



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Li Liu

**Law School:** Emory University School of Law

**Fellowship:** Atlanta Legal Aid Society, General Law Unit

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### Entry 1: May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019

It's the end of my second week. I'm thrilled to become an EJA fellow this year, and to work at the General Law Unit of Atlanta Legal Aid's downtown headquarter this summer. I've been primarily doing case research for landlord-tenant related cases with attorneys at my unit and my co-intern. The General Law Unit follows an open-door policy. I can always knock on someone's door when I feel thwarted in my work progress, and everyone I've talked has been so kind and resourceful. Most of our clients receive federal housing benefits based on disability or low income, but issues remain with subsidized public housing. I've always been curious to use the law in real life, and I made the right choice to be here this summer. In the past two weeks, I worked on cases, met with clients, made phone calls to government agencies and organizations, served a notice, drafted a letter request, attended training sessions, and more importantly, I made friends. I'm working with amazing people and every day I look forward to going to work. I'm excited to put my legal skills in motion, and to see how I could bring about changes to others' lives in the future.

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### Entry 2: June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Weeks go by fast. Last week, I went to the opposing counsel's office with two attorneys to take deposition of witnesses. This week, I took part in my first hearing. It was a lovely experience – in fact, I was able to say “objection” for the first time in any meaningful sense! With guidance from my wonderful supervising attorney, I practiced beforehand and authenticated evidences during the hearing. I feel that we did a good job representing the client and look forward to positive results from the hearing. Alongside this, I continued doing research on various topics, something I realize will be a big part of any legal job I hold in the future. I also met up with a few clients and collected information pertaining to their legal matters. Tomorrow is my screening day, and I'm also going to draft some “sternly worded” request letters, as an attorney in our office would say. I have no idea how many walk-ins I will have, but I know there will be a number of new things to learn and try.



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### Entry 3: June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Result from the hearing came back. Our request for the 14-week unemployment benefits for our client was denied, but the hearing officer did acknowledge that our client did not voluntarily quit her job. That is a small triumph nonetheless because we can use that to our advantage on appeal! I remember how the client held onto my forearm nervously at the beginning of the hearing and how I put my hands on hers to reassure her without words. And how I needed to soothe clients' fears and anxiety over the phone calls sometimes. Legal service without a human touch is incomplete lawyering. My work at Legal Aid and my observation of others' work remind me that I should always remember that I'm entering a noble profession marked by impeccable professionalism and work ethics. By the end of the week I was very pleased to hear that my research notes from previous few weeks proved helpful to the lawyers working the cases.

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### Entry 4: July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019

I took one week off from my internship for the week of July 4<sup>th</sup> so my last day at Legal Aid would be August 2<sup>nd</sup>. I came back from the vacation happily engaged, and everyone congratulated me and that deeply warmed my heart. Legal Aid has started to feel like a family to me.

As I became more and more familiar with client work, I'm given more responsibilities even outside my screening days. Sometimes I would meet a client alone when a client is asked to come in and sign information release forms, detainers, or agreements. I followed up on clients I worked with from a few weeks ago to see if they still needed our services. Yet there are a lot more to learn. One of the clients I screened turned out to have withheld information from us—the client has a lot more assets than she claimed to have. She has more income than the LSC-eligible income level and therefore does not qualify for our service. Lesson I took away from that is always double-check information—sometimes it's as simple as looking up a street address. Lawyerly skills alone will not suffice as professionalism.

August 2<sup>nd</sup>: I got married to my fiancé in court in late July just to get the marriage certificate out of our way before the wedding many months later. On my last day at work, the entire office gave me an Engagement card with a \$20 bill from each person as a little help for my immigration process in the future (for the expensive application fee for marriage-based-green card). That was my sweet ending to my internship this summer. I loved everyone that I worked with, and I will gratefully carry on the knowledge, skills, professional ethics and warm humanity to my journey ahead.