

Dan Ruben
Executive Director at Equal Justice America

Mr. Ruben,

I was so fortunate to spend my summer at Greater Boston Legal Services. I had the opportunity to look get hands on experience in their Immigration Unit. I was surrounded my peers who have similar passions to mine and attorneys who have an admirable amount of dedication.

My experience varied day to day. Each evening I left with new skills. I spent a lot of time refining my research skills and looking for cases no one was sure even existed. I have become as comfortable with WestLaw as I am with sites like Facebook. I have spent many hours with clients trying to navigate the confusing immigration forms required by USCIS. I have been impressed by the patience some clients show while filling out 18 page forms. I've had to ask them embarrassing questions such as "have you ever participated in terrorist activities?" They would nervously laugh and tell me no. Of course they haven't, but it's on the form.

One client in particular made a huge impact on me during my time at Greater Boston Legal Services. She was a mother of three, who came from Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. She had lost family and friends. She came here originally to escape the trauma the whole island faced but decided to stay to escape her abusive husband. I listened as she graciously explained to me the horrors she faced from the man who fathered her children. The man who made a vow to her years before. Her sense of resilience and her positivity struck me particularly. As the meeting ended, I praised her for her strength and mentioned that her children must be so proud to call her their mother. She then told me that at a Father's Day celebration at their school, her children had her stand up and they cheered for her. I know it can be dangerous to get too emotionally involved in one's profession but I could not help but tear up. I was touched by her story and appreciated her fortitude.

Not every client's story was so emotional but that did not make the impact they had on me any less. Another one of my favorite tasks was to help two teenage sisters reapply for DACA. They were bubbly and enjoyed my failed attempts at Spanish. The older sister was going to college this fall so she really was excited to get her application in. I know this because she would call me a few times over the next week to check in. I did not mind though because I remember my anticipation for college.

I did not realize at the time how important my experience at Greater Boston Legal Services was to me but after reflection, I feel more confident as a student going into my second year.

Theresa Hofmann
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