

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director at Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I had an excellent experience interning at the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project this summer. Unlike people going through the criminal justice system, people being deported under the immigration law are not appointed attorneys by the government. Instead, they have to pay for their attorneys, and in turn, more than 80% of people being deported go through their immigration proceedings without representation. We are like the public defenders office of the civil immigration law system in that we provide free legal services to those people who cannot afford attorneys. I worked with men and women aged 19 to 65 from all around the world. While the majority of clients were from Mexico and Central America, I also worked with people from Vietnam, Thailand, and Ethiopia.

This summer, I completed the intake process and discussed available relief options for approximately fifty clients. This included taking down each client's personal information and immigration history so that I could assess whether they qualified for any form of immigration relief. I also met with about fifty other clients more than once over the summer to follow-up on their immigration case. I helped four clients in their fight to win asylum here in the United States in order to evade the persecution of domestic violence back in their home country. I wrote a legal brief that will be used for all future clients who are trying to get asylum here in the states due to being victims of domestic violence back home. This brief attacks a legal argument that immigration judges have been using to justify their denial of asylum claims such as these. Two clients of mine won Legal Permanent Resident Cancellation of Removal, and are therefore allowed to stay in the United States and keep their green card. I assisted six clients in finding police reports for crimes in which they have been victimized, so that they may apply for U-Visas, however I was only able to locate one police report in total. I also helped one client who was

ordered removed to Vietnam seven months ago, back in January 2012 but is still detained because Vietnam will not issue him travel documents. I filed a Habeus Petition for him, asking the court to release him as he has been detained for over six months after a deportation order.

I helped two clients prepare their asylum cases in depth; both were victims of domestic violence in El Salvador. I first cut down and translated into English their personal declaration describing their experience and history of domestic violence back home in El Salvador. Then, I made copies and filed it with the court. I then translated this back to Spanish, so that they would know exactly what we filed with the court. Then, I helped them gather documentation such as birth certificates and restraining orders, and I translated these to English and filed them with the court. I wrote a legal brief arguing that these people are members of a particular social group, which is one element that needs to be proved in order to win asylum. I filed these briefs with the court. Lastly, I helped the clients prepare and practice their testimony before their hearings. I pretended to be the judge and asked them questions, so that they may practice what they are going to say in front of the judge. For one of the clients, I also researched bars to asylum, as she already gained legal status in another country after fleeing El Salvador. Thank you for helping me accomplish my goals this summer.

Sincerely,  
Katya Lancero  
James E. Rogers College of Law, 2014  
\*I transferred from Suffolk University Law School\*