

August 30, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I write to thank you for the Equal Justice America Legal Services Fellowship, which supported my internship with the Immigration Law Unit of The Legal Aid Society this summer. My internship was an incredible learning opportunity and provided me with substantial hands-on client interaction. Moreover, it was a rewarding experience that allowed me to help a deserving population navigate our complex immigration system.

The Legal Aid Society's Civil Practice works to improve the lives and communities of low-income New Yorkers by providing legal services across a wide range of areas, including housing, family law, health care, domestic violence, elder law, tax rights, and immigration. As an intern at Legal Aid, I was exposed to many of these areas through seminars or trainings, and saw that many low-income families and individuals need legal help for a variety of overlapping reasons. The need for sensitive and skilled lawyers to assist them is crucial.

I worked in the Immigration Law Unit, which provides consultation and representation on a variety of legal issues immigrants face. I worked closely with my supervising attorney on immigration cases including: U-visa, adjustments of status, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, and citizenship applications. I also worked on five difficult Requests for Further Evidence (RFEs) on these types of cases.

My main focus over the summer was on U-visas. U-visas provide undocumented immigrants an opportunity to apply for status in the United States if they have been victims of qualifying criminal activity, reported the crimes to law enforcement, and helped to prosecute the perpetrators. I met with several clients throughout the summer who fit these criteria, and helped them put their stories down in applications to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. One group of women had been victims of witness tampering when their restaurant manager, the subject of a Department of Labor investigation, threatened them and forced them to sign false statements. The majority of the clients I interviewed, however, had suffered grotesque domestic violence or survived violent assaults.

One of my U-visa clients, a 30-year old man, had suffered a punctured lung when he was beaten by three of his acquaintances. He spent several days in a coma in the hospital and, upon waking, agreed to help the District Attorney prosecute his attackers, who ended up serving jail time. I worked with him to write an affidavit, and was deeply impressed by

his strength and his upbeat demeanor. One day, I accompanied him to criminal court to settle a 10-year old outstanding warrant for his arrest so that we could successfully file his U-visa application.

On another U-visa case, I assisted an entire family in applying for status based on the domestic violence inflicted upon them by the father of the family. The mother and her four children, now between the ages of 17 and 26, had experienced long-term emotional and physical abuse at his hands for years. I crafted a list of questions that would help them explain what had happened in their home. The oldest son called me to say that he and his sisters had sat down with their mother and written out answers to all the questions over one very emotional afternoon. It was the first time they openly talked about the situation and addressed it head-on. I was moved to be given the chance to help encourage this family's healing and to help them through an overwhelming legal process.

My daily interaction with clients at Legal Aid was at times emotional and challenging. My Spanish language skills and my ability to connect with clients improved immensely. I learned important technical skills related to immigration, as well as with respect to client advocacy in general. Overall, the experience was very rewarding.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Julianne Lee

Julianne Lee
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