



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This summer, I have been interning with the Immigrant Protection Unit at New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). So far, one of the most rewarding parts of the experience has been working directly with immigrants during legal screening clinics.

A large part of my work has involved speaking with Spanish-speaking clients, learning about their backgrounds and experiences, and helping determine what forms of immigration relief they may be eligible for. I work closely with the attorneys during these screenings by gathering information from clients and communicating it back to the legal team. Being able to speak Spanish has allowed me to connect with clients in a way that I otherwise would not have been able to, and hearing their stories firsthand has been the most meaningful part of my internship. Many of the people we meet have overcome incredible challenges, and those conversations remind me why access to legal services is so important.

In addition to working with clients, I have been learning more about immigration and asylum law through research and case preparation. One of my assignments involved conducting country conditions research for an asylum case. I reviewed reports, news articles, and other sources to document conditions in the client's home country and prepared a memorandum summarizing my findings. It was interesting to see how country conditions evidence can help support an asylum claim and provide important context for a client's experiences.

I have also learned more about immigrants' rights and the guidance attorneys provide to individuals who may encounter immigration enforcement. Through both the client-facing work and the research assignments, I have gained a much better understanding of the immigration system and the important role legal aid organizations play in helping people navigate it.



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Although I am still early in my legal career, this internship has already taught me a great deal. More than anything, it has reinforced my interest in serving immigrant communities and shown me how meaningful legal advocacy can be in people's lives.

Update 2: During this part of my internship, I have continued participating in immigration clinics, where I conduct intakes and help determine what forms of immigration relief clients may qualify for. I have also worked with Spanish-speaking asylum applicants to prepare declarations and affidavits. Being able to use my Spanish has helped me build trust with clients while guiding them through difficult and deeply personal conversations. This experience has taught me how to speak with people I have never met before about sensitive subjects and help them communicate their experiences clearly.

I have also conducted country-conditions research involving Mali, Cuba, and Russia. Through this research, I have learned how reports, articles, and other sources can be used to support a client's asylum claim and explain why they may be unable to return safely to their country. One of my legal assignments required me to analyze an asylum application as if I were defending it against pretermission. I had to explain why the client's allegations were legally sufficient and why the client should be given a full opportunity to present the case.

Overall, these assignments have helped me become more comfortable communicating with clients, discussing difficult topics, and connecting legal research to the experiences of real people. They have also shown me how important legal aid is for immigrants who may otherwise struggle to understand the legal system or explain why they need protection.

Update 3: This week, I have once again been focused on researching country conditions in Cuba and Mali for clients seeking asylum. Through the different assignments I have completed this summer, I feel like I have developed a much stronger understanding of asylum claims and what it takes to build and support a case.

I also had the opportunity to attend a master calendar hearing virtually, which helped me better understand what the immigration court process actually looks like. This work has been so meaningful because everything I am researching and learning is connected to a real person and what they have gone through. It has shown me how even the work done behind the scenes can have a real impact on someone's life and future.

Final Reflection: This summer, I had the opportunity to work with the Immigration Protection Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group. Throughout my fellowship, I helped with intake clinics, immigration screenings, client declarations, affidavits, legal research, and Spanish



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interpretation. I worked closely with asylum applicants and helped clients share some of the most difficult and personal experiences of their lives. I also conducted country conditions research on Cuba, Mali, and Russia to help attorneys better understand and support their clients' claims.

During my final week, I helped asylum applicants complete their I-589 forms and interpreted important application questions for Spanish-speaking clients. I was also assigned research on particular social group claims to help an attorney determine how we could support a client's case. This work required me to be very careful because every answer and detail could be important to the outcome of an application.

Throughout the summer, I developed a much stronger understanding of asylum law and the immigration system as a whole. I learned how to speak with clients about difficult subjects, ask important questions, and make people feel comfortable enough to share their stories with me. I also improved my legal research and writing skills and learned how to explain why a source or legal argument could be helpful to a client. Attending a master calendar hearing virtually also gave me the opportunity to see more of the immigration court process.

This experience was another reminder of how powerful public-sector work can be. As legal advocates, we are working on cases that can directly affect people's lives, safety, and futures. That is a huge responsibility, and it is something I do not take lightly. Listening to clients talk about the harm they experienced and the fear they still carry also reminded me of my own privilege. It made me think about the safety and opportunities I have had and how important it is to use my education to help people who may not have the same access or support.

Overall, I am proud of the work I completed and the growth I experienced this summer. I became more confident in my ability to communicate with clients, conduct legal research, interpret in Spanish, and contribute to real cases. This fellowship showed me how meaningful legal advocacy can be and reminded me why helping others must remain an important part of my legal career.