

August 31, 2009

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

Re: Equal Justice America Legal Service Fellowship, Summer 2009

Mr. Ruben:

I cannot begin to thank Equal Justice America enough for the funding to complete my summer internship with the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP) in Washington, D.C. I had a wonderful experience and I some of my work will directly benefit Louisiana. The following is a description of the agency and the assignments and projects I was involved in this summer.

CCLP is a public interest law and policy organization focused on reform of juvenile justice and other systems that affect troubled and at-risk children, and protection of the rights of children in those systems. The Center's work covers a range of activities including research, writing, public education, media advocacy, training, technical assistance, administrative and legislative advocacy, and litigation.

This summer, there were four (4) primary projects that I worked on:

1. **Models for Change:** Funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, CCLP provides the program support, supervision, research and advising for all of the Models for Change program sites across the country. Models for Change is a program that helps states reduce Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) and disparate treatment with the juvenile justice system. The program currently is based primarily in Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. The goal is to reduce the number of youth of color in the justice system, with alternatives such as community treatment, restorative justice, and diversion. A secondary goal is to also identify policies, laws, and practices that disparately target youth of color.

- a. **Work Performed:** I provided support to the staff members on the project by

researching statutory offenses that juveniles are charged with and determining what the sentencing and detention norms for those offenses were in a particular jurisdiction. For instance, in a given jurisdiction, there may be numerous statutory offenses that fall under umbrella of “domestic violence,” but no record of what particular degree of DV that a juvenile was charged with. My role was to find out if juveniles of color were being overcharged, or being unfairly detained on offenses when they normally would have been released on their own recognizance, but for an arbitrary statutory enhancement. I also wrote descriptions of the programs successes in Louisiana, and researched the evolution of juvenile justice reform here.

2. **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI):** The Annie E. Casey Foundation funds CCLP to provide training nationwide on assessing conditions of confinement in juvenile facilities and to serve as lead consultants for the foundation in Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland.

a. **Work Performed:** I attended various meetings and workgroups on JDAI in Washington, D.C., including a roundtable of Judges, DC police, DC Atty General’s Office, and various community providers who are working to reduce the number of youth in detention in District facilities.

b. I also attended the closing down of the notorious Oak Hill Youth Detention Facility in MD and the opening of the New Beginnings Youth Rehabilitation Center. New Beginnings Center is arguably the most innovative youth rehabilitation center in the U.S., with state of the art mental health, education, and community advocacy groups housed in the campus. I attended the press conference at the facility opening with DC Mayor Adrian Fenty and the Director of the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS), Vincent Schraldi.

3. **Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP A):** The JJDP A was up for reauthorization during the 111th Congress (bill was ultimately stalled in committee and was not voted on during my tenure).

a. **Work Performed:** I drafted a non-partisan fact sheet on the bill for Senator Diane Feinstein [D-CA], for her information while deliberating on the Senate

bill. I also attended numerous planning meetings and legislative strategy sessions with juvenile justice coalition members, such as Act 4 Justice, National Juvenile Justice Coalition, and National Council of La Raza.

- b. I also attended various related legislative hearings, such as the National Black Caucus hearing on prison reform with Supreme Court Justice Breyer and Attorney General Eric Holder, the Stop Prison Rape Initiative, hearings on justice reform in Los Angeles, and practitioner conferences, such as the National Juvenile Justice Network Conference.

4. Safford v. Redding: School Strip Search Issues

- a. **Work Performed:** Drafted a memo on the implications of the ruling in *Safford Unified Sch. Dist. #1 et al. v. Redding*, 557 U.S. ____ (2009). Memo discussed the implications of the Court's ruling on the ability of schools to force students to disrobe in pursuit of contraband or wrongdoing.

What I Will Take Away From My Experience:

This summer, I was exposed to an enormous amount of diversity in both juvenile policy and legal practice. Since I do not envision myself on the “Big Law” path, this was very refreshing to see that there are so many jobs that require the training of a lawyer, without the constraints of a more traditional career path. I met a D.C. Attorney General who gets to do trials everyday, legislative staffers who wrote bills and policy papers, researchers, professors, non-profit directors, criminal justice consultants, program managers, community advocates, mediators, trainers and politicians—all of them performing legal-related public interest work. Some of these lawyers didn't practice at all (but made a great living), while others were in court everyday. The point was that most of them went through 3-4 different career changes—all facilitated by their law degrees. So with a little networking and a lot of hard work, it is possible to make a measurable impact on society, particularly in the lives of juveniles victimized within the justice system.

Another benefit of CCLP is the collective experience on staff. The director, Mark Soler, is one the top experts on juvenile justice in the country. Mark knows everything and anyone you need to know in juvenile justice work. He also is a great source of career and academic support. Mark is currently training new leaders in the field through the CCLP Future Leaders Project. All of the staff members collectively have decades of experience in

program management, DMC, system reform, trial advocacy, and legal research and writing. Expect to be thrown in feet first and to learn very quickly. CCLP was the perfect internship for a “hands-on” learner like me who wanted an overview of the D.C. political scene. CCLP staff also practice consensus management, so every staff member has a voice in every decision. At CCLP, interns should expect to consult on programs, draft publications, consult on the website, speak at meetings, and attend legislative hearings. You will be treated as a full-fledged member of the team at CCLP.

My deepest gratitude goes out to the staff at Equal Justice America who made my dynamic summer experience possible.

Respectfully submitted,

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