

Dear Dan Ruben,

This fall as an Equal Justice America fellow, I worked at the Sexual Assault Legal Institute in Maryland. During this time, I worked with numerous clients, often by interviewing them, asking questions for attorneys, writing letters, and attending court hearings. Because of the sensitive nature of sexual assault cases, I am not using names or any specific details in this letter.

As part of the internship, I worked with one client in particular whose case really moved me. She was a victim of years of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by her partner. While she wanted to leave, she had been isolated from others and did not have anyone to help her leave. She also had been economically isolated, because her partner did not allow her to have a job or even know anything about their finances. She finally went to a shelter and then began the long legal process to remove her partner from her life and regain control. I conducted the initial intake for this woman and was shocked by what she had been through. Her struggle wasn't easy and we frequently talked with her during my time at SALI. Like many abusers, her partner continued to attempt to exert control over her life through legal, economic, and physical means. While I wasn't there to see the end of her case, I continue to think about her and hope that she will be able to move on from her abusive partner.

What struck me the most about this woman was how much her case reminded me of my paternal grandmother. There were similar patterns of abuse, similar reasons for staying, and similar attempts to leave. The main difference was that my grandmother didn't have the chance to leave my grandfather until much later in her life. There weren't resources to help her and when she did leave, she was constantly harassed and threatened. Seeing the major difference in these two stories makes me realize how important the work we do is and why it can make all of

the difference in the world for survivors of sexual violence. While I couldn't help my grandmother, I was privileged to be there for another woman in a related situation. That is why I do this work and will continue to do it. Thank you to Equal Justice America for making it possible for me to do so while attending law school.

Sincerely,

Jillian Edmonds

Georgetown