

August 13, 2015

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben

I would like to thank Equal Justice America for funding my summer fellowship at Nationalities Service Center, a non-profit in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania providing reduced cost legal services to Philadelphia's immigrant population. Nationalities Service Center serves a broad range of immigrant populations throughout the greater Philadelphia region, and as a result, the clients that I worked with had diverse and wide-ranging legal needs.

With such a diverse client list, every day was a new challenge and a new opportunity to serve my clients. Because the majority of our clients are without lawful immigration status and in precarious positions, I do not feel comfortable divulging too many details about their specific cases. I would, however, like to discuss a specific type of case that I worked on extensively during my summer and the challenges that it presented.

One major type of immigration relief that I spent a considerable amount of time on this summer is the U-Visa. The U-Visa is an incredibly powerful form of relief for individuals who are eligible for it. If someone is a victim of certain qualifying crimes and they are helpful in the investigation or prosecution of that crime, the individual can obtain work authorization and be on the path to receiving lawful permanent resident status. In addition to this benefit, certain family members can be derivative beneficiaries of the relief. This form of relief is very important and can provide hope for undocumented individuals, however, working with these clients was an incredibly challenging but ultimately rewarding experience.

The purpose of the U-Visa is to encourage individuals to report crimes regardless of immigration status. However, this requires a great deal of trust between the undocumented person and the state. The issue of trust between a client and the advocate is always of great import, however, I feel as though it took on added significance when dealing with potential U-Visa applicants. These individuals, many of whom had been the victims of serious crimes, had to decide whether or not it was worth the risk of reporting the crime to law enforcement and potentially obtaining this relief rather than staying in the shadows. By developing a relationship with our clients and building trust, I was able to effectively counsel them to allow them to make an informed decision about their cases and their future.

At the end of the Summer, some of our clients chose to go forward and attempt to gain U-Visa status while others chose not to report their crimes and pursue other avenues of obtaining status, but regardless, building enough trust between myself and the clients to encourage their own autonomy was incredibly rewarding.

At the end of the day, experiences such as these were the reason why I went to law school and why low-cost legal services are so vital. Through my time at Nationalities Service Center I learned what it is like to work with an underserved and

vulnerable population. What was most important for me to learn, however, is how to build trust with clients and help them make an informed decision about their future. As advocates, each of us wants what is best for our clients, but my time at Nationalities Service Center taught me about listening to the needs of the client and helping them reach an appropriate resolution, even if it happens to be different than what I think might be best. My Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship allowed me to hone my skills as an effective legal advocate and will be the foundation upon which my legal career will be built upon.

Sincerely,

Bradley O. Napier

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Class of 2016