

Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Karina Acosta

Law School: Thurgood Marshall School of Law

Fellowship: Catholic Charities Crime Victims Assistance Program

Entry 1: June 7, 2019



Pictured are the Summer Crime Victim Assistance Program 2019 Interns: Maria “Pita” Escoto (TMSL), Isabella Martinez (UHLC) and myself (TMSL)

As some of you know, I was generously selected as one of this year’s Equal Justice America Fellows. I am currently working with Catholic Charities under the Crimes Assistance Program (CVP). After two weeks of my fellowship, I am finally able to share my first update. This has been a very rewarding experience. Under Catholic Charities I was selected to work under the Crime Victim’s Assistance Program. During our first week the program afforded us the opportunity to attend trainings where we learned an overview of immigration law such as family law, U-Visa, VAWA (Violence Against Women Act), T-Visa (Relief for victims of human trafficking), unaccompanied minors, asylum, and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). Last week’s training fueled my passion for immigration law! Thank you, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, for giving me this opportunity.

This week I started my internship with CVP. CVP focuses in helping crime victims. We work with three types of visas U-Visa, VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) and T-Visas (Relief for victims of human trafficking). This week I assisted my supervising attorney in organizing a U-Visa application. Part of the application is



submitting the client's story to the immigration agency. I was in charge of translating a client's declaration and while reading their story, I realized the hope and positive impact that this program gives to crime victims.

Entry 2: June 21, 2019



My second update is one that I am especially excited to share! Last week, I was able to attend a Charla. A Charla is an information session explaining immigration laws. Following the Charla is an opportunity for a free consultation with an Immigration Attorney or Accredited Representative. First, the Lead Paralegal presented an overview of the U-Visa, T-Visa (For victims of human trafficking) and VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) process. Second, attorneys and paralegals begin to screen each potential client for immigration relief. I sat with my supervising attorney as she screened a potential client for immigration relief. Her story was such an inspiration. She was a victim of sexual assault and was seeking immigration relief. She reported the crime to the police and has fully cooperated with the police agency. My supervising attorney explained the U-Visa process to her and informed her that in order to continue with the U-Visa application, the police department, must sign the Supplement B, U Nonimmigrant Status Certification (Form I-918). After the signature is obtained from the police agency, where she reported the crime, we are able to assist her in applying for a U-Visa with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). During her screening process she stated, "I speak a different dialect, so I had to learn Spanish. I am going to continue to fight for the sake of my children." Her story is the meaning of strength and perseverance even through adversity. Lastly, we scheduled an intake appointment with her and she thanked us. Her story is one out of so many I have listened to since I began my internship. Every CVP employee plays a vital role in assisting crime victims in seeking immigration relief. These include the CVP attorneys, the lead paralegal, the legal clerk and the paralegal. I admire their passion and drive to help people like the individual I had the honor of meeting at Charla. I am very honored to have the opportunity to use the skills I learned at Thurgood Marshall School of Law and apply them to assist crime victims in receiving immigration relief.



Featured in the first photo is (left to right) the Paralegal, Legal Clerk, and the Lead Paralegal. Featured in the second photo is Crime Victims Assistance Program's (CVP) Lead Paralegal presenting a PowerPoint to inform potential clients about their rights and an overview of the U-Visa, T-Visa (Relief for victims of human trafficking), and VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) process.

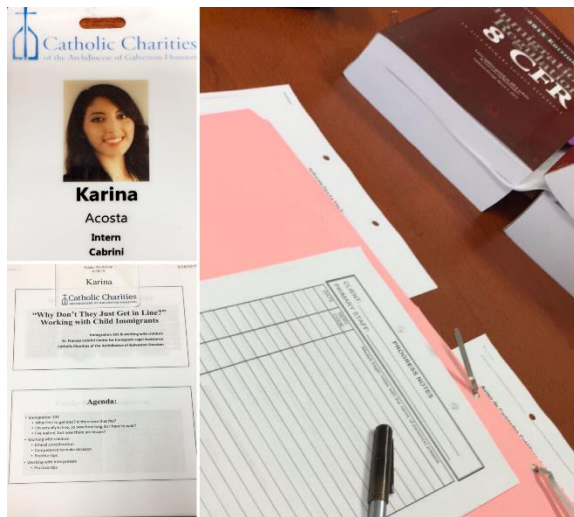
Entry 3: July 5, 2019



I am extremely excited to share my third update. This week I administered a U-Visa intake. This client was a victim of domestic violence and came to #Catholic Charities to apply for a U-Visa. As I listened to her story, I could see the pain in her eyes, yet I could also see her strength. After her intake she thanked the Crime Victim's Assistance Program (CVP) for helping her and her family. I completed her I-918 Supplement B form and mailed it to the Houston Police Department in hopes that it is signed so we can begin her U-Visa application. This was only one of many intakes administered by the staff. I admire all our wonderful CVP attorneys, lead paralegal, paralegal, and legal clerk because without them these victims would be left with no immigration relief. To give you a bigger picture of the positive impact that CVP does in the Houston community, here is the work completed in the month of May and June. CVP filed 44 principal U-visas (fingers crossed, that's 73 people that will get U status), 29 derivatives U-visa applications, 79 work authorizations, sent 13 certification requests, 20 applications for adjustment of status, sent 15 request for evidence responses, and still found time to do 9 different trainings to a combined audience of 298 people. This was only the month of May and June, let that sink in. I am so blessed to have been given the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of people and program. The skills and knowledge that I have gained thus far in CVP will assist me as I continue my journey at Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Thank you @Equal Justice America for making this possible!



Entry 4: July 20, 2019



I cannot believe this is my last update, it is such a bittersweet ending. These past weeks, I have done so many wonderful things including: translating for two Unaccompanied Minors Intake workshops, finalized a motion for a client's U-Visa case requesting that the judge please allow their case to be placed on the status docket or in the alternative a motion for continuance, and I am assisting a U-Visa client, who is currently living in Mexico, with her I-131 Application for Travel Documents and their U-Visa application in hopes that they are allowed back in the United States. As I reflect back at this summer, I am so grateful for @Equal Justice America for allowing me the opportunity to intern with Crime Victims Assistance Program (CVP). Thank you to all the CVP attorneys, legal clerk, lead paralegal and paralegal for making this summer internship so rewarding. I will make sure to implement all the skills and lessons I learned this summer as I continue my legal career at Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Thank you, Equal Justice America, for making this possible!