

208 Carl Becker House
Ithaca, NY 14853

August 19, 2005

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

First, I want to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to serve as a legal intern for Safe Horizon's Domestic Violence and Immigration Law Projects. I had the privilege of working with some amazing mentors in public interest law and gained invaluable knowledge and skills that I will utilize in my future career in international public health and human rights.

During the first week of my internship at Safe Horizon, the attorneys organized a five-day training in which I learned the necessary rights and legal remedies available to victims of domestic violence. Specifically, I learned the functions and jurisdictions of the New York Family, Criminal, and Integrated Domestic Violence (IDV) Court systems. In addition, I learned how to interview clients and field legal intake calls from individuals who had been victims of violence and were seeking some form of legal remedy. Moreover, the attorneys explained the statutes, case law, and intricacies relevant to our work surrounding issues such as orders of protection, custody, and visitation, child support, public benefits, divorce, and paternity. Finally, the training covered additional relevant topics, such as stalking, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) petitions and visas for crime and trafficking victims.

For the next nine weeks, I worked under the supervision of the shelter attorney and also shadowed the director of the Safe Horizon law projects. I was fortunate to work with shelter clients in the family and IDV courts in each of the five boroughs of New York City. Among my many projects, some were successful and are highlighted below.

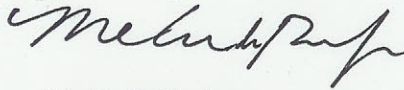
First, I drafted a motion to modify custody and visitation for a client whose husband continued to harass and threaten her during the scheduled pick-ups and drop-offs of their child. The case was extremely complicated and my supervisor had picked it up after the client had appeared before the court several times without an attorney. The judge reconsidered her previous decision, recognizing the batterer's use of her court order to continue the abuse. In addition, I advocated on behalf of the client to investigate more than \$40,000 worth of credit card fraud that her husband had committed against her and to help her receive emergency public housing.

Next, I drafted a motion to modify a family offense petition through numerous interviews in Spanish with a client who was a victim of physical, psychological, emotional, economical, and sexual abuse at the hands of her husband. The client was undocumented and her husband had used this information to keep her from leaving her abusive

Before beginning my internship, I was nervous at the prospect of working with victims of domestic violence because I thought I was too squeamish and it would upset me. I was surprised at how I was able to balance being sympathetic with maintaining enough of a professional distance to allow me to do my job.

Lastly, I very much enjoyed working with the other attorneys, administrators, and interns in the office. The environment was laid-back and friendly. Furthermore, my supervisor gave me a lot of responsibility, and always made himself available to talk with me about my cases. I am grateful to Equal Justice America for supporting the work I did this summer at Land of Lincoln.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Melinda Podgor".

Melinda Podgor
University of Illinois College of Law
May 2006