

December 20, 2006

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for your support of law students like myself working in public interest jobs this fall. I believe my experience at Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA) helped me in both practical and intangible ways.

Much of the work I did for my supervising attorney came in the form of research and writing. Previously, most legal research assignments I completed were for classes in law school, and though these were important, I enjoyed knowing the work I was doing actually would be used for a purpose or in a case. The areas I performed research in also broadened my knowledge of the law – students' rights in schools, social security benefits, juvenile law, and civil rights among others. Many of these areas I likely would not have had the opportunity to learn if not for my work at TRLA. Like anything else, practice and repetition typically lead to improvement and I believe my ability to research a complex problem and find a solution improved greatly.

Perhaps the greater benefit I gained through the experience was my exposure to people from different areas and walks of life. TRLA's coverage area includes most of south Texas, from Austin to the Mexico border. As a result I learned a great deal about issues such as human trafficking and helped with an outreach program TRLA initiated to reach, inform, and educate victims of trafficking.

I traveled with my supervising attorney to a juvenile detention center in the Austin area to meet with a juvenile client she represented. He told me the story of why he was in his current position and that he did not want to be involved in the types of activities that put him there. Hearing his story and seeing the circumstances in which he was raised motivated me to do everything I could to make sure he received a second chance. Of all my experiences at TRLA, I probably enjoyed client interaction the most.

Seeing the clients seeking help from TRLA and understanding their problems helped me to appreciate the role lawyers can play in our society. I am glad to have had the opportunity to work at TRLA and I hope some of the work I did has been a help to its clients. Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,



Craig Gipson
University of Texas '08