

September 7th, 2007

Mr. Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

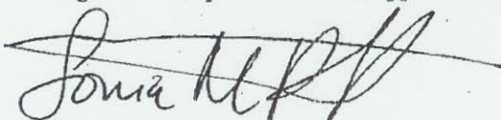
Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I had the immense pleasure of working on Immigrants' Rights in Los Angeles. When I approached this summer and thought about what I wanted to get out of the work experience, I decided I wanted to do direct service work and to serve a Spanish-speaking immigrant population. My Summer Fellowship was a fantastic opportunity that not only allowed me to accomplish those goals, but offered me professional and personal growth while using the law to have a positive impact. I couldn't be more pleased with my experience.

I spent most of my summer working with two clients in particular, and I would like to tell you their story. My clients were a mother and daughter who fled their home country after members of a violent gang threatened their lives if the daughter did not join the gang as a gang prostitute. After surviving a harrowing journey to the United States during which they were physically abused and kidnapped, the mother and daughter crossed the border only to be apprehended by Immigration Officials and detained for several months. Eventually, both mother and daughter were released to the care of a family member with whom they both thought they would be safe. Tragically, the family member sexually abused the young daughter. When I met these clients, what they had been through was obvious from the looks on their faces. Both mother and daughter were very much trapped in the trauma they had endured and hopeless about their futures. Facing an upcoming hearing in their deportation proceedings, my clients were badly in need of assistance.

After several strategy sessions, it was decided that I should prepare a U Visa Interim Relief application as well as a defensive asylum application on behalf of my clients. In order to do so I had to meet nearly daily with both mother and daughter to gain background information and a clear chronology of their stories so that I could write the necessary declarations for their applications. Initially, this process was very difficult as the abuse my client had suffered was extremely painful for her to discuss and thus having to recall what she had suffered in detail proved very difficult. As the summer progressed, however, I developed a trusting personal relationship with both of my clients that made the process much easier and more successful. As I met nearly daily with mother and daughter I was able not only to better serve their legal needs but also to develop a very positive relationship which proved to be one of the most rewarding aspects of my experience.

By the end of the summer, I had filed a U Visa Interim Relief Packet as well as a defensive asylum claim on behalf of mother and daughter. I attended court with them several times and held their shaking hands as they sat in fear of the immigration judge and the possibility of deportation. The last time I met with mother and daughter I was finally able to realize the impact of the work I had done for them. For the first time, the look of panic and fear that had seemed permanently etched on each of their faces was no longer present, and in its place was the most profound look of gratitude I have ever seen. My clients thanked me profusely and told me that without my help and the help of my organization they didn't know where they would be. The highlight of my fellowship and legal career to date has been being able to help two women trapped in a terrible situation regain some hope.



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