

August 13, 2014

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I interned at The Door's Legal Service under the supervision of Anthony Enriquez. The Equal Justice America fellowship allowed me to impact the lives of young immigrants struggling to establish themselves in the United States.

Throughout my internship, I was exposed to a wide range of responsibilities and tasks. I specifically worked with Central American youth that were arrested after crossing the border between Mexico and the United States. Through extensive interviews designed to gain the trust of my young clients, I could determine the type of relief they qualified for. The Door provides a variety of remedies to struggling immigrants including Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), asylum, and various types of Visas. My time was devoted to immigrant youth that qualified for SIJS. I assisted a wide range of immigrant youth through the different stages of the SIJS process. While at The Door, I helped facilitate many successful outcomes. Nonetheless, gaining legal documentation to stay in this country is only the first step on the long road to rebuilding their lives, which have been tragically marked by violence, abuse, and pain.

My experiences have helped me grow as an aspiring attorney seeking to practice in immigration law. This growth would not have been possible without the help of my supervising attorney and the immigrant youths that I met.

I was fortunate to have worked under the direction of an attorney committed and passionate about immigrant's rights. My supervisor demonstrated genuine care and respect in every aspect of his work. He helped foster an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Anthony and I were able to effectively work together as a team, despite the fact that he was my formal supervisor. He not only provided constructive supervision over my interaction with clients, but he also helped build my confidence and develop my legal writing skills. I found that working with a Hispanic attorney was beneficial not just to me but also the clients. There is an added impact with shared cultural background, the immigrant youth feel comfortable trusting someone that speaks their language and looks like them.

The best part of working at The Door's Legal Service was the direct service aspect. I had the wonderful opportunity to meet and connect with many immigrant youths. Through client interviews, I learned about the life events that forced these individuals to embark upon the risky journey to America. Since SIJS is an immigration remedy available to immigrant youth who have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent, many of the clients I assisted underwent heartbreaking experiences and were in dire need of legal representation. I was able to personally relate to these stories because I myself was once one of these kids. My family immigrated to the United States during the Civil War in El Salvador, and I too was undocumented in the U.S. for many years.

One of the most tragic cases I had this summer involved three sisters whose father had neglected them and subjected them to sexual abuse for many years. I was in awe when one of the sisters told me I was the first person she had confided her darkest secret with. I believe it was horrific for her to be able to share her story with me, and hope that this is just the beginning of her healing process. In the end, although the three girls were sisters, because of their ages and personal circumstances they qualified for different relief. Two sisters benefited from SIJS, while the other sister was more suited for an asylum case. Another client of mine was a young man who, at the age of 7 years old, was forced to drop out of school, and start working in the fields. His father abandoned him and his mother was not able to provide for him so he found no other option but to risk his life crossing the border at 15 years old.

The individuals seeking assistance from The Door are not only courageous, but they also come to this country without a dime to their name. The strength that every single one of these young people demonstrated is worthy of getting a second chance to lead a life without inhumane hardship that most residents in this country have had the privilege to never experience. These immigrant youth place their trust in us and in some way we have so much control in the outcomes that will determine the next chapter of their lives. I take that responsibility very serious and hope that I was able to have a positive impact on them by sharing my own story.

This has been the most valuable internship I have had in my life, and I will forever be thankful to the Equal Justice America for funding it. I cherish my experience at The Door, and I'm grateful to my supervisor for the guidance and support he provided me. This experience has improved my confidence as an aspiring Latina lawyer, and solidifies my interest in advocating for those that do not have access to legal services.

Sincerely,

Iris Ventura
Seton Hall Law School
Expected Graduation 2016

August 27, 2014

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Re. End of fellowship evaluation for Iris Ventura

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My name is Anthony Enriquez and I am the Chadbourne & Parke Fellow at the Door's Legal Services Center. The Door is a youth services agency, working with over 11,000 young people from New York City and the surrounding area every year. Its mission is to empower young people to achieve their potential by offering comprehensive services and support in a diverse and caring environment. The Door's Legal Services Center has particular experience in humanitarian immigration law. In 2013, hundreds of young people received lawful permanent residence thanks to the attorneys of the Legal Services Center.

In the summer of 2014, I supervised Iris Ventura as a Legal Intern with the Door's Legal Services Center. Under my direction, Iris worked specifically with youth facing deportation in Immigration Court, the majority from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, all of them monolingual Spanish speakers. Iris was an excellent employee who displayed both skill and precision with legal briefing and exceptional empathy in direct client interaction. As a testament to Iris's skills, I asked her to return to the Door as a volunteer in August to assist with intake of over 30 young people at a Juvenile Docket in Immigration Court and am happy to report that she agreed to do so.

Iris spent a large portion of her summer at the Door drafting court documents and legal arguments for youth who had been abused, abandoned, or neglected by their parents and were seeking Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) as a means of relief from removal from the United States. To do so, she mastered both state family law concerning child neglect and abuse and federal immigration law concerning removal defense and adjustment of status to permanent resident. After her initial introduction to SIJS, Iris was able to draft entire briefs with little direct supervision. She responded adeptly to editing and constructive criticism and displayed an impressive drive to perfect her work through successive drafts. I was happy to hand Iris the lead on several cases and by the time she left the Door she had nearly singlehandedly prepared affidavits, briefs, documentary evidence, and service documents for over five cases while providing essential assistance with writing and researching on over a dozen more.

Throughout her time at the Door, Iris displayed a rare talent for working directly with clients. Thanks to her ability to communicate and instill trust with young people, Iris was able to uncover sensitive personal information from clients who had endured years of trauma in their own households. Iris showed warmth, discretion, and care with each young person with whom she came into contact. Although she did not share her experience as a child immigrant with all of her clients, it was especially remarkable to see

the positive reactions of those young people who did come to know of it. Although many lawyers are able to write well-argued briefs, far fewer are able to inspire their clients to dream of one day becoming a lawyer themselves.

I am happy to further discuss Iris's performance by phone or email.

Sincerely,

Anthony Enriquez, Esq.
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