

May 15, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My Fellowship experience with the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice was outstanding. At NOWCRJ, I had the privilege of assisting multiple undocumented immigrants with U-visa filings. These people had come to the United States with straightforward hopes: hopes of giving their children a better chance to have a fulfilling life than they themselves had, hopes of contributing to the financial stability of their extended families and aging parents, and hopes of escaping home countries ravaged by violence.

I have worked with undocumented immigrants before, and I have always been extremely impressed by my clients' stamina and emotional fortitude: these are people who do physically demanding labor, such as construction or hotel maintenance, earning less than minimum wage, often working two jobs and working for as many as seventeen hours a day. I remind myself of this when I feel like I've put in a long day at my desk job because I left at seven p.m., to go safely home to a comfortable house, without fearing law enforcement.

My clients at NOWCRJ were filing for U-nonimmigrant status because they had been the victims of certain crimes. Often my clients were victimized in the very spaces and at the hands of the very institutions that were supposed to be safe and protective, such as their homes, the workplaces which had given them work visas, and local law enforcement agencies. Many of our clients at NOWCRJ have been in the news, because NOWCRJ's approach includes many kinds of advocacy, including organizing workers to speak out about the abuses they experience. For this reason, I am required to be extremely circumspect about what I write about particular clients: it would be possible to identify them because their cases have attracted much-needed attention to the crimes they exposed.

I worked closely with several clients on U-Visa filings and responses to USCIS's Requests For Evidence. Part of my job was to help clients articulate the harm they had experienced as a result of these crimes, and how it had affected them, and why this meant they should qualify for a u-visa. Many of these clients were non-English speakers, and even for those who were, this articulation of harm was difficult to express across cultural barriers. Some clients, understandably, did not want to admit to the symptoms of psychological harm they were experiencing, and did express themselves in a way that

would appeal to the discretion of adjudicators at USCIS. My clients had experienced difficult lives such that they learned to shrug off experiences of startling hardship; part of my job was to get my clients to talk about that hardship, so that their admirable stamina and resilience did not prevent USCIS from understanding the harm they had experienced.

In addition, I have been impressed by the civic engagement of my clients at NOWCRJ, and the responsibility they feel, not only for their families, but for their community. The populations served by NOWCRJ have seen how collective action by even some of the most marginalized populations can benefit everyone. The lawyers at NOWCRJ have seen part of their task as making sure that people who take part in collective action for the benefit of the community are protected from retaliation and able to support their families while doing this important work, and I am proud to have been part of that work. I hope to continue in this kind of law for the rest of my career.

I am sincerely grateful to Equal Justice America for enabling me to have this experience and gain these invaluable skills. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about my experience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maddie Thomson", written in a cursive style.

Maddie Thomson

Northeastern University School of Law  
Candidate for Juris Doctor, 2014

**New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice**

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217 N. Prieur Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112  
(504) 309-5165 telephone | (504) 309-5205 facsimile

May 21, 2014

Via Email

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

[Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org](mailto:Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org)

**RE: Fellowship Evaluation of Madeline Thomson**

Dear Mr. Ruben,

The Legal Department of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice would like to thank you and Equal Justice America for supporting Ms. Thompson during her time with us and thereby our work and the New Orleans community as well.

The legal department of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice (NOWCRJ) focuses on impact litigation and strategic advocacy as well as direct legal representation of community members in the areas of civil rights, labor, and immigration in the Deep South. In addition, since our legal department is housed within a community organization, the legal department works in deep partnership with community members, community leaders, and organizers. As such, law students interning at NOWCRJ must have the unique ability to do both sophisticated legal research and analysis as well as have the client and community lawyering skills to work alongside community members and gain their respect and trust. Ms. Thomson demonstrated the rare ability to do strong legal work and relate incredibly well to community members and clients both in English and Spanish.

During her internship Ms. Thomson became an indispensable member of our legal department team. I, along with the other legal staff was impressed by Ms. Thomson's legal research and drafting as well as her strong and methodic work ethic. She demonstrated strong research and writing skills on complex legal issues and legal creativity in her crafting of arguments. She displayed an ability to understand difficult legal problems and work on deadline to provide us sophisticated legal answers. She demonstrated strong interviewing skills, both in Spanish and English, and interacted well with clients and partners of various backgrounds and at different levels of formality.

May 21, 2014  
Fellowship Evaluation of Madeline Thomson

During her internship Ms. Thomson's work focused on complex immigration matters including U-visa applications based on novel theories of false imprisonment by law enforcement as well as forced labor and witness tampering. Her work included both developing substantive legal arguments as well as identifying and gathering evidence needed to support the claims she was articulating. Ms. Thomson's work included in-depth and extensive client interviewing (both in Spanish and English) in conjunction with declaration drafting – both of which she performed with skill and sensitivity. Ms. Thomson also provided key support on a Motion to Reopen and File for Asylum based on South American gang violence and political opinion, Independent Police Monitor Complaints, FOIA requests, as well as research on 5<sup>th</sup> amendment rights in the context of grand jury investigations.

Additionally, Ms. Thomson assisted our members and the NOWCRJ providing Spanish language interpretation for mental health evaluations, legal observing for a rally organized by our day laborer members, and participating in community member meetings.

Ms. Thomson demonstrated a strong work ethic. Despite the complexity of the work assigned to her, she was never fazed by the assignments. She methodically worked through tasks—both independently and as collaborative projects—also knowing when and how to ask for guidance. When the legal department needed emergency legal research to be done or a matter arose requiring immediate legal support, Ms. Thomson was there to support in whatever way she could. Even on quick deadlines her work was always on time; she worked proactively and knew how to make herself useful including in high stress and high stakes situations.

Given the quality and sincerity of Ms. Thomson's work during her time at NOWCRJ, I believe that she will make an exceptional public interest lawyer, including one with the skills one wants in a colleague. I look forward to her entry into the legal profession and again thank for your support of such a promising young public interest advocate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Collatz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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Jan Leon Collatz\*

\*Admitted in California and the District of Columbia only.