

YURI RAQUEL JIMÉNEZ

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked at the Equal Justice Center (EJC) in Austin, Texas. The EJC is a non-profit organization that represents low-income transnational migrant workers in cases to recover unpaid wages. Throughout the summer I gained experience with civil litigation, employment law, public interest practice and the emerging field of transnational migrant worker rights. I formed part of a team of legal counsel representing migrant workers in wage rights litigation and community-based enforcement strategies. The practical skills I acquired included learning how to conduct client intakes, advise clients, investigate facts, develop strategy, negotiate with opposing parties, prepare legal documents, manage litigation, research issues, and represent clients in court proceedings.

The most enjoyable aspect of interning at the EJC was the client interaction. I was lucky to help represent some of the most honest, hardworking people. The majority of them come from a sector of society that is too often neglected and exploited. The average citizen wouldn't tolerate going weeks or months without pay, but it is not a rare occurrence for some of our clients. Fortunately, the EJC is there to push back. Through the center's work, we are able to not only recover wages for clients, but also to educate them about their rights in this country.

The variety of cases I worked on also made my summer experience very valuable. I was not limited to a specific type of case or legal area. For example, one of the first cases assigned to me was a straightforward unpaid overtime claim. I learned how to prepare a brief, file it with the clerk, and respond to discovery requests. Another case involved three young workers from Nicaragua who were exploited for two years by a drywall and paint company. A third case deals with the complex area of construction law and mechanic's liens. In that situation, we had a client who was not paid by the original contractor who hired him. We perfected a lien on the property and are now getting ready to recover thousands of dollars for the client. Discovering a somewhat obscure area of law as a tool to recover wages for clients who likely would have gone unpaid had they not sought our help, was difficult (because it presented a host of legal problems I had never dealt with), but at the same time very rewarding.

I am also currently working on a case involving a family of workers who were being exploited by a fraudulent franchise cleaning company. Through extensive research on similar cases, we discovered that a large firm in Boston was heading a national class action against the same

company. We reached out to the firm and worked together to come up with strategies on how to develop a local case against the regional cleaning company.

One of the most sobering parts of this work was trying to help people whose legal claims were not strong. Even if it was apparent that they were not paid and that they were suffering for it, the Center often could not help. Most of the time, we had to turn people away because of a lack of resources. Unfortunately, the Center is one of few organizations that help local workers.

I have always been committed to a public interest career, but after seeing how many people still need help, I am now sure that this is my line of work. I am primarily interested in public service work that aims to empower and help families like mine. More importantly, I have found that this field is where I can use my abilities for positive change.

I am very thankful for the contribution by Equal Justice America. If not for this opportunity, I would not have had such a wonderfully enriching and eye-opening summer.

Thank you once again!!

Yuri Jimenez

The University of Texas School of Law, 2009