

August 11, 2010

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

Dear Dan,

I had the honor and privilege of working for LatinoJustice PRLDEF this summer. I worked on three cases during my internship. The first case was a lawsuit against Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for a series of raids that they conducted in 2007 where it appears they targeted Latino populations in Long Island and Mt. Kisco. Beyond the apparent racial profiling, ICE agents egregiously violated people's fourth amendment rights by entering their homes in the early morning hours without judicial warrants or consent by the occupants. As part of my work on this case I was tasked to help prepare two of the children who were present during the raids and traumatized as a result. Gabriela is now a high school student, but she was still in middle school during the time of the raid. I was very impressed by her composure during the prep sessions as we sought to simulate the environment, pressure and questions that she would encounter during her actual deposition. Gabriela did extremely well at following the attorney's directions and I was able to use my previous experience as a teacher to translate some legal concepts that were initially confusing to her (i.e. invoking her 5th amendment right not to answer questions) into something she was able to understand and therefore more comfortable using. I also had to do the same with her brother Carson who was 4 years younger than her. I was also responsible for attending several depositions of the ICE agents who were responsible for conducting these raids and then drafting, revising and distributing summaries of those depositions to all the attorneys responsible for litigating the case so that they could use it for preparation for future depositions, written documents that were submitted to the judge and for overall trial strategy.

The second case I worked on dealt with the policy and practice of a local sheriff in southern Florida of discouraging and denying individuals from posting a criminal bond for individuals who had been granted such a right via a judicial order. The sheriff engaged in this practice and police by erroneously claiming that individuals with an immigration detainer could not be released even when ICE did not take custody of the individuals and the sheriff was not contracted by ICE to hold individuals on their behalf. I was charged with researching the law that deals with immigration detainees, criminal bonds and the consequences of deportation on the exoneration of bond forfeiture in order to help prepare a summary judgment motion in this case. In this case our plaintiff was an individual who was originally arrested for driving without a license and found himself being locked in jail for at this point over 7 months even though a criminal judge has ordered a \$3000 bond that his family and friends have repeatedly have tried to post on his behalf, but have been turned away each time by the sheriff, because he allegedly has an immigration hold that

prevents his release. However, immigration although being notified of the plaintiff's detention by the sheriff has declined to take him into their custody as a result of his immigration status issues. Despite the fact that he surrendered to police authority peacefully in full view of multiple witnesses, he was forcefully brought down by a police officer nearly a foot taller and over a hundred pounds heavier than him. He was also tasered despite the fact that he offered no resistance to the officer. His wife who was holding their baby in her arms at the time of his arrest had a loaded gun trained on her and the child when she verbally object to the unnecessarily excessive force being used to take her husband into custody after he had peacefully surrendered.

The third case I was working on dealt with an ordinance in Long Island that was designed to prevent day laborers from soliciting work from the sidewalks of the streets there. Many of these individuals were hard-working handymen who were trying to exchange their labor for much needed financial compensation so they could provide for their families both here in the US and back in their native countries. I was tasked with exploring their free speech rights as well as the legal distinction between commercial and non-commercial speech.

Working on these cases really highlighted the various injustices affecting Latino and immigrant communities throughout the United States. It filled me with profound sense of urgency for the need of public interest attorneys to represent individuals and communities who are not able to defend and assert their own rights. I also was able to see how the struggle for immigrants' rights is connected to the broader struggle for social justice. It demonstrates a shared fate amongst communities of color and serves to build multi-racial and multi-ethnic alliances. I learned how a broad approach that generates unity amongst these various groups and addresses an issue fundamental to all of them is the most sustainable way for us to achieve broader social, racial, and economic justice. In this regard, immigrants serve as a "miner's canary" for our society, because the injustice they experience is an early warning sign of much larger injustices that threaten all of us. Immigrants' struggles foretell the continued existence of racial, social, and economic problems that threaten the entire country's well being. The recent movement to turn immigration offenses into criminal offenses or criminalizing immigrants will further silence and oppress some of the country's most vulnerable residents, and solidify the existence of an underclass of undocumented persons for whom human rights and basic dignity are too often denied. Participating in the effort to help counter policies and practices such as seen in these cases as well as SB 1070 has inspired me even further to dedicate my legal career to working in public interest law.

August 30, 2010

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

Re: Franco Torres

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Since its formation in 1972, LatinoJustice PRLDEF has been bringing precedent-setting litigation to protect the constitutional and civil rights of workers, immigrants, tenants, and students in the Pan-Latino community. We have led national efforts to combat local and state anti-immigrant ordinances and policies by spearheading legal challenges in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Virginia; testifying in opposition to proposed anti-immigrant ordinances in local and state legislatures; and advocating on behalf of Latino community groups from Florida to Rhode Island.

As the number of Latinos has continued to increase, many local elected officials from city councils to county and state legislatures have reacted forcefully, promulgating misguided ant-immigrant ordinances which in turn fuels anti-Latino sentiment. The result is a climate of fear and sense of instability in many newly emerging Latino communities, especially those in which many Latinos lack lawful immigration status. Anti-immigrant ordinances are part of the concerted effort of some to frighten and push Latinos out of and away from restrictionist towns, suburbs, and cities. Many localities continue to pursue these punitive policies, particularly against employers and landlords to deter them from hiring or housing Latino immigrants.

As a legal intern with LatinoJustice during the summer of 2010, Franco Torres was of great assistance to the legal division's efforts to combat the discriminatory efforts of localities and law enforcement targeting Latinos in emerging communities. He greatly assisted our current litigations efforts in a number of very active cases on our docket ranging from a 1983 action v. Palm Beach County Florida Sheriff for bond interference, to our Aguilar 4th amendment lawsuit challenging ICE's warrantless home raids in NYS; to research in support of our lawsuit challenging the town of Oyster Bay's recently enacted anti-loitering ordinance on 1st amendment grounds.

Franco's unique combination of effective legal researching skills, strong leadership qualities, and Spanish fluency proved a very valuable asset to LatinoJustice's efforts in the aforementioned cases. He gained practical litigation experience, assisting us in preparing a number of clients and witnesses being deposed by the government in the Aguilar case, as well as attending their depositions and those of several ICE agents and then drafting detailed summaries of the testimony. His summaries were comprehensive yet concise, and of great assistance to the lawyers. Franco also provided invaluable research assistance on qualified immunity and bond interference in our Palm Beach case. I incorporated some of his writing on qualified immunity directly into our brief in opposition with minor editing.

In addition, Franco volunteered to be part of an Education Division pipeline program panel speaking to local high school interns visiting our office on careers in the law, speaking on his personal journey. Speaking candidly about his personal background and journey, he was able to make the students who otherwise might be reluctant to ask questions feel comfortable doing so.

Franco has already demonstrated enormous initiative, creativity and leadership in working with grassroots Latino groups while in law school, forming B.U.'S Immigration Law Society and organizing forums on cutting edge issues while also developing a mentorship program with local high school students.

In short, Franco's wide-ranging experience, communication skills, and personal dedication will serve him well in his future endeavors as a practicing attorney. We had a number of conversations over the summer, and I am impressed by his commitment and dedication to pursue a public interest career in immigrants' rights. I firmly believe that Franco's record of accomplishment to date is only the tip of the iceberg and he will continue to accomplish much good in the years to come.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (212) 739-7575 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Jose Perez
Associate General Counsel