

August 9, 2014

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

When I first decided to spend my summer with the Consumer Litigation Clinic at Fordham University, I was not even clear on what my work would entail. I remember knowing that I wanted to be a part of it after my interview with Professor Silverman who gave me a basic overview of the kinds of legal issues that the Clinic dealt with. She described one case in particular but as often happens in a law class, the abstract appeared too far removed from me to fully understand the implications of what had happened to that particular client.

That was until I began working on Mrs. Gonzalez's case. I read through all the documents in her file, familiarized myself with her legal issues, and thought I knew everything about the case, until she came to the Clinic one day and midway through the interview, she began to cry. Mrs. Gonzalez, the Mrs. Gonzalez that I knew from all the paperwork was in front of me. It was her case, her story, and she had been carrying its weight every day. It was the kind of awakening that all law students must have at one point but I am very glad that mine came during my work at the Clinic.

Mrs. Gonzalez is an illegal immigrant who, having seen an ad in the newspaper for a car, decided to go to the dealer and purchase it. She does not speak or understand any English but after having signed a number of documents, some of them completely blank, and made a significant deposit, she realized that something was amiss and decided that she no longer wanted to purchase the car. The dealer refused to refund her money, insisted

that she had purchased the car, and the situation escalated to the point where the police had to be called at least two times. Having been turned away numerous times without her refund, Mrs. Gonzalez decided to no longer go back to the dealership. She received many calls from the dealership's employees and at one point, she was told that her son had scratched one of the cars on the dealership's lot and would be reported to the police. Eventually, the dealership reported the supposed incident and Mrs. Gonzalez's son was arrested at school. It was her son's arrest that made Mrs. Gonzalez break down in tears.

The meeting with Mrs. Gonzalez, the realization that all the papers in her file paled in comparison to her recounting *her* story, motivated me for the rest of my summer to ensure that Mrs. Gonzalez timely filed her Summons & Complaint against the car dealership. At many points throughout my career, I might need to remind myself that there are people and stories behind every case, and when that happens, I will almost inevitably think back to Mrs. Gonzalez's case.

It is for this very valuable lesson that I am thankful to the Fordham Consumer Litigation Clinic and the Equal Justice America Fellowship.

Sincerely,

Genta Stafaj
Fordham University School of Law
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