

August 23, 2014

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 204
13450 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I spent the past eleven weeks at MFY Legal Services in New York City. I interned with two projects within the organization: the Neighborhood Preservation Project and the Single Room Occupancy Project. Both projects focus on representing low-income residents of Manhattan in eviction proceedings and other landlord-tenant disputes. I began the summer knowing that I wanted to work in direct legal services after graduating from law school and my experience this summer confirmed that I would like to focus on housing law.

Part of what made my experience at MFY this summer so valuable was the variety of assignments the staff attorneys gave me. During the course of the summer, I conducted telephone intake and office intake appointments, drafted briefs on two motions, conducted legal research and writing about rent regulation law in New York City, accompanied clients to New York County Housing Court, and participated in weekly office meetings. Because I was able to take on responsibility for so many aspects of the day-to-day practice at MFY, I was able to get a good sense of what a career in direct legal services will be like.

One of the most valuable experiences I had during the summer was conducting phone intake. During MFY's designated housing hotline hours, I would answer calls from tenants with questions about their housing situations, many of whom were already involved in an eviction proceeding or were otherwise in crisis. During the call, I would collect basic contact and demographic information from callers and ask questions in order to get a clearer sense of their housing problem. If their questions were straightforward enough, I would consult with my supervisor, and then provide the caller with brief general advice, mail them some information, or refer them to an appropriate provider. If the caller had recently been served with court papers by their landlord, I would generally ask them to fax or drop off a copy of those papers for MFY to review before advising the caller or taking their case on for full representation. Telephone intake was consistently educational because callers contacted the hotline with a wide range of housing questions. As a result, I learned about many different types of housing issues across the city. I also learned about how to collect facts from callers in order to elicit a narrative and quickly understand the nature of their housing case.

During my internship, I assisted the housing staff attorneys on many cases and also worked with a number of clients on my own under the direction of Christopher Schwartz, our supervising attorney. For example, I worked with one client -- who I will call Mr. F -- to investigate a potential tenant harassment claim. Mr. F was referred to MFY by his local city council member's office. I contacted him and set up an office appointment to learn more about his situation and

copy his paperwork. At our initial office meeting, Mr. F described to me a long-term pattern of harassment by his landlord. Mr. F has lived in a rent-stabilized apartment in his Manhattan neighborhood for over fifteen years. During that time, his landlord has offered him a number of buyouts attempting to persuade Mr. F to move out of his apartment. Mr. F wants to continue living in his apartment and has declined these buyout offers. Shortly following each of Mr. F's decisions not to accept an offer, his landlord has brought a frivolous eviction lawsuit against Mr. F. In fact, his landlord has brought four such frivolous cases against him in the past five years. Despite the baseless allegations in each of these suits, Mr. F has been compelled to hire and pay for an attorney to defend him in court each time. Defending these cases has been financially and emotionally difficult, as well as extremely time consuming. Although the standard is high for tenants hoping to bring a harassment claim against their landlord, after reviewing Mr. F's documents and speaking at length with the attorney who has represented him in defending these numerous frivolous lawsuits over the years, I was able to talk to Mr. F about his legal options in seeking to enjoin his landlord from engaging in similar behavior in the future. I learned a huge amount while investigating Mr. F's harassment claim and really enjoyed working with him over the course of the summer.

Working with clients such as Mr. F confirmed for me that I want to continue advocating for low-income tenants in my legal career. Thanks to my grant from Equal Justice America I was able to afford to live in New York City while interning for the summer with MFY Legal Services and working on landlord-tenant cases. Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

Julia Lake
NYU School of Law
Class of 2015

Mobilizing for Justice since 1963



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August 27, 2014

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

Re: Julia Lake

Dear Mr. Ruben:

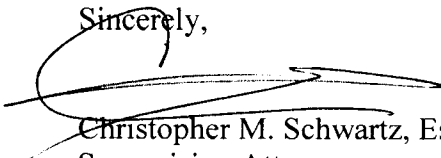
I am the supervising attorney for the Neighborhood Preservation Project at MFY Legal Services, Inc., a not-for-profit dedicated to providing free legal advice and counsel to low-income and working-poor New Yorkers. MFY envisions a society in which no one is denied justice because he or she cannot afford an attorney. To make this vision a reality, for 50 years MFY has provided free legal assistance to residents of New York City on a wide range of civil legal issues, prioritizing services to vulnerable and under-served populations, while simultaneously working to end the root causes of inequities through impact litigation, law reform and policy advocacy. We provide advice and representation to more than 8,500 New Yorkers each year.

I had the opportunity to supervise Ms. Julia Lake when she was selected as a law student intern for our Summer 2014 class at MFY Legal Services. Her placement was supported and made possible by a grant from Equal Justice America. Over the course of the several months she volunteered with us, Ms. Lake was given a variety of assignments with the Neighborhood Preservation Project, which specializes in tenant-side housing litigation and eviction prevention for indigent clients. She researched various legal issues, met face-to-face with clients on practically a daily basis, and contacted administrative agencies to obtain information and various services. She also, while under supervision, represented several clients in housing court, securing their right to affordable, safe housing.

Ms. Lake exceeded all of my expectations in her performance. She is a natural advocate, and immediately displayed an impressive ability to not only remain calm in pressure-filled, unfamiliar circumstances, but to keep our clients calm as well- an invaluable asset in this field of work. I was consistently impressed by her ability to relate to clients and agency representatives.

We were extremely fortunate to have Ms. Lake with us this summer. Thank you, on behalf of MFY and the many tenants she assisted, for making her summer internship possible.

Sincerely,



Christopher M. Schwartz, Esq.
Supervising Attorney