

ABIGAIL TWENTER

Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
Building II
Suite 2014
13540 E Boundary Rd.
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am beyond grateful that I was able to serve the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri – Immigration Law Project as an Equal Justice America Fellow. The experience has only reinstated my passion for serving under-privileged immigrants, especially those that are crime victims. I spent a great portion of my time working with victims of domestic violence in establishing U Visa and VAWA petitions for legal status. I was able to attend several trainings and webinars that allowed me to become specialized in this niche, and really develop the skills necessary to serve these victims. This allowed me to more accurately complete the petitions and to interact with victims through interviews and progress meetings.

There were two immigrants in particular in which I became familiar. One immigrant was from South America and had been dating a U.S. citizen for a few years over the internet. She was soon lured into the United States and married to this man in less than a month. After marriage, the victim was subjected to extreme abuse. She was put on a strict diet of vegetable juice, forced to lay in the sun for hours, access to the internet and her family was restricted and she was unable to watch television. His control required her to be in the house at all times, and he secured video cameras to ensure she could not escape. He would physically and verbally assault her. Eventually, this woman escaped and managed to get a hold of our services. During my time at LSEM, I was able to work on her immigration application, get her in touch with our family law department and refer her to free counseling. She continues to be stalked and harassed by her former husband, but she is getting the services she needs to be independent and live with less fear.

Another client and her son came to the United States to live over a decade ago. After moving in with her boyfriend, both the client and the son became victims of his domestic abuse. This woman was able to pick herself up and move her son and all four of her other U.S. children out of the home, find employment

and start a life without him. The son has struggled with his own responsibilities, such as paying traffic violations, but LSEM was able to direct him to further legal help. We were also able to put together immigration papers for both the mother and the son, as well as employment authorization cards to allow them both to work.

LSEM is a blessing to those that are in need. Being part of such a worthwhile organization and understanding the non-profit from the employee position allowed me to better commit myself to assisting those in need. I have since been interviewing at other immigration non-profit organizations, and I am able to bring new ideas to the interviews regarding outreach projects and client that originated at LSEM. This organization has made me want to continue to put myself in the best position to serve immigrant victims of crime. I would like to thank Equal Justice America and all of its supporters for making this fellowship possible.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Abby Twenter". The ink is black and the signature is fluid and elegant.

Abby Twenter

University of Illinois College of Law

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