



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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**Organization:** Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program

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**Update 1:** I began my internship with the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program on May 24<sup>th</sup>. For the past few weeks, I've been immersing myself in the intricacies of immigration law and cases within that realm. I got my first couple of assignments from my direct supervisor during my orientation week. One of the assignments required me to conduct research and edit a report that documents the medical abuse and neglect that numerous women have suffered at a detention center in the U.S. There are multiple purposes for the report, since it seeks to bring to light the experiences of women at that particular detention center while also arguing that this type of neglect and abuse is not unique to that center and instead a part of a broader issue that needs to be addressed by Congress, ICE and the Executive Branch. For this report, I also had to conduct a client interview to add her testimony to the section that contains the narratives of all the women that came forward to speak out on the abuse they suffered. Additionally, I was assigned this client's overall case since she was deported as retaliation for speaking out about her experiences at the center. As such, the clinic is currently working on filing her U-Visa and Humanitarian Parole claims so she can come back to the U.S. to be with her daughters. Her particular case has been challenging since other student interns had been working on it before me so there was a lot of catching up for me to familiarize myself with her case, work that they had done, plus what I had to do and the relevant law. Additionally, she has a "criminal history" which means I had to draft an inadmissibility waiver which is essentially a declaration explaining the crime that would make her inadmissible, how that crime occurred and what has changed since that took place. The beginning of this internship has definitely been challenging for multiples reasons. I'm working in a remote environment which adds a layer of difficulty when you are learning new systems and doing work within a field as complex as immigration law. Additionally, reading and processing all the narratives from the women in that report has been emotionally and mentally taxing because I'm learning in full detail about all the trauma they have gone through. However, I am learning so much and I am glad to be offering my contribution to these projects.

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**Update 2:** Last week I took on a case that I am working on from scratch for a woman from El Salvador that is requesting asylum on the basis of fear of past persecution due to her gender/political opinion and a fear of future persecution based on her sexuality. When my client was in El Salvador she was the victim of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of her partner who is a member of a gang. She began dating him at the age of 17 when she was away from home working as a live-in babysitter. Once he joined the gang, he became progressively more and more violent with her. She suffered years of abuse with him but given his membership in the gang she did not leave him due to fear for her and her family's life, which is also the reason why she never reported his abuse.



She finally made the resolution to leave to the United States after an incident where he put a gun to her head and threatened to torture and kill her. She currently lives in Massachusetts and identifies as lesbian. These last couple of weeks I have been conducting interviews with her in order to draft her affidavit for her asylum case. Additionally, I have been working on getting in contact with an academic that can serve as an expert country conditions witness for her case so they can testify on what may happen to her if she is deported to El Salvador. The other case I have been working on I inherited the work from other students which means a lot of catching up and building upon the work others have done but with this case I am doing all the leg-work to draft her narrative in a way that is persuasive to a judge. There is always so much pressure in doing this kind of work since we are working on a tight deadline and someone's life is in our hands, but it is equally rewarding to be able to offer help.

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**Update 3:** These last two weeks have really picked up in terms of my workload. I was given my writing assignment for the summer. For my assignment I have to draft a motion for leave to file a supplemental brief and write the brief. The brief is for an asylum case that has been sitting with the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) the last couple years without any decision. Recently, the attorney general vacated a decision that was instrumental to the immigration judge's decision in denying asylum for that client's case. As such, my job in the brief is to argue that given the vacatur of the decision, the BIA must either remand to the immigration judge for further fact finding or in the alternative grant asylum to our client since based on precedent prior to that decision, our client would've qualified for asylum. In addition to the brief, I have also continued to work with the client from El Salvador that is requesting asylum (which I discussed in my previous update). We are still trying to find an expert witness. The search has been a bit challenging given the limited resources of the clinic since the services they offer to clients is completely free. However, we have met with someone that might potentially work with our budget so hopefully that works out. Furthermore, these last few weeks I have continued to work on the affidavit for that client and I have also begun to reach out to her family members and friends in order to draft supporting affidavits. For the supporting affidavits I have teamed out with another fellow intern to be able finish her file before the end of the summer. It has been nice to work with and get to know another fellow intern in this remote environment. I have been very appreciative of having that opportunity.

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**Entry 4:** This was the last week at my internship. I was able to wrap up the last few outstanding items for my client's asylum case. I sent a finalized version of her affidavit to my supervisor and completed a supporting affidavit after I spoke to my client's sister. Additionally, after much searching, we were able to find an expert witness willing to work within the clinic's budget and a doctor that would do a psychological evaluation. Due to the fact that the end of the summer was coming soon and the other projects I was juggling, I was not able to finish my writing sample which was disappointing. However, I made a lot of progress on the research side of the brief and left an outline with the research and arguments to my supervisor for another student to take on the project moving forward. This summer I faced many challenges at my internship. I struggled working my first law school job remotely and the subject matter of the projects I was working on were sometimes a lot to process and work through. But I am happy that I pushed through it and was able to get to the other side because at the end of the day it was extremely rewarding work. Given that this is my last update, I want to take this opportunity to thank Equal Justice America for funding me this summer. The fellowship I received made my work possible and I am very grateful to EJA.