

# Michael H. El-Zein

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August 20, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank you for providing me with the financial assistance that allowed me to work at the University of Michigan Human Trafficking Clinic this summer. It was without a doubt one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, and certainly the most exciting stage of my legal career. Throughout the summer, I have been able to provide meaningful direct service to my clients while sharpening and expanding my legal skills. I was given the opportunity to prepare a variety of immigration applications, coordinate with governmental organizations, work with a social service providers and nongovernmental organizations to get my clients the help they needed, and engage in legal research. None of that would have been possible without the generous grant from Equal Justice America. Without student attorneys like me, our clients would not get the help they so desperately need.

As one of six student attorneys working at the Clinic this summer, I was assigned eight clients, all of whom were foreign nationals. Each client was at a different point in the immigration process. Many of my clients had already secured their own immigration status and were trying to obtain status for their family members, and three of my clients were successfully reunited with family members. I had the privilege of accompanying two of my clients to the airport for the arrival of a family member. Thanks to the student attorneys that came before me, I was able to watch mothers reunite with their daughters after years spent apart; it was a truly unforgettable experience.

Those moments were particularly important to me. While filling out forms inside the office, it was easy to forget the importance of my work. It can be difficult to see the long term impact it has on our clients, and in the beginning I questioned whether I was really making a difference. However, seeing my clients' overwhelming joy when they were able to hug a loved one for the first time in years put things in perspective. Without the assistance of the Clinic, those families may never have been reunited. Without filing all those forms, contacting various governmental officials, and coordinating with social service organizations, those moments might never have happen. Without my contribution this summer, more of those moments would be further delayed. And without Equal Justice America, I would never have been a part of that process. For that opportunity, I am forever grateful.

Sincerely,

Michael El-Zein  
University of Michigan, Class of 2014