



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Ariana Smith

**Law School:** University of Virginia School of Law

**Organization:** East Bay Sanctuary Covenant

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### Update 1:

I just started at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, and already I feel that I've been given so many opportunities to do hands-on, very meaningful work. For example, my second week here, I helped a client to prepare for her asylum interview. Then, I accompanied her to that interview and served as her representative there. An asylum interview is mainly intended to be a conversation between the applicant and the asylum officer, but as a representative I offered moral support and had the opportunity to make a statement, or ask my client further questions, at the end of the interview. Being present for this process offered me a lot of insight into how the affirmative asylum process works, and how eligibility for asylum is determined.

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### Update 2:

I've continued to help clients prepare for their asylum interviews, and accompany / represent them at those interviews. Additionally, I've helped other clients to draft their declarations, which are personal statements detailing past persecution that they've suffered in their countries of origin as well as their fear of returning to those countries. These declarations are submitted along with their asylum applications and other supporting documents, such as country condition reports. Helping clients to draft their declarations is a very involved and delicate process, as you must establish trust and emotional intimacy with the client so that they feel comfortable talking about events that are often very traumatic and difficult to speak about. Declaration drafting also involves anticipating questions that asylum officers may pose and incorporating necessary details into the declaration. I feel very honored and lucky that my clients trust me enough to tell me their stories, and it feels meaningful and fulfilling to assist them in this step of the asylum application process.



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**Update 3:**

Lately, I've been helping out with asylum interview preparation and representation, declaration drafting, work permit renewal, and country conditions research. Each asylum application includes a report on conditions in the relevant country, for example the treatment of women or the treatment of the LGBTQ+ community there. These reports need to be updated frequently, so I've been helping with that research. I also was able to help out as an interpreter while one of the attorneys at my office drafted the declaration of a French-speaking client. As clients await their asylum decisions, they file work permit renewals on an annual basis, so I've been able to learn more about that process by assisting clients with those applications.

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**Entry 4:**

I'm finishing up my summer internship with East Bay Sanctuary Covenant and feel so sad to be leaving! I have really enjoyed my time here, and can easily see myself working for this organization, or a similar one, after my graduation from law school. Over the past few weeks, I've continued to assist clients in preparing for their asylum interviews, and then accompany them to those interviews where I serve as their legal representative. I have also been helping clients renew their work permits, and in the coming week I'll be assisting a client with a residency application. I've also continued to help clients draft their declarations which are submitted with their applications for asylum, and have helped attorneys at the office with research on pertinent legal issues as needed. I am so grateful for all of the very valuable insights into immigration law that I've gotten this summer, and all of the experience that EBSC has given me! Thank you, EJA, for helping to make this internship possible for me!