

**Elinor Jordan**

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July 31, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to work with Michigan Farmworker Legal Services this summer. My experience here has solidified my desire to become a public interest attorney. Migrant farm workers are some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society; it was evident throughout my fellowship that without FLS and organizations like Equal Justice America that support it, these women, men, and children would be alienated and left without recourse.

It only takes one visit to any migrant camp to see the obstacles between farm workers and legal representation. The camps are isolated and difficult to find. Residents live in antiquated mobile homes, run-down cabins, or ramshackle houses. There are often language and cultural barriers to overcome. Most importantly, migrants have migrated – they've come from hundreds of miles away and they just want to work hard and earn as much as they possibly can before the season ends and they need to migrate again, so their fear of retaliation keeps them from speaking up. For me, the realization that people were living in squalor right under my nose was both infuriating and transformative.

One day, a woman named Rosalia called the office. She had been out of work for some time, and had recently received notice from the Unemployment Insurance Administration that she owed restitution of nearly \$10,000. Rosalia cannot read, and does not speak English, making it nearly impossible for her to do much more than ask a friend to explain what the letter said to her. When she called, Rosalia was terrified because she doesn't even earn \$10,000 in a year, and could not dream of returning that amount. In analyzing her case, I was able to find that a mistake had been made and supported her in making an appeal. If an agency like FLS had not helped Rosalia with this claim and explained to her that she had not done anything wrong, she may have been paying back the UIA for decades on a charge that had been incorrectly assessed. Although I had many cases that were a lot like Rosalia's throughout the summer, I will always remember what she said when I let her know that we would take the case. She told me that she was very appreciative that someone would listen to her or even notice her.

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This is what I think FLS, Equal Justice America, and other agencies that provide legal services to indigent clients are about – we notice. I strive to be like the professionals I have worked with this summer who consistently take the time to listen, support, and advocate for migrant farm workers. This seems to be the one place where my skills and the world's need intersect, and I feel indebted to Equal Justice America for helping me fulfill my vocation to serve in this way.

Thank you again,

Elinor Jordan  
Summer Law Clerk, Farm worker Legal Services  
Juris Doctor Candidate, Michigan State University College of Law