

August 25, 2010

Equal Justice America  
ATTN: Dan Ruben  
Building II Suite 240  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This letter is in regards to my summer internship at Neighborhood Legal Services Association, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I recently finished my 10-week internship at NLSA's Landlord Tenant Summer Internship on August 13, 2010.

At NLSA, the population served is all low-income individuals. I worked with private, public and Section 8 housing issues that were assigned to me as individual clients. I helped with a variety of situations, including evictions, discrimination actions, landlord negotiations, and utility shut-offs. During my time at NLSA, I was able to help over twenty people with their legal issues. Even if I was unable to avoid the eviction procedure, I was able to provide them with their legal rights and information for other resources, such as shelters and charitable organizations, in order to improve their current situation.

With the public housing and Section 8 cases, it was crucial that my clients not get a judgment against them because it could affect their status with their subsidies/vouchers. My clients' subsidies/vouchers were usually the only option that they had for housing and if they were to lose them, then my clients and their families may have become homeless. This was especially a possibility with the current state of limited subsidized housing in Pittsburgh. Therefore, my work with these clients was of the utmost importance.

One of the most powerful client stories that I can offer you from my time spent at the Landlord Tenant Project was an eighty-four year-old grandmother who had taken in her twenty-one year-old grandson. Her daughter had not been involved in any of her four children's lives and my client had raised all of her grandchildren by herself. My client lived in a Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh senior high-rise and her grandson had been caught smoking marijuana down the block at the basketball court. She faced eviction because if anyone on the lease was arrested for drugs, then it could result in the whole unit being forced out. I represented her at a District Justice hearing and was able to keep her in her apartment. She was so grateful and I was very pleased that I could save her housing because she had done nothing wrong but still faced a grave consequence for someone else's poor decisions.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Landlord Tenant Project at NLSA. My co-workers were very committed to the public interest cause and I found it very rewarding to work

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with not only my individual clients, but also my co-workers. I learned an invaluable amount about the Pittsburgh legal community, landlord tenant law, negotiation skills, and interacting with clients.

Lastly, I wanted to thank you for the possibility of being able to work at NLSA because without my fellowship, I do not believe that I would have been able to afford a summer working without pay. I wanted to let you know that my internship led to a job offer at NSLA and I will continue my service to the low-income population in Pittsburgh as a bankruptcy intern. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Cyndi Caldwell  
University of Pittsburgh  
School of Law  
Graduation Year: May 2011

August 18, 2010

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is in reference to Cyndi Caldwell's participation in NLSA's Summer Intern Program. She was one of seven interns, four of whom were certified legal interns.

Our program is designed to give law school students hands-on experience in various areas of poverty law. We have a District Judge Project in which students who are certified represent clients at landlord tenant hearings; students who are not yet certified help prepare those clients for the hearings and attend the hearing. Interns also present motions in Special Motions Court before Judge Wettick. They observe arbitration and non-jury trials throughout the summer.

The summer program also includes extensive work on our telephone HELPLINE, which requires not only giving legal advice on landlord tenant issues but also following this up with letters confirming that advice. In addition, we have our interns participate in our Family Law and Debt Advice clinics, sitting in on client interviews at the clinic. We usually have three attorneys participating in each clinic, so students have an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of different interview styles. All students also participate in our Elder Law Program, assisting our ELP attorneys with appointments at the Senior Centers and with any necessary follow up work. Finally, we have what we call various side bar projects, in which students are able to make a direct contribution to some aspect of the NLSA program. This summer the students helped produce a video which demonstrates the type of legal work that NLSA does.

The quality that I found to be most impressive in Ms. Caldwell was her enthusiasm for all aspects of her work here at NLSA and the positive attitude which she displayed, even in the face of what can often be discouraging and frustrating client situations.

I also found that she combined self confidence with the awareness that she had much to learn from others and the willingness to do that. She participated enthusiastically in everything we asked her to do. She worked well with not only her fellow interns but also with all members of our staff, who range in age from very new attorneys to those who have been here for over 30 years.

Although our program is not a research program, there are times when students need to do research in order to be able to respond to the client's needs. Ms. Caldwell spared no effort in digging into any topic on which she needed further information in order to assist her client. When she had that information, she used it effectively to pursue her client's case with adverse parties including landlords and the utility companies.

At the end of the summer we ask our interns to evaluate the program and to identify what

they believe to be its strong points and also those features or procedures which might need modification. Her evaluation was very helpful to us on both practical issues and on suggestions for training techniques.

I believe that your financial investment in Ms. Caldwell's summer work was more than amply rewarded by the progress which she made throughout the summer. Our goal is to help our interns begin the transition from law student to lawyer – and I believe that she accomplished that goal. We were so satisfied with her work that we have asked her to continue to work with our clients in our bankruptcy program during the academic year.

Very truly yours,

Barbara Kern  
Managing Attorney