

August 26, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I had the incredible opportunity to work with Kulsum Ameji and Adela Carlin through the Child and Family Law Practice Group and Community Engagement Unit at Chicago's Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF). I began at LAF as a volunteer, helping market and organize an Immigration and Domestic Violence Conference in Chicago. I was lucky to work with other local organizations, such as the Battered Women's Network, Lifespan, and KANWIN. I became so enamored with the passion and dedication of these leaders that I stayed on at LAF as a legal intern for the summer of 2012. My work at the non-profit consisted of research and writing of presentation reports to the various organizational practice groups, as well as the drafting of briefs, answers, and complaints, many of which were directly filed with the Cook County Clerk with very minimal edits. I also conducted client intake interviews and led my own client meetings to prepare for court hearings and custody evaluations. In fact, I followed one particular client throughout her entire custody case: from the intake interview to the final judgment.

In the second half of my internship, I was given the opportunity to attend court hearings. My supervisor and I spent entire days at the Daley Center, watching everything from status hearings to trials with oral arguments and judgments. I was thrilled to see the law come to life, rather than reading it on a page in a textbook.

My experience at LAF is immeasurable. I spent each day surrounded by my law student peers, as well as over 80 lawyers who are considered experts in their respective fields. Every day was a surprise; I spent an entire three days working on one complaint, and then rushed to the county jail to pick up my client on the fourth day. As an intern with the Community Engagement Unit, I had the opportunity to meet community organizers, local advocates, and teachers, as well as partners of large Chicago law firms dedicated to pro bono work and community outreach.

I cannot be more grateful for this summer scholarship. Without it, I would not be able to put in the hours of tiring, yet passionate work, nor would I have been able to absorb the daily traumatic stories my clients brought forth. My life as a first year law student did not prepare me for the real world as much as three months "on the ground" with LAF. As a result of this summer, I am more dedicated than ever to pursue pro bono work as an attorney and to make as large an impact upon the public interest sector as I can.

I highly recommend any student with even the tiniest attraction to public interest work to apply for the Equal Justice America summer stipend and to pursue at least a summer working with the very people that we pass every day. The lawyers and advocates who work in this field are some of the strongest people in the world; their drive and passion for what they do is infectious, and it is time for us all to follow in their paths.

Sincerely,

Goli Rahimi
DePaul University College of Law, Class of 2014

August 31, 2012

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice Works America

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

I am writing regarding Ms. Goli Rahimi's internship with LAF (f/k/a Legal Assistance Foundation.) I first met Goli at a networking event hosted at her law school.

I begrudgingly attended the event at the organizer's request. She was a source of support to me during my own law school days. I simply wished to repay her kindness.

I never expected to come across Goli, a phenomenal future attorney, advocate, and activist. She was just one of many students with whom I exchanged cards that evening. Several of them haphazardly contacted me. But Goli was the most polite and persistent.

When we finally met up, I was extremely impressed by her positive attitude, array of interests, and level of professionalism. Over the next months, she would become an invaluable contributor to LAF and to our work.

Goli's work this summer ran the gamut. She was instrumental in helping to organize a huge conference on the intersections of immigration, family law, mental health, domestic violence, and trauma. She attended conference meetings, conducted extensive research, helped organize logistics, designed materials, and assisted with myriad other tasks.

This marathon effort was an intense introduction to legal aid/non-profit work. Goli experienced firsthand our struggle to do large-scale work on minimal to non-existent resources.

This conference would not have been possible without Goli's contribution and hard work.

I was profoundly impressed by Goli's willingness to take on any project given to her.

From the intellectual challenge of researching international legal issues to unloading and organizing food for the networking reception, Goli was enthusiastic, strategic, and thoughtful. I was struck by her helpfulness and commitment to the totality of the work.

Goli also researched and shaped a tool-kit on custody and mental health. Her attention to detail, astonishing organizational skills, and nimble intellect all shone in these efforts.

She contributed considerably to several difficult and complicated cases, involving intersecting family law, immigration law, housing law, and other issues. Goli's work on one particularly challenging cases stands out. She reviewed documents, gathered

information, researched legal issues, drafted pleadings and court orders, and attended a status in court.

She led a complex client meeting and did a fantastic job eliciting information, asking tough questions, and building trust with the client. By the end of the summer, Goli established meaningful professional relationships with clients and staff alike.

I know that the summer was intense and challenging for Goli. It was a lot of work at a time of stress and organizational change. Working with immigrant survivors of violence is both meaningful and exhausting. But I am hopeful that she learned and grew as a future attorney and as an advocate for social justice and human rights.

She experienced a wide range of work – from interviewing clients to attending a board meeting to research and writing to observing court proceedings to folding brochures. And she did all of it with passion, perseverance, and a positive spirit.

Instead of attending a pleasant going away lunch, Goli spent the last day of her internship at the Skokie courthouse. Our client, a low income, Southeast Asian immigrant survivor of domestic violence had been arrested because of an altercation with her husband. Goli and I spent the entire day in the courthouse, unraveling the complex situation, exploring the complex legal ethics issues involved, and strategizing the impact of this new development on our civil contested custody and divorce case.

I feel honored and lucky to have had the privilege of working with such an intelligent, zealous, organized, and personable professional. She is far more than an intern. She is a colleague and a friend and I feel blessed to have met her at that networking reception. Thank you for your support of Goli's work with LAF.

Please contact me with any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kulsum Ameji

Kulsum Ameji | Staff Attorney
Community Engagement Unit

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