

August 9, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

First, I would like to sincerely thank you and Equal Justice America for the financial and moral support, which made it possible for me to work for the Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP). Without your generosity, I would have been unable to accept the TCRP summer clerkship position.

I spent this summer working for TCRP's office in Austin, Texas. The mission of TCRP is to promote racial, social, and economic justice through litigation, education, and social services for low-income persons least able to defend themselves. My summer clerkship experience gave me an in-depth look into the TCRP mission while focusing on disability law, police accountability, and prisoner's rights.

Over the summer, I helped represent a number of clients with ADA litigation. Specifically, for one case I helped a young lady address architectural barriers she faced at a local Austin bar. Over a year ago, this wheelchair bound client sent a demand letter to this bar requesting accommodations because their restroom facility lacked grab bars, making it impossible for her to use their restrooms. A year later with no response from the bar, the client went back and found that the restrooms still lacked grab bars, forcing her to travel one block down from the bar to find an accessible restroom. After this incident, the young lady contacted our organization and I began investigating the matter. I worked thoroughly with the client to develop the facts of her case and did extensive research to determine the liability of the local Austin bar. With the official approval from my supervising attorney, I began preparing a petition and preparing discovery for the client's case. Even though my assignments were common tasks for a law clerk, the client was beyond appreciative for my work because she was finally getting justice for the traumatizing experience she faced. This case taught me a great deal about trial preparation but also taught me about the many challenges the disabled community faces. It is without a doubt an experience that I will always remember.

While I spent most of my summer working on ADA cases, I did have the opportunity to engage in community outreach work. For example, a local grassroots organization contacted TCRP and asked us to give a "Know Your Rights" presentation for the Austin community. As a result, I began researching and preparing basic "Know Your Rights" information and created a production that was informative and entertaining. After the presentation, many members of the

community thanked us for taking the time to provide the information because they were completely unaware of their civil rights. It was deeply rewarding to know that our work was empowering and helping the local Austin community.

I have long been committed to public interest law since the beginning of my law school career. However, my work with the Texas Civil Rights Project has solidified that commitment and increased my dedication to providing legal services for the underrepresented. I am tremendously grateful to Equal Justice America for providing me with the support to pursue this opportunity with TCRP. I have gained invaluable education from this experience and plan to continue to follow my passion for public interest law. Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

Denise D. Hernandez

Texas Tech University, School of Law
Class of 2013

TEXAS CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT

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August 24, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing with my evaluation of Denise Hernandez's EJA-sponsored summer legal clerkship with the Texas Civil Rights Project. Denise worked full-time for ten weeks at the TCRP office in Austin, Texas. During her time at TCRP, Denise gained in-depth experience in a variety of practice areas, including litigation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, prisoner's rights work, and police misconduct analysis. Her work also consisted of handling litigation tasks, such as conducting legal research and drafting petitions and discovery.

Denise's research and writing was consistently excellent. She quickly grasped complex legal concepts and was able to effectively communicate them to both legal and non-legal audiences. Denise created a "know your rights" presentation for a community group that was informative and very well-received. She tackled her assignments with passion and demonstrated a high level of empathy toward clients. Denise also took initiative in identifying and pursuing systemic problems that she encountered in her work. While she showed an enthusiasm to ask questions and accept supervision, she also demonstrated an internal confidence and motivation to work independently.

The Texas Civil Rights Project is grateful to Equal Justice America for providing fellowships that enable us to recruit students like Denise. Denise completed a large volume of work this summer that allowed us to significantly increase our impact on the community. We would be delighted to host future recipients of the EJA fellowship.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions about Denise or her work at TCRP.

Sincerely,



Abby Frank
Staff Attorney