

Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

With the Equal Justice America Summer 2014 Fellowship, I had the opportunity to work as a legal intern for the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund for the summer of 2014. AALDEF works to empower Asian Americans through the law by providing a broad array of services ranging in issues including immigration, voting rights, and economic justice, among others. I specifically worked on issues concerning economic justice for workers and human trafficking.

This summer I had the opportunity to observe a trial, help prepare depositions for a case involving trafficked victims, conduct in-take interviews for potential clients, and work on federal, state, and local policies with anti-trafficking objectives. Among the clients I met and assisted was a woman from Nepal who was trafficked into the states as a domestic worker for an Indian family. She was promised a green card but immediately upon her arrival, her passport was confiscated and hidden from her. She was forced to work for the family from 7am until 11pm, everyday. Her responsibilities included cleaning, laundry, cooking, and chaperoning the children. On several occasions, she was also forced to clean the houses of the family's extended family or friends. She felt threatened and was unable to leave the house without supervision.

Although I was unable to see out the completion of her case, meeting her gave me insight to the role of an attorney. Not only are attorneys the liaison between people and the law, they can also play the role of an advocate, the role of a listener, and a role of a counselor. My supervising attorney pressed upon me the importance of taking a client-center approach to lawyering. That is, to present informed options to a client and having him or her decide for himself or herself which option best suits his or her needs. This is not devoid of giving opinions or suggestions, but it allows clients to have agency over their

legal actions. Especially with victims of human trafficking, it is important that victims feel that they are as engaged and involved in the decision making process as they want to be.

I am grateful for the funding provided to me by Equal Justice America. As an Asian American, it was rewarding to be able to empower my own community through this legal experience. I learned a lot about being an attorney and I know that this experience will inform my work in future.

Sincerely,
Andrew Kim
Fordham Law, class of 2015