

**Genesis AGUIRRE GUERRA BIO FOR THE  
2022 ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON LEGACY FUND AWARD**

No family should be separated. By the time I was twelve years old, I had been separated twice – at six from my father and at twelve from my mother.

In order for my Mom to obtain her legal residency, she had to go back to Guatemala for consular processing. My sister and I went with my mom while my dad stayed to fight his own immigration case and work. We lived in a small village where water and electricity was only available on certain days. Planning to stay for only a few months, I treated this time as a vacation at my grandmothers. On the appointed day, my mother traveled to the U.S. embassy expecting to return to our home shortly; instead, she was barred from the U.S. for ten years. As my father had to work full-time to support my family and could not afford childcare, my sister and I – both U.S. citizens – stayed in Guatemala. I missed my dad, and he missed his family. This separation greatly impacted all of us. My sister and I missed our home, our dad, and the opportunities we had in the U.S. My mom constantly dealt with high levels of stress as she tried finding solution to reunify our family. My dad developed depression as he missed birthdays and several milestones in our lives. After two years, my mom chose the only path available to her – crossing the U.S. border.

When I was twelve, my mother tried again and returned to Guatemala. I waited anxiously for months in the U.S., wondering if the U.S. – the country I called home – would again bar my mom from returning. I wished for the ability to do *something*; but, as a kid, all I could do was promise myself that I would grow up to help other mixed-status families.

As I look back to these memories, I see the sorrows and injustice that my family and I experienced but also our resilience to these adversities. My parents never gave up on their goal to keep us all together. I use this experience to identify and fight these and similar injustices.

Before attending law school, I worked as a lead canvasser at Faith in Action Nevada, a local non-partisan grassroots organization bringing together faith communities to fight for social justice. As a lead canvasser, I assisted with and informed the community about voter registration in Washoe County, Nevada. I encountered many naturalized citizens who were unable to access voter registration forms and information about the voting process because of a language barrier. In Spanish, I helped them fill out voter registration forms, inform them about the election, and empower them to take action through exercising their right to vote.

In my previous role as a legal assistant in an immigration law office, I managed a caseload including U-Visa and asylum cases. I zealously advocated for clients who were vulnerable in sharing their stories. Through empathetic and careful listening, I was able to advocate for them when speaking to law enforcement to secure a U-visa certification and draft personal statements to secure immigration relief.

In summer 2021, I worked as a Summer Fellow at the Workers and Immigration Rights Advocacy Clinic (WIRAC) at Yale Law School, which represents immigrants, low-wage workers, and their organizations in labor and immigration. At WIRAC, I worked directly with low-income immigrant clients to advance their immigration and employment law matters. I conducted legal research and wrote various memoranda on race-based employment discrimination, prosecutorial discretion, and the new policy on the U-Visa Bonafide Employment Authorization Document that USCIS implemented this year. Additionally, I conducted approximately 14 interviews with Latino clients on the racial discrimination they faced in their employment. Through their own recollection of the harmful mistreatment they faced, I co-authored a persuasive argument to the court to oppose a partial motion to dismiss our client's claim of racial discrimination. Through this fellowship, I came to truly understand what it meant to advocate as an attorney. I translated our clients' stories of the discrimination into court pleadings that resulted in favorable outcomes.

Throughout law school, I have sought to continue my work in the immigration space. In December 2021, I worked with the UDC Immigration and Human Rights Clinic to provide legal services to Afghan refugee families living on a military base in Virginia. I worked with an interpreter to help families complete I-485 applications to register for permanent residence. It was an honor to serve these families by completing their applications and to provide some kind of relief and hope for safety.

As a student attorney of the General Practice Clinic, I represented clients in their fight for a Civil Protection Order against their abusive partners. I actively listened to my client's needs and stories of the hardships they've endured. I empowered my clients throughout the process and made them feel like they had a choice to pursue the claim or not. My work at the clinic furthered my fight against injustices.

This summer, I was selected as a Justice Stevens Summer Fellow. This is a great privilege because I pursued my goal to continue public interest work. I worked at UCLA's Center for Immigration Law and Policy (CILP) where I worked on macro level change for immigration policy. I researched policy provisions that may help undocumented students work for state entities. I also researched how a state court may hold a federal official for criminal liability.

My fight for marginalized communities does not end here. I want to continue this fight throughout my life. This scholarship will aide me in this journey. I would be deeply grateful to receive this scholarship. It will greatly help me to be a successful student. It will ease my anxieties regarding finances by paying off my tuition and allow me to lessen my debt. This in turn, will help me to solely focus on my studies. However, as I hope you have seen by now, this scholarship will help me to achieve my dreams of helping to practice public interest law.