

August 31, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for providing me with an Equal Justice of America Fellowship this summer, which opened a wonderful summer experience working with the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago ("LAF"). LAF provides free legal service to low-income people in Cook County, Illinois, in housing, children and family, immigration, consumer, and public benefits. I worked in the housing practice group helping people who were being evicted from public/private housing and/or were losing their housing choice vouchers. A housing choice voucher is a government subsidy to subsidize rent payments for low-income people who prefer to rent from private landlords instead of living in public housing. Public housing is operated by the state or federal government, so the rent is already subsidized.

LAF has provided me with a wide range of work experience. I argued motions and scheduled statuses and hearings for over 40 clients in Cook County Circuit Court. Such motions included two motions to vacate and one motion for summary judgment. In addition, I conducted client interviews, presented case summaries during case acceptance meetings, prepared and answered discovery requests, and researched and drafted legal memoranda in housing law.

Throughout this summer, I had two cases that have stood out. The first case was with a client who was being terminated from the housing choice voucher program for failing to submit a new lease to the housing agency issuing her voucher by the due date. My client rented from a private landlord and was receiving a housing subsidy. If she lost her subsidy, she would not be able to pay her monthly rent with her current income. This would have led to my client's eventual eviction due to unpaid rent. The delay was because of my client's landlord. My client phoned her landlord the day she was instructed by the housing agency to provide them with a new lease. When the landlord failed to produce the lease days before the due date, my client made several phone calls again. After informing the housing agency of her landlord's delay, the housing agency extended her deadline to the following week. Within this week, my client made over 40 calls leaving multiple voice messages. Even after these attempts, the landlord still produced the new lease after the extended deadline, which resulted in my client's termination from the housing choice voucher program.

I was able to advocate for my client by drafting a letter to the attorney overseeing the housing agency explaining my client's situation and included her phone records showing the number of calls and voice messages made to her landlord. As a result, the housing agency reenrolled my client and she was able to continue living in her home. She expressed her gratitude and thanked us for protecting her from homelessness, which would have caused her to lose her job.

For the second case, I worked with a client who showed up at his client interview in tears because he had just come from court where an eviction order was entered ex-parte. My client showed up 10 minutes late and was confused upon stepping into the courtroom. By the time he was able to find someone to talk to, the opposing counsel handed him an ex-parte order evicting him from his home. My client, in his early twenties, was head of the household after his mother passed away. He was the legal guardian of his younger brother and teenage nephew who both resided with him. The landlord was trying to evict my client and his household because a neighbor's boyfriend confronted my client's younger brother over something written on Facebook. Under my client's lease, the confrontation was considered a breach.

Upon hearing my client's story, my supervisor and I drafted and filed a motion to vacate the ex-parte order. I argued the motion and was successful in reopening my client's case. Afterwards, I drafted and filed a motion to dismiss based on a wavier defense. There is strong case law in Illinois saying that a landlord's acceptance of rent payment or issuance of a new lease after a breach waives that breach. After the incident between the neighbor's boyfriend and my client's younger brother, the landlord both signed a new lease with my client and accepted several months of rent. The opposing counsel did not respond to my motion to dismiss and decided to dismiss the case. My client was able to keep his current housing and continue his education at a technical college. His younger brother and teenage nephew were also able to continue attending school.

These are just a few examples of the many clients that I worked with this summer. It feels great being able to help those not able to afford legal representation. Many of the clients I served did not know their rights or the judicial procedures. I am happy to have made a difference in their lives. Such experience has reminded me that I want to ensure that everyone, no matter the income, receives adequate legal representation and given their due process. I want to ensure that money is not the reason why someone wins in court, but that justice is preserved. Housing is an essential necessity that everyone needs and I advocate on their behalf so that they can maintain it. Without housing, there are many collateral issues that people like my clients will face, such as the loss of employment or the ability to find one.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Jerry B. Vang  
University of Wisconsin Law School  
J.D. Candidate, 2013



Equal justice starts here.

August 31, 2012

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

Re: Jerry Vang, Equal Justice America Summer 2012 Fellow

Dear Mr. Reuben:

It is a pleasure to write this letter evaluating Jerry Vang's Equal Justice America fellowship. This summer, Jerry worked at LAF (Legal Assistance Foundation). LAF is the largest provider of free civil legal representation in Cook County, Illinois. During his time at LAF, Jerry worked in the Housing Practice Group advocating and representing tenants living in low-income subsidized housing.

Jerry was one of the most intuitive, dedicated, and hard-working students at LAF. He went above and beyond the call of duty coming early, staying late, and filling in whenever necessary. During his fellowship, Jerry obtained his Senior Law Student 711 License which allowed him to represent clients in court and he used it to demonstrate his well-roundedness.

Jerry made sure that he worked with clients in every stage of the eviction process conducting intake interviews, investigating clients, assessing the credibility of potential clients and witnesses, and making recommendations on whether a case warranted LAF's involvement. Jerry was always thoughtful and insightful when considering cases and asked well thought out questions from the day he began his fellowship.

Words fail when explaining just how eager and dedicated Jerry was. We learned rather quickly that Jerry was not only a team player, but that he would become our "go to" person. For example, LAF represented a disabled subsidized tenant in an eviction case facing potential homelessness because of the cleanliness of his unit. When Jerry found out, he was the first person to volunteer to go to the apartment and clean. Shortly after Jerry's fellowship ended, we found out that the landlord was no longer seeking to evict the tenant.

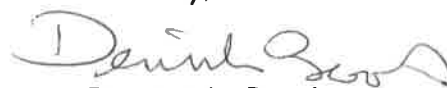
Jerry is also a zealous advocate in court. Half of Jerry's fellowship consisted of managing the housing court call two days a week. Jerry compiled a list of all of pending cases, organized them, negotiated with opposing counsel, and created case management orders.

I could go on and on about how bright and hard-working Jerry is. While he was originally very nervous and unsure of himself, he matured as a student and an attorney over the course of the

summer. He has argued contested motions in court and even won a motion for summary judgment. By the end of the summer, Jerry could multi-task and handle court appearances in multiple courtrooms at the same time.

Jerry was an invaluable asset to the LAF housing practice group and we really felt the void when he left. Jerry is insightful, eager to lend a helping hand, and even more eager to learn. Jerry is a fierce advocate and exhibited great maturity and compassion for others. Working with him was a great pleasure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dennericka Brooks".

Dennericka Brooks

Senior Attorney

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