

José Alvarez

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The Legal Aid Society
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am writing to apply for the Staff Attorney position with the Legal Aid Society Criminal Appeals Bureau. I recently obtained an LL.M. degree from Harvard Law School and will sit for the New York bar exam this July. After graduating from the University of Puerto Rico School of Law, I clerked for the Chief Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court. I am excited for the opportunity to use my research and writing skills on behalf of indigent defendants in New York.

As the son of working-class, immigrant parents, I have been aware of the obstacles that low-income individuals face as a result of the inability to pay for a lawyer. The travails of my family and many other Cuban immigrants to regularize their migratory status and assert their rights to equal opportunities in an unknown and overwhelming legal system awoke me, since an early age, to the problem of uneven access to justice.

In law school, motivated by my interests in social justice and criminal justice, I completed an internship with the Criminal Appeals Division of the Legal Aid Society of Puerto Rico. I worked in the case of a defendant who, having been previously tried in federal court, was later convicted for the same crime in a Puerto Rican court. The primary legal argument raised on appeal was a violation of the defendant's constitutional right against double jeopardy, under the assertion that Puerto Rico and the federal government were the same sovereign for purposes of the dual-sovereignty doctrine. The argument prevailed in the Puerto Rico Supreme Court and the Court vacated the defendant's conviction. It was later upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Puerto Rico v. Hector Rodriguez*, 125 S. Ct. 1234 (2016). The success of that appeal cemented my belief in the potential of appellate practice to transform the criminal justice system into a more humane and civilized one.

After graduating law school, I clerked for two years in the chambers of Honorable [NAME], Chief Justice of the Puerto Rico Supreme Court. In this position, I completed extensive research and writing assignments on a variety of legal topics, and assisted the Chief Justice in drafting Court opinions. I was responsible for overseeing the disposition of appeals and attending all new motions, briefs, and other documents that the parties presented. I also briefed the Chief Justice on a weekly basis on all new appeals filed with the Court and worked with fellow law clerks to effectively and timely manage a case-intensive docket.

At Harvard Law School, I focused my academic work in topics related to the criminal justice system, taking courses in criminal law, criminal procedure, capital punishment, mass incarceration, white-collar criminal law and procedure, among others. My master's thesis explored the implications of the legal concept of human dignity to the analysis of punishment proportionality.

I attached my resume, transcripts, and a writing sample for your review. I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss my interest in working with the Criminal Appeals Bureau of The Legal Aid Society's Criminal Defense Practice. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

José Alvarez