

August 31, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Equal Justice America for making it financially possible for me to work for Legal Aid in my home state of Idaho. I appreciate that EJA allowed me the freedom to complete my internship with an organization of my choice in a location that is important to me. I would have been glad to provide direct legal assistance to the poor anywhere, but it was a special treat to serve the people of my own community.

This summer was especially interesting and rewarding because I was able to practice with a limited license. My first few experiences before a Judge were challenging, exciting and terrifying. I hope to never forget the feeling of responsibility that I felt to my first client who was petitioning for child support. The planning, preparation, and execution of the hearing would directly affect her in a concrete and measurable way for years to come and she was relying on me to zealously represent her. I really wanted to do my best work so as to not betray the trust and confidence that she gave to me. As I continue my career, this feeling of responsibility to the client will be one of the cornerstones of my philosophy. I want my future clients to think that my efforts on their behalf make me worthy of their trust and confidence.

I greatly enjoyed, and learned from, my courtroom experiences. However, my most enjoyable moments were when I was able to counsel clients about how their real life interacts with the law. There was one man who came in for assistance because he had received a 30 day eviction notice from his subsidized housing because of complaints his neighbors were making about him. As a soon to be attorney, I am trained to try and make the given situation fit within a legal remedy. I was able to identify several courses of legal action that we could have pursued- all of which would have likely been destructive of the man's relationship with his landlord. In the end we found that the best solution was not a judicial remedy. I was able to arrange a conference between the landlord and my client and they were able to come to a mutually beneficial agreement that preserved their human relationship.

I worked with another client who was divorcing her abusive husband. It was very rewarding to help this woman navigate through the difficult world of being a victim of domestic violence. Her legal case was not terribly difficult because her husband was going to jail for a long time. The real life issues that she faced, however, were daunting. It was a privilege to be a part of this client's support network in my role as a student attorney. She helped me to understand that my clients are human beings with an amazingly diverse set of problems. While my role as an attorney is limited in its scope, I think that I will be a more successful attorney if I remember the human element of everything I do.

I could not have asked for better mentors than those I received at Idaho Legal Aid. They were attentive to my needs and questions. Most importantly, they provided me legal opportunities that stretched my abilities while providing a safety net should I not do too well. Thanks to the EJA funding, I was able to develop a meaningful relationship with my supervisory attorneys. As I enter the field of law, it is a blessing to have these supportive mentors who care about my development as a lawyer.

Thank you very much for providing me the financial means to have a wonderful and productive summer. I was able to help many individuals who otherwise would not have received legal help. Having worked for Idaho Legal Aid as an Equal Justice America Summer Fellow has helped me develop a very real sense of what my personal values as a practicing lawyer will be. I will be a more effective lawyer because of my experiences, and for that I thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Kenton Beckstead', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kenton Beckstead