

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

As an Equal Justice America Fellowship recipient, I spent the past summer working at the Michigan Clinical Law Program (MCLP) housed at the University of Michigan Law School. I handled a wide variety of cases over the summer, ranging from U-visa applications to prisoner civil rights claims, to habeas corpus suits. Though in each case my client's story was incredibly powerful, looking back on the summer a few cases stand out to me.

My first project of the summer also turned out to be one of the most rewarding. Our client was a Michigan state prisoner serving a life sentence. While in prison, he developed cataracts in both of his eyes. For three years the prison medical facility refused to approve a cataract operation for one eye, eventually leaving him blind in that eye. He received his eye surgery and his vision was restored shortly after we began representing him. I drafted an ultimately successful response brief to a motion to dismiss filed by the prison medical contractor.

Another client I was privileged to work with was a low-income mother in Ann Arbor who was seeking redress after her roof was destroyed. Three years ago she enrolled in a county weatherization program for low-income houses. As part of that program, contractors came to her home to re-shingle her roof. However, the shingle delivery contractor stacked large pallets of shingles on her roof – effectively collapsing portions of it. The shingle contractor attempted to have the roof fixed, but the repair was inadequate. After three winters and the snow load they brought, our client's roof again began to buckle. She and her children were forced to abandon her home with the mortgage still unpaid. Additionally, her insurance company neglected to pay for the damage to her home. This summer, we reached a settlement with our client's home insurance company, and were continuing to litigate against other parties in attempt to win sufficient damages to fully pay off her mortgage. In addition to filing various motions in the case, I drafted a winning response brief to one of the defendant's motion for summary judgment.

My final case of the summer was by far the most emotionally powerful. Our client was a nearly 40-year-old Michigander who was serving a life sentence for a murder conspiracy. Last year, with the help of the clinic, a federal district judge granted her habeas relief due to a confrontation clause violation that occurred during her trial. After the state continually delayed releasing our client, the judge ordered her unconditional release pending her retrial. In an attempt to still avoid releasing our client, the state began new trial proceedings against her while continuing to appeal the writ of habeas corpus in the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit. We filed an emergency motion in the district court asking the judge to again order our client's release and to take measures against the state for continually ignoring the previous release orders. In response to this brief, the state prosecutors agreed to release our client and postpone retrial for the duration of their 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit appeal. I met my client for the first time when she was released from the county jail after being incarcerated

for 10 years. It is hard to describe the emotion of the event, but I'll never forget our client's simultaneous elation and fear from experiencing freedom for the first time in a decade.

I greatly appreciate the support I received from EJA over the summer – my time at the clinic was a fabulous experience that, in retrospect, I wouldn't trade for anything.

Sincerely,

Edward Schexnayder  
University of Michigan Law School  
JD expected 2012