

September 19, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thanks to Equal Justice America's generous support, I was able to contribute to the work of Legal Aid Society's Immigration Law Unit in New York City this summer.

My internship at Ayuda the year prior provided my first introduction to immigration law. By the summer's end, I was certain that I wanted to pursue a career in immigration law. I was thrilled to have found a field that fit so well. Although the applicable statutes and regulations were often frustratingly vague, I learned to love the creativity that this gray area invited. More importantly, I was inspired by the strength and perseverance of the clients I helped. A few months ago, I was buying a sandwich at my favorite deli when I bumped into a client from my summer at Ayuda. She had stood out in my memory because despite the traumatic experience she had endured coming here, she was determined to see her life in this foreign country as a fortunate twist of fate—an opportunity to be seized. Not only would she arrive to all her appointments exactly on time, but she would also bring a binder with all the documents I had asked for, ordered alphabetically and in plastic protective sheets. Now, five months after we had completed her application for her trafficking visa and work permit, she was standing before me as the manager of the deli. When she saw me, she burst into a huge smile and cheerfully exclaimed, "I got my permit! Thank you Ms. Caroline! Thank you!" She refused to let me pay for my sandwich that day.

As one of the largest nonprofit providers of immigration representation in the area, New York's Legal Aid Society provided the opportunity to take the next step toward a career in immigration law under the guidance of several seasoned immigration attorneys. At Legal Aid, I was assigned to the youth docket, mainly assisting juveniles in obtaining Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), a form of immigration relief available to minors who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by one or both parents. Because this form of relief involves the intersection between immigration and family law, I attended several hearings in both family and immigration court and learned the dynamics of two very different bodies of law at once.

My summer at Legal Aid's Immigration Unit was also the first time I worked with juvenile clients. The skill that this required humbled me. I learned how to convey complex legal information to a ten year old, and how to make the critical distinction between our client's desires and those of his or her guardian. Additionally, I was grateful for the opportunity to assist someone in obtaining legal status during his or her formative years. After a family court judge issued a special findings order (the first and most difficult step to obtaining SIJS) for one of our

13-year-old clients, I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. Without pause or hesitation, she replied, “an immigration lawyer.”

My summer at Legal Aid Society reaffirmed my commitment to a career in immigration law. I am incredibly grateful to the financial support EJA provided in making it possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Caroline Jova".

Caroline Jova, GWU