

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I want to express my immense gratitude to the Equal Justice of America organization for funding my fellowship with the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation (ProBAR) Children's Project. Working at ProBAR helped me learn about the immigration process first-hand and reaffirmed by desire to be an immigration attorney. In just ten weeks, I was able to work under the supervision of a passionate attorney (Michelle Quintero), helped prepare applications for clients, researched relevant case law, appeared in immigration court, and networked with other attorneys.

ProBAR Children's Project is a non-profit organization that provides "Know Your Rights" presentations and legal representation to children detained at shelters in South Texas. ProBAR currently serves over 900 children. Majority of these children travel to the United States alone. They speak no English and have little education. Without the help of ProBAR, many of these children, who are eligible for legal relief, would be forced to go through immigration process alone. They would likely be deported to their home country where they would face the dangers that they were running from.

During my time at ProBAR, I was able to work with many of these children. One child in particular, Maria\*, really struck a cord with me. Maria is a young 16 year-old female that was running for her life. She made the long journey from El Salvador to the United States by herself. Border Patrol caught her just after crossing the dangerous Rio Grande River, which separates Mexico and the U.S. As an unaccompanied minor, Maria was sent to one of the shelters in South Texas.

Maria feared returning to El Salvador because she would be killed. Maria's life was threatened by Mara-18, one of the biggest gangs in El Salvador. She became a target of the Mara simply because of her stepsister's affiliation to an opposing gang. Maria's parents left El Salvador when she was very young. Her elderly grandparents, who could not protect her from Mara-18, raised her. After two failed attempts by the Mara to kill her, Maria made the decision to come to the United States.

I worked closely with Maria as I prepared her asylum application. We met numerous times to go over her affidavit and every time she thanked me for helping her. She told me about

\*Named has been changed.

her dream to finally be able to go outside without fearing for her safety. She said that her journey to the United States was worth the risk because in El Salvador she was already dead.

Maria's perseverance and drive to live helped me realize the importance of the services that ProBAR provides and the significance of my contributions. I realized that attorney's possess the power to make a difference in their community because of the knowledge they possess. I realized that without organizations like ProBAR and attorneys willing to use their talents to help others, people like Maria would fall in the cracks of the immigration system.

Again, I thank you for affording me the opportunity to work with such an amazing organization. My work this summer at ProBAR has opened my eyes to the endless possibilities that a law degree affords you.

Sincerely,

Yvette Perez

Texas Tech School of Law- Class 2015

# ProBAR

South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project  
Immigrant Children's Assistance Project

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Meredith Linsky  
**Director**

*A project of the American Bar Association, State Bar of Texas, and  
American Immigration Lawyers Association.*

September 7, 2012

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Denver, CO 80208

RE: Evaluation for EJA Fellow Yvette Perez

Dear Dan Ruben:

I am writing as a Staff Attorney of the Children's Project of the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR). It is with great pleasure that I provide an evaluation for Yvette Perez for the time she interned at ProBAR. She is dedicated to accessing justice for those most in need. During Yvette's internship I was impressed with her empathy for clients, her communication skills and her ability to work with detained unaccompanied immigrant children.

ProBAR was formed in 1989 as a joint effort between the American Bar Association, the State Bar of Texas and the American Immigration Lawyers Association. The Children's Project assists unaccompanied minors who are apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security, detained by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, and placed in removal proceedings before the Executive Office of Immigration Review. There are close to 1200 beds for unaccompanied minors in South Texas spread across fourteen shelters. This region houses the largest population of detained unaccompanied minors in the country.

During Yvette's internship she conducted legal research, and prepared affidavits to be used in state court and before USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). In addition, she prepared multiple immigration forms that were submitted to USCIS for detained immigrant children. Yvette observed ProBAR 'Know Your Rights' workshops and a ProBAR 'Court Tour' workshop conducted with younger children inside the immigration court. In addition, Yvette also observed court proceedings in Cameron County District Court and in the Harlingen Immigration Court. On one of her last days at ProBAR she appeared before Judge Ayala as a Law Student and assisted an unaccompanied minor with his pleadings and designation of legal relief.

There is no doubt; Yvette had a busy summer while interning at ProBAR. Yvette was a pleasure to work with. She was flexible and was understanding when our daily plans shifted from one moment to the next, as is the case when working with hundreds of detained children who are in the process of reunifying with family members across the U.S. I came to rely on Yvette for

support for multiple research projects over the summer and for assistance with my clients. Yvette conducted legal research on procedures related to UAC (unaccompanied alien child) asylum filings with USCIS and she also researched whether any *mens rea* (on behalf of a mother or father) is required to assert that a child has been abused, abandoned, or neglected in state court. In addition, Yvette reviewed a lengthy amicus brief and provided a succinct support of complex legal issues regarding child's rights versus parent's rights.

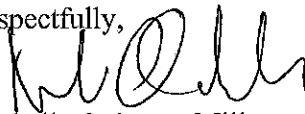
I was very impressed by Yvette's desire and ability to communicate with vulnerable populations. In specific, Yvette demonstrated great dedication and understanding when working with two particular clients. One was a young girl from El Salvador and the other was a young indigenous boy from Guatemala. Yvette met with the Salvadoran girl multiple times in order to prepare an asylum application and an affidavit. With my guidance she successfully prepared the application, made appropriate revisions and filed the application with UCSIS. Yvette demonstrated how dedicated she was by spending considerable time speaking with the grandmother of this Salvadoran child over the phone. After multiple lengthy conversations in Spanish, Yvette had completed a valuable supporting affidavit that will be used during this child's asylum interview. Throughout this process Yvette showed empathy with the child and her grandmother but never lost sight of the importance of evaluating the facts in light of the law.

Yvette also showed great patience when working with the indigenous Guatemalan boy, whose primary language was Quiche. Yvette met with this boy multiple times and used an interpreter in order to prepare an affidavit, state court documents and immigration documents. The documents Yvette prepared were reviewed and revised and used to obtain a Dependency Order from state court, and in order to submit an application for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status with USCIS.

I feel that Yvette was a great asset to ProBAR during her summer internship. With her support we were able to provide legal representation to additional detained immigration children. It was a pleasure to work with Yvette and I know that she has a bright future working to assist those in need.

Thank you. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,



Michelle Quintero Millan  
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