

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

August 28, 2009

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to tell you about my wonderful experience working this summer at Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem's immigration services project. The purpose of this project is to advise non-citizen clients of the immigration consequences of criminal convictions and to try to come up with resolutions that will avoid deportation for clients. The project also works in immigration court and at the administrative level for those non-citizen clients who have prior encounters with the criminal justice system.

This summer I was able to work directly with non-citizen clients at risk of deportation. I interviewed clients who were being held at New York correctional facilities and at the immigration detention center at Varick Street. I also conducted translation work for many Spanish-speaking clients.

Additionally, a large part of my summer was devoted to working to secure the release of a severely ill client being held at the Varick Street detention facility. Our client is in the final stages of kidney failure and was not receiving the proper medical treatment in immigration detention. He was also in a significant amount of pain. Through advocacy efforts, and later through filing a habeas petition in federal court challenging our client's detention, we were able to negotiate with the government to release him under a supervised release program. He is now doing well at home in the care of his family.

The human costs of the current policies regarding deportation cannot be overstated. Many long-time permanent residents are being ripped away from their families, friends, and communities based on minor interactions with the criminal justice system. The immigration laws often punish non-citizens much more harshly than do the criminal laws. Despite the difficulty of this work, the victories that we were able to achieve on behalf of our clients made the experience extremely worthwhile and rewarding. I feel confident that this is the type of work that I would like to continue in the future.

Thank you very much for supporting this important work on behalf of immigrant communities in New York.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Carlson
NYU Class of 2010