



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** McCathern Painter

**Law School:** Elon University School of Law

**Fellowship:** Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy Immigrant Justice Project

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### Entry 1: June 25th, 2019

Over the past week, I've been acclimating myself to working in Charlotte at the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy's Immigrant Justice Project. I have begun shadowing my supervisors as they litigate wrongful eviction and domestic violence cases for very deserving clients. I have also observed my other colleagues conduct training for those sponsoring unaccompanied minor migrants and what they are required to do in order to insure the child's health, safety, and legal path through the immigration process.

This past weekend I participated in a Know Your Rights clinic in Charlotte where interns like me and other paralegals and attorneys helped individuals who are in removal proceedings transfer power of attorney for their children and their property to trusted friends and family who will remain in the country. It was a very well-rounded experience which was highlighted by the lovely and gracious clients but was overshadowed by the very real fear they are feeling as they return, without choice, to their countries of origin for the foreseeable future, leaving their families, their routines, and the lives they've lived here for years. I was happy to be able to help them maintain some semblance of control over their lives and their children's lives during this chaotic time.

I'm very excited to continue my summer as an Equal Justice America fellow and an intern for the Immigrant Justice Project. I'll update everyone again in a few weeks!

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### Entry 2: July 9th, 2019

The past few weeks here in Charlotte have been filled with learning the ins and outs of the immigration process. I have mostly been doing clerical work for clients such as filling out or updating their USCIS forms as they await



status changes. Even though the work is important and I am happy for the clients as their cases progress through the channels of the immigration system, it is difficult to read about and look at the photos of what happened to them in their intimate relationships or in their home countries before they arrived here in Charlotte. The saving grace in all of this is how hopeful they are that they will soon be able to live freely and independently wherever and however they choose. The resilience of the clientele here is nothing short of inspiring.

Going forward, I plan on doing many more court observations of the attorneys here in the office to see how they advocate for their clients where it counts: in the courtroom. Altogether, I still find the work very fulfilling and the cause wholeheartedly worthwhile.

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### **Entry 3:**

My last few weeks at IJP have been focused on doing research for a supervising attorney concerning a very specific immigration problem. The research has been challenging, but I'm grateful for the opportunity to improve my research skills and bring my legal writing before a practiced attorney. The brief is due in September, so for now I am in the final stages of research and well into my pre-writing phase. Throughout this process, I've become more and more grateful for Elon Law and my two wonderful LMC professors who have given me all the tools I need to be an effective legal writer.

It's shocking that this is the seventh week out of my ten-week internship and that I'm nearing the end. I hope to continue to absorb all of the positive and altruistic energy that surrounds me throughout my last weeks with IJP!

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### **Entry 4:**

It's hard to believe that this is my penultimate week here at IJP and my final EJA Fellow Update for this summer. This summer has taught me many things, like the process of an immigration case, the need for equal access to justice, and the need for more lawyers in the public sector. All of these lessons are important, but the most valuable one of all is that this is what I am meant to do. Theodore Roosevelt once said "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." That is what humanitarian immigration work is to me: work wholeheartedly worth doing. I have learned so much from the judges, attorneys, clients, paralegals and other incredible people I get to interact with on a daily basis as an intern at the Immigrant Justice Project. My hope is to continue learning about this gritty field that I have come to love so that I have the chance to work hard at work worth doing.