

Sept. 20, 2014

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

Mr. Ruben,

During my summer law school fellowship my goal was to combine my outreach experience with legal knowledge to address exploited victims in urban low-income areas. I worked with Sanctuary for Families (“SFF”) Immigration Intervention Project. SFF is New York’s leading service provider and advocate for survivors of domestic violence, sex trafficking, and related forms of gender violence. SFF is excellent at serving their clients and provides services in housing, benefits, immigration, and family law.

During my summer fellowship I worked with 6 clients, who faced abuse from intimate partners. I performed immigration intakes, wrote affidavits for immigration applications, filed immigration applications (Naturalization, Battered Spouse Waiver, U-Nonimmigrant Status Certification, Employment Authorization Document, etc.), wrote briefs regarding Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and orders of protection, researched specific statutes under the Immigration and Nationality Act, and observed trafficking court. I thoroughly enjoyed direct services in immigration law related to domestic violence.

My clients taught me about life perspective, but two of them, Mimi and Janice¹, made a significant impact on me. They carried themselves with such strength that it was not apparent that they had been in abusive relationships that nearly destroyed them. Mimi’s perspective was bold and empowering. She once said that she had never feared anyone in life, no person or thing. Her abuser was the first person that made her afraid. Yet she, who

¹ Names have been changed to protect the identities of SFF clients.

had experienced so much strife, had resolved that she would never let anyone make her afraid again. She chose strength. In addition to just surviving extreme hardship she took it even further and she continued to hope for a better future. My other client, Janice, boldly left her abuser and simply wanted to work but her immigration status restricted working legally. She only wanted independence from her abuser and wanted to work hard to achieve it. Her attitude was simply work will bring me freedom from abuse.

This summer after working with SFF, I decided to continue working in immigration for domestic violence victims. I observed all my clients, once leaving an abusive relationship, faced further hardship because of their immigration status. The system did not always treat undocumented persons favorably. Mimi and Janice and all my clients solidified my commitment to work with impoverished women in abuse situations. Walking with my clients' through their stories was a privilege and honor. I not only had the opportunity to listen, but also the skills to use their own voice to create a means of relief for them in their immigration situation, providing long-term benefits after my relationship with them had ended.

I'm so grateful for this summer fellowship. It was challenging emotionally. It was a new working environment and a new subject of law, but it was worth all the hard work.

Sincerely,

Binna Yi

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

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