

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

I spent my summer interning at the Legal Aid Society's Immigration Law Unit in New York City. I mostly worked on the Unit's New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), which is a public-defender style model that provides free representation to immigrants detained in New York area ICE facilities, but I also did a few assignments for the Immigrant Opportunities Project (IOI), which provides free comprehensive immigration services for non-detained immigrants. In fact, I spent a huge amount of time this summer working on just one case. The case involved a 59-year-old man detained at Hudson County jail. He was a legal permanent resident who had been in the United States for over 42 years. He is originally from Colombia, but has never returned there since he left and does not know anyone there. He was detained by ICE in November of last year because he had some old convictions, including a very minor drug sale, from the early 1990s that made him deportable. When he applied to renew his green card, these convictions popped up and he got on ICE's radar. They barged into his house at 4:00 in the morning and took him to detention at Hudson, where he has been ever since. Even though he is a physically disabled man who suffers from constant chronic pain, the Immigration Judge found that he was a "danger to the community" and denied him bond.

This particular case was very complicated because there were many different aspects to it, including preparing the merits case to be presented in immigration court in September, a bond appeal with the Board of Immigration Appeals, a habeas petition in federal court, a pardon request with the governor, and a 440 motion to reverse his old convictions under NY law. The work that I did for the case included country conditions research on Colombia, legal research

tasks, drafting parts of the brief for the merits hearing, and traveling to Hudson with my supervising attorney to meet with our client and prepare him to give testimony in his hearing.

This case was both incredibly rewarding and difficult to work on. Our client was a kind and gentle man who suffered immensely because of his detention. He did not have access to the medical care that he needed, and his possible deportation to Colombia made him recall very painful memories of his traumatic childhood there. I went out to Hudson about 5 times over the course of the summer to meet with him, and every time left feeling heartbroken. I would often feel outraged that a man like this, who had been a legal resident of this country for over four decades and has multiple US citizen family members, could be treated so unfairly. I thought about how painful his situation was for his family, especially his daughter, who is my age and who I have spoken to several times. Working with this client made me realize how our country's immigration system tears families apart and causes such unnecessary suffering.

While I still do not know the outcome of the case since the merits hearing is not until September, I do feel that I was able to contribute to the work that the Immigration Unit does and I hope that all my efforts will help our client stay in this country. At the very least, I know that I was able to take some of the stress off my supervising attorney, who is absolutely incredible and works so hard for her clients. In the future, I hope that I will be able to continue this kind of work and help clients like ours stay in this country with their families.

Sincerely,

Sophie Kivett  
J.D. Candidate, University of Texas School of Law  
Class of 2019



Immigration Law Unit  
199 Water Street  
New York, NY 10038  
[www.legal-aid.org](http://www.legal-aid.org)  
Direct Dial: (212) 577-3400  
Direct Fax: (646) 616-9212  
E-mail: [munger@legal-aid.org](mailto:munger@legal-aid.org)

August 22, 2017

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

Blaine (Fin) V. Fogg  
*President*

Seymour W. James Jr.  
*Attorney-in-Chief*

Adriene L. Holder  
*Attorney-in-Charge*  
Civil Practice

Hasan Shafiquallah  
*Attorney-in-Charge*  
Immigration Law Unit

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I write this letter regarding Sophie-Ann Kivett's internship with the Legal Aid Society during the summer of 2017. Sophie's internship with the Immigration Law Unit began on May 30, 2017 and ended on August 4, 2017 and she worked approximately 35 hours per week. Sophie was a wonderful legal intern and we are so glad she chose to spend her summer with us.

Most of the work Sophie did this summer was part of the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project, the first universal representation program in the country for detained immigrants in removal proceedings. Sophie focused her work on one removal defense case for a longtime legal permanent resident who was in immigration detention and faced deportation to Colombia. Sophie conducted extensive research in English and Spanish on country conditions in Colombia, researching news articles and human rights reports, to develop our client's claim for protection under the Convention Against Torture and withholding of removal. She helped me work with a Colombia country conditions expert to draft an expert affidavit to strengthen our client's claim. Sophie interviewed family members and drafted supporting declarations. She also drafted sample direct examination questions and helped prepare our client for testimony during his final hearing in immigration court. Sophie also conducted legal research and writing to develop sections of the prehearing brief on protection under the Convention Against Torture, withholding of removal, and the particularly serious crime bar to withholding of removal.

Sophie worked on a couple of other cases this summer. She interviewed an Ecuadorian client who fled his country because of political and ethnic persecution and prepared his asylum application. She conducted country conditions research on Honduras for a client seeking protection under the Convention Against Torture. She also attended three all-day clinics in Brooklyn to help members of the Haitian community renew their Temporary Protected Status and employment authorization. In addition to the expertise she developed through casework on asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture, Sophie attended multiple trainings over the course of the summer dealing with different topics in immigration law.

It was a pleasure working with Sophie. She is clearly committed to public interest law and is especially interested in immigration law and defending noncitizens in removal proceedings. I know she found detention work to be compelling and believe it has motivated her to continue to explore immigration law and the intersection of immigration and criminal law. However, Sophie will be a great lawyer in any field she chooses as she already has many of the skills necessary to succeed as a lawyer: excellent legal research and writing skills, strong communication and interviewing skills, and a strong work ethic.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any specific questions about Sophie's internship with us.

Sincerely,

Mia Unger  
Staff Attorney  
Immigration Law Unit  
Tel.: (212) 577-3400  
Email: [munger@legal-aid.org](mailto:munger@legal-aid.org)