

Dear Dan Ruben,

My internship experience at Greater Boston Legal Services had more of an impact on me than I could have ever anticipated. I had the good fortune of working in the Harvard Immigration and Human Rights Clinic, under the supervision of Attorney Nancy Kelly. I have learned so much from everyone in this unit, as well as the clients I have had the opportunity to work with. But the thing that struck me the most was how much the office really feels like a family, a support system of love and advice that I feel is often not found in the legal profession. And this mutual respect and appreciation translates to the clients in a way that allows them to feel comfortable and as though they are in the hands of people who genuinely care about their lives, because they do.

I have worked with clients on all sorts of forms, applications, and affidavits. I was also able to participate in some legal research and helped to edit and turn out two briefs for the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Whether I had the chance to actually meet with a client once or many times, or even if I simply worked on their case without ever coming face-to-face with them, each one impacted me greatly. The clients I worked with had spent their whole lives in terrible situations, and what shocked me the most was that they often did not even consider the fact that they may have deserved better. I spoke with women who were forced into marriages at an extremely young age, with children whose parents abused them and never showed them any of the love that they deserved, and with individuals who have been unfairly targeted and experienced violence from gangs, government officials, police, or even soldiers. Some were able to recognize that life as it was for them in their native country was not the best that they could have, and they escaped from their perilous fates to a promise of a better future in America. For others, it took someone on the outside looking in on their lives and telling them that they deserved something more. Only then were they able to find a way out.

To be perfectly honest, I have a largely pessimistic and jaded view of the country I call home. I witness too much hatred here, too much division across race or party or social lines, and not enough change or growth to counteract this evil. But, I often overlook the great blessings and privileges that I am offered as a citizen of the United States. As a white, middle-class individual, I was quite literally born into more freedom and protection than I could possibly comprehend. The future challenges that I would face as someone whose family did not have the most money or as a woman in a still overwhelmingly patriarchal world, pale in comparison to what I have encountered over this summer. And what surprises me most about all of this is that I forget the love and freedom and choice I have experienced on a level that is so much greater than most of the world. I witnessed how my clients who have so little, yet still have the largest amount of hope of anyone I have ever met. The possibility of getting to become a citizen and vote someday sounds like the greatest gift to them. The chance to actually receive a decent education is relished and appreciated. Not only that, but even on their very first day of school when they are surrounded by hundreds of children who do not speak their language, they are still filled with so much joy at the prospect of learning.

I may only have been present for a very small portion of their process through immigration, but each client I dealt with this summer had a large impact on me. They gifted me with new understandings of hope and love and possibility that I would never have otherwise comprehended. The only thing I wish for is that I showed them even a fraction of the kindness and support that they so greatly deserve and have rarely received.

Sincerely,

Amy Dickinson  
Northeastern University School of Law 2018