

August 6, 2010

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

For the past ten weeks I was a law clerk at American Gateways, a non-profit immigration organization. I was involved with a wide variety of tasks, so I was able to see the immigration process at many levels. I had my own clients for whom I was able to fill out various applications. I visited two immigration detention centers, where I was able to see the lack of due process that most immigrants face. I also successfully argued a bond hearing before an Immigration Judge in San Antonio. The client, who had suffered severe domestic violence for the past ten years, was released of her own recognizance into the care of Casa Marianella, a home for refugees and asylum seekers. My experience with American Gateways at times was trying, but it was also inspiring. Looking back at my internship I learned much more than I could have ever hoped for.

The highlight of my experience involved one of my U Visa clients, a Mexican woman who had been a victim of domestic violence. At our first meeting she was very distraught and could not stop crying. She was very depressed because of the physical and emotional abuse that she had endured for so long from her spouse. Any mention of his name and her eyes would well up with tears. In addition to the suffering she had long endured, she was also bewildered by the immigration process and was under the constant fear of arrest and deportation. She wanted to obtain legal status because her son was a United States citizen and she feared losing custody of him if she were deported. She was very confused by the immigration process so she was initially hesitant to go forward with applying for her U Visa. However, as we continued to meet, her questions became more informed and she seemed much more confident. When I asked her about this, she told me that she had been reading everything she could find about the U Visa process. In addition, she had finally stood up to her abuser and told him to get out of her life. I knew what this woman had suffered and I knew how much it took her to stand up to her abuser and take control of her life. She told me that in meeting with me she had felt more empowered and wanted to make a better life for herself and her children. It was amazing to me that the little steps I was taking to help her get legal status had become giant leaps for her own life. I am proud to say that I sent out her completed U Visa application and we are now waiting for her response.

The U Visa client I discuss above is only one of the many clients I interacted with throughout the summer. I submitted a U Visa application for another victim of domestic violence and almost finished a U Visa Adjustment. In addition to these clients, I also interacted with immigrant women detained at the T. Don Hutto Detention Center in Taylor, TX. There, I would provide them with consultations concerning their cases, listen to their troubles, and help them fill out the necessary paperwork for their asylum applications. In addition to my work at the detention center, I also performed a variety of intakes with asylum seekers throughout the summer: I spoke with Nepali men seeking political asylum and a woman seeking asylum from El Salvador, just to

name a few. Overall, I learned a lot from interaction with these clients. I learned about the terrible things that many people face in their home-countries, and the hardship they endure just to get to the United States. I learned of the severe domestic violence suffered by many Central American women, and their countries' inability to do anything to protect them. I learned about the political turmoil occurring in Nepal and the intense violence which many people suffer both at the hands of the Maoists and the hands of the national police. This experience deepened my understanding of the suffering that many people endure, making me evermore grateful for the gifts I have in life, and deepening my determination to use the law to help those in need.

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to complete this fellowship with funding. It made a tremendous difference for me to be able to do the work I was doing without having to also worry about my own personal finances. Being a budding lawyer with public interest aspirations can be a daunting thing, so it is comforting to know that there are organizations such as yours that will support me on my journey. Your support is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Martha Buttry
J.D. Candidate for 2012
The University of Texas School of Law



AMERICAN GATEWAYS

Legal Services for New Americans

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Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

RE: EJA Fellowship for Martha Buttry

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is in regards to Martha Buttry's summer clerkship at American Gateways. American Gateways is a non-profit organization that provides services to immigrants in Central Texas. Martha has spent the previous ten weeks at our office in Austin, TX assisting us with a variety of tasks.

Martha's primary assignment was the management of three cases. Martha performed the initial intakes for each client and met with them numerous times to prepare their visa applications. She proceeded to complete the necessary immigration forms and to compile all supporting documents. Martha has sent out two U Visa applications and an application for a U Visa Adjustment.

In addition to her work with clients, Martha accompanied me to the T. Don Hutto Detention Center every Thursday. There she provided consultation to the immigrants who are currently being detained there. Martha also traveled to the South Texas Detention Center to observe and participate in the Legal Orientation Program.

Martha successfully argued a bond hearing before an Immigration Judge in San Antonio, TX. The hearing was successful and the client was released of her own recognizance. In addition to arguing the case before the IJ, Martha prepared all necessary paperwork that had to be presented to the court.

Martha has also been involved with a variety of other tasks. She has assisted me with a very difficult case concerning a Cuban individual attempting to adjust his status. She has also helped with a variety of asylum cases: researching Nepalese country conditions; performing intakes with asylum-seekers; and interacting with an asylum seeker who had recently relocated to Massachusetts.

Finally, Martha wrote a brief memo discussing the circumstances in which "alien smuggling" is considered an aggravated felony. For this memo she was responsible for both navigating through the Immigration and Nationality Act and also for reading cases from the 5th Circuit and the Board of Immigration Appeals.

Martha is incredibly capable, responsible, and is a pleasure to work with. She will be sorely missed! I counted on her to complete very difficult tasks and she did not let me down once. Thank you for bringing this tremendous talent to our organization this summer.

Warm regards,

Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch
Supervising Attorney