

August 23, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This past summer I worked at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant in Berkeley, California. There I worked with fifteen clients at varying points in their affirmative asylum applications. I drafted seven declarations submitted to USCIS after sensitively interviewing clients about the persecution they faced in their home countries. I represented eight asylum applicants at their final asylum interviews by ensuring due process, asking follow-up questions, and providing closing statements. Finally, I researched and compiled country conditions to prove clients' inabilities to relocate within their home countries.

Working with so many clients was an incredibly rewarding experience. All of my clients experienced trauma at some point in their lives that resulted in conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression. I learned how to ask necessary but thoughtful questions of my clients about their trauma, gathering the information I needed for their claim while minimizing re-traumatization. It was a delicate balancing game, but the attorneys at the Sanctuary taught me various tactics to achieve both ends.

One of my clients was a young man who feared returning to his home country because he was gay. He was outgoing, friendly, and proudly himself. Yet, simply because of whom he was, he had to fear being killed if he was not granted asylum and sent back to his home country. I worked with him over the course of a few weeks. We first worked on his declaration, explaining his story in a way that conveyed the legal nexus. After submitting his declaration, we spent several hours preparing for his final asylum interview. I remember the morning of his asylum interview we met outside of USCIS. Gone was the friendly, bubbly client I knew. Instead, my young client was solemn and reticent, only saying that he thought we were going to lose. I reassured him that he was more than ready for his interview; he simply had to tell the truth and tell his story. My client testified very well and when we left the interview he knew it. He danced around a bit and gave me a huge hug. He re-enacted several questions and answers because of how proud he was of himself. It was inspiring to watch how empowered he felt taking command over his life story. Two weeks later we learned he had been granted asylum. Now, my client will be able to stay in the United States, freer to live as his authentic self.

This client played the largest role in his case, but I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to help in any way I could. Thank you to the Sanctuary as well as EJA for providing me with the funding that allowed me to do so.

Sincerely,
Maya Iyyani
University of Virginia School of Law
May 2018

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31 August 2017

I write on behalf of East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC) to provide a final evaluation for Maya Iyyani. She served as a legal intern during the summer of 2017 and received funding through Equal Justice America. We were very pleased with her work, professionalism, and legal skills during her time with us.

EBSC is an advocacy organization based in Berkeley, California, USA. We have been dedicated to assisting low-income refugees and immigrants since 1982. One of our most robust programs is Affirmative Asylum, which began in 1992, and now serves hundreds of individuals annually from all over the world. We have a small staff, but have served thousands of clients fleeing from persecution in their home countries.

We rely on volunteers and legal interns in order to represent our clients effectively and competently. As a result of an experienced staff and dedicated volunteers and interns, we have a very high success rate in assisting our clients obtaining asylum and other forms of immigration relief.

Maya joined our office this past summer, where she worked on all aspects of affirmative asylum cases, including interviewing potential applicants, filling out immigration forms, helping clients draft their declarations, researching country conditions, researching and analyzing clients' asylum claims, gathering and compiling documents to support clients' claims, and preparing and representing clients at their affirmative asylum interviews. Through the interview and preparing process, she gained fact-gathering and analytical skills. In addition, she learned about personal stories of persecution based as a result of various geo-political and historical conditions.

Maya worked on many cases during the summer. She researched country conditions in Somalia and represented a human rights activist from there. She went to the asylum interview for a lesbian from Mexico and helped her win asylum. She worked with clients from Ethiopia, Guatemala, El Salvador, and other countries.

She did an excellent job. She managed her own caseload, communicated with the clients and staff effectively, met all her deadlines, and submitted high-quality and well-written work. She demonstrated that she has strong legal, writing, and research skills. She also demonstrated that she has strong oral advocacy skills. Maya has a passion and a drive to assist others, and it is clear that she is dedicated to social justice issues.

Sincerely,

/s/

Kaveena Singh
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