

August 16, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I write to report on my summer internship with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) in Austin, Texas. I greatly enjoyed my internship at TRLA, where I represented immigrant survivors of domestic violence and trafficking as well as individuals who were at risk of losing their public housing benefits. I am very grateful to EJA for providing me the opportunity to gain this wonderful experience.

At TRLA, I worked on two very distinct areas- trafficking and immigration as well as housing. In total, I served about a dozen clients. Before law school, I had worked as an advocate for domestic violence survivors and had researched and written about gender violence in the United States and South America. I was very excited to have the opportunity to address the issue of gender violence through direct legal services. In my position at TRLA, I drafted the necessary documents for U-visa and T-visa applications, for immigrant crime victims and trafficking victims, respectively. Depending on the stage of the application, I also interviewed clients to gather factual information and to explain the visa application process. I worked with one client who had been abused by her husband since she was sixteen years old. After years of abuse, she had left her abuser and was referred to TRLA for immigration services. While she was nervous about filing her U-visa application, I saw how important it was for her to hear the attorney patiently explain each step of the process and how it would affect her. Following years of isolation in an abusive relationship, the client finally had someone she could speak to about her experience and someone who would advocate for her to obtain much-needed immigration relief.

In addition to the immigration and trafficking work, I also worked with housing clients. The housing team at TRLA works on a variety of issues, from foreclosures to eviction defense. My work in this area largely focused on public housing that was federally or locally subsidized. In contrast to the immigration work that I was doing which was an affirmative step for clients, housing clients were defending themselves against actions brought by landlords or public housing authorities. In these cases, I interviewed clients, drafted pleadings, and drafted letters to send to managers of various housing authorities. I enjoyed learning more about housing work and about the challenges many clients face with retaining or accessing public housing.

Finally, in addition to my day-to-day work, TRLA holds two clinics each week for anyone in the community to meet for fifteen-minute periods with a pro bono attorney. During these clinics, I had the opportunity to shadow family law attorneys as they addressed concerns ranging from division of marital property to child custody and visitation. When necessary, I translated for Spanish-speaking clients. Even though the attorneys at the clinics could only provide limited

assistance, I found this experience to be very rewarding and educational. It exposed me to areas of the law that I did not work on during my internship, and it allowed me to see how important even a brief consultation with a lawyer can be.

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to work at TRLA through EJA's summer fellowship. My desire to work within the field of poverty law has only been strengthened through my summer internship. I know that what I learned this summer will make me a better public interest attorney in the future.

Sincerely,

Alia Al-Khatib
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2015
American University
Washington College of Law

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August 23, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
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Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I write to evaluate Alia Al-Khatib's summer internship with Texas RioGrade Legal Aid (TRLA). We are incredibly grateful for the EJA fellowship which allowed Alia to join us. Alia provided invaluable assistance to TRLA, and her work on behalf of our clients was greatly appreciated.

Alia's primary focus was on the preparation immigration applications for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. For example, she prepared a U- visa application for a client who had been abused by her spouse since she was 16 years old. This client's immigration history was complex, and in preparing her application, Alia was able to quickly identify and analyze some of most complicated aspects of immigration law. Because she speaks fluent Spanish, Alia also assisted in interviewing the client and in preparing her declaration, and she displayed empathy and respect for the client throughout that process.

Alia also assisted in initial intake and evaluation of human trafficking clients and helped prepare T- visa applications as well as applications for adjustment for several victims of trafficking. As part of her trafficking work, Alia represented TRLA at monthly meetings of the Central Texas Coalition Against Human Trafficking. She additionally researched and wrote an insightful memo analyzing two victims' potential wage claims.

In addition to her immigration work, Alia worked with seasoned housing attorneys on several cases and, in doing so, developed an interest in that field. In order to have as much direct contact with clients as possible and to gain exposure to a wide variety of intakes, Alia assisted with our evening walk-in advice clinics, as well. She also participated in TRLA's effort to incorporate human rights into our practice by co-writing and editing a brief arguing that both international and state law prohibit immigration status from negatively impacting a parent in a custody case and by preparing a letter to a state judge requesting certification for a U- visa using human rights language and theories. While moving between such different projects in the course of a summer would be challenging for many interns, Alia's maturity, intelligence, and curiosity allowed her to do so almost effortlessly.

Alia's past experience working with survivors of domestic violence served her well in this internship. She was clearly comfortable working and interacting with clients, and she

thoughtfully engaged in strategy conversations regarding how to provide quality services to each individual client. Alia is mature, detail-oriented, capable of juggling various projects at once, and passionate about working with clients. She quickly earned our trust with important client matters. We look forward to having Alia as a colleague in the public interest community in the future.

Sincerely,

TEXAS RIOGRANDE LEGAL AID, INC.

/s/ Stacie Jonas

Stacie Jonas,
Attorney at Law

