

August 31, 2016

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Over this past summer I worked as a summer law clerk at Greater Boston Legal Services in the Immigration Department. I was supervised by one attorney the entire time and I worked closely with him on many of his cases. He is an exceptional attorney, teacher, and mentor. As a law student I quickly felt very connected to and involved in the work that GBLS does in large part because of how my supervisor trained and taught me.

From the very first day of my internship I was expected to be independent and a problem solver. I remember on my second day my supervisor had triple booked himself and he could not conduct an interview for an asylum application that he had scheduled. We had met with the client the previous day, but I had simply taken notes of their conversation. He handed me the client's file and said, "I can't do the interview, so you'll have to do it. If you have any questions, let me know, I'm here." And then he was gone and I was left to go interview an asylum petitioner, not even fully understanding how someone gets asylum. This moment is very indicative of my experience at GBLS and the method my supervisor used, partially out of necessity. From the beginning I was treated as an intelligent adult and a competent practitioner of the law. I was given directions, but then I would figure out the details as I went along, asking for help when needed.

This is not to say that my supervisor was absent or did not supervise me. He was extremely aware of my work and what I was doing. I met with him multiple times a day often to discuss cases I was working on, questions I had, or the confusing morass that immigration law is.

This particular client that I was asked to interview by myself on my second day of work turned out to be a very important client in my summer at GBLS. Although the client had filed for asylum quite a while ago, the details of the case were not developed. I was charged with developing the case, almost from scratch, and seeing it through until the hearing. Over the course of the summer I met multiple times with this client. I got to know the intimate details of her life, both here and back in her home country. I met her children, and over time we have developed a friendship and rapport.

The most difficult part of working on her case has been figuring out the theory of the case. She has multiple grounds for requesting asylum, but the pieces of the case aren't such that it is a clear cut case. When I spoke with my supervisor about this, he said the cases rarely are and it's our job to make them clear cut for the judge. To help, we have decided to look for an expert on the culture of the client's home country, to show the backdrop of this person's life and why her circumstances are such that she merits asylum. My fears are not quelled, however, and I wrestle with whether I think she'll be granted asylum, or not. I know that should she return to her home country, she will be made to suffer horrible things, but I wonder if the judge will understand that. I wonder how the judge can understand all of her story in an afternoon when it's taken me months. But, like my supervisor said, it's up to us to present the case so the judge understands why our client is eligible and should be granted asylum.

This case, and this internship in general, has reaffirmed for me how important immigration lawyers are and how deeply flawed our immigration system is. I think about this particular client and her family a lot; the family she will be separated from if she is not granted asylum. I think about all of the other individuals in the world who fear for their lives so greatly they feel they have no choice but to uproot their lives and flee their homes. I wonder how we can

be so callous to these people. I frequently think about what it would take for me to decide to leave my life in the United States and move to another country, knowing that I will never be able to return to my home here. All I can say is that it would have to be life and death for me to consider such a thing. I believe this is what my clients faced and I hope that they find support and acceptance here.

Sincerely,

/s/ Reid Kurtz
Northeastern University School of Law
2018