

August 29, 2014

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My name is Marie Silver, and I was one of the EJA fellows this past summer. I worked as a legal intern at the Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights, a non-profit organization located at the University of Chicago Law School. I worked under the supervision of Director Maria Woltjen, Associate Director Elizabeth Frankel, and Staff Attorney Jajah Wu. I also spent two weeks of my internship working out of the Young Center's office on the border, in Harlingen, Texas, under the supervision of Attorneys Elizabeth Rieser-Murphy and Shalyn Fluharty.

My experience working for the Young Center was really fantastic. I worked as a Child Advocate for five different unaccompanied immigrant children, and I completed various research projects and memos. Because the crisis on the border involving unaccompanied children came to a head this summer, and because the Young Center works exclusively with and on behalf of these children, a lot of my work focused on policy research and advocacy in response to the crisis. The larger projects I worked on were a memo on expedited removal and why it is an inappropriate response to the humanitarian crisis at the border and should not be applied to unaccompanied children, a memo on the Roma unaccompanied children who have been assigned Child Advocates by the Young Center, and Best Interests recommendations and advocacy on behalf of my five assigned children.

The Young Center also graciously paid for my flight to visit and work out of their office on the border in Harlingen, Texas, for two weeks. While there, I worked with individual unaccompanied children who are or have been detained in Texas, I attended a state government Human Trafficking Committee hearing and a couple other meetings with different stakeholders, I volunteered at one of the shelters for immigrant families, and I generally aided the staff attorneys with whatever work they were doing.

While I cannot provide very specific details about the cases of the five children I worked with individually due to confidentiality concerns with this population, I can describe generally the ways in which I worked to help them this summer:

Four of my assigned children were detained in facilities contracted by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) during the summer—three in Chicago and one in Houston. The fifth had already been released to a family member. I got to know the children either by visiting them weekly while they were detained or by calling them weekly by phone or via Skype. After we had gotten to know each other and I had a chance to review their files, my colleagues at the Young Center and I discussed and decided on ways we could advocate for their best interests. For one child, this meant helping to facilitate his trip to Canada to be reunited with his father and writing a Best Interests letter recommending and arguing that, under international and U.S. law, his removal proceedings should be terminated. For another, it meant writing a recommendation for a psychiatric evaluation. For a third, it meant helping her understand the different legal

remedies available to her so that she could decide which she wanted to pursue with her attorney. These are just a few examples of the kinds of support and advocacy I provided the children.

I loved my work with these children, and I am currently still serving as their Child Advocate, as a volunteer with the Young Center. One of the reasons I want to continue helping as a Child Advocate is the inspiring commitment and passion that the attorneys who work for the Young Center have for their work. Despite how difficult this summer was for people and groups who advocate on behalf of unaccompanied children, each one of the women I worked with at the Young Center exhibited incredible energy and determination. They all really believe in this cause, just as I do, and it was fantastic to work with likeminded, passionate individuals. They do an amazing job advocating in creative and innovative ways to overcome the numerous barriers unaccompanied children face.

Another reason I want to continue as a Child Advocate, and the main reason the work I did this summer meant so much to me, is the resilience and spirit my five assigned children display despite the immense tragedy and hardship they have experienced. Each one of these kids has experienced so much trauma and strife, but each one is able to smile, laugh, reflect, improve, and love. They are such wonderful people already, and they deserve all of the help they can get.

I have learned so much from my fellowship experience. Working with the Young Center has taught me what policy advocacy is really about, and also what it means to be a Child Advocate as compared to directly representing children as an attorney. I am thrilled that I will be able to continue this work, and I know my new connections and knowledge about the situation currently confronting unaccompanied children will serve me well in my work with this population in the future. I am so thankful that Equal Justice America enabled me to have this experience and do the work I love this summer. Thank you so much for everything.

Sincerely,

Marie Silver
J.D. Candidate, 2015
DePaul University, College of Law



August 27, 2014

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Marie Silver, Equal Justice Works Fellow

Dear Dan,

This summer, we had the pleasure of working with Marie Silver, a rising third-year student at DePaul University College of Law. We were delighted to have Marie on board, and she impressed all of us with her work ethic, expertise, and her passion for helping the immigrant children we advocate for.

By way of background, the Young Center runs a clinic at the University of Chicago Law School where we assign trained, bilingual students to serve as Child Advocates, or best interests guardians *ad litem*, for unaccompanied immigrant children. These are children who have arrived in the United States without their parents and who are detained by the federal government. Law students are assigned to work with individual children and must identify and advocate for their best interests with federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Justice.

During her short time with us, Marie served as the Child Advocate for five children detained in Chicago and Harlingen, Texas. As Child Advocate, Marie was responsible for meeting with the children, learning their stories and then advocating for their best interests with federal decision-makers, including immigration judges and officials. Prior to her law school career, Marie worked with unaccompanied children in a different role, and she was able to utilize her knowledge and expertise in her cases.

Marie's cases were challenging, involving traumatized clients, complicated legal issues, and stakeholders spread across multiple countries. Marie handled all of her cases superbly, connecting with her clients, gaining their trust, and advocating for them zealously at all levels, from their immigration cases to their well-being and safety. Her cultural sensitivity and language skills were crucial factors in her success, but her empathy and dedication truly allowed the children to connect with her. Marie was also incredibly resourceful, and undertook the responsibility of gathering information from her clients' families overseas – always a difficult part of the work.

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Marie is also an excellent writer, and honed her ability to craft strong arguments throughout the summer. Marie prepared Best Interests Recommendations (BIRs) for the immigration court and other agencies in support of her clients' cases. Marie crafted strong legal arguments and described detailed country conditions. In one case, Marie's BIR on behalf of a teen persuaded the Department of Homeland Security to release him from federal custody, instead of taking into adult detention, on his 18th-birthday.

Throughout the summer, Marie actively sought out opportunities to broaden her base of knowledge. She expressed interest in working with children at the border at our Harlingen, Texas office, so we arranged for Marie to spend two weeks there. Marie provided significant on-the-ground assistance to our office in Harlingen, Texas, and served as Child Advocate for two children, both complicated cases.

In addition to conducting legal research to assist the Young Center and serving as a Child Advocate, Marie had the opportunity to interact with key stakeholders in South Texas. On July 24, 2014, Marie accompanied Young Center Supervising Attorney Shalyn Fluharty to testify before the Texas Joint Interim Committee to Study Human Trafficking, where the Young Center presented testimony regarding child trafficking victims who live in, or are detained in, the Rio Grande Valley. Lastly, Marie had the opportunity to accompany detained immigrant children who appeared before the Immigration Judge in Harlingen, and to observe their removal proceedings.

Marie's superb work demonstrates her character, intellectual ability, and empathy for her clients. Marie is bright and hardworking, and we know that she will be an attorney who brings real and significant change to the lives of her clients. We were so fortunate to work with Marie this summer, and would eagerly welcome her back.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at 773-702-0349.

Sincerely,

Maria Woltjen
Executive Director

Jajah Wu
Staff Attorney