

Dan Ruben, Executive Director of Equal Justice America

Dear Dan Ruben,

My summer fellowship with the Battered Women's Program Legal Component, has not only provided me with an opportunity to be trained on the most up to date state (Louisiana) and federal laws concerning domestic violence, it has provided me insight on the career path I aspire to reach. Previously, I was unsure of the area of law I wanted to practice, because of my experience this summer, I would like to practice family law. I believe I could assist families in reaching an amicable end to their difficult disputes.

The Battered Women's Program Legal Component is a free service that assist victims of domestic violence in obtain Protective Orders (P.O.) against their abusers. In addition, the program provides safety planning, emotional support, and various other services for victims. I have been greatly influence by this and understand the vital roles attorneys have when helping people. Often, attorneys are portrayed as money seeking vultures that prey on others misery, however, through services like the Battered Women's Program Legal Component attorneys are there to assist people in their greatest time of need, free of charge.

Although the practice of the Battered Women's Program Legal Component is very focused, I have been exposed to a wide range of court proceeding in many different Parishes (Counties). I have assisted attorneys in very standard proceeding in the city to unconventional proceeding in rural area. Because of my travel within the surrounding area of Baton Rouge, I have had the opportunity to meet judges, attorneys, and various officers of the court. Also, I have obtained working knowledge of how attorneys handle their procedural duties.

Clients in domestic abuse situations can be very emotional. This sometime creates a problem for attorneys when trying to obtain pertinent facts to represent clients in court proceeding. Often I would help calm down clients who were very emotional and sacred and help pull the facts of the incident together. There was no greater joy in seeing clients go from been sacred to sit in the same room as their abuser, to the sense of relief they would feel when a Protective Order was granted by the court. Also, I conducted post client interviews in which I would call victims and counsel them about their situation after the granting of the P.O. This was grafting because victims would often have a new sense of self and were able to lead lives outside the fear of abuses. From this, I truly understood that our service does make a difference in the lives of victims of domestic abuse.

Working with the Battered Women's Program this summer has not only given me insight in regards to my career path, but has forced me to evaluate how I deal with my personal relationship. Abuse is not only physical but can be found with the words we chose and how we treat others. This has truly been a great experience this summer. I thank Equal Justice America for giving me this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Hollis Lewis  
Southern University Law Center

Juris Doctorate Candidate May 2012

# Battered Women's Program

CAPITAL AREA FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION CENTER, INC. P.O. BOX 52809 BATON ROUGE, LA 70892-2809

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August 24, 2010

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Re: Hollis Lewis – Southern University Law Center

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Hollis began his fellowship with us by reading, reviewing, and discussing with me and one of our Court Advocates materials utilized in the orientation and training of all new staff and volunteers at the Legal Services Component of the Capital Area Family Violence Intervention Center, Inc. (Battered Women's Program). These materials included the history of violence against women, in the world, the United States of America, Louisiana, and the greater capital area; sexism and other forms of oppression still alive and well in our world, country, state, and city; the crisis intervention model utilized by counselors and advocates with victims of domestic and dating violence; the history of our agency and the Legal Services Component; State and Federal laws responsive to domestic and dating violence; and Louisiana mandated forms for orders of protection for victims of domestic and dating violence.

Thereafter, Hollis observed and participated in legal advocacy, emotional support, and safety planning with victims of domestic and dating violence in various court settings throughout our service area; these included East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court, Ascension Parish, Iberville Parish, Pointe Coupee Parish, and West Baton Rouge Parish. Hollis also observed our attorneys in pre-court meetings with potential clients who are victims of domestic and dating violence in both Baton Rouge and Gonzales, Louisiana.

Hollis reviewed and analyzed petitions filed by victims of domestic and dating violence to determine if their circumstances and facts were appropriate for our agency's legal representation. He also contacted numerous victims of domestic and dating violence, clients of ours, and interviewed them regarding their experience with law enforcement agencies. He assisted these clients in developing knowledge regarding the Criminal Justice System and how to access the information and assistance which may be needed in the future from that system.

Hollis also observed and assisted our attorneys in the all of the aforementioned parishes as they represented victims of domestic and dating violence in protective order proceedings. Hollis also contacted some of these clients after their court proceedings to make sure that they understood how to participate in the enforcement of these court orders.

Hollis oversaw a project which required contact with our legal clients and the drafting of rules for contempt against our clients partners/former partners when the partners did not comply with the court orders insofar as the payment of attorney fees and court costs were concerned. As the result of Hollis' work on this project, our agency will be able to collect past due attorney fees and ensure the payment of court costs in our protective order proceedings.

Hollis was very enjoyable to work with; he established immediately positive working relationships with every member of our staff. He conducted himself in a professional manner and was timely and responsible in all matters and all work assigned to him.

We would welcome Hollis in the future should our paths cross again.

Sincerely,

Ayn W. Stehr  
Attorney at Law  
Director, Legal Services