

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

Summer 2015 Fellowship

August 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you so much for your support of my fellowship with Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition this summer. Working at CAIR was an invaluable experience that proved to be both challenging and rewarding. I am truly grateful to have had the sponsorship of Equal Justice America. CAIR Coalition is the only nonprofit legal services provider offering legal orientation and pro bono representation to detained immigrants in the greater Washington, D.C. region. It was an honor to be part of CAIR's legal team and to serve the low-income immigrant community. CAIR gave me outstanding supervision and mentorship.

This summer, I was a legal intern in the Virginia Justice Program (VJP), the newest project at CAIR. The VJP offers resources and assistance to defense attorneys in Virginia regarding the complex immigration consequences of criminal convictions. It aims to minimize the negative impacts of criminal convictions for immigrants that often include lengthy detention and deportation. Immigration law is notoriously complex, and criminal convictions only create thornier issues. The federal government provides only public defenders in criminal proceedings; immigrants do not have guaranteed representation in immigration court, and indigent detainees are disproportionately unrepresented. My work focused on legal research and writing briefs in support of two detained clients' immigration cases. While I had worked in nonprofit immigration legal services before law school, I had never handled any cases with complicated criminal issues.

One case was particularly difficult—and fulfilling.* Our client was facing deportation after almost twenty years in the United States, and permanent separation from his U.S. citizen children. He legally came to the U.S. as a young teenager with a “green card.” As a result of a criminal conviction, our client was now detained at an immigration detention center in rural Virginia, hours from D.C. We regularly “met” via televideo conference in CAIR's office; detainees “appear” in immigration court via televideo and the technology is often problematic. My supervisor at CAIR told me that we would fight our client's case by arguing that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was wrongly deporting him based on a misclassification of his criminal conviction. If an immigrant is convicted under a state statute

* All identifying client information has been changed.

that criminalizes more conduct than does the federal statute, DHS should not deport him. But after researching the Virginia criminal statute and immigration laws, I honestly did not think that our client could win. It seemed nearly impossible that the immigration judge would terminate our client's deportation.

Over the next ten weeks, I was determined and worked to build the strongest case I could for our client. One problem was that the law kept changing: a few days into my internship the Supreme Court decided a favorable case, and the following day the Board of Immigration Appeals decided a case that completely undermined our client's case theory. But then, just five days before our client's brief was due, the Supreme Court published another groundbreaking decision that indirectly supported our client's case. We worked hard to reframe our brief, using the new case to strengthen our argument. Though we felt more confident in our client's case, we did not know what to expect: immigration adjudications are unpredictable. Another problem was that our client had broken his arm in detention and was not receiving adequate medical attention. He was in extreme pain and could not sleep for weeks.

Finally, it was the day of our client's hearing and I was ready to argue his case. But the judge bluntly denied our client's motion to terminate before we could present the case. The judge sided completely with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, but did not explain his reasoning. I left court completely deflated, knowing that our client would probably be detained for months as we appealed. The next day, I went to visit our client in detention. He still wanted to fight his case to the end, even if it meant staying detained in a lot of pain. I went back to the office and I gave our client's case my all. I wrote a motion for the judge to reconsider his decision, and I hoped for the best. My client's next hearing was scheduled after the end of my internship.

Our client never had his next hearing—instead, he was released from detention just this week because the judge granted his case. It was an amazing feeling to know that our client was finally free, reunited with family, and able to remain in the U.S. and to get medical treatment. I still cannot believe it. Our client's patience and hope was inspirational. My supervisors' commitment to justice was motivational. And Equal Justice America's funding made this opportunity possible for me—thank you. I truly value your mission to support law students in pursuing careers in public interest and to promote representation for those who need it most.

All the best,



Katherine Beck

J.D. Candidate, 2017

Public Interest / Public Service Scholar

American University Washington College of Law



*Working to ensure all immigrants are treated with fairness,
dignity and respect for their human and civil rights.*

www.caircoalition.org

1612 K Street, NW Suite 204 T 202 / 331.3320
Washington, DC 20006 F 202 / 331.3341

August 24, 2015

Via Email (Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org)

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

Re: Katherine Beck – Fellowship at CAIR Coalition

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I write this letter as the immediate supervisor for Katherine Beck (American University Washington College of Law), who received an Equal Justice America fellowship for her work over the summer as a legal intern for the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition. During her internship, Katherine demonstrated a remarkable degree of maturity and aptitude for working directly with clients, a skilled understanding of complex legal topics and a very strong commitment to CAIR Coalition's mission. It was a pleasure to work with Katherine over the summer.

Katherine interned with CAIR Coalition's Virginia Justice Program (VJP), which works at the intersection of immigration and criminal law. Her primary project over the summer was the representation of an indigent Lawful Permanent Resident (*e.g.*, green card holder) who had been convicted of "unlawful wounding" in Virginia and did not have an attorney to assist him in immigration court. With Katherine leading the representation, CAIR Coalition challenged whether a Virginia unlawful wounding statute was properly charged as a deportable "aggravated felony." Katherine drafted lengthy legal briefing in this case and also made two appearances in court. This was a very challenging case that required a nuanced understanding of the ways in which state criminal convictions coincide with the grounds of deportability under immigration law. Additionally, during the course of the case, two intervening decisions from the Board of Immigration Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court significantly altered the scope of the analysis, requiring substantial changes to our argument. Katherine approached the challenging legal questions with enthusiasm, confidence and willingness to spend long hours, including working over the course of a weekend, to make sure the brief was the best possible work product for the client.

Katherine's work on the unlawful wounding case stood out not only for her superb legal analysis but also for her innate ability to connect with the client and make him feel like his best interests were being served. Katherine needed almost no supervision when she met with the

client, and I quickly came to realize that, in terms of attorney-client relations, Katherine is just as skilled as many attorneys who have been practicing for 4-5 years. Our client had significant medical concerns that surfaced during the scope of our representation and Katherine went out of her way to ensure that those concerns were addressed with the appropriate medical staff at the client's place of incarceration. At the end of the summer, the client was very sorry to see Katherine leave and repeatedly remarked how much he appreciated Katherine's work.

Katherine's ability to relate to clients was evident in all of her work during the summer. She assisted with the representation of a Spanish speaking client before the Board of Immigration Appeals and developed a similar bond with that client in a short period of time. She also excelled at advising clients during a two-day visit to one of the detention facilities at which CAIR Coalition provides "know your rights presentations" and brief case consultations. For some lawyers, interacting with the clients is a challenge. For Katherine, given her lengthy professional background, it is a skill that comes with ease and that will serve her throughout her career.

Katherine also helped with a number of additional legal research and writing projects. What stands out about Katherine's legal analytical ability is the thoroughness of her research and her willingness to tackle very challenging legal issues. I knew that I could rely on her to provide a work product that represented a very diligent effort to uncover all the applicable case law and other legal precedent. As a supervising attorney, working with someone whose research you can rely upon is invaluable and highly appreciated.

Working with Katherine over the summer showed me that she has an exceedingly bright future in the law, and I very much look forward to watching her grow as an attorney. She has a firm commitment to public interest law and an innate ability to relate to those who are most in need of legal services. Her future colleagues will be truly fortunate to work with, and learn from, Katherine.

Please contact me should you have any further questions.

Very truly yours,



Morgan Macdonald