

MICHAEL MARCHESINI

September 2, 2015

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

RE: Summary of Summer 2015 Fellowship Experience

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This past summer, from May through August 2015, I served as a legal intern at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project ("NWIRP"), a non-profit organization in Seattle, Washington. NWIRP advocates for the rights of immigrants by (1) providing direct legal services to low-income people involved in civil immigration proceedings; (2) offering community education regarding the immigration laws; and (3) conducting impact litigation aimed at reforming federal immigration laws and practices.

NWIRP is loosely divided into various units according to immigration practice area. I worked primarily in the Family Services Unit, which represents low-income clients pursuing visas or relief from deportation based on their family ties in the United States. I took on a caseload of approximately 10 cases, half of which required applying for "Provisional Unlawful Presence Waivers." In these cases, the undocumented immigrant client would have a United States citizen spouse, and often United States citizen children. To gain lawful status in the United States, the client had to demonstrate that their return to their home country would result in "extreme hardship" to their U.S. citizen spouse. My job was to work with these families to document the extreme hardship the U.S. citizen spouse would experience, by preparing sworn statements and gathering documentary evidence.

One of my clients, whom I will refer to as Domingo for the sake of anonymity, was from Central America. Domingo entered the United States without inspection ("illegally") when he was 18, about 15 years ago. About 7 years ago, he met his wife, Wendy, a natural-born United States citizen. The two are married and have two young United States citizen children. Wendy was abused as a child, and suffers from anxiety and depression. She depends on Domingo for emotional support and a sense of stability. Wendy works, but cannot afford all the household expenses on her own. Domingo earns nearly 2/3 of the household income through his employment as a construction worker.

I met with Wendy and Domingo on about four occasions over the course of a month to prepare Domingo's Provisional Unlawful Presence Waiver application. This entailed filling out forms with biographic information, preparing sworn statements from Wendy

and Domingo regarding the extreme hardship she would suffer if he left the United States, and working with the couple to gather approximately 30 pieces of documentary evidence, including doctors' letters corroborating Wendy's mental health issues, and letters from friends and family discussing Wendy's emotional and financial reliance on Domingo. The touchstone of the application was Wendy's sworn statement. I met with her multiple times to prepare this lengthy document. Wendy and I discussed in detail the abuse she experienced as a child, the subsequent abusive relationships she experienced as an adult prior to meeting Domingo, how she depends on Domingo for support, and how her life would be ruined if he had to return to his home country.

When I had gathered all the necessary documentation, I submitted Domingo's case to the immigration authorities for adjudication, along with a brief in which I presented an argument as to why Domingo's application ought to be approved. These cases take approximately 3-6 months to be adjudicated, so the case is still pending.

Wendy and Domingo expressed sincere gratitude to me and to NWIRP for helping them file Domingo's Waiver application. For years, they had lived in fear that Domingo could be deported at any moment. They had grown tired of living with this fear, and had decided to take a chance at seeking legal status for Domingo. With NWIRP's help, the couple was able to present a strong case before the immigration authorities. With luck, Domingo will soon become a lawful permanent resident, and eventually a United States citizen. He will be able to live and work in the United States without fear of deportation. As a result, he can continue to support Wendy emotionally and financially, and she will no longer have to fear him being taken from her.

Wendy and Domingo's case entailed a substantial amount of work, including numerous, lengthy in-person meetings, countless phone calls, and written correspondence back and forth. Over the course of the summer, I worked on four other cases nearly identical to Wendy and Domingo's, in addition to a number of other family-immigration related cases. This work inspired me to continue to serve marginalized communities however I can, and to help ensure that families such as Wendy, Domingo, and their two children can stay together.

Sincerely,



Michael Marchesini
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Class of 2016