EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA
LEGAL SERVICES FELLOWSHIPS

Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:

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Law School: University of Virginia School of Law
Organization: Just Neighbors

Update 1:

After completing my 1L year at University of Virginia School of Law, I am working as a legal intern and Equal Justice America fellow at Just Neighbors, a non-profit providing immigration legal services to low income immigrants in the DC area.

In my first three weeks, I have been assigned to several trafficking and asylum cases. I have enjoyed meeting with clients, hearing their stories, and learning how lawyers can use existing legal frameworks to provide clients with the security of lawful U.S. immigration status. But this work has also highlighted how complex and shortsighted our existing immigration system is, and how so many immigrants are allowed to fall through the cracks simply because the law is not designed to protect them and their interests. I'm privileged to be learning from lawyers who know firsthand how broken the system is, but continue to show up every day to fight for their clients, and from clients who show incredible strength and hope despite setbacks and obstacles.

Update 2:

For my second EJA Fellow update, I'm realizing just how short a 10 week internship is. I just finished the fifth week of my internship at Just Neighbors, and I have several projects I'm invested in that I may not have time to finish before I return to University of Virginia School of Law to begin my 2L year. I'm working on an asylum brief for a client escaping political persecution, I am beginning the process of interviewing a client for another asylum case, and I am close to completing a trafficking survivor's declaration for their T-Visa. Each of these cases have allowed me to meet with my clients and become familiar with their stories, and I have loved using my knowledge to argue that they qualify for relief under particular immigration laws. It will be difficult to leave Just Neighbors without having completed their cases or knowing how they will end, but I am grateful for the opportunity to help, even if only for a short time.

Update 3:

I only have three weeks left Just Neighbors before I return to University of Virginia School of Law. My cases are moving forward, some more rapidly than others, and I am excited to meet with my client who was labor trafficked tomorrow so we can report her trafficking to the FBI. I know I will be leaving before I have the chance to see my cases adjudicated, but it's been so exciting to be a part of them.

Entry 4:

I have truly loved working my time working at Just Neighbors. In a few weeks, I will return to University of Virginia School of Law to begin my 2L year, and my experiences as a legal intern this summer have sharpened my legal skills and inspired me to work with asylum seekers along the southern border after I graduate. One of my proudest moments from this summer was facilitating a meeting between my client who was labor trafficked and the D.C. U.S. Attorney's Office. Unlike many trafficking victims, my client was eager to testify against her trafficker and see her brought to justice, and I was thrilled that after speaking to me about her case, the Assistant U.S. Attorney decided to meet with my client and begin collecting evidence to build a criminal case against her traffickers. I also finished the second draft of an asylum brief for a client fleeing political persecution in Cameroon. Writing his 26 page brief was no small undertaking, but I am pleased that I was able to use my writing skills to contribute to his case and learn about Cameroonian politics in the meantime. I have loved using my legal skills to advance justice in people's lives, and I know I will take the lessons I learned this summer with me as I finish law school and begin my legal career.

As an Equal Justice America Fellow, my work this summer is made possible by the very generous support of Equal Justice America. If you are interested in supporting the next generation of public interest lawyers, please consider donating to EJA.