I have witnessed firsthand the chaos that so-called "Mega-Masters" are wreaking across the country. Individuals and families who thought they had years to prepare for their next hearing are being called into court with just a few weeks notice. The administration is banking on a huge percentage of people not getting notice and not showing up, so they can be ordered deported without any semblance of due process.



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Those who are able to show up have to take hours out of their day to go to the courthouse in person for a glorified roll call, only to be told to show up again in just a couple weeks. For our clients, this means a huge scramble to prepare filings and evidence in a matter of weeks when we thought we had years.

Update 3: This summer, I have the immense privilege to work with asylum-seekers and survivors of gender-based violence this summer at the Greater Boston Legal Services and Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program. Witnessing and navigating the often arbitrary and deeply violent legal apparatus that judges the worth of my immigrant neighbors firsthand, I am incredibly honored to have a small role in resisting the administration's relentless attacks on the immigrant community.

What has struck me the most as we prepare mountains of supporting evidence and spend over a dozen hours per client preparing declarations is the inherently retraumatizing nature of the asylum process. In the increasingly laborious process to prove immigrants' "deservingness" to be here, our immigration courts demand individuals who have gone through some of the most horrific violence imaginable and traversed continents to get here recount their stories in excruciating detail over and over and over again.

As the case law keeps narrowing the definition of what exact type of persecution is deserving of protection in this country, the burden of preparation on our clients keeps accumulating. It is a stark reminder of how the legal process itself is violence, forcing people who have gone through hell to relive it over and over again in the hopes that a judge finds it to be the proper kind of suffering deserving of relief.

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Anyone outside of immigration law would be flabbergasted by the amount of evidence required for an asylum application. For one client, the amount of evidence we prepared can't be measured in pages - only pounds. We have to prepare for the government to challenge every aspect of our client's experience. Our clients spend dozens of hours in intense, traumatic interviews to create a flawless declaration. All the while, the BIA issues new decisions every day that fundamentally change the law, upending years of work - every email alert about a new decision makes my stomach drop.



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The vast majority of people in removal proceedings don't have access to an army of law students to produce reams of evidence on their behalf. Unlike criminal proceedings, there is no right to counsel in immigration court. I know very few people who could afford the tens of thousands of dollars a private attorney would cost. Free immigration legal services today is like a band-aid on a severed limb: for every client we can help, there are thousands more, including unaccompanied children, who will never get that chance. I'm incredibly proud of the work I get to do, and acutely aware of how inadequate it is in the face of the deportation machine.

Final Reflection: This summer, I had the immense privilege to work with asylum-seekers and survivors of gender-based violence this summer at the Greater Boston Legal Services and Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program. Witnessing and navigating the often arbitrary and deeply violent legal apparatus that judges the worth of my immigrant neighbors firsthand, I am incredibly honored to have played a small role in resisting the administration's relentless attacks on the immigrant community.

In my final weeks at GBLS, it became increasingly clear how even though we imagine much of the cruelty of the deportation machine originating from the federal government, ICE could not so thoroughly terrorize our immigrant neighbors without the collaboration of local law enforcement. Even in so-called sanctuary states like Massachusetts, local sheriffs and police departments voluntarily collaborate with ICE extensively even without formal 287(g) agreements.

Because of massive interagency databases, fusion centers, and unofficial communication between local LEOs and ICE, any arrest, without a conviction or any semblance of due process, can immediately result in immigration detention and a fast track to deportation. Many immigrants, eligible for release on bail or otherwise, are choosing to stay incarcerated locally to avoid being released directly into ICE's custody and risk being shipped to an overcrowded detention center across the country.

This week, many advocates are deservedly celebrating the passage of the PROTECT act, which purports to reduce collaboration between ICE and the Commonwealth while offering protections to our immigrant neighbors. But I also can't forget that it specifically carved out exceptions for individuals with criminal records and did little to limit local sheriffs discretion to honor ICE's detainer requests. It is disheartening and disturbing to see us once again refuse to protect our immigrant neighbors because the police (and not a jury) assigned them the label of criminal.

As I gear up for BU's criminal defense clinic on the fall, I am excited to get hands on experience in criminal court that will enable me to serve our neighbors most directly impacted by state



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violence. I'm very excited to combine that knowledge with my immigration background to hopefully meet the needs of the moment ok a few short years as a practitioner.

Once again, I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn from experienced practitioners and fierce advocates for the immigrant community here in Massachusetts. I was able to do this work with the support of Equal Justice America and Boston University School of Law. Please consider supporting law students across the country doing meaningful work in the public interest.