

August 28, 2012

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

RE: Summer 2012 Fellowship at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to you to express my deepest appreciation to Equal Justice America for providing me with a fellowship to support my work at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, D.C. this summer. Without your support, I would not have been able to pursue a summer internship at the Lawyers' Committee and further explore opportunities in civil rights law. The work of Equal Justice America is vital in enabling aspiring public interest attorneys like myself to gain the experience necessary to launch a successful public interest career.

While interning at the Lawyers' Committee, I primarily assisted with litigation as well as legislative advocacy to promote progressive reforms that will protect the voting rights of low-income and minority communities. More specifically, I conducted research and wrote memos to support litigation challenging voter photo ID laws and redistricting as well as violations of the sections of the National Voter Registration Act requiring states to register voters at public assistance agencies. Additionally, I submitted record requests and other correspondence in ongoing cases. As part of these election reform initiatives, I also staffed the Election Protection Hotline, a legal resource administered by the Lawyers' Committee to inform voters of their rights and respond to reports of voting rights violations.

Further, I produced educational and advocacy materials to reach out to laypersons as well as community leaders and Members of Congress. These materials emphasized the urgent need to institute new protections to ensure equal access at the ballot box. In addition to voting rights, however, I also conducted research and assisted with advocacy to ensure that the right of an employee to bring suit against his or her employer when that employee experiences discrimination in the workplace remains protected. I also analyzed current legislative proposals to evaluate how well they protected the rights of low-income and minority voters or employees.

I found my work at Lawyers' Committee immensely rewarding. I went into work everyday knowing that I would be part of a greater movement of attorneys who believe in equality and equal opportunity, and that my work would help further these goals.

One particularly memorable experience I had was assisting a voter through the hotline who was not sure where she could obtain a photo ID to vote because she did not drive and did not have the money to pay the required fee needed to obtain such identification. I helped her find an agency in her city providing free photo IDs, and walked her through the steps she needed to take to get her ID. At the beginning of our conversation, this client was frustrated that she may not be able to cast her ballot on Election Day, but, at the end of her phone call, she was empowered and equipped with the information she needed to make her voice heard. When clients have the tools they need to address their own situations and needs, they have the ability to then use these tools to create real change in their communities by sharing this information with others.

Another experience that I will never forget resulted from my work in compiling educational materials about the outcome of the Supreme Court case, *Dukes v. Wal-Mart*. As a result of my efforts, I was invited to meet Betty Dukes, the lead plaintiff in that case. I found her to be incredible inspiring—it is powerful to think that the persistence of one woman and her legal team can spark a cry for widespread legal change. Indeed, the stories of the lead plaintiffs in the ongoing voter photo ID cases highlight the courage of individuals who have been discriminated against because of their membership in a minority group in fighting for their rights. In the end, these stories kept me motivated to continue fighting for progressive legal reforms promoting equal opportunity for all.

The generous support of Equal Justice America that made it possible for me to intern at the Lawyers' Committee has left a long-lasting impact on me. I entered law school already committed to pursuing a career in public interest law, but my experience at the Lawyers' Committee reaffirmed this commitment. The work of Equal Justice America is crucial in fostering a new generation of public interest attorneys.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katrina M. Homel".

Katrina M. Homel
J.D. candidate 2013, Georgetown University Law Center