



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

NAME	Emmanuel Agladima
LAW SCHOOL	University of Pittsburgh
ORGANIZATION	Allegheny County Bar Foundation

Final Reflection:

This summer, I had the opportunity to work with the Allegheny County Bar Foundation's Juvenile Court Project through my Equal Justice America Fellowship. Going into the summer, I knew that I wanted to become a trial lawyer and that I wanted to use my legal education to help people. This experience gave me the opportunity to see what that actually looks like in practice.

I spent three days a week in court, working on dependency cases and representing parents who were navigating some of the most difficult moments of their lives. I saw parents trying to reunify with their children while also dealing with incarceration, housing instability, treatment requirements, and many other challenges. One of the biggest lessons I learned was that these cases are rarely as simple as they may appear on paper. Every client has a story, and good representation requires understanding that story before walking into the courtroom.

One of the moments that stayed with me most was my first opportunity to participate in a hearing as a certified legal intern. I remember preparing my questions, thinking through what I wanted the judge to know, and trying to anticipate what might happen in court. That experience taught me how important preparation is, but it also taught me that you cannot prepare for everything. You have to know the facts, understand your client's goals, know the judge and the history of the case, and still be prepared to adjust when something unexpected happens.

I also learned how collaborative this work is. I benefited tremendously from watching and working alongside experienced attorneys who were willing to answer my questions, review my work, and allow me to take on meaningful responsibility. I became more comfortable speaking



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in court, communicating with clients, and trusting my own judgment while also recognizing when I needed guidance.

This fellowship strengthened my desire to become a trial lawyer, but more importantly, it reminded me why I came to law school in the first place. I get energized from helping people in need and this experience has shown me that there is so much I can do with my legal degree. I am leaving this experience more confident, more prepared, and with a much deeper understanding of the responsibility that comes with representing people when so much is at stake.