

August 31, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

The Asylum Unit of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) assists survivors of persecution and torture to obtain asylum in the United States. Its clients include teachers, political activists, farmers, beauticians, and doctors; mothers, fathers, and children; and people from countries across the globe who have left their homes and families in hopes of finding refuge from harm. These individuals have undergone unspeakable suffering—but they often embody resilience, hope, and the best parts of the human spirit.

Equal Justice America's fellowship program allowed me to join NWIRP's Seattle office during the summer of 2016. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have worked with, and learned from, remarkable clients and staff attorneys. I have broadened my understanding of asylum and immigration law, even as I have seen how legal services can transform people's lives in positive ways. My experience at NWIRP has affirmed my commitment to a career in public interest law.

NWIRP entrusted me with significant responsibilities. I prepared client declarations, researched and wrote a legal brief in support of a defensive asylum application, and met with asylum seekers awaiting adjudication of their cases in the Northwest Detention Center, an immigration detention center in Tacoma, Washington. Additionally, I helped several pro se asylum seekers complete their asylum paperwork and file motions with the Immigration Court. I spent most of the summer working intensively with two clients, whom I'll call Sarah and Anna. Their stories go to the heart of NWIRP's mission.*

Sarah, a citizen of Guatemala, entered an abusive relationship at the age of seventeen. For many years, her partner beat her, raped her, and threatened to kill her and her family if she attempted to leave him. In addition to severe domestic violence, Sarah suffered a brutal sexual assault by a criminal gang intent on appropriating her family's land. Early this year, Sarah fled Guatemala and requested asylum at the United States-Mexico border. She was promptly detained, placed in removal proceedings, and transferred to the Northwest Detention Center. For nearly three months, I met with Sarah multiple times each week in the concrete-walled visitation rooms at the detention center. I worked with Sarah to write her declaration for her asylum application, compiled evidence in support of her claim, and helped her prepare for her court hearing. I was privileged to gain Sarah's trust and witness her indomitable drive, persistence, and compassion. Last week, the Immigration Court granted Sarah asylum. She was overjoyed.

Like Sarah, Anna, a citizen of Somalia, is a survivor of gender-related violence. At the age of eight, Anna was subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM). The procedure has caused Anna

* These clients' names have been changed, and some details of their stories excluded, to protect their privacy.

medical complications, physical pain, and ongoing psychological suffering. More recently, Somali security forces detained, tortured, and raped Anna, accusing her of supporting the political work of her father, a democratic activist. Once released from detention, Anna fled to a neighboring country. There she met a U.S. citizen who offered to procure Anna a visa to work for his family in the United States. Anna, heartened by the prospect of a new life abroad, agreed. But when Anna arrived in California, she encountered a nightmare: her employers forced her to work over fifteen hours a day without pay, denied her medical care, and withheld food from her. Anna is eligible for both asylum and a T Visa, a form of immigration relief available to victims of human trafficking. I have assisted Anna with declarations for her asylum and T Visa applications, and begun to draft legal briefs in support of each application. Anna has graciously shared her story with me, despite the trauma she has suffered. Our challenging conversations left me deeply moved by her hopefulness, bravery, and generosity. I am optimistic that Anna will soon be granted immigration relief.

Sarah and Anna would have struggled to navigate the maze-like immigration system on their own. Asylum law is notoriously complex: the applicant must show that she faced persecution on account of one of five specific grounds, overcome bars to admissibility, and corroborate her story with sufficient evidence. An asylum seeker's chances of success rise dramatically when represented by an attorney. Yet asylum seekers in removal proceedings lack the right to appointed counsel, and private attorneys' fees are often impossibly high. The Asylum Unit ameliorates these injustices. Our community is more just, inclusive, and compassionate for NWIRP's tenacious advocacy on behalf of low-income asylum seekers. I am humbled to have been part of that advocacy this summer.

In the course of my fellowship, I grew to better understand the power and social responsibility that accompanies a law degree. I have also seen that the law, on its own, rarely favors people facing poverty, discrimination, and other barriers to justice. I am more motivated than ever to use my degree in the service of survivors of gender-related violence and others who lack resources or hope.

Sincerely,

Katherine Shattuck
University of Washington

August 26, 2016

Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Rd
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Midlothian, VA 23112

Via email to katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

I am a staff attorney in the Asylum Unit of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) in Seattle, WA, and I am writing in regards to our EJA 2016 summer fellow Kate Shattuck.

NWIRP provides comprehensive immigration legal services to low-income immigrants and refugees in the State of Washington. Our Asylum Unit assists those fleeing persecution in seeking asylum in the United States. We carry a heavy and challenging caseload, as we work with a particularly vulnerable population who has suffered severe trauma. We rely on our legal interns to draft detailed client declarations and legal memoranda, provide pro se assistance, conduct country condition and legal research, and gather evidence in support of claims for immigration relief. Interns may also assist us with intakes and preparing court filings.

We were very fortunate to have Kate Shattuck as a legal intern in our Asylum Unit. I became very familiar with her capabilities while supervising her this past summer. As highlight of her work, Kate provided substantial assistance with one of my detained cases. We represented a female asylum seeker who was detained at the Northwest Immigration Detention Center and placed in deportation proceedings. Kate would travel to the detention center in Tacoma numerous times to meet with the client and draft a declaration detailing her history of persecution. Kate collected country condition reports in support of the client's claim, and drafted the prehearing statement outlining the client's eligibility for relief. She corresponded with client's family members to gather affidavits corroborating the claim. She translated letters of support and official records, and served as interpreter during attorney-client meetings and in preparing client for testimony in court. She even went above and beyond and assisted the client's family members in finding legal resources out of state. As testament to Kate's work, the client was ultimately granted asylum and released from detention.

In addition, Kate assisted detainees and others in removal proceedings fill out and lodge their asylum applications. She also provided pro se assistance to individuals who have been ordered removed in absentia by filing motions to reopen and rescind deportation orders. Towards the end of her internship, she was assisting a victim of trafficking in their application for asylum and T-visa.

Given our limited resources, NWIRP cannot provide financial support to law student interns. Thus EJA funding allows us to host a legal intern and in helping law students gain practical legal skills and experience. We were very happy to have Kate this summer, and hope to host another EJA fellow in the future.

Please contact me if you have any questions at (206) 957-8642 or maggie@nwirp.org.

Sincerely,

/s/ Maggie Cheng
Staff Attorney