

June 1, 2018

Dear Mr. Cohen and the JJCF Board,

The final months of my fellowship at the International Refugee Assistance Project passed in much the same way as the first – too quickly, and with new opportunities for creative responses to global challenges at every turn.

When I first began at IRAP, I took point on our organization's response to the sudden and unexpected cancellation of a special refugee and parole program designed to reunite children suffering from gang violence in their home countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras with their parents in the United States. IRAP's legal team secured legal representation for a number of these children, and we are hopeful that many will be granted refugee status and brought to safety soon. In recent months, I have had the privilege of assisting IRAP's litigation team in preparing a lawsuit challenging the termination of the Central American Minors Humanitarian parole program, an effort that feels very full-circle after spending months working on individual cases. I have been helping our plaintiffs tell their stories to the court by preparing declarations, and am constantly awed by their bravery and resilience. Individual legal assistance and impact litigation are two of the most prominent tools in the human rights lawyer's toolkit, and I feel extremely fortunate to have been exposed to both during my time at IRAP.

Additionally, I have been spending a significant amount of time requesting information and records from federal agencies through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. It is empowering to write these requests and witness democratic and transparent governance in action, a privilege few of IRAP's clients enjoy in their home countries. Although navigating the federal bureaucracy can sometimes be frustrating, the effort is well worth it because sometimes the information we receive from these requests is the key to winning a client's case. My writing has undoubtedly improved because of my experience writing FOIA requests, and I will carry these communication skills with me throughout my career.

I am also working with a team of IRAP staff to review and modify our internal processes regarding how we screen potential clients. Hundreds of refugees reach out to IRAP each month requesting legal assistance, and IRAP staff and volunteers dedicate countless hours to listening to their stories and determining which cases would benefit from our intervention. In my eight months at IRAP, I have conducted over 60 intake interviews with potential clients from all around the world, and I am now using that experience to make our screening process more efficient and client-focused.

I am leaving IRAP humbled by the scope of modern suffering, but also awed and hopeful at the number of ways in which everyday citizens can contribute to efforts to create a more just and peaceful world. I look forward to pursuing a career in international humanitarian law, and will forever be thankful for the JJCF for enabling me to spend this year exploring that passion.

Best,

Freya Jamison