

August 12, 2008

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I worked at the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic at Greater Boston Legal Services. I worked with an attorney that specialized in refugee and juvenile cases, and I spent my summer helping clients attain legal status in the United States. Overall, I found my experience to be incredibly satisfying.

The clients that I helped through asylum had run afoul of the government of their home countries. One family, for example, was Iranian and had become interested in Christianity in Iran. They began attending Christian bible study groups and bought a Christian bible written in Farsi. Soon the father and son were arrested, tortured, and charged with apostasy, which is punishable in Iran by death. When the father and son were released on bail, they fled the country with the mother and daughter and sought refuge in the United States.

My supervising attorney filed affirmatively for asylum with the Department of Homeland Security but the family was rejected and referred to immigration court for removal proceedings. The only remaining option to keep the family in the United States was to claim asylum defensively before the immigration judge. In a hearing that I attended, my supervising attorney successfully raised an asylum defense, allowing the family to remain in the United States. They will be eligible to become legal permanent residents of the United States one year from the date the immigration judge granted them asylum.

The juvenile cases that I worked on revolved around a method of attaining status for unaccompanied minors in the United States called Special Immigrant Juvenile. These children had been detained by the Department of Homeland Security and paroled into the United States with removal proceedings pending against them. Like with asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile can be affirmatively filed for or used as a defense against removal proceedings. I was involved in both types of cases.

One example of a juvenile case that I worked on involved a Tibetan child who had been smuggled into the United States at the behest of his parents. His story was incredibly poignant. He grew up mostly alone for his father worked in a distant city and his mother was often away visiting his father. He was thus forced to fend for himself from a very early age. When he was fourteen year old, his parents informed him that he would be

traveling to the United States. Although he did not want to leave his home, his parents gave him no option. They employed smugglers known as ‘snakeheads’ to transport him to the United States. Despite the help from these smugglers, because he did not have any documentation, he was detained at the airport when he arrived in the United States and then paroled into the United States with removal proceedings pending against him. The snakeheads that his parents employed expected him to repay them by working in the U.S. His inability to repay them put him in significant danger. Although I did not stay to see to final disposition of this case, helping people in such dire predicaments was enormously satisfying.

Overall, I found my summer experience to be not only rewarding but to be great training for my future career as an attorney. Although I do not plan to practice immigration law in the future, the skills I learned pertaining to handling cases and dealing with clients and courts will be enormously valuable to me in the future. I am very thankful to Equal Justice America for helping make this internship feasible from a financial perspective.

Sincerely,

Liam Ryan  
Boston University School of Law  
J.D. Anticipated 2010