

August 1, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I deeply appreciate your organization's support of my time at LAF this summer. LAF serves the disadvantaged members of Cook County who need skilled and dedicated advocates on their sides, and the grant you provided to me, many of my fellow interns this year, and very many more over the years, made it possible for us to help LAF serve these people.

I spent my summer working in LAF's consumer protection group. Some illustrative work this group handles is consumer bankruptcy, foreclosure defense and Fair Debt Collection Practices Act violations. I had a variety of experiences this summer, including participating in client intake and meetings, attending depositions, and drafting motions and complaints. The lion's share of my work was legal research and writing, which was a fantastic chance to strengthen my skills in that area. I have essentially taught myself a substantial amount of consumer bankruptcy law, a topic I knew nothing about when I joined LAF at the beginning of the summer.

One of my favorite clients was one whose case let me work with a quirky interest of mine—old property-law customs. I think the resilience of these old, antiquated customs in a modern world where they make no sense is pretty fascinating. Our client needed to show the chain of title to her home so she could, hopefully, save it from what is more or less a technicality in the bankruptcy code. Because records in Cook County before 1985 have not been digitized, I found myself in the basement of the recorder's office poking around the old records to trace the chain of title. It was something of a thrill to see something so old, and amusingly frustrating to have to still do it this way in an age of instant computer recall.

My other favorite client was one whose case helped something click into place for how I approach the field of law. Part of my desire to work at LAF stemmed from my past work on the creditor side of foreclosure, and I wanted to put the skills I learned there to use on the other side for a while. The greatest thing I came to believe during my time on the creditor side was that everyone, even if they do things some other people find problematic, deserves the protection the law is designed to provide. This client at LAF illustrated the universality of that truth. She had filed for bankruptcy when she could no longer pay her mortgage. When I was discussing the case with an attorney, I learned that the client was a criminal who had been convicted for stealing from the government. My skepticism was clear and the attorney immediately challenged me—the bankruptcy code was designed to protect people in precisely this situation, and just because our client was a felon didn't mean she shouldn't get that help. I reflected in that moment that she was right, and that it is not only those who are both good and powerful who deserve lawyers.

Thank you for enabling me to learn this lesson. I will remember my time at LAF for the practical skills I learned, the interests I got to explore, and an insight that helps me appreciate why lawyers do what we do.

Aaron Wiltse.
Harvard Law School
May 2017

August 28, 2015

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
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13540 E. Boundary Road
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Also by email to Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Aaron Wiltse

Dear Mr. Ruben:

We were extremely pleased with Aaron Wiltse's work as a summer law student intern. Aaron was placed in LAF's Consumer Practice Group, and I was his supervisor. Most of my work, and thus most of his work, is in the bankruptcy area, but he also worked with other attorneys in our practice group on cases involving other consumer issues such as debt defense, consumer fraud, abusive debt collection, foreclosure defense and home ownership preservation.

Most of Aaron's assignments were legal research on bankruptcy topics. Although he did not have any background in bankruptcy, he was able to quickly grasp the structure of consumer bankruptcy, research the assigned topics and produce memos with thorough analysis and clear conclusions or recommendations. Aaron also worked on several cases that did not involve bankruptcy but were still in the consumer area. In those cases in addition to legal research he drafted several pleadings and prepared a client for an administrative hearing, which ended with a favorable result as the agency folded rather than go through with the hearing. All of the other attorneys that Aaron worked with shared my high opinion of the quality of his work

In the period when Aaron was working with the Consumer group we drastically cut back on taking new clients. We were not able to offer Aaron as much client interaction as we would have liked. In the limited number of cases where he did have client contact he showed the combination of sensitivity to client concerns while focusing on the legal and factual issues that was needed to evaluate clients' cases and, for those cases that accepted, to move forward.

In sum, Aaron was an outstanding summer intern. I hope that he found the experience as rewarding for him as it was helpful for LAF and our clients.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Yen', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

David S. Yen
Supervisory Attorney
Consumer Practice Group

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H:\Law Student evaluation - Aaron Wiltse (summer 2015).docx

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