

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

August 30, 2017

For eleven weeks this summer, I worked at the Loyola Immigrant Justice Clinic (LIJC) at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, California. The clinic helps those who are low-income or indigent in the greater Los Angeles area. I was assigned to work with attorney Alejandro Barajas. Right away, I could tell it was going to be a good fit. Attorney Barajas cares immensely for his clients, and advocates for them to the highest degree possible.

I primarily worked on citizenship applications, visas for victims of crime, and more complex green card applications. However, Attorney Barajas also handles Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJS) petitions, which are complex cases involving family or probate state courts and immigration court as well. These cases became the bulk of my workload this summer.

SIJS cases involve juveniles who arrive in the United States without one or both parents, and cannot safely return to their country of origin. I found these cases to be particularly compelling, mainly because of the ages of the clients. Each child had fled from something awful in their home country: some gang violence, others parental abuse. Two particular SIJS cases had a strong impact on me.

First, I worked with a 17-year-old young man from El Salvador who had fled from gang violence and abandonment by his father. He was so sweet and earnest, and I felt urged to do everything possible to help him obtain legal status in the United States. He was doing well in school, learning English, and going to church. The only thing missing was legal permanent residency so he could remain in the United States and continue to build his future. His aunt had taken him in, and our first task was to file a petition with the California Probate court to award her guardianship of the young man. It was particularly stressful too, because the young man turned eighteen at the end of July, and we had to successfully complete the Probate portion of the case before he was no longer a minor. We went to court on July 12, and the judge granted his aunt guardianship just a few days before his birthday. I was so relieved and happy that the forms and brief I had drafted had achieved tangible results!

After his Probate hearing, we filed a petition with immigration showing he was appointed a guardian and that he warranted issuance of legal status. I compiled the petition and supporting evidence the following week and mailed it out as soon as possible. While I do not have the final results of his petition yet, I am so happy to know I had a direct influence in the process. Thinking about his future and all the possibilities he will have gives me a great sense of joy.

Second, I worked with a 17-year-old single mother from Guatemala who escaped an abusive relationship with an older man. She came to the United States with her two-year-old son

who was the product of the abusive relationship. Luckily, her mother lived here in California, but she still needed legal status. I drafted and filed a Petition to Establish Custody in California Family court, in the hopes that the judge would recognize her mother as her sole guardian. I finished the fellowship before her hearing, but I am hopeful it goes well. She had lived such a difficult past and had to grow up too soon. I couldn't imagine her having to return to Guatemala and face her abuser, and I couldn't imagine her two-year-old son growing up around someone like that.

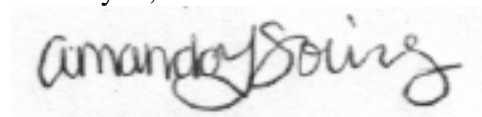
These two cases deeply resonated with me, and reaffirmed my love for public interest work. The best feeling was knowing that the work I was doing was changing people's lives for the better.

I also enjoyed participating in the two offsite intake sessions that the LIJC would have each week. On Wednesdays, the attorneys would visit Dolores Mission in Boyle Heights. On Fridays, the attorneys would visit Homeboy Industries, which is an organization committed to gang reform. People would already be waiting for free legal consultations when we arrived. Each person was given a number, and the attorneys would stay until each number was called. Sometimes, there were up to 20 different consultations in an afternoon. Each situation was different and important. It would make me so happy to see the client's reactions when we told them we could assist them, and we could do it for free. It would also break my heart when someone would have a case we couldn't take on, and we had to refer them elsewhere.

The afternoons at Dolores and Homeboy really allowed me to connect with the clients directly, see the intake process, and practice my interviewing skills. Being out in the community on a regular basis also helped reaffirm my desire to go into public interest. The sheer number of people who genuinely need help is surprising. Sometimes, it was so easy to help a client! They might have needed a phone number or address, or a single form filed with immigration. Being able to offer that simple gesture could change the course of their case. Other clients had more complicated issues, but it was so fulfilling to take them on and hope to solve them.

I enjoyed my fellowship at the Loyola Immigrant Justice Clinic immensely and hope to work with them in the future. I received valuable hands-on experience with clients, in court and in the community. Often, it didn't feel like work at all. The time I spent at the LIJC was invaluable, and I am very grateful for Equal Justice America for allowing me an opportunity I otherwise would not have had.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Sorvig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda Sorvig
Chapman Fowler School of Law
J.D. 2019



August 31, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
13540 East Boundary Road
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Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Executive Director Ruben:

I am a Staff Attorney at the Loyola Immigrant Justice Clinic at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, California. From June through August this summer, Ms. Amanda Sorvig worked under my direction as a Law Clerk.

Ms. Sorvig was punctual in the completion of her tasks and managed her time wisely. She brought considerable knowledge to our clinic, but also recognized when to ask questions or research an issue. Ms. Sorvig was also eager to accept new and challenging cases. Ms. Sorvig aided in drafting and filing petitions for citizenship, victim's visas, DACA renewals, and green card applications this summer. She was also extremely helpful in compiling applications for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status petitions, a process she had not done before. Ms. Sorvig's work was very helpful to me and to our clients. She interacted seamlessly with clients both in Spanish and in English by creating a trusting and friendly environment for them.

Ms. Sorvig participated in many real-world circumstances as well. She observed my representation in Probate court, Family court, Immigration court, and citizenship interviews with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. She also attended a citizenship training, asylum workshop, and an ACLU immigration overview seminar. Additionally, she attended and participated in weekly intake sessions at Homeboy Industries and Dolores Mission. In these situations, Ms. Sorvig was attentive, asked questions and aided the client.

I appreciate the aid that Equal Justice America provided for Ms. Sorvig as it allowed her to spend the summer at the LIJC. I sincerely enjoyed working with Ms. Sorvig and hope to work with her again in the future. She is a caring individual and will make a formidable attorney.

Sincerely,

Alejandro Barajas
Staff Attorney
Loyola Immigrant Justice Clinic
Loyola Law School
919 Albany Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015
(213)480-6808 ph.