

August 28, 2014

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 2014. My experience at Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF) continued to be 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, specifically, in the Immigration Project, assisting immigrant victims of domestic violence and victims of crimes. During my time at LAF, I worked about 400 hours assisting over a dozen clients, in various capacities, with their immigration matters.

One memorable client was the victim of a labor trafficking scheme in Chicago. While trying to find employment, the client ended up being forced to work for various employers, ultimately having to pay the traffickers "finders fees." The client was also forced to reside in the basement of a house with dozens of other workers. They could not leave the home, they were forced to work unreasonable hours, and sometimes they were not paid for their work. It was determined that the client was eligible for a T visa. As part of the preparation for his case, I conducted research of similar trafficking schemes that have occurred around the country, conducted country condition research, and drafted a cover letter arguing that the client was eligible for the T visa. I also assisted the client in drafting his affidavit in support of his petition. Additionally, I helped the client secure the necessary supporting documents that he would need to complete his petition. Finally, I helped the client complete the forms necessary to request this relief.

Although I have had prior experience working on immigration cases, I had never worked on a T visa. This was a great opportunity to learn a completely new form of relief. I was able to study and learn the different requirements between this and other forms of relief. It was a very exciting experience for me to learn something completely new.

Another exciting opportunity was the chance to start the work on a Non-Legal Permanent Resident Cancellation case. The client, a young man in removal proceedings, was scheduled for a merits hearing during the summer. One of the more difficult tasks for this case was having to locate the client! As sometimes happens, the clients that we serve in public

interest/ non-profit sometimes do not have the means to stay in touch with their attorneys. In this case, the client's phone was disconnected and he had moved without informing his attorney. It took some time and creative thinking, but I was ultimately able to reach the client so that we could begin working on his case. The merits hearing was later rescheduled, but we were still able to help the client prepare a U visa petition, since he was also the victim of a crime. Prior to the end of my internship, I worked with the client extensively on obtaining the information and documents needed for his U visa petition. I also helped the client prepare his affidavit in support of his petition.

Working at LAF meant so much to me because it was a way for me to help an already vulnerable population that has been victim to recent unfair criticism and judgment. Individuals who seek non-profit services are already a vulnerable community. Now add to that the fact that clients in the Immigration Project have no current legal status in the United States. Plus, U.S. immigration laws are incredible difficult to navigate, even for skilled practitioners. The immigrant population is currently in dire need of representatives who are going to advocate for them when everyone else is literally trying to push them out. Working at LAF allowed me to play a small part in helping our clients with their immigration matters.

Being able to work at LAF allowed me to work with a great team of highly skilled and dedicated attorneys who are just as passionate about immigration law as I am. They care and connect with their clients. I sincerely thank Equal Justice America for selecting me as a recipient of this fellowship that allowed me to be a part of this team.

Sincerely,

Ana Valenzuela
DePaul University College of Law
Class of 2015



Equal justice starts here.

August 25, 2014

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

Dear Dan:

I write to provide you with an evaluation of Ana Valenzuela, our EJA 2014 summer law student. Ana was an exceptional student. She has all of the qualities of a great student, and completed very significant legal work at LAF this past summer. We would definitely hire her again.

Ana's work this summer consisted of a variety of work: she worked directly with clients by scheduling appointments, preparing their applications, assisting them in gathering documents in support of their claims, and answering their questions. Ana took on a number of very difficult cases, two of which were scheduled for immigration court. While the court cases did not proceed during the summer (one was continued and one is in 2015), Ana was in charge of preparing the documentation for the court cases, finding two expert witnesses for our asylum case, and researching legal issues in both cases. She also prepared a number of U visa (crime victim) applications, completed work authorization applications, worked to respond to letters from detained immigrants, and prepared "Requests for Evidence" on individual cases pending with USCIS.

Ana is extremely well-organized, efficient, and tenacious. In one case, we were unable to find our client (his phone was not working) and his hearing was upcoming. Ana combed through the file and found a number of avenues to find the client, which we eventually did. She accompanied one client to the Chicago Police Department to seek an amendment to the client's police report, and would not take no for an answer. She is extremely responsible, hardworking and committed. She works well independently and has a professional and collegial demeanor. Frankly, I could not have made it through the summer without her.

I hope EJA continues to provide funding to exceptional students like Ana. Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding her employment with LAF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. J. Palumbo', written over a horizontal line.

Lisa J. Palumbo
Supervisory Attorney