

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

September 17, 2013

Mr. Ruben,

I would like to sincerely thank Equal Justice America for its support of public interest students and for giving me the opportunity to engage in work that I loved this past summer. The funds for my Summer Fellowship were used to support my work at the University of Michigan's Human Trafficking Clinic, which provides holistic legal services to victims of human trafficking. Upon graduating law school, I hope to work to help combat trafficking in a public interest setting, and my work at the Clinic provided me with invaluable experience in the human trafficking field. I would not have been able to work at the Clinic and have this incredible experience without Equal Justice America.

Although I enjoyed most aspects of work at the Clinic, my favorite part was interacting directly with our clients. One of my clients, with whom I continue to work, fled her home in Latin America to escape an abusive husband. While trying to reach the United States my client became a victim of sex and labor trafficking. My client escaped her trafficker only after immigration officers arrested her up upon crossing the United States border. Eventually, my client made her way to Michigan and was advised to apply for a T Visa.

My first meeting with this client was the first time she had met someone from the Clinic in person, and was the first time I had interviewed a victim of human trafficking. She was initially withdrawn, skeptical, visibly nervous, and completely ashamed of what had happened to her. I wondered how I was ever going to get the necessary information from her to complete a solid T Visa application. However, by the end of our first interview I had helped her realize that she did not have to be ashamed of what had happened to her, but that she was a *survivor* of a crime who was worthy of help. Although our first interview was extremely emotional for her, she opened up to me and I was able to get the information I needed to begin a strong T Visa application. Our relationship has continued to evolve and there are few things that make me as happy as seeing her smile or hearing her happy voice over the phone. With the help of Equal Justice America, I was able to provide this woman with some sense of comfort and stability- two things that had been severely lacking in her life. I look forward to the day when our client receives her T Visa and is able to be reunited with her children and provide them with a better life.

Another client who I was able to build a strong relationship with was a teenage boy from Western Africa who was forced into domestic servitude and suffered extreme physical and verbal abuse for years. I spent quite a bit of time with the client in order to help him apply for Legal Permanent Resident status. The client is the same age as my brother, and it amazed me how different their lives had been, yet how many similarities

they shared. They went to high school, played the same sport, texted girls, and were nervous about passing their driver's test. This client served as a great reminder to me that while our Clinic may only represent victims of human trafficking, there is so much more to our clients than their trafficking. They are interesting individuals with amazing potential to become incredible assets to their communities. Their trafficking is something that happened to them, but it should not be what defines them. Without Equal Justice America, this lesson would have certainly taken me much longer to learn.

My Summer Fellowship with Equal Justice America served as an important milestone for me on my path to help combat human trafficking. I was able to learn critical legal skills and help a number of underprivileged clients with a variety of legal needs. I look forward to hearing about the wonderful work that Equal Justice America will help support in the future.

Sincerely,

Danica Taylor
University of Michigan Law School
Class of 2015