

Dan Ruben, Director
Equal Justice America
Law Student Fellowships
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II – Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: EJA Summer 2013 Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank you for Equal Justice America's support for my public interest internship this summer. From May 28 to August 2, I worked as a legal intern at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) in New York City, and I had a wonderful experience. I had the opportunity to work with both young and seasoned attorneys, organizers, and coalition partners. I learned the meaning of community lawyering as I participated in meetings with the community members and worked to advance for our interests together on the streets, in courts, and at the legislative level. I worked in two of AALDEF's project areas, the Education Equity Project and the Anti-Trafficking Initiative. This pairing was a great way for me to learn about two very different areas of the law, as well as a variety of different advocacy strategies.

In Education Equity, I began the summer with a research assignment surrounding the passage of Proposal 2 in Michigan, which amended the state constitution to bar race-based admissions to public universities and hiring at state agencies. I participated in conference calls with our partners who are fighting to reinstate affirmative action in the state. This was a particularly interesting assignment due to the special position that Asian students hold in the affirmative action debate. My research helped AALDEF decide its strategy in an upcoming Supreme Court case concerning affirmative action.

Later in the summer, I researched and wrote several memos for a client who alleged that her son had been expelled from a public educational institution for racially-motivated reasons. I wrote several memos on the institution's policies, and the client's possibilities for redress at the state and federal level. I directly participated in client calls with her and assisted my attorney supervisor in giving the client advice on how to proceed with her case.

Other projects I worked on in Education Equity also concerned racial discrimination in public schools. I worked with my co-intern to investigate the quality of English Language Learning programming in New York public schools and wrote a detailed analysis of our findings. These findings have sparked a new project at AALDEF to further investigate noncompliance with a set of reforms that was passed in New York pertaining to bilingual education programs. In addition, I participated in several community meetings with Muslim students and advocates to organize against post-9/11 racial profiling and surveillance on university campuses. These meetings were a treat for me because as a Muslim student myself, post-9/11 surveillance is an issue close to my heart and one that I hope to specifically work in after graduation. With my attorney supervisor, I directed a meeting with two advocates at a New

York university to catalog specific violations for AALDEF to address in the form of a concerted campaign against violations of religious freedom with help from its coalition partners.

The big event of the summer related to education was of course the Supreme Court's decision in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, which affirmed that diversity is a compelling interest in education, but may have lowered the level of deference afforded to universities in determining the means by which they will achieve diversity. I wrote several memos dissecting the Court's opinions, one of which analyzed the impact of the decision on Asian students.

I spent my last few weeks in the Education Equity Project helping to draft a DOE complaint representing Vietnamese students and parents being denied language access in New Orleans charter schools. My role in this complaint process included participating in many conference calls with our partners, transcribing intakes from parents, sifting through the intakes to identify legal claims, filing freedom of information requests with the schools for more information, and helping to draft and file the complaint.

In the Anti-Trafficking Initiative, the other project area I was assigned to, I also worked on a variety of issues. I attended several trainings on immigration and labor law to learn client interaction skills and substantive areas of law concerning trafficked persons. With my co-intern, I was in charge of managing the Initiative's social media presence. The entailed researching recent news and opinion pieces on sex and labor trafficking, prostitution, forced labor, farm labor, immigration reform, and a number of different issues. Each day, after finding the articles, I would write a description and post them to Twitter and Facebook.

I wrote several memos concerning comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. These memos detailed which articles and amendments to the immigration bill addressed trafficked persons. I looked out for problematic language and criminalization of sex work, in particular. I also wrote memos on legislation concerning trafficking at the New York state level, and assisted my attorney supervisor in writing policy recommendations. I received most of my client interaction experience through the Anti-Trafficking Initiative. In June, I worked directly with an Indian woman who had been trafficked into the US and forced to work as a domestic servant file for an adjustment of status. I also worked with a group of young men who had been trafficked from Thailand and were living in a coercive environment at the time begin their T-visa process. The client interaction portion of my internship was my favorite, because I love working with people and seeing the smiles on my clients' faces despite the hardship they have endured reminded me why I want to do this work in the first place.

Overall, my summer was an incredible learning experience working on issues affecting Asian Americans. This would not have been possible without the generous support from Equal Justice America. The funding helped me defray the costs of living in an expensive city like New York so that I could dive into my internship with full force. Thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Samia Hossain
UC Berkeley School of Law, to graduate May 2014
Visiting Student, Harvard Law School 2013-2014