

Equal Justice America
Dan Ruben
Executive Director at Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I worked as a Summer Law Clerk with the Immigration Law Clinic of the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC). In that capacity, I handled my own caseload under the supervision of an attorney, regularly met with clients to complete forms and write declarations, wrote a Motion to Reopen and Reconsider on behalf of a U visa client, appeared in Immigration Court twice on behalf of clients in removal proceedings, and did legal research on country conditions.

My experience as a Summer Law Clerk at EBCLC was an invaluable one. I was responsible for my own caseload, had the responsibility of meeting with clients and completing immigration applications on their behalf, preparing clients for Immigration Court, and writing a Motion to Reopen and Reconsider. I also had the opportunity of working on a wide range of immigration law cases such as asylum, U visa, cancellation of removal, adjustment of status, and naturalization. I appreciated the significant responsibility that EBCLC's supervising attorneys gave me. Although I received regular supervision by an attorney, I was given the responsibility of balancing a caseload, coming up with my own timeline for handling clients' cases, overseeing immigration applications from start to finish, and writing and organizing evidence for a Motion to Reopen and Reconsider.

I spent much of my clerkship meeting with clients and listening to their stories. Their stories were some of the most harrowing I had ever heard. One client sought asylum after escaping a violent and abusive partner; another client sought asylum for being gay, HIV positive, and discovering government embezzlement; another client had experienced threats and violence for being a cartel informant. I had a chance to work one-on-one with these clients and complete applications and write declarations on their behalf to help get them legal status in the U.S. I also worked with HIV-positive clients who had received asylum and now sought adjustment of status to become Lawful Permanent Residents. I also worked remotely with a married couple in Mexico who had been forced to return to their home country and who now sought entry into the U.S. as a result of qualifying for a U visa. One spouse was inadmissible to the U.S. because of multiple deportations and unlawful entries. I worked with the client to write a declaration on her behalf arguing that the multiple unlawful entries were the result of a mother's love and need to be reunited with her children in the U.S. and that this immigration history did not make her a person of bad moral character. I worked with her and her husband's family members in the U.S. to compile various letters of support indicating their good moral character, contributions to the U.S. while they lived here, and the significant hardship that their absence had on their children.

I also had the opportunity to work with clients who had a criminal history, but who had worked to turn their lives around and become more than their criminal background. One of these clients had their U visa application denied as a result of having DUI-related arrests and convictions and multiple unlawful entries into the U.S. I wrote a Motion to Reopen and Reconsider on his

behalf, arguing that his criminal history was the result of having a medical disease of alcoholism for which he had completed a rehabilitation program. I wrote of his commitment to his sobriety, his current involvement in Alcoholics Anonymous, his history of being a productive member of the U.S., and his significant family ties in the U.S. I argued and presented evidence that indicated that neither his criminal or immigration history made him dangerous or a person of bad moral character. Working with this client and writing his Motion to Reopen was one of my favorite experiences at EBCLC. It was a tough argument to make, particularly because of the popular rallying cry, “Felons, Not Families.” I wanted to show that the “bad” versus “good” immigrant dichotomy was a false one, and that undocumented immigrants are more than their past infractions and mistakes. They not only provide positive contributions to the U.S., but have significant family ties in the U.S. and these family members will suffer significant hardship if they are deported.

I thank Equal Justice America (EJA) for allowing me the opportunity to learn the practice of Immigration Law this summer. Because of EJA’s funding, I had the chance to work on a myriad of immigration law cases, work with diverse clients with complex immigration histories, and had the opportunity to learn from talented and passionate attorneys devoted to social justice.

Sincerely,

/s/ Viviana Arcia

Viviana Arcia
UCLA School of Law
Class of 2018