



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Lanay Mitchell

Law School: Cornell Law School

Organization: Cornell Law School Farmworker
Legal Assistance Clinic

Week of June 15th:

For the past few weeks, I have been working on my summer internship. I currently intern for Cornell Law School's Farmworker Legal Assistance Clinic. I assist immigrant farmworkers with their U-Visa application. The Senate passed the U-Visa to encourage immigrants to report certain crimes, especially if they have been a victim of the crime. It also allows the applicant to apply for status for certain family members.

I am working with farmworkers who were exploited and abused here on a farm in the United States. They endured the abuse silently for years. It took one farmworker to speak up and talk to a federal investigator, and the rest was history. More and more farmworkers on the same farm came forward to corroborate the story, and there are at least 60 farmworkers that have come forward so far. This investigation made national news and resulted in some criminal convictions for some of the exploiters. I also assist immigrant teenagers with obtaining the Special Immigration Juvenile Status. The applicant must be no older than 21 years old when applying. It is required that the applicant is unable to reunite with one or both parents and that it would be in the best interest of the applicant not to be returned to their home country. If the applicant is approved, the person will be able to stay in the United States with immunity from deportation. It will allow the person to remain in the United States and open up a pathway for permanent residency and eventual citizenship.

It has been a personal and professional challenge to interview teenagers on traumatic events. However, I always remind myself that I deal with more than an application; I deal with a person's life story. Due to COVID-19, I am unable to cultivate relationships with my clients in person, but I will do the best I can to connect with them in other ways. I can't wait to see what the rest of the summer will entail.

Week of July 6th:

Today I am posting my second EJA Fellow Update. I am now over a month into my internship, and I am continuously learning new skills and acquiring new experiences. I am still in the process of filing U-Visa



applications for some of my clients and filing SIJS applications for my other clients. These past two weeks, I have been asking my clients really uncomfortable questions regarding their past traumatic experiences. I have learned that building a genuine rapport with a client helps to alleviate some of the awkwardness that comes with talking about painful experiences. It is of the utmost importance to provide your client with words of compassion and understanding. Listening to stories of how my clients have overcome adversity inspires me to advocate for them in the best way possible.

Week of July 27th:

I am wrapping up my last week at Cornell's Farmworker Legal Assistance Clinic. It has been an intense but fulfilling experience. I am in the process of submitting the U-Visa applications for my two clients and getting my other two clients' guardianship petitions filed in the family court by the end of this week. Being able to cultivate relationships with my clients and their families these past two months have taught me the importance of the work that I completed this summer. My first-year civil procedure professor told my classmates and me on the last day of class to remember that it is very easy for us as law students to read so many cases that we just see them as cases. However, she admonished us never to forget that we are reading more than just a case; we are dealing with the lives of real people. Doing public interest work this summer brought to life the point my professor wanted us to take away on the last day of class, and I appreciate that.

Week of August 10th:

Looking back, I had an enjoyable experience doing public interest work, and I encourage all law students to have that experience to understand the importance of the field and to appreciate the tremendous impact it creates for the student attorney and the client. For me, I have cultivated skills of empathy, time management, and storytelling which I will practice in school and for the rest of my career in the legal field.