

August 31, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II—Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, thanks in part to the grant I received from Equal Justice America, I had the opportunity to work at Public Counsel's Immigrants Rights Project in Los Angeles, California. There, I worked with a wide range of clients ranging in age from 10 to 70, on issues relating to their immigration status.

The bulk of my work was devoted to applying for affirmative immigration benefits for clients through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS). This summer, these included Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, U-Visas, NACARA, Waiver of Inadmissibility, and Asylum. I was also able to translate for clients at USCIS interviews where two clients sought to adjust as a Legal Permanent Resident and to naturalize as a U.S. Citizen, respectively. Additionally, I met with clients who were detained at several immigration detention centers in Southern California, to screen them for relief from removal, and help them to understand their rights in removal proceedings.

I was fortunate to get to work very directly with the clients I served, and enjoyed getting to know each of them personally. In one case, I assisted Pablo*, a twenty-four year old young man from Mexico who had lived in United States since he was four years old. Three years ago, Pablo and his mother, brother and sister were looking for a parking space near their home when a man who they had never seen before began shooting at their car. Pablo, who was at the wheel, was shot in the leg. While the family was able to drive away to safety, Pablo spent several months unable to walk, and the family, scared to encounter the shooter again, fled their home to go live with family in another city.

The family reported the crime to law enforcement, and assisted in the investigation of the crime. As such, Pablo and his family qualified for a U-Visa, of which they were unaware. In order to submit paperwork for their U-Visas, Pablo and his family first needed to receive certification from law enforcement that verified that they had been helpful in the investigation of the crime, which can sometimes prove to be a significant administrative hurdle for victims of crime. This summer, I was able to travel personally to meet with law enforcement where the shooting had occurred, and after many months of waiting, we received law enforcement certification for Pablo and his mother.

*Not his real name.

On my last day of the summer, I met with Pablo and his family to fill out the forms needed to submit to USCIS for his U-Visa and draft declarations. The forms have now been submitted to USCIS and are pending. If successful, the submitted U-Visas will provide lawful status for Pablo, his mother, and his sister, and will eventually provide them the opportunity to become Legal Permanent Residents of the U.S., and later, U.S. Citizens.

I greatly enjoyed my summer working with Public Counsel's Immigrants Rights Project, and am very grateful to Equal Justice America for making this work possible.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Popuch
UC-Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2014 (Anticipated)

*Not his real name.