

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

In part because of the Equal Justice America Fellowship, I had the opportunity to spend the summer after my second year of law school at the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (“CRLAF”) Citizenship and Immigration Project in Sacramento, California. CRLAF provides legal assistance to rural, farmworking and immigrant populations, and its Citizenship and Immigration Project focuses on providing immigration legal services and information to families and communities.

As a summer clerk, I was able to serve individual clients, both through assistance on lengthier cases as well as shorter initial client intakes and limited service appointments. I worked on a variety of cases at different stages, and experienced first-hand the enduring and lengthy process of immigration proceedings. I began my summer clerkship by working on U and VAWA Visas, meeting with clients in-person and over the phone to fully capture their stories for supporting affidavits, drafting cover letters to USCIS, and compiling evidence packets to corroborate their applications. The women, despite the horrors in their past, were strong and determined to tell their stories. As one woman stated, “*tengo muchas ganas de salir adelante para mis hijos,*” in other words, she had a “a great desire to get ahead for my children.”

I later started working on detained asylum cases, working on the supporting brief and indexes for their cases. And when the Supreme Court decided *Pereira v. Sessions*, I had the opportunity to draft motions to terminate for our clients, learning from other attorneys and advocates who were sharing their interpretations and research on the Court’s decision. Along with many other immigration advocates, I was able to see how CRLAF collaborated with other immigration attorneys to share experiences, both their failures and successes, in immigration courts with judges who were making the first decisions on *Pereira* motions to terminate.

With other immigration attorneys, I also went to the Yuba County Jail, which contracted with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to detained individuals during their immigration proceedings, to conduct initial intakes with detained immigrants. Time and time again, I had to remind myself that immigrants are not guaranteed representation in their defensive proceedings in immigration court. Despite the complexity and ever-changing landscape of immigration law, immigrant individuals and families were expected to represent themselves if they could not afford an immigration lawyer. While a few organizations like CRLAF offered no-cost legal services, or even low-bono services, it seemed that there were never enough to support the many individuals seeking immigration relief or representations in defensive immigration proceedings.

CRLAF’s immigration legal services clinics though provided some more uplifting moments. Partnering with local community organizations and non-profits, CRLAF coordinated naturalization and DACA clinics in surrounding communities. These clinics were booked from

the morning until the mid-afternoon, with families and individuals coming to receive assistance and information on applications to naturalize or to renew their DACA applications. Usually, with the support of volunteer law students and attorneys, CRLAF attorneys could assist more than twenty individuals in a single clinic. These clinics proved crucial when a wave of DACA recipients, fearing the upcoming decisions by courts and Congress that could potentially end DACA, inundated CRLAF's appointment logs,. In those couple of weeks, legal interns and CRLAF attorneys blocked off entire days to accommodate the need for DACA renewal applications, and each completed application, signed and mailed, felt like a small victory.

I am grateful for the support of the EJA Fellowship during my time at CRLAF. As the granddaughter of farmworking immigrants who benefitted from CRLAF's advocacy for farmworkers back in the 1970's and 80's, I was especially humbled to assist in CRLAF's efforts this past summer. Now, as a rising 3L looking to my post-graduate career, I am eager to continue working with immigrant communities and I hope to return to CRLAF upon completing my legal education.

Sincerely,

Clarisa Reyes-Becerra
Columbia Law School Class of 2019

California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation

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August 30, 2018

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My name is Marcus Tang and I am an attorney with California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. I was one of Ms. Clarisa Reyes-Becerra's supervising attorneys this past summer during Clarisa's internship.

CRLA Foundation provides free legal assistance and representation to low-income individuals in their immigration matters. This summer, Clarisa worked on a wide range of assignments and projects, including client intakes, preparation of evidence and applications for immigration relief, research projects, declarations and letter briefs, court filings, and detention center visits. Under the supervision of our attorneys, she was able to gain meaningful experience with various immigration practices, including naturalization, DACA, U Visa, VAWA, removal defense, criminal convictions and their immigration consequences, and family-based immigration.

Each of our attorneys had the opportunity to work with Clarisa, and all considered the quality of her work product to be exceptional. For example, she successfully drafted and prepared a motion to terminate removal proceedings based on a very recent U.S. Supreme Court decision. This motion was ultimately granted by the immigration judge in her client's case. She is very respectful and effective when working with clients, including those with challenging cases or personalities. Clients immediately trust her because of her demeanor and humility, which is a skill that often requires a lot of time for law students to develop. We observed her at all times to be diligent, highly professional, and an incredible advocate for our clients.

Clarisa was a pleasure to work with and supervise, and effortlessly worked with attorney and non-attorney staff in our office. We never hesitated introducing her to our community partners, as we knew she would represent our organization well. Because of her strong legal and non-legal skills, outstanding summer performance, and clear commitment to our clients and mission, we decided to host Clarisa for a postgraduate fellowship and have invited her to return to our office as a full-time attorney next year.

Please feel free to contact me at mtang@crlaf.org or (916) 446-7904 ext. 114 if you have any other questions. I would be more than happy to continue discussing over the phone our positive experience with Clarisa's summer internship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M - T', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marcus Tang
Citizenship and Immigration Project Director
California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation