

August 11, 2015

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben, Executive Director at Equal Justice America,

This summer I interned at Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (“CLSEPA”) in their immigration field. Being that I am from East Palo Alto, I was extremely excited about my internship because it meant working with people from my community.

At CLSEPA, I worked with low income, undocumented people who were seeking a way to legalize their status in the U.S. Whether it was Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (“DACA”), asylum, or U VISA, I was able to learn about the different types of immigration relief options available to many people. All of the clients I worked with were primarily Spanish speaking individuals from low-income households.

One of my long-term summer projects involved starting and finishing a U VISA application for a low- income woman who was the victim of a felonious assault. I met with her various times throughout the summer in order to be able to finish her application on time. During the first meetings with her, I learned about the importance of building a rapport with my client. Seeing that the declaration to the U VISA had to be specific and detailed I had to ask personal questions regarding her life. During the first couple of meetings we had, I did notice that she held back some information or did not want to elaborate because she was either shy or embarrassed of what she was telling me. However, I would always emphasize to her that I was there to help her and that anything she told me was confidential and would only help her application. After a couple of conversations, she started warming up to me until she finally answered all of my questions with specific details.

Throughout learning her story and helping her with the application, I understood about the importance of having legal status in the United States for someone who had lived here for over 10 years without any status. She came to the U.S. to reunite with her daughters and always lived in fear of deportation. However, when CLSEPA advised her that she was eligible for U VISA status, she smiled from ear to ear eager to start the application.

Seeing that CLSEPA charges low rates for our clients, my client was able to afford the U VISA application. Without CLSEPA, she stated that she would not have had the financial means of paying a private attorney to file her U VISA application and would continue to live in fear of deportation. While she will not know whether or not she is approved for her U VISA for another few months, the fact that she was able to file an application gave her the hope she had longed for. She was able to turn something so horrible (the assault) into something that would bring her some type of peace (immigration relief). The immense look of gratitude that she gave me the last day I met with her emphasized my desire to become an immigration attorney, and even more to work for a non-profit organization like CLSEPA.

Similar to the clients at CLSEPA, there are thousands of undocumented individuals who are eligible for some sort of immigration relief, but unfortunately do not have the financial means to pay for it. However, organizations like CLSEPA, are able to help undocumented people apply for relief giving them hope that there is a way to legalize their status and diminish their fear of deportation. Similar to my U VISA client, my other clients throughout the summer also proved how one attorney could make a positive impact in a person’s life.

Another of my long- term projects at CLSEPA was working on client-centered materials for DACA eligible students, as well as filing DACA applications clients. I was responsible for creating a simple, one page summary of all of the benefits that DACA provides and the steps to

applying for DACA and renewing DACA. Towards the end of the summer, CLSEPA hosted a DACA workshop for several eligible individuals. The students would come with all of the documents required for the DACA application and would get help from the attorneys to organize the application and prepare it to be filed. The workshop was 100% free for all the clients. At the workshop I was able to present my one- page summary of DACA and briefly explain it to every individual. I explained how to renew DACA and the benefits of DACA, which included the ability to travel outside of the U.S. All of the students applying for DACA were college students and many were hoping to travel abroad. As soon as I told them about the benefits of DACA, their faces lit up. Not only were they getting help to file an application, which would be very costly to do with a private attorney, but they were also getting information on how to make traveling abroad a reality. (CLSEPA also offers workshops to help students file the necessary documentation to get permission to travel outside the U.S.).

These are just a few of the stories that can help me summarize what interning at CLSEPA has meant to me. At CLSEPA, I saw how an attorney could help make a positive change in someone's life. Hundreds of people do not have the financial means necessary to pay for an attorney to help them file a simple U VISA application, which forces them to continue to live in fear of deportation even when there is some type of relief available to them. Attorneys who work at organizations like CLSEPA target those individuals who are eligible for some type of immigration relief but would not otherwise have the financial means to pay for it.

Even though it was a 10- week internship, I have learned more than I would have ever expected. More than ever, I am determined to practice immigration law in the future and work in a non-profit organization.

The Equal Justice America Fellowship gave me the opportunity to work in the field that I love and work with people from my own community. I am extremely grateful for this amazing fellowship. Thank you.

Best,

Eliana Corona  
UC Hastings, College of the Law  
J.D. Candidate, May 2017



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LEGAL SERVICES IN  
EAST PALO ALTO

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August 17, 2015

**Re: EJA Fellowship Recipient Eliana Corona Vasquez**

Dear Dan Ruben,

I am writing in regards to Eliana Corona-Vasquez, who was a legal intern with the Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto's ("CLSEPA") Immigration Program this summer. Ms. Corona Vasquez was an amazing intern, and she demonstrated great commitment to our clients and community.

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (CLSEPA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit legal services agency. CLSEPA provides free and low-cost legal services to low-income persons in East Palo Alto and the Peninsula in the areas of immigration, housing, anti-predatory lending, foreclosure, and consumer law.

During her internship this summer, Ms. Corona Vasquez worked with all practice areas within the Immigration Program. She worked with clients on their applications for U Nonimmigrant Status. She drafted a brief on asylum eligibility for a young woman fleeing domestic violence in Guatemala. In addition, she also drafted motions for immigration court and assisted CLSEPA staff attorneys at the juvenile and surge dockets at the San Francisco Immigration Court by performing intakes and assisting clients in filling out basic immigration forms. She also assisted at a variety of community clinics where she performed intakes.

In particular, Ms. Corona Vasquez's work this summer focused on assisting our Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") and Deferred Action for Parental Responsibility ("DAPA") program. Ms. Corona Vasquez drafted client empowerment materials regarding these executive actions. As the implementation of these executive actions is currently in flux, the need for client empowerment materials is crucial at this moment to help prevent our community from falling victim to fraudulent schemes as well as to prepare for when the executive actions are implemented. She also assisted our staff attorneys on individual DACA cases and at DACA and DAPA related clinics.

In addition, Ms. Corona Vasquez performed extensive legal research and writing. Besides the aforementioned brief, Ms. Corona Vasquez inquired about potential fraud issues as well as when conditional residency is

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considered to be abandoned. She also drafted legal statements regarding eligibility for U Nonimmigrant Status.

Ms. Corona Vasquez was professional and diligent. She showed excellent communication skills and welcomed feedback. She learned quickly, and we saw great progress over the summer. She was great with clients, and she was a pleasure to have at the office.

Thank you for granting Ms. Corona Vasquez this Fellowship. We were thrilled to have her join our team this summer, and she had a great impact on our community.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [kaitlin@clsepa.org](mailto:kaitlin@clsepa.org) or (650) 391-0343.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Kalna Darwal

Senior Immigration Attorney, Supervisor of the Humanitarian Relief Program

CLSEPA