

August 9, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I have just completed my summer 2010 internship with LatinoJustice/PRLDEF. I am writing to summarize my summer experience, one that would not have been possible without Equal Justice America's financial support.

LatinoJustice/PRLDEF is an impact litigation organization that strives to protect the civil rights of Latino immigrants living in the U.S. This summer, they had a number of active cases on their docket. I worked primarily on two cases- one that involved unconstitutional ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) home raids in the New York area, and another case taking place in Florida involving a §1983 claim around ICE detainees and bond posting. I was also involved with work around LatinoJustice's 2008 petition to the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights regarding the federal government's inability and unwillingness to protect Latinos residing in this country.

All the interns spent the majority of their summer working on the home raids case, as its discovery deadline is in mid August. I attended a large number of plaintiff, defendant, and 30(b)(6) depositions in and around New York City. As an intern, I was responsible for taking notes at each deposition and writing a summary of the rough transcript to be shared with the entire legal team. I also helped cite check and edit letters to the court and opposing counsel, as well as sit in on a discovery hearing before the magistrate judge.

I also did a large amount of legal research and writing surrounding the Florida bond case. Primarily, I researched partial summary judgment standards in the Southern District of Florida for §1983 claims. Portions of my research memos were used in actual briefs submitted to the court. I also pulled and summarized federal cases referenced in the defendant's own motions. In addition, I assisted the attorneys by cite checking briefs and motions, and finding relevant case law for portions of their argument.

Because I am so interested in human rights law, I was given some follow-up work on the 2008 human rights petition. I analyzed a recently successful petition by the Border Action Network in Arizona regarding the government's inability to control anti-immigrant vigilante groups at the border. My task was to analyze their petition in relation to ours, and identify portions of our petition that could be improved in terms of potential supplementary submissions.

Finally, I also assisted when needed in other areas- I performed a client intake for a man brutalized by local police, and created a demonstrator safety tip sheet culled from National Lawyer's Guild materials. We were also given tremendous opportunities to visit with local Latino judges involved in state appellate and criminal proceedings. We also did a small amount of outreach to high school students considering the legal profession, and were given chances to attend many law-related events around the city.

Our clients comprised a diverse group of Latino individuals. Geographically, our client base this summer extended from West Palm Beach, Florida to much of Suffolk County in New York. They included American citizens, legal permanent residents, and undocumented individuals. Their countries of origin included El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. Many have only a minimal level of education, and most are low-income. Working with clients is one of my favorite aspects of lawyering, and preparing some of our plaintiffs for their depositions was a highlight of my summer. Their stories of abuse by the authorities were heart wrenching, and served as meaningful reminders of why I chose this line of work. Especially interesting for me was observing the attorneys train clients in the use of their 5th amendment rights. It is truly inspiring to see the ways in which the U.S. constitution extends its protection to all people within its borders, regardless of legal status. This has been such a prescient summer in that respect, especially in regard to the situation unfolding in Arizona and across many states.

This was a fantastic legal training experience.

Sincerely,

Bettina Rodriguez Schlegel  
Juris Doctor Candidate, 2011  
U.C. Hastings College of the Law