

August 16, 2008

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My fellowship was at the DC Employment Justice Center (EJC), assisting low wage workers with employment and labor law issues. The EJC is the only organization in the DC area that provides free legal consultations on employment law matters to a large number of low income workers without preconditions. They will help any worker who comes through the doors at clinic regardless of mental health issues, language barriers, or other obstacles. These workers have nowhere else to turn and often they have been turned away from other organizations before they come to the EJC. These are people who want a fair opportunity to work. Many have other issues in their lives, but without the ability to fairly earn a living they have no means with which to address their other issues.

One of my main tasks was to attend the weekly EJC workers rights clinics in Anacostia and facilitated legal consultations between volunteer attorneys and clients with a vast array of legal issues. Back in the office I did follow up work on cases that were being assessed for pro bono placement, ongoing litigation, and a handful of cases that I managed. In one such case, I assisted a 30 year veteran of the DC government in obtaining her pension, which had been unjustly withheld for over a year because a former manager refused to submit the appropriate paperwork for her retirement application. I developed a close relationship with this client as I explored the remedies available to her. In the end, non-traditional lawyering techniques resulted in the manager's compliance and she was granted over \$12,000 in back pension payments. This was very fortunate because the traditional legal remedies were not promising, as administrative agencies have broad leeway to perform their duties. Because I had worked so closely with this client, I was elated when she got the news that her pension was approved and I truly felt that justice had been done for her.

I particularly enjoyed going out into the community and working with La Union de los Trabajadores, a group of day laborers who were working towards establishing a workers' center in the District. I did outreach with these workers on several occasions by handing out rights booklets and talking to them about worker protections in the Home Depot parking lot where they gathered. I also attended one of their union meetings and observed as they grappled with issues of organizational structure, accountability of members, public relations, and funding. These opportunities exposed me to the realities of struggling day laborers in a slow economy and a volatile political situation. We talked about their work, their families, politics, their goals, and many other topics during these visits. I was reminded why I am so committed to the work I will do for these workers who face huge obstacles as they try to secure a decent life for their families.

I am very grateful to Equal Justice America for giving me to opportunity to do the work I love

doing and help clients who desperately need quality legal services.

Sincerely,
Gillian Chadwick
American University Washington College of Law, 2009