

August 29, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My 1L summer internship experience working at the East Bay Community Law Center's Neighborhood Justice Clinic (NJC) was invaluable, furthering my understanding of barriers facing low-income individuals in accessing legal services and creative strategies to meet the needs of such clients. NJC afforded me unparalleled opportunities to provide direct legal services to low-income and homeless clients in Alameda County through weekly clinics and short-term case management; to conduct legal research and produce advanced legal writing including but not limited to a writ, demurrers, trial briefs, a motion in limine, memorandums of points and authorities, responses to discovery requests, and letters of various types; and perform community outreach in different parts of Alameda County. My time at NJC also affirmed my commitment to pursue a public interest legal career after graduation. I am so grateful to Equal Justice America for the EJA Fellowship I received, without which I would not have been able to help serve poverty-stricken individuals in the Alameda County community.

Over the course of the summer, I provided direct legal services to roughly fifty clients who came to NJC from diverse backgrounds, with a variety of legal issues, and different needs. As a bilingual Spanish-English speaker, at least half of the clients I assisted were monolingual Spanish speakers. Although I value and have learned from interactions with each of my clients, there are a few who will remain in my heart and remind me on challenging days why I have chosen this field.

One such client was an older immigrant woman whose husband had died some years earlier and left her with outstanding debt. She received modest Social Security benefits, worked six days a week making minimum wage, and sent most of her earnings back to her children and grandchildren in her native country. As an older woman whose native and primary language was not English, she was part of a particularly vulnerable population in Alameda County. A scam debt reduction company took advantage of her and told her that, if she paid them a certain amount each month, it would assist her in negotiating low, lump-sum settlement payments with her debtors. Over time, she paid the scam organization much of her hard-earned money, in an amount that would have settled most of her debt had she paid the credit card companies directly. Sadly, the scam organization took her money and disappeared without attempting to help her pay off her debt. After being sued by a third party debt collector, she incorrectly filed an Answer to the suit on her own and opposing counsel petitioned the court for a judgment on the pleadings. At this point, she came into NJC for assistance. I helped prepare and file a Case Management Conference Statement for her, wrote a motion in opposition to judgment on the pleadings that was granted by the court, and assisted her in filing an Amended Answer with several affirmative

defenses. Over the course of the summer, I became very invested in this client's case. She helped show me that, even though there are necessary boundaries we as lawyers set with our clients, we are humans first. Compassion and empathy are so important in forging and maintaining lawyer-client relationships, at the very least when working in this area of the law. Although my time at NJC came to a close before the claim against her had been resolved, her case was transferred to another advocate who will be able to provide her with quality legal assistance going forward.

Another client came to NJC looking for assistance with a variety of legal issues. She disclosed to me that she was a domestic violence survivor whose family law attorney was providing little to no assistance in her custody case against her abusive ex-husband. In fact, the attorney was avoiding her calls and failing to give her updates on her case. I assisted her in submitting a bar complaint to the state of California and provided her with referrals for pro bono family law attorneys in the area. I also assisted this client with a complicated personal injury case involving medical malpractice by writing a complaint to a medical board, a demand letter to the defendant, and assisting her in filing a small claims action against him. The various issues facing this client helped demonstrate the need for me to become a creative community lawyer, willing to try different strategies in order to meet a client's particular needs.

These are just two stories of clients I worked with while at NJC; there are many more that provided me with meaningful and challenging experience I will continue to draw on in the future. The time I spent working at NJC, under the supervision of two incredible attorneys and as a peer to five other passionate and inspiring interns, was irreplaceable and very formative for me. Thank you for awarding me an EJA Fellowship and making such an experience possible.

Sincerely,

Kristen Cates
Georgetown



August 28, 2013

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

RE: Summer 2013 Internship Evaluation for Kristen Cates

Dear Equal Justice America,

It is with tremendous ease that I write this evaluation for Kristen Cates. She was an intern at the Neighborhood Justice Clinic of the East Bay Community Law Center. As I was her direct supervisor during her brief tenure here I feel amply qualified to speak about her work.

The Neighborhood Justice Clinic (NJC) is low-barrier general legal clinic that provides advice, referral, and representation on a wide variety of legal issues. Our clinic handles anything from filing affirmative cases against bad actors to debt collection litigation defense to infraction and misdemeanor criminal defense. This environment requires/forces our interns to adapt quickly to a variety of deadlines and learn areas of law very quickly. I have seen many law students come through our doors and either be totally overwhelmed by this experience or relish the fast-paced nature of the clinic and thrive. Kristen was definitely in the later camp.

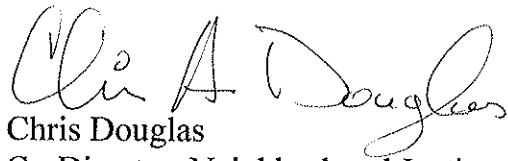
From her first day at NJC, Kristen was handling multiple cases and assisting many more clients at one of our three weekly clinics. More was asked of her due to her proficiency in Spanish and she did not shy away for this responsibility. Despite her high workload Kristen was able to easily meet deadlines and constantly sought out feedback on how to improve her skills. Feedback was easy as her legal research and writing was consistently stellar. One more than one occasion she improved upon templates that the clinic had been using. Most important to me, however, was how beloved she was by her clients. She was patient and accommodating and never allowed the stress of her workload to interfere with her client meetings.



All in all, Kristen had an exceptional summer at NJC. We could not have asked for anything more and her loss was felt after her internship was over.

Please feel free to contact me at 510.269.6611 if you want any additional information about Kristen's work at NJC.

Sincerely,



Chris Douglas
Co-Director, Neighborhood Justice Clinic