

August 29, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you very much for allowing me to participate in the Equal Justice America Summer 2016 Fellowship. I completed an eleven-week internship with the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project in Florence, Arizona.

The Florence Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit legal service organization that provides free legal services to men, women and unaccompanied children detained in immigration custody in Arizona. Although the government assists indigent criminal defendants and civil litigants through public defenders and legal aid attorneys, it does not provide attorneys for people facing deportation charges. The Florence Project strives to address this inequity both locally and nationally through direct service, partnerships with the community, and advocacy and outreach efforts.

As an intern with the adult team, I spent about 50% of my time in the three detention facilities in the area directly working with clients. About 2-3 times per week, I would conduct initial intake interviews following the Know Your Rights Presentations to screen individuals for potential forms of immigration relief. I would then conduct follow-up client meetings inside the detention centers as necessary. I also had the opportunity to complete interesting writing projects mainly on crim-imm issues to argue that our clients' prior criminal convictions did not make them deportable. During the last few weeks of my internship, I had the opportunity to directly represent two clients in their bond hearings at Eloy Immigration Court.

One of the clients I represented at her bond hearing was a 19-year-old female from Mexico. This client came to the U.S. when she was only 4 years old. Her whole family currently lives in the U.S. including her mother, sisters, brother, and daughter. Nonetheless, she was recently put in removal proceedings due to prior drug paraphernalia charges she was convicted of in Arizona. Growing up, she was the victim of severe domestic violence at the hands of her father and recently was the victim of intimate partner violence at the hands of her ex-boyfriend. These experiences led to substance abuse problems, which contributed to her criminal convictions. The social workers at the Florence Project helped design a release plan for this client to convince the judge that she will have access to counseling and substance abuse treatment if released. We were able to present all of this at her bond hearing, and it felt great to be involved in such team effort with many members of the office working on her case.

I also worked with a client who recently attempted to enter the U.S. from El Salvador, but was caught in the desert. Immediately prior to making the journey to the U.S. this client was kidnapped and severely beaten by gang members in El Salvador, likely because of the gang's previous failed attempts to extort his mother-in-law. For this reason, he was planning on applying for asylum in U.S., but was denied after his credible fear interview. On the day I met

him at the detention center, he was in imminent danger of being deported since an IJ had already upheld the asylum officer's negative credible fear finding. My supervisor and I were able to quickly file a temporary stay of deportation with ICE so that we could help this client with an appeal to the Ninth Circuit and a request for a re-interview to the asylum office. It felt good to be able to play some role in impacting this client's life by getting his deportation order suspended while awaiting further appeal.

Finally, I worked closely with a client who had been in immigration detention for over 2.5 years, in an attempt for him to be released on bond. I helped collect a number of letters of support and other character reference documents to be submitting with this client's bond request. This client's hearing was set for two weeks after my last day at the Florence Project, so unfortunately I was not able to represent him at the hearing. However, I recently found out from one of my supervisors that he received a \$1500 bond at his hearing, and was expected to be released later that evening.

Prior to this internship, I was committed to working as a public defender after graduating from law school. This internship confirmed my desire to work as a public defender and provided me with a deep understanding of the intersection between immigration and criminal law, which will allow me to represent non-citizen clients as a public defender more effectively. Thank you again to EJA for giving me this opportunity.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kevin O'Sullivan

JD Candidate 2017

New York University School of Law



FLORENCE
IMMIGRANT
& REFUGEE
RIGHTS PROJECT

August 30, 2016

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

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2601 N. Pinal Pkwy
P.O. Box 654
Florence, AZ 85132
Tel: 520.868.0191
Fax: 520.868.0192

Sent via email to: Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

RE: EJA Fellowship of Kevin O'Sullivan

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Children's Program:
202 E. McDowell Rd.
Suite 165
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Tel: 602.307.1008
Fax: 602.340.0596

Web: www.firrp.org

My name is Rekha Nair. I am managing attorney at the adult detention program at the Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project. The Florence Project is a non-profit which provides *pro bono* legal services to men, women, and children who are detained in Department of Homeland Security custody and are in removal proceedings before the immigration courts in Eloy, Florence, Tucson, and Phoenix, Arizona. The Florence Project began in 1989 and currently has a staff of approximately fifty individuals. We provide our services primarily through two programs: our Adult Detention Program in Eloy and Florence and our Children's Project, with branch locations in both Phoenix and Tucson. The Adult Detention Program provided legal services to more than 4,400 detained immigrants in 2015 and our Children's Project provides legal services to more than 7,400 unaccompanied minors in 2015.

EJA Fellow Kevin O'Sullivan was an intern with the adult detention program along with two other law students. The summer internship was approximately ten weeks, beginning on May 31, 2016 and ending on August 5, 2016. Kevin regularly worked more than the required forty hours each week to assist our staff with a variety of projects including conducting intakes with detainees, completing and/or reviewing applications for asylum and cancellation of removal, gathering documents in support of bond hearings, and conducting legal research, and drafting legal briefs. Kevin was eager to learn and regularly sought out additional work to maximize his internship experience.

Kevin expressed a particular interest in the immigration consequences of criminal convictions. He wrote two briefs for me alone discussing why a client's criminal convictions either were not removable offense and/or did not disqualify the client from relief. Kevin also wrote a bond appeal brief and a memo on particular social groups for asylum. Kevin's work was well researched and completed in a timely manner. Moreover, Kevin was open to feedback and incorporated the feedback he received into subsequent drafts and subsequent assignments.

During his internship, Kevin also expressed a desire to provide in court representation and was given the opportunity to represent two women in their bond proceedings before the Immigration Judge. In fact, Kevin agreed to stay on an extra week after his internship ended to complete the second bond hearing. The attorneys who supervised him on each case said he was well prepared and presented a zealous and legally sound argument for bond in each case.



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Fax: 602.340.0596

Web: www.firrp.org

Should you have any further questions or concerns about Kevin's internship with the Florence Project, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at rnair@firrp.org.

Sincerely,

Rekha Nair, Esq.
Managing Attorney
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
P.O. Box 654
Florence, AZ 85132
rnair@firrp.org