

August 24, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I was an Equal Justice America Fellow at the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC). I am extremely grateful to Equal Justice America for its support of my internship. As an asylum project intern, I interviewed people facing persecution in their home countries and helped clients apply for asylum in the United States. The experience was hands-on, informative, and intellectually and emotionally challenging.

I arrived at NIJC with an interest in working with low-income immigrants and asylum seekers in need of legal help. I was also eager to see the intersection of direct-service work with the “bigger picture” of litigation and policy. NIJC was the perfect place to experience both of these aspects. My first week there, I had the chance to observe an oral argument at the Seventh Circuit for an asylum case that NIJC subsequently won.

Working directly with clients on a daily basis gave me a clear picture of how our country’s asylum system works and how it affects people in their everyday lives. I interviewed and advocated for clients from countries including Honduras, Eritrea, Kenya, and Somalia. My French skills were particularly useful in communicating with French-speaking clients from West Africa and Haiti. One of the most rewarding experiences I had was helping to represent two boys from Somalia. Both were 17 years old when they arrived in the U.S. after an extremely arduous journey from Somalia. As unaccompanied minors, they were able to apply for asylum at the asylum office in Chicago, rather than being sent directly to immigration court. I met with the boys on several occasions, interviewing them about their life in Somalia, the events that caused them to flee, and their journey to get to the United States. I accompanied one of the boys to his interview at the asylum office and gave the closing statement for his case. It was a great learning experience to be responsible for preparing all the materials to supplement his asylum application, and then to sit next to him during his interview and explain to the asylum officer exactly why he deserved asylum.

In addition to client work, I also completed a number of research and writing projects. One of my first assignments was to write a Freedom of Information Act appeal letter to the Department of Homeland Security requesting more information about terrorism bars that NIJC’s clients increasingly face. Some of my other writing responsibilities included researching and summarizing case law on “whistle-blowers”, drafting a response to a request for evidence for a client applying for Temporary Protected Status, and drafting a motion to change venue a client that had recently moved from Texas.

Finally, my summer at NIJC would not have been the same if it were not for NIJC's dedicated staff. My supervisor was very supportive, but also gave me a significant amount of responsibility. This allowed me to learn quickly and feel confident in my abilities. In addition, I had the chance to work with and get to know a number of other NIJC attorneys. For example, I worked with attorneys in the detention project when I volunteered on a day trip to a detention center in Wisconsin. At the center, we informed detained immigrants of their rights and interviewed those seeking legal representation.

Thank you again to Equal Justice America and its sponsors. My experience as an Equal Justice America Fellow at NIJC is one that will stay with me throughout my career.

Sincerely,

Kara Murphy
Northwestern University School of Law, May 2012



National Immigrant Justice Center

August 24, 2010

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Re: Evaluation of Kara Murphy, Equal Justice America Fellow Summer 2010

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Kara Murphy served as an Equal Justice America Fellow for the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) from May through July 2010. Kara worked mainly within NIJC's Asylum Project and I was her primary supervisor.

Throughout her time at NIJC, Kara had the opportunity to work on various assignments for the Asylum Project. She also learned about the work of other NIJC projects through weekly presentations led by NIJC attorneys on topics such as immigrant detention and relief for immigrant survivors of domestic violence. Kara also participated in a day-long "Know Your Rights" presentation and intake session at a local immigration detention facility. In the Asylum Project, Kara conducted in-depth intake interviews of potential asylum clients and researched the country conditions relevant to their claims. She prepared an affirmative (asylum office) application package for a young man from Somalia who sought asylum and represented him through his interview at the Chicago Asylum Office. She also drafted several other legal documents for submission to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Chicago Immigration Court. In addition, Kara interpreted for French-speaking clients and translated client affidavits and other documents from English into French and French to English. Finally, she updated NIJC's asylum database for the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals by researching and summarizing recent cases at the Seventh Circuit involving asylum claims.

It was a pleasure to supervise Kara in the Asylum Project this summer and I have nothing but praise for the work she did at NIJC. She was always very professional when interacting with NIJC staff and clients and required very little supervision. She demonstrated excellent writing and research skills and quickly grasped new legal concepts without needing significant explanation. As the Asylum Project has many French-speaking clients, Kara's French language skills and her willingness to interpret and translate whenever necessary was also a significant asset. Kara's fellowship at NIJC came at a time when the Asylum Project was undergoing a transition in staff and Kara's ability to take on any assignment, no matter how small or large, was a tremendous help to NIJC as a whole. If you have any questions about Kara's work at NIJC, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ashley Huebner
Supervising Attorney, Asylum Project
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