

August 25, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to thank you for my Equal Justice America Fellowship, and to let you know a bit of what I did at the PAIR Project during my Summer Fellowship experience.

I learned so much in my ten weeks at the PAIR Project. I spent most of my time working with the Pro Bono Detention Manager at PAIR, accompanying him to lead "Know Your Rights" presentations every week at local county jails where the Department of Homeland Security detains non-citizens. There, I conducted intake interviews of detainees to determine if they were eligible to apply for bond, relief from removal, or supervised release. I spent much of my time conducting legal research, contacting family members, and gathering court records and police report to determine whether detainees had viable cases. I wrote case summaries for potential cases to send to pro bono attorneys. I then worked hand-in-hand with pro bono attorneys to prepare bond, LPR and non-LPR cancellation cases.

Working at PAIR and going to detention centers every week, I met incredible people in unbelievable circumstances. I met a detained high school graduate who came to the U.S. as a refugee from Liberia when he was eleven with his entire extended family. I met men who had been in immigration detention over a year after being ordered deported. I met a college graduate and music producer from El Salvador detained for overstaying his visa. Fortunately, I was able to be a part of helping many of the people I met. I researched what options were available to the former refugee given his criminal record, met with his aunt, wrote a summary of his case, and thankfully, a pro bono attorney volunteered to represent him in his non-LPR cancellation case. I worked with a pro bono attorney to apply for bond for the music producer, and in July, he was released. I referred the detainees who had been detained for over a year to a PAIR staff attorney, and then helped her file habeas petitions on their behalf.

During my Summer Fellowship at PAIR, I learned a lot immigration and criminal law, but more importantly, I discovered many misconceptions I didn't know I held about jails and criminals. Before working at PAIR, the idea of walking into a jail frightened me and I had never had a face-to-face conversation with a criminal. Meeting detainees who did not know whether their families had hired an attorney, how their cases were proceeding or how long they would remain in jail, and no way of calling anyone outside of jail, made me reevaluate my life's troubles. It is unbelievable how much uncertainty

and adversity some non-citizens must face for no other reason than their citizenship.

Thank you for my Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship, it helped make my ten weeks at PAIR possible. I couldn't have asked for a more educational, enlightening, and rewarding summer work experience.

Sincerely,

Erin Cox
Boston College Law School, 2010