

Fernando R. Colón

Date: 05/29/2012

Dan Ruben

Founder/Executive Director

Equal Justice America Law Student Fellowships

Building II- Suite 204

Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This past spring semester, as an Equal Justice America Fellow, was a turning point in my development as a law student and my interest in public interest law. In my time with the Legal Assistance Foundation (“LAF”) in Chicago, I was fortunate enough to work with a dedicated group of attorneys who serve communities who do not have access to necessary legal services to defend their most basic human rights. Over the course of the semester, working in the Immigration/Worker’s Rights Project, I was able to advocate for U-visa applicants, who were victims of violent crimes or sexual abuse and cooperated with authorities. I assisted clients to obtain a work authorization permit and a path to citizenship through U-visa. My fellowship culminated with the opportunity to represent clients in front of the United States Immigration Court.

The U-visa clients I served were mostly undocumented women and children who were the victims of domestic violence or sexual abuse. Their courage allowed them to cooperate with authorities in the interest of justice in a county not their own, which in turn allowed the possibility for a path to permanent residency and eventually citizenship. I helped these clients from the initial intake interview through the completion of the entire U-visa application process. The process required an assessment, based on information and documents provided, to see if the clients qualified for a U-visa under the federal statute. I developed trust and rapport with clients and their families to gather the necessary information to present to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. In one of the more complex cases, I was able to assist in developing the legal theory to prepare and submit a U-visa application for a family of three that was accepted by USCIS and prevented the detained client from being deported and their family from being separated. During the course of the semester, I worked on dozens of such cases at various stages of the U-visa process and even took 3 such cases from beginning to completion independently.

The culmination of my internship with LAF was the opportunity to assist my supervisor work on cases for clients who were in removal proceedings. I assisted clients in preparation for hearings before the U.S. Immigration Court by researching issues of law, writing motions, gathering evidence to present in court, preparing clients for direct examination, and conducting direct examination in open court. These clients I helped represent had been in removal proceedings for many years and a negative decision would mean that they would



go back to a country they hardly knew anymore and be separated from their family members. In my time with LAF, I assisted with three removal proceedings over the course of several months and my supervising attorney was able to get all three cases dismissed, re-establishing residency for the clients and re-establishing their families a sense of security.

My time spent with LAF as an EJA fellow allowed me to explore the possibility of a career in public interest law. Working with underrepresented communities has been a challenging and rewarding experience that has opened up a new aspect of law. I appreciate the opportunity that EJA has giving me and I hope that one day I could be in a position to contribute to public interest law.

Sincerely,

Fernando Colón
JD Candidate 2013
Chicago-Kent College of Law



Equal justice starts here.

May 30, 2012

Mr. Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to inform you that Fernando Colon completed a successful internship with LAF's Immigration Project this past spring semester. Fernando's work was exceptional and he was one of my best students ever to work in the Project.

Fernando worked on many cases, the majority of which were U visa applications for crime victims seeking immigration status. He interviewed clients, obtained statements, gathered and prepared documentation, communicated with law enforcement, and finalized filings for submission to USCIS. In doing so, Fernando worked efficiently and with great sensitivity towards our clients.

Fernando also completed research and prepared two witnesses for immigration court. One case settled, and he provided an offer of proof for the other when the immigration judge indicated he was inclined to grant the case.

LAF was thoroughly impressed by Fernando. He is an excellent writer, proactive, communicative and hardworking. He was an asset to our project.

If you have any further questions regarding his internship, you can call me at (312) 347-8374.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. J. Palumbo', written in a cursive style.

Lisa J. Palumbo
Supervisory Attorney