

May 10, 2014

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

All too often, law school can feel terribly disconnected from the real world of people who need help with legal problems. Reading casebooks and writing papers, while often very interesting, can feel like a purely intellectual exercise. My EJA Fellowship gave me an invaluable opportunity to get outside of the confines of the law school and engage with vulnerable members of the community in need of assistance. Through the EJA Fellowship, I was able to experience firsthand the ways in which the law can be a powerful means of improving people's lives.

My EJA Fellowship position as a Director of the Temporary Restraining Order Project enabled me to partake in legal services for victims of domestic abuse in two highly rewarding ways. First, I was able to volunteer in the office myself, working alongside clients to complete the copious paperwork necessary to apply for a temporary restraining order. Perhaps even more importantly, I was able to help recruit, train and supervise more than sixty Yale law students as Temporary Restraining Order Project volunteers.

Perhaps the most meaningful experiences in my EJA Fellowship consisted of watching first year law students, entirely new to the legal field, discover the ability to use law as a way to help those most in need. During one of my shifts in the Temporary Restraining Order Project office this year, I worked alongside two first year law students as they assisted their first client. As the applicant came to the office that day, I felt privileged to observe the law students assist her with empathy, diligence, and increasing confidence. Throughout the long process of completing the temporary restraining order application over several hours, the students answered the client's questions thoughtfully and patiently, listened with great respect and compassion as she recounted her experiences with domestic abuse in preparation for writing her affidavit, and helped her to understand the many steps involved in obtaining a temporary restraining order. In addition to having assisted the applicant with a crucial step in attaining safety, the students clearly gained a far greater appreciation of the ways in which the law can be used to impact the lives of community members.

In my EJA Fellowship, I am constantly reminded of the importance of public interest legal work; more importantly, I have been given the ability to share that experience with a significant portion of my fellow students at Yale Law School.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Messiter
Yale Law School
Class of 2015