

August 14, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I had the privilege of spending my summer fellowship at the University of Michigan Law School Human Trafficking Clinic. The Clinic provides direct representation to victims of human trafficking on a variety of legal issues including family law, public benefits, immigration, and criminal law depending on the needs of our clients. Over the course of the summer, I represented 15 clients. The diversity of clients and their varied histories with trafficking ensured that there were numerous opportunities to gain valuable experience.

The vast majority of our cases at the Clinic never end up in court, so it was an unexpected opportunity this summer to appear on behalf of a client. One of my clients is a U.S. citizen that was a victim of commercial sex trafficking. An intimate partner that fathered one of her children forced her into prostitution, and over the course of their near-decade-long relationship her trafficker frequently beat her. When she finally managed to escape her situation safely, she obtained a personal protection order against her trafficker that prevented him from any contact with her. Unfortunately, he tried repeatedly to terminate the protective order in an effort to harass her. He was eventually successful in getting a hearing on the issue and served our client with notice only a week before the hearing. The short time I had to prepare for my first court appearance added a great deal of pressure and anxiety, as failing to successfully defend the continuation of the protective order would put my client in danger. This added pressure made my success in keeping the protective order in place all the more rewarding, as I had managed to overcome the time constraints and mental pressures of a first court appearance in order to secure for my client the result she badly needed.

I was thrilled when the judge ruled in favor of my client. She has worked very hard over the past two years to build a new life for herself and her children, and every new attempt by her trafficker to harass her and interfere with her life is another roadblock to her continued success. Unfortunately, due to the child they share, she will never be able to fully extricate herself from ever seeing or interacting with her trafficker again. Luckily, the Clinic will continue to cultivate students that are willing and able to keep fighting on her behalf.

My experience this summer has been extremely rewarding and has provided hands-on advocacy training in a way most students don't get to experience. I feel very lucky that I've been given the opportunity to represent my many clients, and I am pleased to be able to continue representing some of my clients this fall as I continue my work with the Clinic.

Sincerely,

Bradley Novreske
University of Michigan Law School

