

August 24, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director at Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

In light of the recent fellowship I received from Equal Justice America, I would like to take a brief moment to express my sincere gratitude to the donors who made this possible and share a little about my summer experience at Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS). I immensely appreciate your generous contribution to my legal education through practical experience.

During this summer, I worked with two attorneys at CRIS who focus on providing low cost immigration legal services to those who need it. One of the first cases I had a chance to work on involved a young man from another country who realized that he was gay after enjoying freedom in America for a few years. His visa recently expired, and he was afraid to return home because his father threatened to beat, or even kill him because he was gay. Thankfully, because I was able to devote several days of research and drafting to it, we were able to file an asylum application for him quickly. At present, his case is pending a hearing before an asylum officer in Chicago. This young man's case was very helpful in my understanding of what is required to get an asylum application filed for a client in real-life practice.

In addition to asylum cases, we processed a lot of standard family-petition applications, fee waiver applications, and other sporadic immigration needs. Over the course of the summer, we processed and received approvals on around twelve fee waivers, which saved our clients over \$10,000 collectively (because nearly all immigration applications are expensive otherwise). Filing these fee waiver applications was very insightful to me to see how easy they are when done correctly. They also drilled into me the importance of doing the very small things correctly the first time, even when it takes some extra time for the clients to find the appropriate paperwork.

Beyond the fee waivers, I got to work most closely with two notable clients. The first was a young couple who needed petitions filed to allow the new husband to remain in the United States with his sweet wife. This case was useful for noticing the difference between when a competent person tries to tackle immigration processes without an attorney and when the person uses a lawyer. After meeting the couple, it was so obvious that their marriage was real, and not merely entered into for an immigration benefit. However, because the couple had not provided enough "proof" for the government, their application had been rejected. We were able to file a follow up petition that we expect to be approved because of the additional evidence that we provided.

Finally, the second most notable client was an older woman who is a United States citizen but needed paperwork to prove it because she was born outside of the United States. For citizenship, the law in effect at the time that one is born is what applies. Thus, I spent several hours locating the law from the early 1950s and organizing what we would need to prove that she met the requirements. From there, I worked with the client to tell her what kind of paperwork she would need to find and encourage her to do the work to get it. By the time I completed my summer at CRIS, we had compiled a significant amount of evidence to prove what is needed to establish citizenship. While I was not able to finish this completely, it was very rewarding to work with an older woman to help her get what she needs to do what should be so simple—get a passport to travel and enjoy retirement.

Other than the successful fee waivers, all of the cases that we handled this summer remain pending because immigration moves very slowly. While it is frustrating that I will not be aware of the exact outcomes for some time, I am grateful for the opportunity I had to serve such a wonderfully diverse group of people during my summer.

I hope that in reading this brief letter you have sensed the impact of your contribution to my summer experience. For your direct role in helping me pursue my passion for public interest work, and specifically in immigration, I am extremely grateful.

Sincerely,

Reina Fostyk
Michigan State University College of Law
Juris Doctor expected May 2018