



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Rey Laurencio

**Law School:** Thurgood Marshall School of Law

**Fellowship:** Catholic Charities' Immigrant Legal Services

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### Entry 1: June 10, 2019:

So far, I have been working for Catholic Charities' Immigrant Legal Services for nearly two weeks with the help of the generous fellowship from Equal Justice America. I was selected by Catholic Charities to be part of their Unaccompanied Children Program. The first week of my summer internship consisted of an intense and informative training, reviewing several immigration law topics. This training discussed the various paths to immigrate to the U.S. (Family/Employment/Humanitarian/Luck). Furthermore, I learned about U-visas (Victims of qualifying crimes), family petitions, adjustment of status, and SIJS (Special Immigrant Juvenile Status).

Once the second week came around, I was immediately tasked with preparing files containing summaries of unaccompanied minors from local detention shelters. At the close of the second week, I was given the opportunity to sit alongside an immigration attorney and screen one of my files to see if the unaccompanied minor qualified for any legal defense or relief. Despite being in this position for just two weeks, I have learned a great deal about immigration law and done a significant amount of work. I feel very fortunate to be in a position to directly help out immigrants and refugees as an immigrant myself. I look forward to continuing to work diligently to help those who need it the most, knowing that I am positively changing lives.

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### Entry 2: June 24, 2019

Week three and four at catholic charities as a legal intern have been exciting. I had a chance to work as an interpreter at a asylum pro se workshop alongside two fellow law school students. We spent the majority of the day carefully listening to the story of an unaccompanied minor from Central America. Our task was to see if the unaccompanied minor had been persecuted based on one of the five protected grounds (Race/Religion/Nationality/Political Opinion/Membership in a Particular Social Group). The child ultimately



left Catholic Charities with a complete I-589 (Asylum Application Form) so he could present to the judge at his next hearing and hopefully serve as a legal defense to removal.

I also had the opportunity to go to court with my supervising attorney and witness as she successfully reunified an unaccompanied minor with a US family relative. This particular child had been abandoned and neglected by both his parents. It was a very powerful moment seeing how the judge issued a court order to grant the uncle custody of the child shortly after swearing to cherish and care for the minor. These past two weeks have been extremely uplifting. I am ready to see what these next two weeks have in store for me.

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### Entry 3: July 10, 2019



I am now more than half way through my internship, but I still feel like there is so much more to learn. Despite this feeling, I have been given a diverse immigration work load from the attorneys around the office. I recently was tasked with preparing a certification request for the Houston Police Department. The goal is to have the Chief of Police certify (sign) and acknowledge our client's police report. This is a vital process that is required in order to obtain a u-visa. These visas are non-immigrant visas for victims of crimes who suffered significant mental and physical abuse while in the US. The point of this visa is to promote the reporting of crimes by preventing criminals from targeting immigrants who are likely not to report criminal activity due to the fear of being deported.

I also had more opportunities to go to court these past two weeks. I got a chance to see another custody case on the family law floor of the Harris County Civil Courthouse. In this particular case, the mother of the child received full custody of the child after it was concluded that the father abandoned and neglected the child. On a different occasion, I went to the Houston Immigration Court with an attorney who had "docket". At "docket" unaccompanied minors are read their rights and obligations by an immigration judge as part of the removal proceedings. One of the most interesting things from docket was the use of interpreters to communicate the information to the minors. The minors are read their rights in the language they are most familiar with through the use of a telephonic interpreting service provider. Despite Spanish being the most dominant language in Central America, there are dozens of Mayan languages with their own respective dialects. Some of these include "Quiche," "Mam," and "Kekchi." At our docket, there were about 8 minors who each spoke a different language. A couple of the minors were given a new court hearing date due to the lack of



interpreters. These last couple of weeks have really opened my eyes to the depth and complexities of immigration law. I hope to take in as much as I can these last couple of weeks to continue fighting to the best of my ability for immigrants who have no one to turn to for aid.

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#### **Entry 4: August 7, 2019**

It was a great experience interning at Catholic Charities. I learned so much about immigration law during the 10-week program. I was fortunate enough to do a little bit of everything during my summer internship. Some of the work I have done includes: U-Visa certification requests; I-360 Application for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status; several I-589 applications; I-765 Employment Authorization Renewal; two N-400 Applications for Naturalization; application for Return, Reintegration, and Family Reunification Program for Trafficking Victims in the US; research memo on any legal remedies for an immigrant with pending T visa and an upcoming deportation check-in; asylum research memo on establishing membership in a particular social group post-*Matter of A-B*; asylum research memo on legal handles to defeat “gang affiliation” allegations; country conditions research for an asylum case regarding the Sikh religion and the treatment of women in India; country conditions for an asylum case based on disabilities in El Salvador; gang membership research project regarding profiling and gang databases; case law research on the principle of international comity; Motion to Terminate Proceedings due to Death; Motion to Administratively Close; Motion to Withdraw as Counsel; Motion to Continue Individual Hearing or Alternatively Place on the Status Docket; helped with a DACA renewal; prepped G-28’s for clients to come in and sign; completed two intake workshops for released children as an interpreter and facilitator for the pro bono attorney; completed an asylum pro se workshop as an interpreter; HPD Incident Report request; EAD pick-up meeting with client; assembled KYR’s and family preparedness resources for current and potential clients; shadowed attorney at several charla consultations; served as an interpreter during a testimony practice for merits hearing prep for 3 siblings seeking asylum; attended four SAPCR prove ups in civil court; attended detained docket: attended a master calendar hearing where the judge issued an order of removal entered in absentia.

I never imagined myself working on the before mentioned immigration law assignment. I am thankful for Equal Justice America’s help in making this summer internship possible. I feel amazing knowing that I am a part of the Equal Justice America network of people that strive to provide legal services to those who need it the most.