

August 17, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I have found my summer internship at the Harriett Buhai Center to be an extremely rewarding and interesting experience. In addition to helping clients through a deeply emotional and personal time in their lives, I have also gained valuable insight into family law issues and poverty law more generally. Through my work, I was able to improve my writing and research skills.

Throughout the summer I have been consistently impressed by each client's ability to rise above challenging circumstances and navigate a complicated and often frustrating court system so that they can provide safe and happier lives for their families. One of my first clients at the Center was a middle-aged woman who had been in a long-term abusive relationship and was seeking a divorce and orders for custody of her children. Her husband had been abusive for many years and the children had often seen the abuse. She was a monolingual Spanish speaker and therefore required a court appointed translator with her in court. When she first came into the office she was timid and hesitant to represent herself. She was fearful that the language barrier would be a disadvantage to her and she was scared to ask the judge for full custody of her children. However, over the course of several visits she grew more confident and self-assured. She successfully represented herself in pro per and was able to receive the custody orders she had asked for. The look on her face as she relayed the news to me in the office after her hearing was so touching. She was genuinely proud of herself and I was so happy to have been a part of her success.

Another client that stands out is a twenty-year-old father of two. Although he had never intended to be a single parent, when his girlfriend proved unable to raise their two children full time as a result of addiction, he stepped up to the plate and fought for custody of his children. We worked together to create orders that would keep the children safe and still give them the opportunity to spend time with and foster a relationship with their mother. This client's maturity and calm was always impressive and the sacrifices he made for the well being of his two boys will always inspire me.

My EJA fellowship afforded me the opportunity to improve my client interviewing skills while simultaneously helping the Harriett Buhai Center to manage a larger caseload than they would have otherwise been able to. The opportunity to write proposed judgments, trial briefs, and memorandum on points an authorities will help me in my future legal

career and the exposure to navigating the family courts system gives me new appreciation for the obstacles facing low income families in Los Angeles.

I am very grateful for this opportunity and I hope I was able to leave a positive impact on the Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law.

Best regards,

Mishan Araujo
University of Chicago
Class of 2013



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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to express how pleased we were to host Mishan Araujo as an Equal Justice America fellow this summer. The Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law depends on the help of volunteers and student interns to help serve as many members of the community as possible. Without the help of our law student interns, our impact in Los Angeles' low income community would be significantly diminished.

Mishan excelled as a summer intern, taking on a variety of projects and handling them all with ease and maturity. She helped with client intake, case management, research projects, and client appointments. She developed her interviewing skills, her research and writing skills, and gained exposure to the family law court system in Los Angeles County. During our intake appointments, Mishan met with clients and interviewed them thoroughly about their family history, the remedies they were seeking, and any history of domestic violence. She then presented the case to staff attorneys and helped work with them to decide whether or not the case was a good fit for the Center's priorities and whether or not the client could be served through the self-help center at the courthouse in Los Angeles. Mishan showed tremendous empathy and patience with our clients.

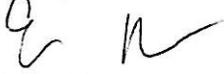
Mishan also met with clients one-on-one and guided them through various stages of the divorce process including orders on support, custody and visitation, and drafting proposed judgments. Mishan worked with clients to create their declarations for the Court and assisted clients in determining which facts were most pertinent to their case and to the relief they were seeking.

Lastly, Mishan helped us get an important new project off the ground. The Hague International Service Convention was recently made directly applicable to family law cases and we had a number of clients whose cases were permanently on hold while we tried to understand the requirements of this complex treaty. However, thanks to the research and materials Mishan put together, we now have a process in place and these clients will be able to proceed with their divorce or paternity cases.

We have deeply appreciated the time and energy Mishan has been able to contribute to our organization. She made a tremendous contribution to the Center and our clients through her work this summer. The internship has also helped Mishan develop valuable skills in client interaction, client interviewing, research, and writing.

We would be thrilled to host other Equal Justice America fellows in the future.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Dabbs', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Erin Dabbs
Senior Staff Attorney