

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I had the pleasure of interning at the Immigration Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services this past summer. Coming out of my first year of law school I was thankful to have an opportunity to be a legal intern, but I had no idea what to expect. Right from my first day I realized that I was lucky not only to *have* an internship but that it was at GBLS.

The attorney to whom I was assigned had me start reviewing cases right away. My first week was spent organizing and reviewing the case file of two asylum applicants, both of whom had incredible and heartbreaking stories. Just by reading their declarations and before meeting the clients, I felt connected to them. Some of the clients history was very difficult to read, it felt like I was watching a TV show, but unfortunately their experiences were real. Because of this, it made me want to work ten times harder to make sure their case ended positively.

That was the best thing about being at GBLS, every single person working there, attorney or student, genuinely cared about the people they were helping. The clients my unit worked with where either asylum applicants, women applying under the Violence Against Women Act, or were unaccompanied minors who had entered into the United States without status. The types of cases and clients the unit dealt with were, therefore, always moving. Listening to people tell horrific stories was the most difficult aspect of my internship; I struggled with finding a balance between being a listening comfort for clients and learning to be their advocate. I didn't want to push my clients and force them to relive traumatic events, but it was necessary to aid them. More than anything else, I learned how to interact with clients through my experience at GBLS.

The proudest moment of my 10 weeks at GBLS was signing off on an application I helped put together for a client. She was filing for immigration status as a self petitioning spouse of an abuser. Hearing this woman, who was barely older than me, retell the horrendous acts her husband committed against her was disturbing but I became amazed at her strength and perseverance. As part of her application, she had to show she was in a good faith marriage and that her spouse was abusive. In order to do so I helped write her declaration and interviewed other people who knew the couple and assisted in writing their statements. I also had to find and retrieve police reports that had been written in regards to the abusive household. Working on the case gave me a chance to work on both my legal writing and research skills. Although she had not received an answer to her application at the end of my internship, I asked that my attorney alert me to her application status because I felt so connected to the client and the case.

Although I learned many practical skills that were not really taught during my first year at school, such as how to write and file a motion or how to track down police reports, I am most thankful for the opportunity I had to help the people and clients who needed assistance and had no other means of support. The attorneys I was lucky enough to work with and observe amazed me with the amount of care they had for their clients. Understaffed and underfunded, these attorneys spent morning to evening (and sometimes weekends) being advocates for their clients. They worked around their client's needs and schedules, to do whatever they could to help them. I feel lucky to have been able to learn from these attorneys.

Sincerely,

Elnaz Teymouri
Suffolk University Law School 2012