

August 31, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

It was an incredible honor to have received the Equal Justice America Summer 2014 Fellowship this summer which sponsored my work with HIV Project at South Brooklyn Legal Services.

Working with the HIV Project at South Brooklyn Legal Services was an incredible experience. The HIV Project helps people who are HIV positive in a wide variety of areas including housing, welfare benefits, SSI or SSD problems, family law problems, consumer law problems, and discrimination cases. The HIV project also provides trainings to the staff of community based organizations on housing, benefits, family law, or advance directive/will issues. Recently, the HIV Unit has expanded its mission to provide direct legal services to Brooklyn's low-income LGBTQ community (regardless of HIV status).

I worked mainly with housing issues for HIV positive clients who were receiving public benefits. On a daily basis, I collaborated with caseworkers as well as city agencies such as the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA). One client that I worked with very closely resided in a supportive housing unit in Brooklyn. Our client had been residing in the facility for many years and unfortunately fell behind in rent payments. Despite having reached an agreement with the supportive living facility for a payment plan, our client was taken to housing court and constantly lived in fear of eviction. It was critical that our client be able to remain in the supportive housing unit because it provided critical services such as individual and group meetings, life skills counseling, and referral support. Ultimately, we were able to advocate on our client's behalf in housing court and also to appeal to HRA for support. We were successful in our request and our client was able to pay off back rent and continue receiving supportive care. I had an incredible time at South Brooklyn Legal Services, it was an incredibly humbling and eye-opening experience to work with such dedicated attorneys and wonderful clients.

There is no doubt that the Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship helped me become a better advocate for the economic and social rights of low-income communities by allowing me to work with South Brooklyn Legal Services' HIV Project. I hope to continue doing public interest work in the future and am so grateful to have had this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,  
Dian Yu  
NYU School of Law Student, Class of 2016