

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I could not be more proud of completing my Equal Justice America Fellowship this summer. I had a tremendous experience working with lawyers, interns, and clients at Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF) in Chicago, where I completed my Fellowship in the Immigrant & Workers' Rights practice group. The vast majority of work that I did was on immigration cases—namely assisting with U-Visa and VAWA petitions. I was glad to have the opportunity to continue working with survivors of violence in securing immigration relief, as I had been a legal advocate for survivors of domestic violence prior to going to law school.

Throughout the summer, I communicated with clients in Spanish and English via phone and in person appointments to gather the information needed for their petitions. I completed intakes with potential new clients and presented their stories at Case Acceptance Meetings to determine their eligibility for services. Once clients were deemed eligible for a U-Visa, I wrote persuasive cover letters to law enforcement describing the incidences of violence and abuse that the clients had experienced. I documented the ways that they had been helpful to law enforcement and requested law enforcement certification for the application. Whether clients were deemed eligible for U-Visa or VAWA petitions, I worked with survivors to draft and edit declarations, often detailing the abuse they had experienced at the hands of their intimate partners. The end of each declaration explained the many reasons why clients wanted to be able to stay legally in the United States and how their lives would be upended or endangered were they to be forced to return to their home country. Despite the trauma that these clients had experienced, these declarations often included a vision of hope for the future—one free from abuse and full of opportunity.

In addition to working on U-Visa and VAWA petitions, I also assisted with adjustment of status applications, a domestic violence-based asylum application, employment authorization documents, and an employment discrimination case. I performed research and drafted memos on country conditions in Honduras for the asylum case and the process for enforcing a sponsor's affidavit of support. While researching and writing on country conditions in Honduras, I learned about the problem of femicide and the many reasons women and girls flee their home country to escape violence that targets them. Toward the end of the summer, I also had the opportunity to participate in the practice group's annual migrant outreach trip, where we traveled throughout the state of Illinois providing information to migrant workers, many of whom are part of the guest worker program. My experience on this trip sparked my interest in the many problems with the guest worker program and the abuses that workers experience, which will form the basis of my academic research and writing for my 2L year.

Overall, my summer was an amazing experience. I am proud of the work I was able to do to provide relief for immigrants in the legal system and I am moved by the courage of the many survivors that I had the privilege of working with. I am excited to bring the knowledge and skills that I gained throughout the summer as I share with my colleagues in UCLA's Public Interest Law & Policy Program, Critical Race Studies Program, and U-Visa and VAWA clinic. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the EJA Fellowship—it will undoubtedly shape my practice of law in the future.

Gratefully,  
Erin Hallagan  
UCLA Class of 2018



August 31, 2016

Dan Ruben  
Equal Justice American  
Via Electronic Mail

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a Staff Attorney within the Immigrants and Workers' Rights Practice Group (IWR) of LAF. This summer I helped supervise Erin Hallagan, a rising 2L, attending UCLA Law School. IWR consists of three main practices: Immigration, Employment, and Migrant Law.

Our Immigration Project works on transactional cases and files administrative petitions for various humanitarian remedies for survivors of domestic violence and other serious crimes. During her time with us, Erin complete direct client intakes; filed FOIA requests from multiple government entities; researched country conditions for an asylum case; composed a memo discussing affidavits of support; submitted multiple U visa certification requests from various law enforcement agencies; and filed four U visa applications while also working on VAWAs and Adjustment of Status applications. Her work was of high-quality and she was given progressively more complicated and important assignments because of her ability to deliver timely and superior results.

Our Employment Project litigates on both federal, state, and administrative levels. Employment attorneys represent clients in administrative appeals for unemployment to discrimination cases filed in federal court. Additionally, IWR has a special focus on labor-based U visas that blends immigration and employment law. Erin worked on a labor-based U visa during the summer. She also helped work on a response to a summary judgement motion for a race-discrimination case filed in federal court.

Finally, our Migrant Legal Assistance Project spans the entire state of Illinois. This project is charged with conducting outreach to migrant workers throughout the state to inform them of their rights and provide them with legal services, if necessary. Many of the migrant workers are in the U.S. on H2-A visas that require certain conditions from their employer, like housing or transportation. Consistent outreach is needed to ensure that the workers know their rights and how to enforce them. There is a substantial intermixing of anti-human-trafficking advocacy (both labor-based and sex-work) in this project as well. During the summer, Erin participated in outreach events, including IWR's annual outreach trip to St. Louis, where multiple groups travel throughout the state to reach as many migrant workers as possible.



Aside from the independent work done by all three projects, Erin also actively participated in weekly Case Acceptance Meetings where she presented the facts of each case to help determine whether we could represent the individual and/or what appropriate advice to give them. She also observed immigration court, and her work on some extremely time-sensitive applications was invaluable.

Erin did a fantastic job this summer and I am incredibly pleased with her work.

If you have any questions you may contact me at 312-347-8324 or [nwillman@lafchicago.org](mailto:nwillman@lafchicago.org)

Sincerely,

Nubia Willman  
Staff Attorney  
LAF