

LILIYA PARAKETSOVA
University of Michigan Law School

August 30, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I would like to thank you for the Equal Justice America scholarship. My internship at the University of Michigan Law School's Human Trafficking Clinic was an amazing experience and I am now certain that human rights law is the right legal field for me.

Although the name of the Clinic suggests that the work may be emotionally draining, I found my day-to-day work to be extremely rewarding and uplifting because it consisted of supporting and empowering victims as they move on from their trauma. The Clinic often continues to work with clients for years as it helps them to overcome struggles with immigration, access to public benefits, and past criminal convictions. We represent clients that are both U.S. citizens and immigrants, and the two groups often have slightly different legal needs.

One of my clients had been with the Clinic for multiple years, and had a number of legal issues that the Clinic had previously resolved. She was a victim of sex trafficking, and had been waiting for several years for her trafficker to be charged and sentenced for the crimes he committed against her and other victims. Right before I began my internship, her trafficker had finally been sentenced and sent to prison. So a large chunk of that client's legal issues were finally over; she no longer had to attend the trial or prepare for being questioned; the PPO against her trafficker no longer needed to be renewed every year, and the trafficker will be in prison for such a long period that the custody of their shared child will no longer need to be defended against in court. However, I was able to help my client with a number of other legal issues.

At the start of the summer, she was told by her government benefits agency that they overpaid for her housing, so she would be required to pay that sum back. Through attending a review session with the administering agency, requesting documents from that agency, and reading through all the documents the agency had kept I was able to help my client reduce her repayment agreement and get back rent that she had overpaid because of the agency's mistake. Although the end result was fairly limited, this part of advocacy was very important to my client. By handling most of the interactions with the agency and being a person that was on her side, I was able to take away some of the stress that dealing with her benefits situation caused her.

I also worked to prepare an expungement motion for a crime this client had been convicted of while she was still under the control of her trafficker. To write the factual narrative, I started by reading through all of the old interview notes and memoranda in her case file. I wanted to be extra thorough with my research of her file because I knew that the interview would be traumatic for her, and I wanted to prevent unnecessary trauma. After writing a draft based on notes, I read through everything a second time before coming to the conclusion that I would need to interview the client to get more details about certain events. When I interviewed my client, I explained that these details would help me write a more persuasive motion; but that she did not have to answer any questions if they made her feel uncomfortable. Despite the difficulty of the subject, she answered all the questions, and I was amazed by her strength both because of what she had survived and her ability to communicate her story once again.

Another client I represented was an immigrant, and was a new client for the clinic. She was a teenager that had travelled to the U.S. as an unattended refugee minor from a country in Latin America. I conducted the intake interview with the client, and then evaluated whether the client is a victim of trafficking and the client's legal needs. I determined that she probably was a victim of sex trafficking and was possibly a victim of a separate attempted trafficking incident.

This client's biggest legal need was representation in Immigration Court, as she was in removal proceedings and had a hearing coming up in less than a month. To prepare for the hearing, I tried to track down her caseworkers and attorneys from a state she had lived in previously, which proved to be more difficult than I expected. I was finally able to make contact with an attorney just two days before her hearing and get some necessary information about the client's case. At the court hearing, I entered pleadings on my client's behalf and requested and was granted a continuance from the court in order to pursue an application for immigration benefits. I spent the remainder of the summer researching different immigration visa options for my client, trying to figure out which immigration status would fit her situation the best.

I was also able to help my client in an unexpected way. She had been staying at a foster care facility, and had been unhappy with how long she had been there and the limited freedom she had there. By communicating with her social care worker and the facility, I was able to make my client aware that they were working towards transitioning her to a foster care family. By getting the social worker and facility to be more forthcoming, I was able to provide my client with positive news much earlier in the process.

Thank you again for giving me this wonderful opportunity. I enjoyed my experience so much that I will remain at the Clinic this fall, and I feel fortunate to be able to continue representing a number of my clients.

Sincerely,

Liliya S. Paraketsova
University of Michigan Law School
JD Candidate, 2018



Bridgette A. Carr
Suelyn Scarnecchia
Elizabeth A. Campbell

July 27, 2016

Mr. Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
c/o KATIE@EQUALJUSTICE AMERICA.ORG

RE: Liliya Paraketsova, EJA Fellow

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Liliya Paraketsova spent the summer with the University of Michigan Human Trafficking Clinic. I served as her supervisor. She handled five or six cases at any given time during the summer. Several of them required a good deal of work, including client interviews, research, writing, case updates, and a court appearance. She also did advocacy with various agencies on behalf of her clients.

Liliya's performance was excellent. She was always prompt and worked diligently. Her research skills are excellent and she used them to her clients' advantage on a daily basis. She drafted two significant documents – an analysis of a client's legal options and a client's narrative. Both were complex and required both significant research and client interaction. She worked directly with clients on a daily basis, exhibiting excellent communication skills. She was able to use a variety of means to stay in touch with clients – phone, email, text, and in-person meetings. She was readily responsive to client requests. Her preparation and performance in court were extremely well done.

Overall, Liliya is responsible, intelligent, and organized. She accomplished quite a bit for her clients and I noted that, in addition, she often helped her student colleagues with their problem solving on behalf of clients. She handled supervision well, keeping me informed and responding well to feedback. At the same time, she was able to work independently. I had no concerns with Liliya's performance at all. She learned a lot and she helped her clients very much during her time with us.

We have accepted Liliya into our advanced program to work with us during the fall. Many thanks for your support of this terrific student attorney.

Sincerely,

Suelyn Scarnecchia
Clinical Professor of Law