

## MR. AUSTIN C. WHITMORE

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My experience at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid this summer greatly impacted my career goals and expectations. I want to sincerely thank Equal Justice America and its supporters, and I count myself very fortunate to have had this opportunity.

I worked at TRLA this summer because I wanted to devote myself to using the skills and competencies I have developed in law school to lawyer for the good of my community. At bottom, I went to law school to have a career that would put me in a capacity to make a great difference in the lives of others. TRLA opened my eyes to the ways I can do just that. In just two months, I played a critical role in saving the homes of 6 different clients and families, and that was only a portion of the work that I did. I now have an even deeper conviction about using my degree to serve others who have less, and in the process I made great progress on the goals I set for myself as a developing lawyer.

Two particular client matters stand out to me as most influential in my growth as a lawyer committed to serving others. The first dealt with a client who owed delinquent taxes on a mobile home that she was evicted from years before. An investigation into the matter showed that the lender repossessed the home and subsequently sold it without doing the proper transfer of title. Because of this the client, already in poverty, was facing a lawsuit for unpaid taxes. We tracked down the lender, had a sheriff deliver documents for the title transfer to the lender, and successfully remedied the problem. Through it all, I saw a confused and frightened client regain confidence about a brighter future, and that was truly special.

Possibly even more gratifying was the work I did for a client in an estate planning matter. The client was a young, single mother with two children. She and her children were living in poverty, and there had been a history of violence in the home. The young mother feared her ex-boyfriend and wanted to ensure that her children would be safe and cared for if anything ever happened to her. After a meeting with the client, I developed an understanding of her needs and concerns and drafted a series of advance directive documents that would give her more certainty about her future. We designated a guardian for her children and made plans to handle her affairs in the event of her incapacity. I also counseled the client on preserving evidence in order to make a case for why the ex-boyfriend was unfit to be a caretaker. Looking back, I helped to give this woman certainty about her future and more importantly helped her regain her sense of dignity and hope for her family's future. I am proud to have made a difference in her life.

Overall, my passion for serving the poor widened this summer. TRLA opened my eyes to the ways in which I will be able to lawyer for social justice, and I am deeply convicted about doing so. I am very thankful for the support I received from Equal Justice

America, and I hope that many students in the future will be given the same opportunities to do non-profit clerkships through it's support.

Sincerely,

Austin C. Whitmore  
The University of Texas School of Law, May 2014