

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

Dear Dir. Ruben,

My name is Keneshia Washington, and I am a third year at the University of Texas School of Law. This summer I worked as clerk for American Gateways, a non-profit organization that provides free or low-cost legal services to immigrants in Central Texas. My experience with American Gateways enabled me to live life as an immigration lawyer and was one of the most rewarding opportunities that I have ever had. I worked on asylum cases, criminal cases, and cases involving crimes against immigrants in the United States. The opportunity to serve my own clients was simultaneously eye opening and fulfilling.

Working on asylum cases allowed me to learn from the experiences of my clients and do work that provided tangible benefits for them. While working on asylum cases, I listened to the stories of my clients' lives and prepared an application for asylum status based on these stories. Comforted by the confidentiality inherent in the attorney-client relationship, my clients shared the most traumatic and intimate aspects of their lives with me. The fact that they were here in the United States fighting for a better life after enduring such strife is truly inspirational. Also, the trust that they had in me as a person and my capacity as a legal clerk taught me the value of an attorney's role in the lives of clients, especially for refugees.

Working with criminal cases gave me a well-rounded perception of immigration work. I prepared briefs for criminal clients and accompanied a staff attorney to court to represent a client regarding criminal issues. Watching the staff attorney fight ardently for her client, in spite of his

criminal background, taught me that judgmental attitudes have no place in an attorney's work. Every client needs our help on some level, and it will be my job as an attorney to help my client to the best of my ability, without condemnation for his actions. I had this lesson in mind as I prepared my brief for my client, and this lesson inspired me to think with creativity and work with diligence to help my client.

Working on the case about crimes committed against immigrants in the United States, I was exposed to the extent of immigrants' vulnerability to the legal system. I listened to my client's story about her escape from poverty and domestic abuse and prepared her application for a visa based on her story. Listening to her fear of contacting the police or neighbors because of her undocumented status in the United States illustrated to me the perils that some immigrants must face. Without the help of immigration attorneys, some immigrants are at the mercy of smugglers and abusive spouses because they fear seeking the very police protection that most U.S. citizens take for granted.

Thank you so much for your contribution to my pursuit of career as an immigration attorney. Without you, I would not have been able to have such a rewarding experience.

Sincerely,

Keneshia Washington  
Univeristy of Texas School of Law  
J.D. Expected in May 2010