

August 17, 2016

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent the summer working with the Litigation Support Unit with Legal Services NYC. I had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects with various attorneys.

The majority of my work was with the New York City Bankruptcy Assistance Program. I performed intake interviews, evaluating potential clients for their eligibility for LSNYC's services, and whether bankruptcy would be an appropriate option for them. Out of the dozen interviews I conducted, I took on six of my own clients, and assisted them with deciding which documents were necessary to demonstrate their financial situations, and completed their chapter 7 bankruptcy petitions. When their petitions were ready to be filed, I reviewed each page of the petition with the client, and prepared them for the meeting of creditors.

Filing for bankruptcy was a transformative process for my clients, and they were very grateful to have assistance. Many of them were being harassed by their creditors, or were facing other consequences of debt, such as wage garnishment. It was incredibly rewarding to be able to give them advice on how to end the harassment, or stop wage garnishment, as well as help them successfully file with bankruptcy court. Preparing clients for the meeting of creditors and the trustee's questions was an essential part of the process and the assistance I provided. One of my clients was so appreciative of my assistance that she sent flowers and a thank you note to me.

I also worked with an immigration attorney preparing a brief for a client who had been a victim of a fraudulent immigration services provider. The previous immigration fraud had resulted in USCIS accusing her of falsely claiming citizenship, and denying her naturalization application and initiating removal proceedings against her. I helped research and draft a petition for her naturalization under INA § 329.

I performed research for potential future litigation and advocacy around the new housing and rezoning plans in New York City, which could lead to displacement of low income residents and adverse impacts for public education in affected neighborhoods.

Part of my internship entailed working on Racial Justice Hotline. Clients whose legal issues didn't fit neatly into other areas of services were directed to interns to make further inquiries. I interviewed and provided advice to clients who suffered negative employment or housing consequences due to race-based harassment. In some instances, I gave advice on how to best report an instance of racial discrimination to the New York Commission on Human Rights, and in other instances I was able to write a report to explain how a particular case qualifies for LSNYC's legal services, and advocate for a lawyer to take on a client's case. These clients were very relieved to receive any advice on filing reports, and even more relieved to get a lawyer where that was possible.

My experience this summer made me even more determined to pursue a career in civil legal services, and I am grateful to EJA for the opportunity to gain this experience.

Very truly yours,

Madeline Hopper
Columbia Law School, 2018