



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: University of Michigan Law School

Organization: Michigan Law School Human Trafficking Clinic

Update 1:

After working internationally with trafficking survivors, I'm thrilled to join the Human Trafficking Clinic at the University of Michigan to work on behalf of survivors in my home state of Michigan. With the support of an Equal Justice America fellowship, I am advocating for immigration relief for my clients so that they can live and work in the United States without fear of deportation. There is no official estimate of the total number of human trafficking victims in the U.S. However, trafficking affects people of every age, gender, and nationality, and the number of victims likely reaches into the hundreds of thousands. In my first few weeks of work, I've had the privilege of getting to know my clients. One of my clients was sex trafficked at a hotel I drive by frequently in my hometown. Others are teenagers. I'm grateful to work with them, to be a part of seeking justice on their behalf, and to be able to do this work through Equal Justice America.

Update 2:

I'm now a month into my internship with the Human Trafficking Clinic and I've had the opportunity to meet with many of my clients and dive into the complexities of their cases. My clients are at various stages in their immigration process and are trying to get different kinds of immigration relief, including T Visas, U Visas, green cards, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Part of my work is tracking down the information I need in order to complete a client's application. At the same time, I develop the facts of my client's case into a narrative, explaining how they are eligible for immigration relief due to their trafficking. I have especially enjoyed establishing relationships with my clients and coordinating with other service providers who are helping them get on stable footing. One of our biggest challenges is simply the wait times involved with the U.S. immigration system. On average, we represent our clients for 10 years. My summer with the clinic is just a drop in the bucket, but I'm excited to be a part of moving my clients' cases forward.



Update 3:

Last week I met with one of my clients to give him an update on his immigration case. Through his Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, he can work legally in the U.S., and he has a stable living situation. However, his T Visa was recently denied and while we are trying another avenue for his green card, the outcome is uncertain. When I asked him where he see himself in the future, he responded, “I don’t think of the future.” Another client lives in a home for trafficking survivors. She faces a minimum wait of two to three years on her T Visa application, and she is not able to work during that time. Over calls, she has wondered several times whether it would be better to go back to her home country rather than live in limbo for many years. It’s easy to feel defeated when I think about all that my clients have gone through and the barriers that exist in their immigration cases. When I do feel that way, I remember the extraordinary hope my clients have expressed. Both these clients want to stay in the U.S. and help people like themselves – immigrants and trafficking survivors. As one client said: “I don’t want to only be a victim – I want to actively make positive changes in people’s lives.”

Update 4:

As I reach the end of my summer fellowship, I’m grateful for all I have learned and accomplished through the Human Trafficking Clinic. With the guidance of my supervisors, I’ve completed several derivative visas to help clients bring their family members to the United States, a green card application, and a T Visa application. It has been a privilege to work closely with clients and develop advocacy skills that I will take into my career. I have gained a better understanding of the challenges trafficking survivors face and the ways in which lawyers can pursue justice for them. This summer has been so fulfilling and I’m excited to continue my involvement with the clinic in the fall. I’m extremely appreciative of the mentorship I received from the clinic directors and for the support of Equal Justice America.