

August 31, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you so much for your support of my summer public interest work. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work for two organizations this summer. I began my summer in New York City, where I interned for the Immigration Unit of the Legal Aid Society for 10 weeks. Afterwards, I moved to Houston for 8 weeks, where I interned for the Tahirih Justice Center. The two experiences greatly enhanced my ability to pursue my public interest career, and I am grateful for both experiences.

At the Legal Aid Society, I worked in the Detention Project of the Immigration Unit. Most of my work involved the Legal Orientation Program. Three mornings a week, we would go the Immigration Court building where hearings for detained immigrants are held. We would give a presentation to all the detainees before their first hearing about the immigration system and various forms of relief. Afterwards, we would meet individually with unrepresented detainees to see if they qualified for any relief. Through these presentations and meetings, the detainees became more empowered to seek relief and aware of their options. These intake interviews provided me the opportunity to hear the stories of many individuals from all over the world, and to better understand the context of the intersection of criminal and immigration laws. After these conversations, I would return to the office and write case summaries. These memos involved writing the individuals' personal stories, their criminal history and an analysis of any immigration relief for which they may be eligible. This often involved an analysis of the intersection of state criminal law and federal immigration law. The memos also required an analysis of their bond eligibility and next possible steps for representation.

Additionally, I worked with attorneys on a variety of cases. In one case, a detained father of two was applying for Cancellation of Removal for green card holders. We worked for months putting together his application, including writing affidavits with his family members. I interviewed his children and mother to draft affidavits detailing his meaning in their lives and the impact his deportation would have on their futures. These tearful conversations led to powerful affidavits that contributed to his ultimately winning his case. When the judge granted his application, his family members celebrated, crying with joy and relief. They hugged me and thanked us all profusely. Seeing him reunited with his family was one of the most meaningful moments of my summer.

At the Tahirih Justice Center, I work with female immigrant survivors of gender-based violence to pursue immigration relief. Together, we pursue relief through asylum and other applications available to survivors of crime and domestic violence. We work with women from all over the world who have endured a range of traumatic events. Our clients inspire me every day with their bravery and strength. I have had the opportunity to work with one woman who survived serious domestic

violence at the hands of her ex-partner. We are working to achieve immigration relief through the U Visa, which is available to individuals who are the victims of crime and cooperate with law enforcement in the investigation and prosecution of the crime. She courageously protected herself and her child, overcoming language barriers to work with police to convict him and now, she is building a new life in the United States for her small family. She is seeking safety and justice, and it is my honor to be her partner in this pursuit.

My summer helped me expand my experience in working directly with immigrants and refugees seeking a variety of forms of immigration relief. Both experiences taught me valuable lessons and helped me hone important skills in pursuing this work for the duration of my career. Thank you so much for helping to make it possible: I will always be grateful for these invaluable experiences.

Sincerely,

Alison Hollenbeck
Class of 2014
University of Pennsylvania Law School