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Mr. Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
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Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

Thanks to Equal Justice America's fellowship, I was able to intern at Boat People SOS this summer and serve immigrants and refugees. The majority of the work I performed pertained to immigration, including applications for naturalization or work authorization, letters of appeal to the BIA to bring family members over, and advance parole applications for trafficking victims. I also assisted Katrina victims with MDA or FEMA recoupment appeals.

A curious thing I learned is that while I and my fellow interns found ourselves eager to work on the more challenging, difficult cases, which were admittedly few and far between, it was the simpler, sometimes mundane tasks like filling out applications that provided the most immediate and practical help to the greatest number of clients. What seemed like rote activity to me could actually be incredibly important and vital to a client. This realization and understanding helped me appreciate even the smaller assignments, which previously I might have performed grudgingly only in lieu of more interesting work.

In all honesty, this realization did not come from an epiphany of my own, but from the sincere gratitude expressed by the people I served. At first I found it difficult to believe that such simple tasks would be much needed or even appreciated by anyone. However, while volunteering with coworkers and dozens of other volunteers at a citizenship workshop in Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center, I saw firsthand how meaningful this type of work, even in its most basic form, can be. I had finished helping one couple with their naturalization application and sent them off to have one of the attorneys at the workshop review and finalize the application. I went through 3 or 4 more clients when I looked up and saw the couple walking back in my direction, looking for someone or something. I caught their attention and waved, wondering if something was wrong or if they needed more help. Instead, they simply smiled and shouted "Thank you! It was perfect!" I was surprised and touched by their gratitude, which I thought was completely undeserved but wholly welcome.

Gratefully,



Daryl Kuo
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