

Dear Dan Ruben,

Thanks to the funding grant from Equal Justice America, I was able to spend the summer in Boston, MA, working for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice (LCCR). I came to law school to further social justice movements and entered the classroom eager to discuss ways in which the legal system contributed to the marginalization of various populations over centuries. Instead of unpacking systemic oppression and discussing avenues for social change, much of our classroom conversations unapologetically revolved around reinforcing said systems. My substantive legal education finally began at LCCR this summer, where I worked on cases surrounding racially hostile educational environments, discriminatory employment practices, and aided in furthering economic justice for small business owners of color.

A parent from a small town in Massachusetts called us to report a school district's failure to address the racially motivated bullying her child faced. After continued reports, the school district finally retaliated against the parent. My first day at LCCR, I sifted through the parent's written notices to the school and researched the caselaw on retaliation. In between phone calls with the parent about continued bullying, I summarized the law to draft a demand letter to the school district. This client taught me how to use my legal toolkit to impact an individual directly. The effects of this form of advocacy were directly observable, but limited to one family.

I also worked extensively on a case about a particular employment practice that we argued had a disparate impact on employees of color. The case was on appeal before the First Circuit and I assisted in strategy and legal research. In this case, I had no direct client contact. Instead, I argued for legal principles that would shape how the court viewed this employment

practice. Unlike the education case, the impacts of this case were much broader in scope, but far harder to observe directly.

Finally, I worked with the Economic Justice Project to see how corporate law can revitalize communities of color. The Economic Justice Project routinely works with small business owners of color and assists them in entity formation, IP matters, and merging with other small businesses. They host local workshops and include members of the private bar in their work. This form of legal advocacy was the most akin to community organizing. Our impacts were direct, observable, and yet still broad in scope.

I am still uncertain on the kind of legal advocacy I want to pursue in the future. I learned so much during the summer about the varied ways in which the legal system can promote social change. I am continuing to learn this outside of the classroom and hope to find my path eventually.

Best,
Alvina Pillai
Class of 2018
Harvard Law School



LAWYERS' COMMITTEE
FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND
ECONOMIC JUSTICE
Serving Greater Boston Since 1968

October 17, 2016

Mr. Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
Via E-Mail – Katie@Equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Alvina Pillai

Dear Mr. Ruben:

It is my pleasure to provide this evaluation for Alvina Pillai, who was a law clerk at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice during the Summer 2016.

Overall, Alvina was an exceptional clerk. She worked in a number of our different programmatic areas, including employment discrimination, education equity, and economic empowerment. Her work ranged from performing client intakes, to conducting traditional legal research for litigation, to drafting demand letters and client correspondence. Alvina was a quick study, learning readily about new areas of law. She asked appropriate questions of her supervisor in order to understand any assignment given and then worked well independently. Her legal research skills were superior, as was her writing ability. This was evidenced in a variety of formats, from legal memoranda to intake write-ups to draft letters to clients or opposing parties.

Alvina was pleasant to work with, always cheerful and willing to chip in on tasks to help keep the office running smoothly. She interacted well with clients (primarily by phone), as well as with community contacts, *pro bono* volunteers, and others. She was passionate about civil rights, and that excitement and interest in the work was evident throughout her time here. She worked diligently, was reliable, and produced excellent work product overall.

In sum, Alvina was a terrific law clerk. We extend our thanks to Equal Justice America for providing her with funding that helped allow her to work here this past summer. If there is any additional information that you need, please let me know. Thank you.

Sincerely,

OREN M. SELLSTROM
Litigation Director