



Casa Cornelia Law Center

August 22, 2013

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 204
East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Summer 2013 Fellowship of Johanna Fernandez

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am the Domestic Violence Program Director and Staff Attorney at Casa Cornelia Law Center. We are a public interest law firm providing quality pro bono legal services to victims of human and civil rights violations. Our primary commitment is to the indigent immigrant community in Southern California. I am writing to you in regard to Johanna Fernandez who worked with us from June 3, 2013 through July 26, 2013.

Johanna was a stellar addition to our summer staff. She was involved in every aspect of the Domestic Violence Program's work including: completing client applications, conducting initial client intakes, requesting certifications of helpfulness from law enforcement officials, interpreting for volunteer attorneys, and translating documents from Spanish to English. She also participated in a number of webinars, trainings, and clinics that we offered.

Johanna's main responsibility during her time here was to work on the U-Visa applications for two brothers from Nicaragua that were victimized by an alien smuggling organization. In order to complete these applications Johanna spent many hours meeting with each brother, one on one, to learn what happened and how it affected each brother. She then helped each brother to write an extensive declaration which included all of the important details

of their case. Part of the U-Visa application requires a showing of “substantial physical and/or emotional harm” which was one of the more difficult pieces of these applications as the brothers were initially reluctant to discuss these topics.

After gaining the client’s trust, Johanna helped these clients complete thoughtful, organized, and thorough declarations. She also helped them to gather the necessary supporting documentation and she put together each of their applications.

Johanna completed all tasks in a professional and sincere manner. She has a good manner with the clients and she is very detail oriented. Further, Johanna took every opportunity given to her to go with the attorneys to court and to participate in our monthly screening clinics and outreach efforts.

One thing that really impressed the Casa Cornelia staff was Johanna’s dedication to our organization as a whole. Throughout the course of her fellowship, she learned that we were in desperate need of Somali interpreters for our asylum program. Because of our limited resources we rely on volunteer interpreters and there simply not enough Somali volunteer interpreters to meet our growing Somali client base. Johanna took it upon herself to reach out to some of her own contacts and was able to secure a Somali interpreter who is still volunteering with Casa Cornelia even after Johanna’s fellowship ended.

I was very pleased with the work Johanna did for our organization over the summer and feel that she contributed to our mission. She is a hard-working, intelligent, and compassionate person and we hope to work with her again in the future if she returns to the San Diego area.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions or concerns. You may reach me at (619) 231-7788 ext. 322.

Sincerely,

Katherine Oldham