



Summer 2018 EJA Fellow



Name: Zalondria Graham
Law School: UCLA School of Law
EJA Fellowship: Immigrant Defenders Law Center

Entry 1: Week of 6/11/2018

#EJAFellowUpdate

Over the last week, I have been working at the Immigrant Defenders Law Center learning about what it takes to represent unaccompanied minors. I have learned so much in the last week of how immigration court differs from the court system so many of us are familiar with and surprised to learn that so many minors go to court unrepresented, even at very young ages.

Entry 2: Week of 6/25/2018

#EJAFellowUpdate

The past few weeks, entailed me observing the work of so many dedicated lawyers at the Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef) who fearlessly advocate on behalf of undocumented minors. I am so honored and proud to be interning at an organization that fights for undocumented individuals in this needed time.

Entry 3: Week of 7/9/2018

#EJAFellowUpdate

My time at ImmDEF has been filled with opportunities to shadow and see first- hand at what it takes to be an Immigrant Defense Attorney. I have the chance to work on assignments in the realm of Crimmigration and continue to be amazed by the brilliance it takes to be in this area of work. ImmDef has only enhanced my passion, and I feel an even stronger desire to help as much as I can.

Entry 4: Week of 7/23/2018

#EJAFellowUpdate

I am so happy I got to spend my summer at ImmDef. I had the opportunity to meet so many passionate attorneys and even had a chance to see the joy that reunification brings and the joy of being granted relief. While there is still more work to go, I'm glad I got to experience the in and outs of what Immigration work entails.



Thursday, August 23, 2018

Emma Ruben
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
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RE: Zalondria Graham, EJA Fellow

Dear Ms. Ruben,

My name is Yliana Johansen-Méndez and I am a managing attorney at Immigrant Defenders Law Center (ImmDef) in Los Angeles, CA. I was Zalondria Graham's supervising attorney during her summer internship at ImmDef.

ImmDef is a nonprofit organization and social justice law firm that provides immigration removal defense, defends immigrant communities against systemic injustices in the legal system, and with the long-term goal of providing universal representation to all immigrants facing deportation. Zalondria was hired to work with our Children's Representation Project which represents unaccompanied minors, most of whom are pursuing applications for special immigrant juvenile status or asylum. However, she also expressed an interest in criminal defense and the work being done by ImmDef's adult representation team, which includes removal defense and bond requests for immigrant detainees, and working with immigrants with criminal convictions to challenge their removability or seek post-conviction relief. Therefore Zalondria received a variety of assignments from several ImmDef attorneys working with both children and adults in removal proceedings.

Overall, it was a pleasure having Zalondria join ImmDef as one of our 2018 summer interns. She consistently displayed an excellent work ethic and positive attitude. She always asked appropriate and thoughtful questions, and made efforts to increase her understanding of ImmDef's advocacy efforts and the underlying legal issues. She is an independent worker and generally researched and analyzed issues herself before approaching an attorney for advice. She was given many challenging assignments and always responded well to constructive criticism and suggestions.

She assisted with translations of letters from clients, drafted and edited motions to terminate removal proceedings based on jurisdiction, due process violations and recent changes in case law, and drafted a memorandum of points and authorities in support of a guardianship petition and request for special immigrant juvenile status before the probate court. She also assisted with research regarding nuances of California law relating to the custody of children, and the immigration consequences of certain criminal convictions. Zalondria accompanied several of ImmDef's clients and attorneys to hearings in probate court, family court, and the immigration court in Los Angeles and at the Adelanto detention facility.

Zalondria joined ImmDef during a summer when changes to immigration law and policy that undermined due process rights for immigrants were announced at an unprecedented pace. Because

of ImmDef's work with detained children and adults, our organization was uniquely positioned to serve the families that were separated at the border under Trump's Zero Tolerance policy that was announced in May 2018. When one of our first clients in the Family Unity Project had an ICE check-in at which we feared he could be deported without being reunified with his 6-year-old son, Zalondria and several other ImmDef staff members joined us for an emergency rally and press conference in front of the federal building where he was scheduled for his appointment. The call to action was made just hours before he had to report that morning, but Zalondria arrived for work early that morning to support our client.

I thank Equal Justice America for providing future lawyers like Zalondria an opportunity to support organizations like ImmDef and advocate for our clients and the rights of immigrants in our country. Considering that Zalondria is only a rising 2L, I expect to see her skills and knowledge improve significantly with additional experience and immigration law coursework at UCLA. I hope that her summer at ImmDef has a positive impact on her future as a legal advocate for underrepresented communities.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at (213) 634-0950 or Yliana@ImmDef.org.

Sincerely,



Yliana Johansen-Méndez, Esq.

Managing Attorney

