

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Bldg II, Ste 204
13540 E. Boundary Rd.
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I had a wonderful experience this summer at the Tahirih Justice Center in Falls Church, Virginia, where I worked as a family law and public policy legal intern, thanks to funding from Equal Justice America. As mine was a split internship, I spent about half of my time working on Tahirih clients' family court cases, and the other half working on Tahirih policy issues.

For the family law department, I assisted the family law attorney with her active cases, as well as took on primary responsibility for an uncontested divorce case. I performed legal research and wrote legal memoranda on issues facing the family attorney in clients' cases, as well as drafted court documents such as complaints and agreements. I not only performed primary intake of my uncontested divorce client, but also assisted the family law attorney with her client preparation meetings and interviews.

I also had the opportunity to go to court several times to observe hearings in which the family law attorney represented Tahirih clients, which was very interesting and often quite gripping! These were experiences that really resonated with me, because it was there that I saw how my work drafting court documents and assisting with client preparation was essential to competent representation of a woman truly in need of legal protection or resolution of an essential element of her life—her family, whether that meant leaving an abusive partner or winning official custody of her children.

The women served by Tahirih are particularly vulnerable, as the majority are recent immigrants to the U.S. who confront language, cultural, economic, and social barriers as they begin their lives in the U.S. Most of these women have experienced domestic violence, and the majority of the family law department's clients are working to regain control of their lives and their children's lives. To me, helping the family law attorney with her cases meant helping a woman escape an abuser and find the life that she deserved.

For the policy department, I researched various issues of particular concern to Tahirih clients, such as the international marriage broker industry and the one-year filing deadline for asylum. I also assisted with the promotion and dissemination of the first-ever survey on forced marriage in the U.S., which information Tahirih hopes to use in promoting policies to assist actual or potential forced marriage victims. Although this part of my internship did not involve direct client contact, I feel as though I collected a store of critical background information on the issues facing immigrant women who have faced gender-based violence, information I will absolutely use going forward when helping other clients.

In closing, I would like to again express my great gratitude for the fellowship. It was an enormous aid in making my internship experience at Tahirih possible. I feel as though I helped to make a difference in the lives of some of the women that Tahirih served this summer, and, more importantly, that I have gained invaluable tools with which I will be able to serve my future clients more effectively and compassionately.

Sincerely,

Diane Eikenberry
The George Washington University Law School
J.D. Candidate December 2012



Protecting Immigrant
Women and Girls
Fleeing Violence

September 12, 2011

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
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Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is an evaluation of Equal Justice America Summer 2011 Fellow Diane Eikenberry, who interned with us at Tahirih Justice Center, located in Falls Church, Virginia, in both the family law and public policy departments. Diane split her time between working on our family law cases and Tahirih policy issues.

Diane was a fantastic contribution to our office this summer. She was a very hardworking and reliable intern. In particular her research and written work product were of very high quality. Diane researched challenging jurisdictional questions surrounding the ability of a foreign national to bring a claim against a U.S. company operating overseas and whether pending legislation might improve that individual's chance of obtaining legal recourse for harm suffered. Despite the lack of apparent resources on the subject Diane put together a comprehensive memo on the current legal options and how these options may change if the pending legislation is passed.

Diane worked directly with clients on family matters and was professional and appropriate at all times. Her drafting of pleadings was thorough and meticulous. Diane also dove into an extensive research project that involved reviewing numerous Tahirih asylum files and legal documents for evidence of the impact of the one-year filing deadline on asylum seekers, and organized and summarized all relevant findings.

Diane did great work as an Equal Justice America Fellow because she spent a significant amount of time and energy working tirelessly for Tahirih's legal and policy departments. She consistently worked on challenging legal research topics and produced high quality work product, which advances the work of Tahirih and our mission on behalf of immigrant women and girls who have been victims of gender-based violence. The majority of our clients have very limited—if any—financial resources, and we provide our services without charge. Equal Justice America's fellowship grant not only made it possible for Diane to work with us this summer, but ensured that we were able to help our clients

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more effectively, thanks to her assistance. Please keep up the great work your organization is doing on behalf of low-income litigants across the U.S. It certainly made a difference to our clients this summer.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Ramos
Family Law Attorney

Heather Heiman
Senior Public Policy Attorney

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