

August 18, 2017

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you so much for selecting me as a recipient for the Equal Justice America Summer 2017 Fellowship. My summer at Greater Boston Legal Services in its Immigration and Human Rights Unit taught and enlightened me much about immigration law, working with others, and myself. I worked under Attorney Maggie Morgan, who handles mostly asylum applicants from Latin America, mostly Guatemala. Under her supervision, I worked closely alongside clients, building their asylum cases for the applications and asylum interviews. In doing so, I interviewed clients, drafted affidavits and legal memorandums, researched country conditions, filed documents with the asylum office and Immigration Court, prepared clients for asylum interviews, and attended their interviews.

As stated earlier, most of my clients were from Guatemala seeking asylum in the U.S. Of those clients, nearly all of those clients were indigenous. Many of them sought asylum for the persecution they faced in Guatemala from *maras* (meaning “gangs” in Spanish), the Guatemalan government, and racist Ladinos (Ladinos are considered a “westernized” Spanish speaking population). This persecution often stemmed from the long history of violent discrimination of indigenous people by Ladinos, peaking during the Civil War in Guatemala. Most of my clients were born during the violent time of the Civil War, and they either remember about the violence or the lasting effects it had on their people. My clients lost many family members over the years, especially in the Civil War, by the military and guerillas. Although the war ended and the Peace Accords signed in 1996, the violent discrimination did not.

Indigenous people are easily identified by the Ladinos because they wear traditional clothing, have darker skin, and speak an indigenous language. My male clients often faced threats and beatings from gangs, trying to recruit them and hurt them because of their indigenous heritage. My female clients faced physical and sexual attacks by Ladino men and *maras*. Also, politically active indigenous persons faced great risk in trying to gain rights for their people, as the right-wing Ladinos oppressed them and threatened their lives and families lives for being politically active. Because of the threats and harm they face, they came to the U.S. seeking refuge.

During my summer, I was able to help multiple clients in their asylum cases. I met with my clients, drafted their affidavits, and created the theory of their case under the asylum law. They were able to finally share their story as they usually do not tell anyone prior to coming to GBLS, fearing for what would happen to them if they did. Though I was only a law student working on a case, I felt like a friend, therapist, and teacher. I spent most of my fellowship with my clients, getting to know them and their story. I talked to them about their fears, trauma, hopes, and dreams. I explained to them the process and substance of asylum law. With each client, we created a close relationship of trust and understanding.

Although my job was to help them receive legal status in the U.S., as the relationship with each client became stronger, my stake in their case dug deeper. I became more invested in their case, knowing their life story, all their family members' names, what they were interested, and other intimate details. While I was not getting paid, the work was rewarding in itself. However, I did find myself becoming desensitized from each story that I was told. Stories of murder, rape, and bloodshed crept their way into my daily life, forcing me to remind myself that tragedy lies behind each client and stories. However, this made me better understand the size of our world and those who are in need of help, making me more grateful for what I have. My Summer was filled with many cases, short deadlines, and quick turnaround periods. Though it was stressful, my exposure and experience at GBLS is incomparable to any office I worked in before.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Gardon  
Northeastern University School of Law  
J.D. Candidate 2019



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LEGAL SERVICES  
*...and justice for all*

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August 21, 2017

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to highlight the excellent work done by Elizabeth Gardon, who worked as a legal intern under my supervision at Greater Boston Legal Services this summer. She contributed immensely to our representation of clients this summer, including preparing several cases for adjudication before the Boston Asylum Office and Immigration Court. She represented clients with a zealous advocacy and legal skill that will benefit any law office at which she chooses to work in the future.

Elizabeth worked primarily with asylum seekers, as well as with children seeking special immigrant juvenile visas and immigrants applying for cancellation of removal. Each client was seeking a form of immigration relief requiring hours of intensive client interviewing, legal research and writing, and interaction with immigration officials. At all times, Elizabeth displayed a high degree of mastery of all stages of the work, from building client relationships to drafting legal affidavits, procuring evidence from outside sources and conducting case research. She was able to gather large amounts of incredibly helpful information from our clients under significant time pressure and craft compelling legal arguments which have immeasurably advanced our cases.

Elizabeth drafted legal affidavits, which are the foundational documents for our asylum cases, as well as memos and briefs addressing discrete issues such as the one year requirement in asylum law. Throughout her work, she displayed the highest levels of legal analysis, critical thinking, research breadth and depth, as well as the ability to articulate legal issues clearly and concisely.

Elizabeth was a pleasure to work with; she was always courteous to colleagues and clients alike, hardworking and eager to help in any way possible. She was able to juggle multiple cases in a sometimes intense work environment with frequent deadlines.

Elizabeth was unfailingly polite, good natured, on task, respectful and engaged with her supervisors and fellow interns throughout the summer. She developed warm relationships with her fellow interns and was able to bond easily with clients as well.

Elizabeth contributed significantly to the work at GBLs this summer. I believe she will be a treasure in whatever workplace she may find herself in in the future. Please send more students like her!

Sincerely,

Maggie Morgan  
Staff Attorney



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