

Dilley Pro Bono Project

A Project of the Immigration Justice Campaign

October 29, 2018

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

Re: Equal Justice America Fellowship with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I have served as the Managing Attorney of the Dilley Pro Bono Project for approximately two years. My experience in Dilley has made one thing clear: placement of an Equal Justice America Fellow in Dilley, now more than ever before, is critical to ensure access to justice for asylum-seeking families detained at the South Texas Family Residential Center. I am humbled that our project has been chosen as a placement for an EJA Fellow from Columbia School of Law, and look forward to launching the legal career of an outstanding young attorney while expanding our capacity to serve clients on-the-ground.

I know first-hand the impact one attorney can make. Over the last two years, our project has provided limited-scope representation to over 25,000 families. With only two full-time attorneys in Dilley at any given time, we have trained and supervised over 1,000 volunteers to ensure every family received free legal services. While sorely understaffed, our clients have obtained a 99.7% grant rate at the conclusion of their credible or reasonable interview with the asylum office, and subsequently, release from detention to present their claims to an Immigration Judge in the community.

This success reflects one reality: families fleeing Central America are bona fide “refugees”. In response to our success, the government has worked to roll back access to justice for asylum-seekers who cross the US-Mexican border. In his decision in *Matter of A-B-*, Attorney General Sessions attempted to eliminate decades of precedent to heighten the burden for asylum-seekers. Children have been torn from the arms of their mothers in order to deter future migration, and men and women in uniform have stood at the border, turning away asylum-seekers in direct violation of international and domestic law.

These attacks on rule of law principles have exacerbated asylum-seekers need for legal services and our Project’s need for additional attorney capacity. The deck is stacked against our clients

