

Jose L. Valtzar (Martinez)

August 11, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am pleased to provide this letter summarizing my experience with Texas Appleseed during the summer of 2009.

During the summer, I had the valuable experience and opportunity to work on a comprehensive study and report of the immigration courts of the United States, specifically focused on those located in Texas. The purpose of the study was to gain a thorough comprehension of the manner in which deportation and removal proceedings affect deportable aliens with mental illnesses. Given that deportation and removal proceedings lack many essential procedural safeguards for mentally ill aliens, we also collaborated on policy proposals to amend the procedure during deportation and removal proceedings.

During my internship I prepared memoranda detailing the Procedural Due Process that exists for incompetent defendants within the criminal and civil spheres. The memoranda, in turn, served as a basis to incorporate, adapt, and propose new procedural safeguards for incompetent deportable aliens during immigration proceedings. In addition, I had the valuable opportunity to perform interviews in Spanish for clients of other attorneys who were mentally ill and who underwent deportation proceedings. Finally, my last project constituted in reviewing inter-governmental agreements between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Texas counties, in order to investigate whether said contracts provide express provisions for incompetent or mentally ill alien detainees.

Overall, this internship was highly valuable for me because I not only had the opportunity to practice and develop my research and writing skills; but also had the opportunity to work on utilizing law for the development of policy. I attended various meetings with collaborating attorneys and other organizations to present my individual findings and assist in the drafting of the final report.

I want to thank Equal Justice America for providing financial support during the summer. The funding allowed me to finance basic housing needs and to fully dedicate myself to my internship.

Sincerely,

Jose L. Valtzar (Martinez)
University of Texas, May 2011