

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to express my gratitude for the generous funding that Equal Justice America provided for me this summer. With your support, I was able to advocate for abused women and children at Legal Aid of North Carolina's Battered Immigrant Project. My summer internship was rewarding and inspiring, and it gave me the opportunity to put my legal education to work on behalf of vulnerable populations.

Most of my work involved preparing immigration petitions for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. One particularly meaningful experience involved a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) self-petition that I filed in the summer of 2013 while volunteering part-time at Legal Aid. That summer, I frequently spoke with the client over the phone, but since she didn't live near the office, we never met in person. When I returned to Legal Aid as a full-time intern this past summer, I was happy to learn that her petition had recently been approved. In fact, she had an upcoming interview at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to get her green card. I went to the USCIS office to accompany her on the day of the interview. One year after I had started working on her case, I finally had the opportunity to meet her and her daughter in person. A week or so after that interview, I was happy to call her with the good news: we had received her green card in the mail, and she was now a legal permanent resident of the United States. She was so grateful and happy. After suffering terrible abuse at the hands of her former partner, she was now able to move toward a more hopeful future.

I also had the opportunity to help a mother reunite with her son after living apart from him for a decade. When I started working on their consular processing case, the client's son was still living in Mexico. Thanks to our efforts, he obtained a visa to travel to the U.S. and live with his mom, a survivor of domestic violence who had previously received assistance through Legal Aid. On the last day of my internship, the client brought her son to the office to meet me. She had tears in her eyes as she thanked me and the attorney for working on her case. It was such a privilege to be a part of their journey.

I learned so much during my time as a Legal Aid intern. I appreciated working alongside such talented and inspiring attorneys, and I felt my self-confidence and determination increase as the summer went on. I look forward to pursuing a career after graduation where I can provide legal services to underserved populations. Thank you, Equal Justice America, for supporting my internship and the important work of legal aid organizations!

With gratitude,

Leah Arnold

J.D. Candidate, 2015

University of North Carolina School of Law