

## **Karina Acosta**

August 16, 2017

Equal Justice America Committee  
Equal Justice America Building II  
13540 East Boundary Road Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Dan Ruben, Executive Director at Equal Justice America:

This summer Equal Justice America funded me and gave me the opportunity to intern at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston under the Crime Victims Program. Under the Crime Victim's Program, I had first-hand experience helping victims of crimes. This internship was so rewarding because we used immigration visas such as U-Visas (non-immigrant visas), VAWA (Violence Against Women Act), and T-Visas (T non-immigrant visas) to help crime victims attain legal status in the United States. My experience this summer has taught me three valuable lessons about working with crime victims. In order to help crime victims, you must develop qualities such as compassion, hope, and persistence. As a result of my summer internship I developed these three qualities and will continue to use them throughout my professional career.

I developed these three qualities interacting with many clients, but three stories impacted me the most. My first client was a victim of labor trafficking. At a very young age she was brought to the United States with the promises of a better life. Unfortunately, these promises were lies and she found herself working horrible hours and under bad conditions. When she told me her story I had to find the strength not to cry with her. It was really difficult to hear all the horrible things her traffickers did to her. After she told me her story she said "thank you for listening." This client taught me that you must always have compassion because behind every individual there is a story.

My second clients were victims of child sexual assault. After years of being sexually assaulted by the same abuser they decided to break their silence. These clients had an approved U-Visa and were already at the residency stage. As I was preparing their residency intake forms I had to read their story to get a better understanding in order to complete their forms. During their consultation, I had to ask them a question that immigration required which stated, "why they believe United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) should grant them and their family residency in the United States?" They responded, "to give a better life to my children." Their response was full of hope. These clients told me that throughout this long immigration process they learned that people must remain hopeful even when life keeps throwing you obstacles. Their responses surprised me because I could not imagine how many obstacles they went through, yet they remain hopeful.

My third client was a victim of domestic violence perpetrated by her citizen husband, this qualified her for the VAWA visa. In order to qualify for a VAWA visa the individual must show

proof of different qualifications. One very important qualification is proof of citizenship or residency of the abuser. Due to the domestic violence this client was living in a shelter and was unable to attain the abusers proof of citizenship. This evidence is very critical in a VAWA case without proof of citizenship or residency of the abuser the case may not be accepted by USCIS. The client and I brainstormed for two hours' on different ways of attaining proof of the abuser's citizenship without letting the abuser know. After looking at the case in different angles I was giving up hope until she said, "I am married legally in Texas to the abuser." My thinking cap lit up. I remembered my supervising attorney tell me that if the victim is legally married to the abuser in Texas we can order the judge to ask the perpetrator for a copy of his birth certificate without him/her knowing the reasoning behind the request. I provided the client with the departments information so that she could request the abuser's birth certificate. The client agreed and two days later she called me very excited to let me know that she was given the abuser's birth certificate. This client told me that she rides the metro in order to come to our consultations and I am positive that she used the same transportation to attain the abuser's birth certificate. This client lost everything, her home and money due to the domestic violence; yet, she had the persistence to collect the documents for her VAWA case. This client taught me that even through hard times you must remain faithful and persistent.

My time at Catholic Charities under the Crime Victim's Department was very rewarding and I am looking forward to volunteering or interning in this department in the future. Thank you Equal Justice America for funding and giving me the opportunity to work with such an amazing non-profit that provides free legal assistance to the undocumented community.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karina Acosta



*providing help.  
creating hope.*

September 8, 2017

Equal Justice America  
Attn: Summer Fellowship Program  
Building II- Suite 204  
23540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

**RE: Internship Evaluation, Summer 2017  
Karina Acosta**

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am the Supervising Attorney for the Crime Victims Assistance Program for the Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance, a department of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Catholic Charities was founded in 1943, incorporated in 1952, and functions with the vision of having our board, staff and volunteers serve as people of faith who help people in need achieve self-sufficiency and live with dignity. Our agency provides a wide range of services, reaching out to almost 87,629 people a year at locations in Harris, Fort Bend and Galveston Counties. Our services are made available to all – without regard to religious affiliation – with ninety-two cents of every dollar dedicated to program services. The Cabrini Center for Immigrant Legal Assistance, one such program, has offered low-cost, high-quality legal relief to the Houston community for more than 25 years. Within Cabrini, the Crime Victims Assistance Program operates to provide free legal immigration services to low-income immigrant victims of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, who qualify for humanitarian visas.

Catholic Charities was delighted to offer an internship to Ms. Karina Acosta, a juris doctorate candidate, for the summer of 2017. Ms. Acosta spent her 10 week internship in my program, the Crime Victims Assistance Program. During that time, she provided legal intakes for immigrant crime victims, helped them draft documents for their immigration applications, and advocated for them with various law enforcement agencies. Necessary to these tasks, she also spent hours working on correspondence, legal screenings at outreach events, and counseling victims in crisis. In addition, I asked for Karina's assistance with various legal research projects and to help organize our pro bono legal project.

Karina proved herself to be a helpful and dedicated legal intern. She is friendly, intelligent, motivated, efficient, and extremely dedicated. Karina showed great compassion for every client she encountered, while still maintaining her efficiency in her duties. Karina is a great multi-tasker, something that our job requires. She successfully managed a high volume of cases and phone calls, and can prioritize her work effectively. Many of our clients suffer from depression, trauma-induced mental illness, and other problems, but Karina showed incredible patience in



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working with them, often in very frustrating circumstances. Her love of the work and of the clients she serves is evident in everything she does. She maintained professional relationships with clients, co-workers, and supervisors alike, always without changing her friendly disposition. We were very pleased with Karina's contribution to the agency and very grateful to Equal Justice America for providing her with the opportunity.

Thank you again for allowing Karina to participate in the fellowship program. If you require any further information, please feel free to contact me at (713)874-6570 or at [egriesmyer@catholiccharities.org](mailto:egriesmyer@catholiccharities.org).

Sincerely,

Elise Griesmyer  
Supervising Attorney