

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

August 7, 2012

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am so grateful to have been awarded an EJA Fellowship for the summer of 2012 so that I could dedicate my time to the Immigration Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services.

When choosing my first summer internship as a law student, the most important criteria were to find a position that reignited the passions and reasons why I chose law as a career path. I wanted to work for and experience a not-for-profit, legal services organization in the Boston area that did important work to help the indigent local community. I found a perfect match in Greater Boston Legal Services. Upon my initial research, I was blown away by the effect this small, under-staffed office has on the greater Boston community.

In 2011 alone, GBLS provided critical legal assistance to more than 15,000 low-income people. Of the clients served, 68% were women; 75% were minorities; and 20% were over the age of 60. Moreover, their clients are victims of domestic violence, families facing destitution, elders and individuals with disabilities, low-wage workers, and immigrants fleeing torture and persecution. The firm plays a unique role in providing essential, free legal services to as many low-income clients as possible to help them secure some of the most basic necessities in life. Knowing that it takes manpower to make these numbers and missions possible, I was eager to accept a position doing exactly what I aim to do in my future career: help those who need it the most.

My experience at GBLS was an extremely insightful first step into my legal career and one that will forever shape my perspective of legal practice. I worked alongside nine very capable attorneys and 12 other legal interns for 12 weeks. Aside from the incredible mentoring and unparalleled training that the Immigration Unit is known for, I was most excited to work with clients in preparation for their claims for asylum. It was incredibly invaluable to gain experience in conducting in depth interviews, legal research and writing, drafting affidavits, coordinating and collecting evidence, researching and assembling documentation, communicating with experts, and preparing clients for interviews. I was particularly struck by the work that the Immigration Unit has and continues to do to help the immigrant community in the Boston area.

Because of the number of indigenous Mayan clients from Guatemala that the unit represents in asylum claims, each case that goes before a judge or asylum officer is an opportunity for the attorney to educate the court on Guatemala's recent history. Most of the unit's clients, including five cases for which I was responsible, were individuals who were targeted during the Guatemalan Civil War in the 1980's. Their families were victims of a massive genocide, one that the international community is just beginning to recognize, and continue to be threatened and treated as second-class citizens by the racist regime in charge. The Unit's clients have since fled

Guatemala to escape the racial persecution they experienced on a daily basis from gang members, ex-soldiers, and other racist people of authority.

I worked with a client, “Rodrigo,” who grew up in El Quiche, a predominantly indigenous department of Guatemala. When he was just two years old, soldiers in the Guatemalan army murdered Rodrigo’s parents and older siblings because they outwardly refused to participate in the Civil Patrols, who were notorious for their acts of terrorism. Being devout members of the Catholic Church, Rodrigo and his family were targeted because of their political and religious beliefs. Orphaned by the war, Rodrigo was taken in by his Aunt and her second husband, who abused him because of the legacy attached to his namesake. At twelve years old, Rodrigo escaped the family’s abuse and fled to the capital city, where he lived on the streets and begged for money and food. There, he was targeted and attacked by gang members, who forced him to pay “taxes” and threatened his life using racial slurs and weapons. Eventually, the violence became too dangerous for him and his family, and Rodrigo felt it was absolutely necessary to leave Guatemala to find safety in the United States.

The work that I did at GBLS this summer was very important to the lives of my clients. As I worked through their cases, I developed very close relationships with them, in part because we could talk about their home country and my travels there and also because they were trusting me with the most secretive, horrific details of their lives. I felt a duty and sense of ethical responsibility to work their cases as best as I could so that we could convince the EOIR judge or asylum officer that their past persecution was real and their fear of returning was reasonable.

What surprised me most about my internship was how emotionally unprepared I was to hear my clients’ stories of persecution. It was hard to believe that the stories of rape, murder, and torture were real and that they happened to the individuals sitting before me. It was also impossible to comprehend how governments all over the world would allow such acts of terror happen to their citizens. Hearing narratives of the difficult journey to the United States, I understood the risk that each person took to get here and how desperate each was to escape persecution. My work this summer reinforced my commitment to public interest and my dedication to helping people who really need legal assistance in order to better their lives.

Thank you so much for funding my work at Greater Boston Legal Services and for helping me help the clients who need it the most.

Sincerely,  
Amy Pimentel  
Northeastern University School of Law, Class of 2014

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**COOPERATIVE LEGAL EMPLOYMENT EVALUATION**

(THIS FORM MUST BE TYPED FOR INCLUSION IN STUDENT'S ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPT)

Student: Amy Pimentel \_\_\_\_\_ Dates Employed: From: 05/30/2012 To: 08/08/2012

Employer: Greater Boston Legal Services - Immigration Unit

Address: 197 Friend Street, Boston, MA 02114

Attorney Supervising Law Student: Erin E. Phillips

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**I. DESCRIPTION OF TASKS PERFORMED BY STUDENT (specific examples):**

Ms. Pimentel worked on a variety of asylum and withholding of removal cases over the summer. She was individually responsible for the management of four fully active cases and assisted with the preparation of many other cases. Specifically, Ms. Pimentel conducted countless client interviews and prepared client affidavits prior to asylum hearings in Immigration Court and before the Asylum Office; she performed research and prepared legal memos for the Court and Asylum Office arguing for exceptions to the "one-year asylum bar" for our clients; she prepared country conditions research and packets of documentation for each case; she worked with expert witnesses to assist them in their preparation of affidavits and testimony in support of our clients' claims; she represented one client before the Immigration Court in a Master Calendar hearing; she prepared motions for a continuance and for permission to present telephonic testimony that were submitted to the Immigration Court; and she substantially assisted in the preparation of an appellate brief before the Board of Immigration Appeals.

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**II. EVALUATION OF STUDENT'S LEGAL SKILLS (research, writing, analytical, oral & advocacy skills):**

Ms. Pimentel's ability to conduct clear and persuasive legal research and writing was outstanding. Not only was she able to assemble a clear factual account of a client's history of persecution and present that story in a compelling way through an affidavit, but she was also able to efficiently and effectively prepare legal arguments and memoranda. I was particularly impressed with Ms. Pimentel's research, writing and analytical skills through her work on an appellate brief that was submitted to the Board of Immigration Appeals. Through her superior research skills, she was able to find case law that I and others working on the brief had missed - in the end her research and writing formed the heart of several of the key arguments made in the brief.

In addition, Ms. Pimentel's oral and advocacy skills were outstanding. Specifically, she represented one of our clients, under my supervision, before Immigration Judge Brenda O'Malley in the Boston Immigration Court during a master calendar hearing. There were several tricky procedural issues to be dealt with during the Master Calendar hearing, and Ms. Pimentel was able to effectively and concisely convey our position to the Judge.

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**III. EVALUATION OF STUDENT'S DILIGENCE:**

Ms. Pimentel was a remarkably hard worker throughout the summer. She consistently completed assignments in a timely fashion. Not only did she complete all assignments given to her, but she was able to foresee and address other issues in a case in a way that went above and beyond.

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**IV. OTHER COMMENTS:**

I truly enjoyed the opportunity to work with Ms. Pimentel at GBLs this summer. She was absolutely indispensable in the preparation and management of some very difficult cases. In addition, her ability to connect and build trust with her clients was commendable. I give her the highest marks for purposes of Northeastern's evaluation process ("OUTSTANDING"), and for any future employers I would wholeheartedly recommend Ms. Pimentel. I am happy to answer any further questions about her work with us over the summer, and am glad to help in any way possible.

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Submitted By: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Supervising Attorney)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

8/2/12