

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

August 31, 2011

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Working for Greater Boston Legal Services' Latinas Know Your Rights Project was an incredible learning experience and an invaluable opportunity to serve a community with multiple barriers to accessing legal services. The Project handles family law, immigration and public benefits matters for low-income domestic violence survivors in furtherance of its mission to provide holistic services to its target population.

As an Equal Justice America fellow, I contributed to the ongoing work of the Project and consequently, positively impacted the quality of life for six domestic violence survivors living in the Boston area. I prepared U visa and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petition applications, helping our clients to access the immigration benefits created by Congress for victims of violence. I conducted in-depth interviews with clients, collected supporting documents, drafted client story affidavits, and completed immigration forms.

Due to the unique multi-service nature of the Latinas Know Your Rights Project, I was able to assist one client, K, on many different issues simultaneously. I began working on K's case while my supervisor was representing her in a child custody matter against her abusive ex-boyfriend. While my supervisor handled the pressing family law matter, I began preparing her U visa application, conducting multiple interviews with her about the psychological and physical abuse she has endured and continues to endure. To fulfill a requirement of the U visa application, I advocated with a local law enforcement agency to request that the agency certify K's helpfulness in the investigation of a crime. I collected supporting documents from her friends, doctor and therapist to build a strong case for her application. At the same time, I helped her open a food stamp and cash benefit case for her daughter after she lost her job. K's U visa case is ongoing, but I am hopeful that the project will be submitting a thorough application for this client.

I gained tremendous perspective from working with the Latinas Know Your Rights clients. I feel confident that my work for the Project assisted clients, like K, who might not otherwise have access to legal services due to financial, language, and cultural barriers. I hope my work helped not only to achieve concrete legal ends, but also to empower my clients. My internship, enabled by the Equal Justice America fellowship, solidified my already-established commitment to working with low-income populations. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Jessica Swensen
J.D. Candidate 2013
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