

August 3, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I thank you for your support in allowing me the opportunity to serve victims of domestic violence at the New York Legal Assistance Group (“NYLAG”) this summer. Without the support of EJA’s fellowship, I would not have had the tremendous learning experiences and meaningful opportunities to serve a community in such desperate need of legal assistance.

My experiences this summer have been richly diverse. I have had the pleasure of meeting and serving women who have survived or who are fighting to survive domestic violence, to protect their children, and start life anew. Perhaps the most poignant moment of my summer came during my third week of service when I guided an elderly woman through the process of obtaining an Order of Protection against her abusive husband. Having survived a brutally violent, 40-year marriage, this mother of four and grandmother of two decided that it was not too late to assert her right to safety and dignity. I wrote her petition to the court, accompanied her before the judge on that day and on an, spoke on the record on her behalf. I was thrilled when she was granted a full stay away Order of Protection with exclusion for a period of two years. I was touched by this woman’s courage and her appreciation of my help. I saw in her an elder, a strong woman, and a person who has not let life’s hardships and tragedies define her life. She reminds me that victims of domestic violence victims are in every community and of every age—but they are never too late in seeking help.

In addition to helping clients obtain Orders of Protection, I have drafted divorce papers for both contested and uncontested divorce proceedings, drafted an Order to Show Cause, Petition for Maintenance, and a Summary Judgment Motion. I have shadowed my supervisor at Family and Integrated Domestic Violence Courts and have at times, spoken on the record. Along the way, I have been inspired by committed coworkers, activists and advocates who daily battle their way through under-funded family courts and the bureaucracy occluding many from realizing their rights and a better life. In short, I got the experience I was hoping to receive at NYLAG, and I look forward to applying sharpened advocacy skills and family law training to future public interest work.

Finally, as law schools largely funnel law students into a corporate track, it is difficult to forge an alternative path. It is challenging to find guidance from counselors in finding public interest work, and once one finds such work, it is difficult to find funding. It is ironic that it is quite difficult to support oneself by helping underserved communities. Thus, I am grateful to Equal Justice America's allowing me to both learn from and contribute to work at NYLAG. I thank you for this great opportunity, and please let me know of any way in which I can help create or further similar opportunities for other law students.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M. Bond'.

Melissa A. Bond

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

Class of 2008