



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This summer I am working with the Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef) in their San Diego office as a Cross-Border Initiative Law Clerk. During my first two weeks at ImmDef, I've had the honor of helping those in defensive asylum proceedings both in the federal courthouse and in detention centers. This has been through client meetings, researching and writing memos to support their cases, and accompanying my supervisor to master calendar hearings and individual hearings in immigration court. Immigration law rapidly changes and can be difficult to navigate even if English is your first language, which is why I am so proud to be part of ImmDef's public defender model for universal representation in immigration proceedings. Asylum is a human right, and no one should have to navigate the immigration process alone.

Update 2: My first month as a law clerk at Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef) has felt like a rollercoaster that I never want to get off. In just the past two weeks, I have accompanied my supervisor to legal visits and court at the Otay Mesa Detention Center and researched and wrote arguments that will be used to support people in their immigration cases. Being at the detention center is an eye-opening experience and furthers my commitment to ImmDef's public defender model for universal representation in immigration proceedings, because it is hard enough navigating the immigration system on your own, it's impossible for someone detained. In addition to legal visits for ImmDef's detained clients, ImmDef also responds to hotline calls from those detained and will assign attorneys for legal consults to assess their case and refer them to other free immigration legal services part of ImmDef's coalition.

Regarding my legal writing and research skills, they have grown immensely through my internship at ImmDef. So far, I have researched and written memorandums on asking for discovery in immigration proceedings beyond Freedom of Information Act requests and motions to suppress evidence due to fundamental inconsistencies in Department of Homeland



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Security forms and in Fourth Amendment violations. I also researched and drafted an argument that will be used as part of a brief to the Board of Immigration Appeals appealing an immigration judge's decision to pretermite someone's asylum claim and order deportation to a third-party country that the individual is not a citizen of and has no connection to. Currently, I am working on a country conditions report that will assist those seeking asylum from Haiti due persecution based on political opinion, and I'm excited to see how my legal writing grows as these cases continue.

Update 3: I am now halfway through my internship as a summer law clerk with Immigrant Defenders Law Center's (ImmDef) Cross-Border Initiative! Since my last update, I am continuing to assist my supervisor everywhere from the office to federal court, to the detention center and support universal representation for everyone in immigration proceedings. Using my language skills, I have been able to better connect with clients and understand nuances in their situations and make them feel more comfortable working with ImmDef.

I had the privilege of seeing a case from the beginning of someone being unlawfully arrested and detained to researching their eligibility for a writ of habeas corpus, and the finalized petition will hopefully have them immediately released in the upcoming weeks. I also have the incredible opportunity to go to Tijuana, Mexico with ImmDef next week as part of the Cross-Border Initiative and can't wait to report on that for my next #EJAFellowUpdate. In Tijuana we will be visiting shelters for those recently deported and organizations providing resources to deported veterans in Tijuana.

Update 4: I am nearing the end of my internship with Immigrant Defenders Law Center, and this summer has been so incredible I don't want it to end. Last week, I had the privilege of traveling with ImmDef's Cross-Border Initiative to Tijuana to visit the U.S. Deported Veteran's Office, and two shelters serving recent deportees to Tijuana and migrants hoping to seek asylum in the United States. The first shelter we visited served women and their children who were not from Tijuana, whether they were internally displaced in Mexico or from another country entirely. I'm grateful for my language skills as I was able to speak with two women from Haiti about their journey to Tijuana and their goals for the future. At the next shelter, our team met with recent deportees to Tijuana to hear their stories and with some men from Cameroon who wanted to learn more about the asylum process in the United States.

Finally, the office had some major wins this week! Our litigation and advocacy team secured a preliminary injunction demanding better conditions for those detained in Adelanto, and one of the attorneys I work with filed a habeas petition that released a woman from Otay Mesa Detention Center. This woman was arrested in North Carolina and was transferred all around the country before ending up at Otay Mesa and I am so glad that we were able to get her released and reunited with her family.



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In these last two weeks, I'm continuing to do research for more habeas petitions and hope to help free more people from unlawful detention.

Final Reflection: My summer with Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef) has been incredible! As a law clerk for the Cross-Border Initiative, I had the privilege of working with detained and non-detained immigrants in San Diego and traveling to Tijuana to learn about services there for displaced migrants and recent deportees. Primarily, the Cross-Border Initiative focuses on removal defense for those in San Diego County and as a clerk I saw all stages of removal defense from someone just being detained or served with a Notice to Appear in immigration court to working on a brief for the Board of Immigration Appeals. Every immigration case is individual and with the law rapidly changing, each case was an opportunity to learn more and connect with the clients and their support network. Throughout the summer, I assisted my supervisor with a case of a man who was illegally arrested by ICE and subsequently detained. Much of the research for this case was on egregious Fourth Amendment violations and trying to get his case terminated on those grounds, but everything was repeatedly denied by the Immigration Judge. Finally, my supervisor and I worked on a Writ of Habeas Corpus asking for his immediate release and he was granted a bond hearing. While that is not the relief we were hoping for, he now has a much better chance of being released from detention so he can freely pursue asylum.

Many of the challenges working in immigration law right now are feeling like the cards are stacked against you and the person you're trying to help. Bonds are extraordinarily high, over \$10,000, which prolongs people's detention as their communities try to raise funds and the conditions in detention centers are abysmal. Despite this, I know that this is the field I want to be in and I want to continue fighting for universal representation for everyone in the immigration system. There are many challenges, but the victories are incredible and make it all worth it. My biggest victory this summer was helping free a woman from detention so she could be reunited with her fiancé. This woman was arrested at an interview needed for her asylum claim and then transferred across the country away from her family and support system. She was freed through a habeas petition, and the judge ordered her immediate release.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible support of Equal Justice America and I am honored to be an EJA Fellow. This is my final EJA Fellow Update, and it would be greatly appreciated if you would join me in fundraising for them and supporting public interest law. Thank you to everyone that followed my journey this summer and it's not over yet! I will be joining the immigration clinic at the University of San Diego School of Law for my 2L year.