



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: Over the past few weeks, my fellowship has allowed me to move beyond legal theory and see firsthand how the law affects various communities. I have had the privilege of working with immigrants navigating an unfamiliar legal system in search of safety, stability, and opportunity. My work has included assisting with immigration applications, conducting legal research, and meeting with potential clients during intake assessments. Through these experiences, I have seen how legal advocacy can have a direct and meaningful impact on individuals and families.

Each case carries extraordinarily high stakes. For some clients, legal assistance may provide refuge from severe human rights violations. For others, it may preserve family unity or secure work authorization. Access to high-quality legal representation can make a substantial difference, not because attorneys are finding loopholes, but because immigration law is complex and often difficult to navigate without assistance. Through my fellowship, I have seen how legal aid helps address barriers to justice that disproportionately affect low resource communities.

Update 2: The most rewarding part of my fellowship has been working directly with clients. Hearing their stories has been an absolute privilege and has deepened my appreciation for the role attorneys play as gatekeepers of legal knowledge. Many of my clients are navigating unfamiliar legal systems that are challenging even for experienced practitioners in the field. Constant changes in immigration law make it even more difficult to understand what options for relief are available. At the same time, many are adjusting to life in a new country while being separated from their support systems in their birth countries. These experiences have reminded me that legal advocacy requires more than an understanding of the law. Instead, providing high-quality legal services requires empathy, patience, and the ability to make complex legal concepts accessible.



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Update 3: These past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to expand my experience by shadowing attorneys in both immigration court and family court. Watching them advocate for their clients was both exciting and inspiring. It gave me a firsthand look at how legal research, client preparation, and strategy come together in the courtroom, and reinforced the importance of strong legal advocacy.

What stood out most was seeing how attorneys reassured clients during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. I also had the opportunity to volunteer at a legal clinic hosted by my organization for individuals who had been unable to secure legal representation. We helped participants draft affidavits and motions to support their pro-se cases, providing guidance through a legal process that is otherwise overwhelming. Experiences like these have reinforced how access to legal assistance can help individuals better understand their rights and present their cases more effectively.

Update 4: Recently, I assisted an individual with a U visa application. U visas provide a pathway to immigration relief for certain noncitizen victims of crime who have assisted law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity. Working on this case gave me a firsthand look at the intersection of criminal and immigration law and the unique challenges clients face while navigating both systems.

I also had the opportunity to observe several court hearings alongside my supervising attorneys. Watching them advocate for their clients was an invaluable learning experience. From this experience, I realized that effective advocacy begins long before entering the courtroom. Clients often arrive feeling anxious and overwhelmed, and providing reassurance, clear communication, and preparation is just as important as your time in front of the judge.

My summer internship was a fruitful experience and helped me gain a better understanding of the area of law I want to practice and the type of attorney I hope to become. I will certainly carry these experiences with me as I navigate my final year at law school.

Final Reflection: This summer has been an incredible and deeply meaningful experience. Working with immigrant communities at a time when immigration issues are at the center of a growing human rights crisis in the United States has been both challenging and transformative. The experience required me to confront difficult realities while also learning from the attorneys, advocates, and clients who continue to navigate an increasingly difficult immigration system.

One interaction with a client will stay with me in particular. After assisting a client who was extremely worried about the outcome of an upcoming hearing, the client broke down in tears



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while thanking me for my help. That was a powerful moment of realization, allowing me to learn that even when I cannot control the outcome of a case, providing someone with support so that they are not navigating the process alone is meaningful.

This fellowship also reinforced my commitment to immigration and human rights advocacy and helped me grow more confident in my ability to contribute meaningfully to this work. I am extremely grateful to Equal Justice America for making this experience possible. Without its financial support, it would have been extremely difficult for me to cover the significant commuting costs associated with my work this summer. The fellowship allowed me to devote myself to this experience and gain skills and perspectives that I will carry with me throughout law school and into my future legal career.