

August 31, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My name is Jasmyn Aponte and this summer I had the opportunity to intern at Manhattan Legal Services. During my time with Manhattan Legal Services, I worked in the Immigration and Employment Law Departments.

In my work with the Immigration Department, I was able to perform client intake, assist clients in determining what form of immigration relief they were eligible for, assist the client in preparing immigration applications and petitions, and gather evidence to accompany clients' petitions and applications. In addition, through my client interviews and meetings, I was often able to identify other areas in which our organization could assist our clients, including referring them to other departments within our office but also referring clients to public assistance offices.

As part of my work in the Employment Law Department, I represented clients who were appealing decisions by the Department of Labor to terminate their unemployment insurance benefits. These clients were initially granted benefits only to have them terminated due to a determination of the Department of Labor that they were ineligible for the benefits. In particular, I represented one such client whose benefits were terminated due to a finding that he was dismissed from his employment due to misconduct. In addition, the Department of Labor

was requiring him to repay the monies he had received and had also imposed a fine because they believed he failed to state the true reason he was dismissed during his initial benefits interview. I was able to work on this case from its inception, meeting with the client to do intake, performed all the research in preparation for his hearing and represented him at his appeal hearing.

During the hearing I had the opportunity to cross-examine my client as well as deliver a closing statement. I was told that it usually takes 2-4 weeks for our clients to receive a decision from the Department of Labor but my client actually received a favorable decision just two days after our hearing. Not only were my client's benefits reinstated, but he also does not have to repay any benefits he received and the fine was removed. For this particular client, the favorable outcome amounted to about \$30,000 in back benefits.

Being able to successfully represent my client in his unemployment insurance hearing was the highlight of my internship with Manhattan Legal Services. Not only did this experience leave me feeling like an actual attorney but it also helped me realize that I actually enjoy litigating. This summer served the dual purpose of reinforcing my already existing commitment to working in the public interest field as well as broadening my interests to include not just transactional work but litigation as well.

Sincerely,

Jasmyn L. Aponte

St. John's University School of Law

Class of 2010