

May 12, 2010

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you so much for making my internship with The HIV Law Project possible. Without Equal Justice America's funding I would not have been able to work and provide necessary legal services for HIV Law Project clients. As someone who looks forward to a career in public interest law, it is uplifting to see fellowships and opportunities such as this one.

The HIV Law Project provides free direct legal services for individuals living with HIV and AIDS in New York City. I conducted weekly intakes with clients, gleaning out their legal problems. The legal issues brought by the clients included: evictions, custody hearings, social security benefit appeals, and immigration. I learned about many new areas of law because the HIV Law Project provides such a wide array of services. These intakes, my research assignments, and daily tasks all contributed to one realization: I want to practice family law and immigration after graduating from Brooklyn Law School.

Throughout my internship, I received the support and guidance from all the HIV Law Project attorneys. I gained their trust and they repaid me with new and exciting assignments. One of the most meaningful clients I worked with validated my public interest career path. This client arrived in the United States from Africa where men regularly raped and marginalized her. Unfortunately, when she arrived in the United States, this cycle continued and she gave birth to 3 children, all with different fathers. I drafted and wrote her cross-custody petition for family court. My supervising attorney trusted me with researching and preparing the documents for this case, which was her first family law case. Although my internship ended before the parties resolved the custody battle – I am happy that I was able to help this woman in any capacity. It is women just like this client that I hope I can serve for my entire career.

My internship also exposed me to the shortcomings of the legal system, and the need for more comprehensive services. Many of the individuals seeking assistance at the HIV Law Project do not only need legal services, but also social services. The HIV Law Project is fortunate enough to have a social worker on staff. The social worker did the best he could with the limited social services available to individuals. The social worker came to the weekly intake meetings and worked closely with each attorney. I truly believe that this model should be followed by all public interest organizations. Not only to connect clients with public services, but to reinforce that there are people who want to help them and can provide a shoulder to lean on.

It would be impossible for me to sum up my internship in one short letter to you. This internship was more important to me than any class I have ever taken at Brooklyn Law School. It validated my career choice and showed me that public interest is my niche. Success is not measured by dollars on a paycheck, but by self-fulfillment and satisfaction. However, the realities and obligations of daily life do not always allow individuals to pursue their career goals. I am fortunate to say that I was able to take another step towards my career goal with the Equal Justice America fellowship.

Sincerely,

Christine Meyer  
Brooklyn Law School

J.D. Candidate, June 2011