

Erin Toolan, Summer 2014

July 10, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I began my internship with Immigration Consultation Services (ICS) of Catholic Charities of Fort Worth on May 19, 2014 and completed it on July 11, 2014. During my time there, I spent about 316 hours working under immigration attorney, Jennifer de Haro.

ICS handles a variety of family-based low-cost immigration services. For the most part, the clients come from Mexico and Central America.

The attorney that I worked under, Jennifer, handles a lot of U nonimmigrant visa applications and renewals. U nonimmigrant visas are given to victims of crimes, such as domestic violence, assault, rape, and so forth. I would help by choosing the supporting documents from the documents the client provided. For a U nonimmigrant visa, you have to show substantial abuse, cooperation with law enforcement, and good moral character. Most times I would also write the cover letter that articulates the basis for the petition. It's basically a brief memo highlighting what happened to our client and why they should be granted U status. I became really familiar with most of the U visa cases because I had to write the cover letter for their petition.

Unfortunately, there were a lot of U visa clients who have been through really upsetting events. Many women were physically abused by their husbands. The I-918B is the form that is signed by the local authority (like the Tarrant County DA's Office) saying that the client was the victim of a crime and is helping out law enforcement

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with the criminal's prosecution. A police report is included with the I-918B form and oftentimes photos are included with the police report. Seeing the photos of our clients after being assaulted was deeply disturbing. I would see split lips, bloody faces, bruises, and lacerations.

One instance was more troubling than most. One client had an adult daughter in her 20s who had the mental capacity of a 5 year old. The daughter was assaulted and raped by the boyfriend of her babysitter. Another client was beaten so badly he lost all his teeth. It was very difficult to read and see these things at first, but then, after a while, you just become a more fervent advocate for them. You realize that these people really need someone to help them get a voice because their undocumented status has rendered them voiceless and invisible for years. Honestly, these are the most marginalized people because there are cultural, economic, and legal barriers to them accessing the necessary help and assistance.

Overall, during my time at Catholic Charities I had a lot of exposure to immigration petitions of all kinds. I gained a lot of practical experience in writing the cover letters for petitions, in collecting and choosing the supporting evidence, and in speaking with clients. I feel like my experience will be really helpful in the future because I hope to practice nonprofit immigration law, especially dealing with refugees and asylum seekers. Thank you for this opportunity because it has been very fulfilling for me.

Respectfully,

Erin Toolan  
Baylor Law  
Anticipated graduation date: July 2015



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Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to you as the supervising attorney for Erin Toolan who completed an internship with us here at Catholic Charities this summer.

I had Erin do a variety of tasks during her time here. A lot of the work was research and writing focused, but she also had the opportunity to sit in on client consultations and attend master calendar hearings in immigration court. In addition, she was also given larger and more complicated research projects addressing more complex legal issues, such as an asylum-based persecution question.

Erin was able to see the entire process of completing and submitting a family-based immigration petition. She witnessed initial consultations with our BIA accredited representatives. She completed a variety of applications, such as I-130s, N-400s, I-765s, I-918s, and so forth. She gathered and chose the supporting documents she felt best evidenced the requisite criteria for approval. She also researched for and wrote cover letters

which articulated the basis of the client's argument for approval. At the end, she compiled the entire petition and submitted it for approval. I believe she really got a great hands-on, practical experience during her time at Catholic Charities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. de Haro".

Jennifer de Haro  
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