



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



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**Law School:** UC Hastings College of the Law

**Fellowship:** Catholic Charities of the East Bay

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### Entry 1:

These past two weeks, I had the opportunity to begin my summer legal clerkship with Catholic Charities. Already, I have been assigned a few cases with diverse asylum claims that I feel deeply passionate about. I have the opportunity to work on a removal case for the first time, meaning I'll be helping a client who is currently detained by ICE. My supervising attorney offered me the opportunity to represent him in court myself, this August at his bond hearing. I have already begun to prepare through helping to search for answers in his case file to rebut some of the legal arguments presented at his last hearing, and I will be attending a day of Immigration Court to watch several bond hearings myself. Although I am nervous about the responsibility this will involve, I am deeply grateful and passionate to have the opportunity to represent a client fleeing persecution in court for the first time. For so long, I have dreamed of representing clients in these types of proceedings.

I also have been preparing for a client interview I have been assigned for the early part of this coming week. I will be assisting the client in filling out some asylum governmental forms that we are preparing for her case. I love performing client interviews, as connecting with clients is one of my favorite parts of asylum seeker and refugee work. I also am working on creating a declaration and the legal argument of the brief of a client with particular social group asylum claim. She is a survivor of domestic and gender-based violence, and helping with her case is very moving to me.

Overall, I am loving my clerkship this summer. It is challenging and multifaceted in the skills it requires, but I love the work and am so happy to have the ability to continue my passion and work in this field. Can't wait to see what the next two weeks bring!

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### Entry 2:

These past two weeks, I've had the opportunity to really delve into working with clients subject to both affirmative action asylum cases and removal defense ones. Last Tuesday, I had the opportunity to interview a client and help her with her I-589 asylum application. I've always enjoyed interviewing clients as one of my



favorite parts of asylum work, but this interview was special. At the end of the two hour interview, the client told me she likes seeing women of color working in this area of law because I look like her daughter. She told me her daughter is interested in a career in law and politics. It touched me to see such a concrete example of how much representation and visibility matter in this kind of work.

I have also been working extensively on two different briefs, one for an affirmative action asylum case with several particular social group and political opinion claims for a client fleeing severe gender and gang-based violence in her home country. Getting to apply the legal knowledge I've acquired so far in law school to the kind of cases I care so deeply about has been a rewarding and challenging experience. I also have been working on the brief for the underlying removal case of the client I will be representing in August for his bond hearing. It helped me to understand the details and nuance of his case better. I am excited for the opportunity to meet with him soon to discuss his case.

Today, I also went to ICE headquarters to observe court proceedings for detained clients attempting to get bond hearings. It was an intense and jarring experience. I observed bond hearings with the judge I will be representing my client in front of in August. The detained clients could not even appear in person in court, just via a TV screen. Most of them did not have any counsel to represent them, and their hearings ended in minutes. It made me realize the difference a client having counsel can make in these types of proceedings, and even more determined to present and prepare a thorough argument for my client in August.

Overall, I am continuing to enjoy and be challenged by this clerkship in rewarding ways. I feel very passionate about this work that I've had the privilege to do. I am grateful for the ability to continue this experience in the coming weeks.

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### **Entry 3:**

These past two weeks, I have had the opportunity to work on a variety of cases, including both removal defense and asylum claims. At the end of last week, I sat in on a client intake with my supervising attorney, who is beginning a removal defense and asylum claim application for a trans asylum seeker. I have a background in working with affirmative trans and queer asylum seeker claims, and am excited to get to apply this to helping with a removal defense claim. Our client came through the Sante Fe Dreamers organization, which helps trans women be released from ICE detention. Her claim is multifaceted and a real privilege to get to assist with.

I am also helping with a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) visa claim that my supervising attorney is handling. It has been interesting to help with research and preparation for her interview, including getting to assist with providing her with services she needs, like a safe shelter for her and her child, as she works to escape an abusive situation.



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Additionally, I have been assigned my first case assisting an unaccompanied minor child who fled an abusive home life to seek asylum in the United States. His story of being subject to abuse by ICE while in detention reminded me of every story in the news about the horrifying conditions of detention centers that thousands of children are enduring. I had my first interview with him this past week, and as he was speaking Spanish as his second language, his first being indigenous, getting the details of his claim were difficult at first. I plan on doing a series of interviews with him, to give him time to become more comfortable and to trust me with his story. I am grateful to get to perform these interviews, and hope that I can do his story the justice it deserves.

Overall, I am glad to have the continued opportunity to perform various functions in assisting with these cases--from performing client interviews to drafting briefs and submitting required forms. The work reaffirms why I became so passionate about working with asylum seekers and removal defense cases in the first place, and I am eager to continue to do so in the future.

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#### **Entry 4:**

The past two weeks, I had the opportunity to continue working on some of the cases I had worked on for prior weeks, and to begin work on some new ones. I began interviewing a client who is a trans asylum seeker to help put together her asylum claim. She faced persecution by a variety of nongovernmental actors, and her claim is an interesting one to frame. Finding the common ground of queer and trans terminologies that she uses, compared to those understood and recognized in the United States, has been a challenge. It reminds me how important it is to make sure that assumptions aren't made about US queer terminologies being dominant. I am interviewing her a few times more in the coming two weeks to get enough information to complete her declaration and I-589 asylum forms.

I also continued working on the Unaccompanied Child Minor asylum case I was previously assigned, completing interviews with the client so that I could fill out his probate forms for a new guardianship, his asylum declaration, and I-589 asylum application. My attorney also assigned me another Unaccompanied Child Minor case, where most of the forms for the application have already been completed, but I have mainly been working on updating the file and adding supporting declarations from the applicant's relatives. I have realized over the past two weeks especially how much I enjoy working with clients face to face. I find it so rewarding to be able to put interviewing skills to use for applications that are so meaningful.

I also had my first interview with a client who has a VAWA application. We mainly thus far, I have spent time gathering her documents for the extensive amount of evidence a claim like hers requires. I've realized how important getting a client to trust you with their story can be to having them in turn trust you with their personal story. So much of immigration is following the ins and outs of the different parts of a client's life, and using it to create a cohesive linear declaration and application for asylum or removal defense.



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Another big part of this week has been Catholic Charities deciding how it will respond to the ICE raids and threats to undocumented migrants. Being a part of Know Your Rights presentation prep and working with getting people status during a time like this, being a woman of color from an immigrant family, has been a true comfort to me. This work has always been important to me, but especially now, with the policies of the current administration and actions of ICE, it feels more vital. I am truly grateful I had the opportunity this summer to work in my area of focus on issues that matter so much to me.

I still have two more weeks of my internship, and will be finishing some case claims I have been helping complete for clients. I will miss getting to do work directly on these issues every day, but it has truly been an indelible experience.