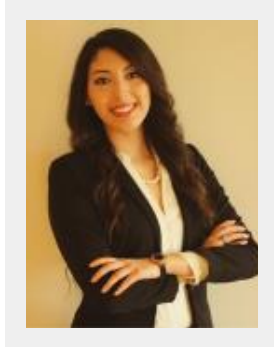




## Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Karina Acosta

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

**Organization:** Fe Y Justicia Worker Center

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### Week of June 15th

I was generously selected as one of this year's Equal Justice America Fellows. I am currently working with Fe Y Justicia (Faith and Justice) Workers Center under the Legal Department. After one month of my fellowship, I am finally able to share my first EJA Fellow update.

I had the privilege to be a part of a press conference held on June 1st to address all labor law violations and the importance of your rights despite legal status. Since March 2020, Fe Y Justicia Workers Center has received a total of 490 calls from the most vulnerable Houston communities: including low income and individuals without legal status. All reporting workplace violations, seeking financial or food assistance and wage theft. Workers in the Houston Metro Area reported \$1,360,082 in unpaid wages from February 2018 to March 2019. This year, a total of \$304,732.03 in stolen wages has been reported for the months of March and April. Fe y Justicia Worker Center expects this amount to continue to spike up as COVID-19 continues to affect business. I am very grateful to Fe y Justicia Worker Center for giving me the opportunity to work with this amazing organization this summer.

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### Week of July 6th

My second EJA Fellow update is one that I am especially excited to share! Due to the recent Supreme Court decision, Fe Y Justicia Worker Center will be launching a program to help individuals complete their Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications free of charge. Fe Y Justicia Worker Center hosted a zoom meeting last week to speak about DACA. The workshop consisted of educating the community about the requisites in applying to DACA for the first time or renewing their application. We hope that with the launching of this new program we are able to assist many DACA recipients.

Additionally, last week I was able to assist clients complete their Texas Workforce Commission Wage Claim



applications. I was privileged to offer assistance to an employee whose employer refused to pay her for an entire month. During her consultation she shared with me that she had three children one of which was a special needs child. The effects of COVID-19 already make the life of a single mom especially difficult and this employer willfully added to this stress by refusing to pay her an entire month's wages. As I am at the end of my law school career, it is stories like hers that validates why I chose to become an attorney - to be the voice for victims who are silenced by oppression. 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 clients with their wage theft claims.

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## **Week of July 27th**

I am extremely excited to share my third EJA Fellow update. Fe Y Justicia Worker Center has different departments such as the Community Legal & Support Center, Worker Center Outreach, Safety and Health Department, and Organizer of Justice for Domestic Workers.

What I appreciate most about Fe Y Justicia is that we all work together for one mission, to create positive change with and for low-wage workers by providing services, building peer support networks, and mobilizing campaigns. I am so blessed to have been given the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of people. For example, due to COVID-19 we all worked together this summer to distribute financial assistance to Houstonians. I was able to witness and be a part of what working together looks like, and I am so grateful to join Fe Y Justicia's team!

The skills and knowledge that I have gained thus far in Fe Y Justicia will assist me as I end my journey at Thurgood Marshall School of Law. Thank you @Equal Justice America for making this possible!

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## **Week of August 10th**

I cannot believe this is my last EJA Fellow update. I am very grateful for having the opportunity to work with such an amazing team. For years, Fe Y Justicia Worker Center has made a difference in the Houston community. I have seen first-hand how COVID-19 has impacted Houstonians. Many families are left without a job, food, or shelter. Additionally, the rate of wage theft cases have increased since the pandemic. However, I have also seen the relief on our client's faces when Fe Y Justicia Worker Center assists them financially or represents them on their wage theft claim free of charge.

I am proud to join Fe Y Justicia's team! I vow to implement all the skills and lessons I learned this summer as my time at Thurgood Marshall School of Law comes to an end. Thank you, Equal Justice America, for making this possible!

Please consider donating to Equal Justice America so that my work, and the work of my peers, may continue.