



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: Byung Yo Kim

Law School: Northeastern University School of Law

Organization: Northeast Legal Aid

Update 1:

This summer I am working as a legal intern at Northeast Legal Aid's family law unit. I am able to do this work partly because of my Equal Justice America fellowship, which helps offset some of my living expenses.

At NLA, I have been working on and learning about cases for indigent clients concerning divorces, custody, alimony, and other family law issues. Before this internship, I have not had any experience in this area of law. I am learning new things every day and am blessed to have a great group of attorneys to look up to.

The most striking part of my internship is the fact that our clients would not have any legal assistance with matters that will impact their family and children for the rest of their lives without our free services. Everyone deserves to have high quality legal representation, especially those who are systematically oppressed, and money should never be a barrier.

If you are interested in supporting my time at NLA, please donate to my fundraising page. 25% of the proceeds will go towards my living expenses while the other 75% will go towards future internships funded by Equal Justice America.

Update 2:

It's time for my second EJA update! While I have been assisting Northeast Legal Aid's clients, I can't help but wonder about the indigent individuals who were not taken on as clients. Last summer, my landlord found out that I was trying to organize a tenants' union in my apartment building and refused to renew my lease. I reached out to Northeast Legal Aid for assistance and was told that my case was not urgent enough to take on: I wasn't being evicted and I was not facing imminent homelessness.



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While everything worked out in the end for me, I suspect that the 80% of people living in poverty who require legal services but don't have access to it are not faring as well as I did.

When we are living in a country of abundance and ostensible liberty and justice for all, the unequal access to vital services such as healthcare, education, housing, and legal services should alarm us. But this initial alarm should be only the beginning of our struggle to build a better society, where everyone's needs are met and everyone contributes to their ability. The beautiful thing about humans is that we care for one another, even in the midst of ruthless competition and manufactured scarcity.

My internship at Northeast Legal Aid is but one of the steps that I plan to take in the long journey towards the just and equitable society I hope to live in one day.

Update 3:

During the past couple of weeks in Northeast Legal Aid's Family Law Unit, I have had the opportunity to work on divorce cases. Many of the unit's clients are in situations involving domestic violence and divorce is their chance at closing an arduous chapter of their lives. Although divorce is often seen as something to avoid, for some of our clients, it is the first step to peace and joy. As such, I have been thoroughly enjoying assisting the attorneys with cases and legal research since I know that my work will have a positive impact on someone's life. Although I wish that no one would ever need our services, I am grateful for the experience of working with extremely talented and devoted legal professionals.

Entry 4:

Since my last EJA Fellow update, each assignment I have received has been different from the last. A particularly interesting assignment was a motion for alternate service, a civil procedure I had learned about last year but never thought I would have a hand in so soon. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far at Northeast Legal Aid from drafting motions and affidavits to researching various legal topics. I am looking forward to finishing my internship here this summer and bringing this experience with me as I begin 2L classes.

If you would like to support Equal Justice America in their sponsorship of public interest legal internships, please donate. Thank you!