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Dan Ruben
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Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to start by thanking you for the incredible opportunity to work for a public interest organization this summer. I found my experience very rewarding, and I am continuing to realize how much I learned about the actual practice of law. Your organization made this possible, and it not only enriched my legal studies, but also aided the immigrant labor force in Austin.

I spent the majority working on a multi-plaintiff suit against Target (and Jim's Maintenance, essentially a labor recruiter for janitorial service) for minimum wage and overtime violations. I gained a breadth of knowledge about a number of important public interest law areas: the Fair Labor Standards Act, the current DHS immigration policies and the ongoing legislative debate and case law development, negotiating with hostile parties and recovering damages, and so on. I spent a great deal of time researching the nature of the employer-employee relationship and how to determine joint employer status, and federal employment law. I became familiar with the dynamic area of law that addresses the relevance of immigration status in federal proceedings. And of course, I learned that a large part of legal practice is dealing with overwhelming amounts of somewhat tedious information. As one client put it when asking for a break in a deposition, "this is making my brain hot".

Which brings me to what was most rewarding about my summer experience: the clients. I worked on about five cases, but I really got to know most of the twenty-nine plaintiffs in *Itzep, et. al v. Target, Inc.* These clients were immigrants from Mexico and Guatemala who came to Texas and were recruited to clean, all night every night, at a wage that went far below subsistence. They were locked inside the store for ten hour shifts seven days a week, with maybe a day off every month. Their pay was below minimum wage, and sometime delayed or withheld with no explanation. They had no bargaining power because they could lose their job on any pretext; one worker was fired because a Target cashier gave her a cheeseburger for her birthday.

This suit all started when a few men got angry enough to take action- they hadn't been paid for their last month of employment, the equivalent of 310 hours of work. A friend of theirs told them about a weekly class held at the Equal Justice Center, a Spanish language

informational about workers rights. They thought they might have a claim for a month's wages, a small sum against an insolvent defendant (Jim's Maintenance, the [we are hoping to prove] joint-employer, has declared bankruptcy). The EJC showed them that they had rights, and helped them to start enforcing them. There are now almost thirty plaintiffs, with claims as large as three year of unpaid minimum wage and overtime. These cases are helping to move public perceptions about worker rights and access to justice toward a more equitable position.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eleanor Bryant". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed "Thank you,".

Eleanor (Nora) Bryant