

August 29, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for the funding my clerkship with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA). With your help, I was able to spend half of my summer at the TRLA office in Mercedes, Texas. During my seven weeks on the farmworker team, I sat in on interviews with clients, researched asylum issues, researched and drafted complaints, and planned and participated in community outreach in the Rio Grande Valley and the Texas Panhandle. I had the opportunity to work with several attorneys and paralegals on the farmworker team, including those in other TRLA offices across the state.

Thanks to this clerkship at TRLA, I was able to see firsthand the issues facing migrant farmworkers, a vulnerable and oft-overlooked segment of the U.S. population. My outreach team spent eight days traveling throughout the Lubbock area speaking with migrant farmworkers and foreign guest workers about their employment and housing rights. We also gave out information about sexual violence and human trafficking.

During the trip, we met with many migrant and seasonal workers and foreign guest workers. We heard stories of mistreatment by growers and farm labor contractors, including not providing bathrooms near the worksite nor giving pay stubs. We spoke with one man who was working 60 hours per week but only making \$300 per week (\$5.00 per hour). We also met some young workers who were living in typical migrant labor housing constructed with sheet metal. The employer charged the workers \$100 a week to live in the unit. We spoke with a woman whose 17-year-old son had fainted while loading watermelons into trucks. He had been taken to the hospital, but the employer did not do anything else to help the family.

If I had not gone on the outreach trip, I would have had a theoretical understanding of the issues facing migrant workers, but I would not have had the experience of seeing their working and living conditions firsthand. Speaking with workers and hearing about the ways they have been mistreated was much more impactful than just reading the law or drafting a complaint without meeting the clients. Thank you again for affording me this opportunity.

Thank you,

Katelin Norris

University of Texas School of Law
Class of 2019

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August 25, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
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13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Sent via email to Katie@EqualJusticeAmerica.org

Re: EJA Fellowship Evaluation for Katelin Norris, Rising 2L at Univ. of Texas School of Law.

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for funding Katelin Norris' 2017 summer clerkship with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA). This letter serves as her end of fellowship evaluation.

With your help, Katelin spent half of her summer (mid-July through 8/24) at the TRLA office in Mercedes, Texas, primarily assisting our statewide farmworker team. During her seven weeks in the Rio Grande Valley, Katelin sat in on interviews with clients, researched asylum issues, researched and drafted complaints. Although Katelin was based in South Texas, our litigation docket tracks our farmworker clients' migrations. Thus, she graciously assisted several attorneys and paralegals on the farmworker team, including those in other TRLA offices across the state. Without her assistance, we would not have been able to serve the needs of as many clients, nor would we have been able to advance their cases so quickly. [Her] efforts helped our clients more quickly achieve access to justice.

One of Katelin's other big contributions was her assistance with planning and conducting outreach with our staff in numerous rural counties in the north Texas panhandle. For several days in advance, Katelin helped us update our research on the agricultural industry throughout north Texas. This included: documenting migration patterns, researching employers who had been fined or sued in the past for legal violations to determine current compliance, noting farmworker housing locations (licensed and unlicensed) and obtaining public information about potential farmworker employment and social services. Once she arrived with our legal team in the Panhandle, Katelin also helped daily to speak with the workers,

provide basic Know Your Rights information, and to document their requests for assistance and our team's investigative findings. This included documenting the extremely poor housing conditions farmworkers are provided, an effort we hope strengthens state enforcement of housing condition laws. Katelin also completed a comprehensive outreach report upon her return, including GPS coordinates and photographs of various worker camps, which will prove essential for follow-up investigations and legal assistance throughout the next year.

In addition to providing high-quality legal assistance, Katelin was a pleasure to have in the office. Our staff appreciated her friendliness and genuine efforts to get to know our community and farmworker culture. She was always willing to assist with an assignment. Her work was timely, thorough and well-edited.

Thank you again for affording TRLA the opportunity to benefit from Katelin's assistance through the EJA fellowship program. We look forward to working with EJA again in the future if we are again afforded the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Daniela Dwyer
Managing Attorney - Farmworker Team
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc.

Cc: (via email)
Susan Law, TRLA HR Director
JLanderos, TRLA Grants
Katelin Norris (Fellow)