

August 25, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you so much for awarding me with an Equal Justice America fellowship this summer. My experience at a legal aid agency was invaluable, and I learned a lot about the type of work that is done at public interest organizations. My experience this summer affirmed my desire to practice public interest law when I graduate from law school.

I worked in the Immigrant and Workers' Rights practice group at the Legal Assistance Foundation. I worked specifically in the Immigration Project, where I assisted many immigrant crime victims and domestic violence survivors. Their stories were very sad, but my experience was incredibly rewarding. I was most impacted by the cases involving children and sex assault.

My most memorable client was a 27-year-old Mexican woman who entered the US with her family at a very young age. I worked on her U-visa application, which is an immigration remedy for crime victims. This woman had survived so much in her life, including a heinous incident of sexual assault perpetrated by a classmate and ovarian cancer. She was severely depressed, and I spoke to her at least once a week. Because of her depression, she needed help with other aspects of her life, including counseling and housing. Her case taught me how to deal with especially sad stories and how to draw a professional line between what a client needs and my legal responsibility. It was often tempting to give her advice regarding other areas of her life, but I still listened to her when she called me. Although this was not necessarily part of my job, her emotional wellbeing affected her immigration case, and it clearly helped her to have someone to talk to, especially because she had not shared the details of her case with friends or family.

I also worked primarily with a mother of three US children who was in removal proceedings and faced the threat of deportation. I prepared her Cancellation of Removal application on my own, and because of my prior work experiences, I was able to assist the attorney assigned to the case greatly because she had never worked on this type of case before. I served as the client's primary advocate, and she was my first Spanish-speaking client that I communicated with exclusively. She did not know the attorney, so if she needed anything, she called me. It was very rewarding to use my Spanish skills, as I am working towards becoming fluent in Spanish, and to see how helpful it was to the attorney, who was extremely busy.

I hope to continue working in the public interest sector after I graduate. I would like to practice immigration law in the future, so my work experience this summer prepared me greatly for this

type of work in the non-profit sector. I am thankful that the Equal Justice America fellowship provided me with the means to work with low-income immigrants this summer.

Sincerely,

Anita Gupta
DePaul College of Law
Class of 2013



Equal justice starts here.

August 29, 2012

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

Dear Dan:

I am writing to report on the internship of Anita Gupta, who worked in LAF's Immigration Project this summer. Anita was an excellent student. Her prior experience with immigration cases allowed her to provide in-depth assistance to our clients and to staff.

Anita handled a number of individual cases, which required her to meet with clients, fill out applications, examine and gather evidence in support of the case, and finalize letters to law enforcement and immigration related to these cases.

LAF's caseload is primarily applications for crime victims. Immigrant victims of crimes can include crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual assault or even murder. Anita handled cases falling under these circumstances, and learned to approach clients in a sensitive manner. In one case, our client was a victim of rape by a school friend. In addition to working on the crime victim application (called a U visa), Anita had to deal with a number of other issues, including searching out housing options, counseling services and continued education options for our client.

Anita's work on this case alone was exceptional. But she worked on no less than 25 cases this summer. This is a much larger number of cases than the average student.

Anita also participated in our weekly, two-hour case meetings, and contributed regularly to case analysis and planning issues. She also assisted with our project's first-ever financial and educational literacy Open House, for clients whose cases have been granted and who now have authorization to work, to come and find out about job training, GED, credit building, and microfinancing.

I was very happy with Anita's work and I believe she got a well-rounded experience of working in a legal services office and, in particular, working with indigent immigrant clients.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (312) 347-8374, or at lpal@lafchicago.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. J. Palumbo".

Lisa J. Palumbo
Supervisory attorney