

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben:

I would like to tell you about my fellowship opportunity this past Summer 2016. I had the honor of serving as a law clerk at the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA), specifically in the Asian Pacific Islander Unit (API). The experience overall was great, I had the opportunity to work one on one with clients and maintain a few of my own cases myself. I was able to learn about several legal issues that affect low-income communities. I particularly worked on immigration and dissolution issues.

While working on immigration matters I was able to learn more than just the administrative work that goes into filing a petition, I was able to learn what is necessary to efficiently aiding these communities. One particular client stood out to me during my time with LAFLA. The gentleman was elderly and had migrated from Cambodia, he had been in the United States for more than twenty years and was suffering from several physical and mental disabilities and was unable to understand English and maintain simple conversations, and he was on his own and did not have a fixed residence. It was hard to get into contact and communicate with the client. He was having a hard time with adjusting his status because of the interviews and the questions, not only did he have issues with immigration, he also had issues with his government benefits being reduced and cut off periodically. Eventually we were able to help him sort things out, however this situation made me realize how ineffective the system that is in place now is. I am glad I was able to

help this gentleman out, but I would like to work toward fixing and creating a better way of helping out clients in similar situations.

During my time with LAFLA I also had the pleasure of working with a client who needed our assistance, she also left a lasting impression. She migrated from Cambodia as well and obtained legal status through marriage, she lived with her husband, mother who had health issues and her two children, a four-year-old son and infant child. She is a domestic violence survivor after we were able to assist her. She came to us after an incident at home where her now ex-husband physically abused her and her children and threatened to kill her with a large kitchen knife. Fearing for her life and her children's she came to us for assistance, we helped her prepare for dissolution and prepared a petition for a restraining order, and most importantly we helped her to find a shelter, which took us about a week to do, her fear progressively grew with each day we took to help her find a place for her mother, children, and herself. We were able to find her a place that took them altogether and helped her find work, and were able to file the dissolution papers and had the petition for a restraining order granted. I could see the fear in all of their eyes each day they came in and I saw and felt just how grateful they were when I was able to help sort things out. I want to continue being able to help other clients in the same position.

This was one of the best experiences and opportunities I have had while in law school and as I continue to pursue a career as an attorney. I learned much more than a book would ever teach and I am very grateful to have had this opportunity.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Kom
Juris Doctor Candidate, 2017
Southwestern Law School