

May 31, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to reflect on my spring internship with The Door's Legal Services office. I wanted to intern at The Door because I wanted experience working directly with clients in an environment that cared about holistic advocacy. My experience at The Door was invaluable and undoubtedly the most rewarding part of my first year of law school. After my internship, I am even more committed to devoting my career to public service.

At The Door, I worked with young people who were eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). SIJS is a way for young people (up to 21 years old in New York) to get a green card and become lawful permanent residents of the United States. These children are eligible to apply for SIJS if a family court judge decides that reunification with one or both of their parents is not viable due to abandonment, neglect, abuse, or something similar such as death. If the family court judges finds this along with finding that returning to the young person's home country is not in his/her best interest, the person can apply for SIJS through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The Door represents young people both in their family court hearings and in their immigration cases. I worked with many young people who had no family in the U.S. and who were struggling to support themselves. One of my first clients was a young woman from Haiti who came to the United States after the devastating earthquake in her home country. Her father had completely abandoned her and she had not spoken to him in years. Her mother was unable to support her and was homeless in Haiti. This young woman had fortunately found a support system through her school and was referred to The Door by a teacher. I was able to work with her to put together her case for family court where she testified beautifully about her life in front of the judge. We then prepared her immigration applications together and she is now awaiting her green card. Her story represents the millions of courageous young immigrants who are pushed from one home to another while just trying to survive.

Another client that stands out is a young man from Jamaica. He came to The Door because he was being locked out of his home and was sleeping on the subways. He was certainly eligible for SIJS as his parents had neglected and abandoned him at a very young age. Because of The Door's commitment to helping young people in every aspect of their life, however, his work with us did not end in the legal services department. His imminent risk of homelessness meant that I took him to the Runaway Homeless Youth office at The Door to help him learn about shelter options. His inability to get enough food was remedied as The Door provides free meals to young people. In fact, everything

he needed was under that one roof: free medical and dental care, free laundry, free showers, free metrocards, free job training, free GED classes, and free legal help. This client's journey through The Door reminded me that legal services are just one element of client work and that frequently, what a client needs is more than a lawyer but an advocate in every sense.

The young people at The Door inspired me with their bravery and their resilience. The legal staff at The Door similarly inspired me with their tirelessness and their passion. I feel so lucky to have spent my spring semester at The Door and will take the lessons that I learned with me throughout my legal career.

Thank you so much for funding my experience at The Door.

Sincerely,

Molly Lauterback

May 28 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing regarding Molly Lauterback's spring internship at The Door. I am a staff attorney at The Door and was Molly's supervisor during her internship. Molly was fantastic to work with and she demonstrated levels of competence well above those of most first year law students. I felt confident trusting her with difficult tasks and working with my more challenging clients. Additionally, her passion for working with the population of young people we serve was apparent and I could tell how meaningful the internship experience was to her.

Many of my clients are from West Africa or Haiti and are French-speaking. Molly originally came to The Door to help us with French translation for these clients but she demonstrated such enthusiasm for the work and the ability to connect with clients that I soon began trusting her with tasks beyond translating. Her work was instrumental in dozens of cases. For example, Molly, on her first day, translated a letter from French to English from a father of one of my young clients. The father sent the letter to the client's caregiver in the United States to ask if the caregiver could send the 9-year-old girl back to Africa to be circumcised. The father stressed that he would not keep the child in Africa; he only wanted to make sure she was circumcised. Molly's translation of that letter helped our office show the family court judge that our client was at risk of serious bodily injury or death in her home country and needed to stay in the United States.

As stated above, Molly's internship with us quickly went beyond French translation. She bonded easily with our clients and I felt comfortable having her work with them from their first intake appointment until their final Adjustment of Status interview at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Molly established a great rapport with the young people and was frequently emailing clients after her internship hours ended for the week to check in on them and answer their questions. In fact, even though Molly's internship with us has ended, she has made me promise that I will email her when certain clients come in the office so she can stop by and say hello to them.

Having Molly as an intern enabled our office to serve even more young people and change their lives in ways that would have been impossible otherwise. For example, Molly interviewed one client and she quickly realized that the young person was eligible to receive services through our office. This client, however, turned 21 within three weeks, which is the age when green card eligibility expires for the type of immigration he qualified for. Molly came to the office multiple times those three weeks despite having a very busy academic schedule to meet with this young person. Because of Molly's

dedication, enthusiasm and assistance, we were able to complete the family court process in time and mail her immigration applications prior to her 21st birthday. This client just received her green card!

Molly accompanied me to family court and immigration interviews. She was professional and, more importantly, personable. She was very curious about the different legal scenarios raised in family and immigration court and we often had long conversations about legal strategy. These conversations often helped me solidify legal arguments or look at an issue in a new way.

In sum, it was a pleasure having Molly as an intern in our office. She was not only a great intern, but I now consider her a friend and I sincerely miss having her around the office.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Heller