

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

August 29, 2016

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank Equal Justice America for providing me with a summer fellowship. Your organization's support was crucial in my decision to pursue public interest work this summer. This summer, I worked at the Legal Aid Justice Center's Civil Advocacy Division in Charlottesville, Virginia. I worked in several areas of the law including housing, consumer, public benefits, and prisoner rights.

The main area of my work was in housing law. All of the clients I worked with were low income tenants-- some of my clients wanted to get out of their lease because they were being treated unfairly, and some needed help defending themselves from being evicted. As an intern, I interviewed clients to gather more facts and to see if there is any leverage we can use to negotiate with the landlord. With the guide of the supervising attorney for the case, I negotiated on behalf of the tenants with the landlord. Many times I was able to negotiate a settlement successfully. I had one housing case that ended up going to trial because we were not able to negotiate a settlement. We were well prepared for the trial. Unfortunately for us, the opposing party decided to nonsuit on the day of trial in order to bring additional related claims.

Another task I was given as an intern was to write wills or power of attorneys for low income people. Despite it being a simple task of interviewing the client and drafting a will, I particularly enjoyed this task as I was able to learn a lot about the lives of the clients I was drafting the will for. During the interview, many clients shared their life stories and the reasons for why they are leaving certain items for a certain person. One client I drafted a will for had terminal cancer. He told me that writing this will was the last important task he had to do in life. Executing his will was one of the most rewarding experiences I had during the summer.

Another interesting project that I worked on was regarding prisoner's rights. The project's goal was to monitor a certain prison in Virginia to make sure they were providing proper medical treatments to prisoners. My task consisted of organizing and summarizing letters sent by prisoners, and replying to the prisoners with any advice my supervising attorney provided. I also had the chance to visit the prisoners myself to gather more facts about the situation.

Throughout my summer internship, I realized how much the clients appreciated the help legal aid was providing them. I was also very surprised at the wide range of clients the legal aid society served, varying from refugee children to prisoners with life sentences. The experience that I had at the Legal Aid Justice Center this summer not only helped me gain substantive legal experience, but was also truly meaningful.

Once again, I would like to thank Equal Justice America for providing me with a summer fellowship and the opportunity to have a wonderful and meaningful experience.

Sincerely,

“Josh” Hyunjong Ryu

University of Virginia, '18