

August 26, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude for selecting me as a recipient of the Equal Justice America Fellowship for Summer 2013. My experience at Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF) was rewarding and impactful. Working at LAF affirmed my desire to pursue a career in public interest, specifically in Immigration Law, in order to assist the immigrant community.

At the Legal Assistance Foundation, I worked with the Immigrants' and Workers' Rights Practice Group. I worked in the Immigration Project, assisting immigrant victims of domestic violence and victims of crimes.

I was able to assist approximately 12-15 clients over the summer, but two clients in particular made an impact on me. One was a young woman from Mexico. Her young daughter was a victim of sexual abuse. The young woman's former husband was also very abusive. When the young mom spoke to police to report that her daughter had been sexually abused, she was treated with suspicion. The authorities made her feel that the violent act was her fault because of the fact that she worked long hours to provide for her family. It was disheartening to hear this. She had no faith in the system that was meant to protect her and her family. I worked on her U-Visa, a petition for immigrants who have been victims of crimes while in the United States. I helped her draft her statement in support of her petition. As professionals, we sometimes have to hear that our client is a victim of a terrible act and we have to be sensitive to their experience. At the same time, we have to address the terrible act to be able to work on the case. Working on her case, I learned how to formulate and deliver the questions I needed to ask in order to help the client draft her statement. The client was appreciative of the fact that I was sensitive to her pain and that my ultimate concern was that she was comfortable during our discussions.

The second client that I worked with that made an impact on me was a Guatemalan woman who had suffered extreme domestic violence from her former partner. They had previously lived in the United States, but he had forced her to return to Guatemala in order to further abuse her. While in Guatemala, she tried for many years to seek help from the police, but found no reprieve. When he threatened to kill her and her daughter, she finally decided that she needed to escape him and came to the United States to seek Asylum. I worked on the research for her asylum petition and extensively on her affidavit. I spoke to

her on a weekly basis to develop and draft a clear and detailed statement that will be submitted in court for her asylum hearing. Working with her made me understand how diligent one must be when working on such an important document for a client's case. Every time I thought I was done with her statement, my supervising attorney would suggest that I gather additional details. By the end, I understood what it took to elevate a well-written statement to something that will be a key in that client's case. It helps the client express her abuse, trauma, and concerns directly to the immigration judge and the trial attorney, but it does so in her own words.

Because I hope to work in the immigration law field after I graduate from DePaul University College of Law, the experience that I had at LAF has helped prepare me for the work that I plan to do in the future. I have always had an interest in remaining in the public interest law sector and this experience has reinforced that interest.

I sincerely thank Equal Justice America for selecting me as a recipient of this fellowship.

Sincerely,

Ana Valenzuela  
DePaul University College of Law  
Class of 2015

August 28, 2013

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

Re: Ana Valenzuela

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing in regards to Ana Valenzuela's Summer 2013 fellowship with LAF. I am a Staff Attorney in the Immigration Project and I directly supervised Ms. Valenzuela's work.

Ms. Valenzuela showed professionalism, maturity, and skill. She was assigned a variety of cases in which she was required to communicate directly with clients. One of her primary tasks was to work with clients to draft their statements regarding the abuses they suffered. This process can be emotionally taxing for both the attorney and the client and requires a high level of sensitivity and compassion. She mastered this skill with the utmost respect for the clients while maintaining focus on the goal.

One of Ms. Valenzuela's shining moments was her completion of a U-visa application in less than 24 hours. She stepped in when I was unavailable to work intensely with the client to draft all her forms, complete her statement, gather the supporting evidence and organize the application. Because of Ms. Valenzuela's tireless efforts, the client was able to avoid an imminent deportation order.

Ms. Valenzuela's commitment to the immigrant community and passion for just treatment shines through everything she does. It was a pleasure to work with her. She was a valuable member of our team and is greatly missed.

Sincerely,



Angelica Lopez

Staff Attorney  
LAF, Immigrant and Worker's Rights Practice Group  
120 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 900  
Chicago, IL 60603  
312-347-8390