

*Report From Maggie Marron, New York Women's Bar Association Foundation Fellow at Her Justice*

This past spring I was fortunate to be the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation Fellow at Her Justice, a public interest organization providing family and immigration legal assistance and representation to low-income women in New York City. I worked on the intake hotline, helping connect dozens of women to much-needed legal services, and assisted with a number of divorce cases and a U visa application.

There was one client in particular, a young mother of three from Ecuador, with whom I worked closely over the course of the internship and I truly enjoyed getting to know her. She was a survivor of domestic violence and I assisted with both her contested divorce and U visa application. She had a sweet and quiet demeanor, but her strength of character was evident when she detailed the abuse she had endured and spoke of the better life she wanted for her children. She was resolute in ensuring that the terms of the divorce would be sufficient to be able to support her and her children until her work authorization came through.

Prior to the fellowship, I was sure I would prefer immigration-related matters over matrimonial cases. But my semester at Her Justice showed me how crucial negotiating favorable terms for a client in divorce can be for low-income women, especially if they are raising children and are not authorized to work in this country. Child and spousal support and maintenance are often key pieces in helping women get back on their feet and, for survivors of domestic violence, enabling them to gain independence after years of financial and other forms of abuse.

Not only did I better understand how the lives of my client and her children were deeply impacted by the Her Justice attorney's scrupulous representation in the divorce, but I also learned as a women's rights advocate that divorce casework is an essential part of empowering women to achieve their independence and build lives free from violence. I had already been planning to pursue public interest law and work in women's rights and/or economic justice in some regard, but my hands-on

experience at Her Justice (more so than with any other law school internship thus far) further solidified my interest in this area of the law.

I am sincerely grateful to Her Justice and the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation for making this experience possible.

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