

August 31, 2016

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13450 East Boundary Road, Building II – Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I write to both express my tremendous gratitude for Equal Justice America's support this summer, and to summarize my fellowship experience. I completed a ten-week internship in the Civil Action Practice (CAP) of the Bronx Defenders, a holistic public defenders' office in the Bronx, New York. CAP works in conjunction with the Bronx Defenders' Criminal Defense and Family Defense practice areas to comprehensively address the enmeshed legal issues faced by clients after contact with the criminal justice system. In particular, CAP attorneys and legal advocates work to protect clients' rights to housing, employment, and public benefits, and assist with immigration-related legal needs.

As an intern, I completed a broad variety of tasks to support my supervising attorney and CAP clients. From the moment of intake to court dates and beyond, I worked on assignments that showed me many stages of clients' cases. Among other things, I conducted research in support of memos and motions, met with clients both in court and in the office, and participated in community intake.

Engaging with clients' cases at these different stages illuminated the swift and far-reaching domino-like chain of legal consequences that our clients faced after criminal justice contact. For instance, for a public housing tenant, an arrest, even without conviction, can quickly spiral toward eviction and homelessness, child protective service involvement, and possible immigration consequences. Time and time again our clients were swept up in complicated and frustrating legal webs, the ramifications of which were broadly felt by their families and communities. The internship reaffirmed my desire to pursue a career serving the needs of these communities and introduced me to the potential inherent in a holistic model of practice.

In particular, it was my experiences with individual clients that solidified my interest in continuing to provide holistic, direct legal services for vulnerable populations. For example, at the start of my internship I met with Ms. B who was facing eviction from her apartment in public housing by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Ms. B had lived in her apartment for almost 20 years. After experiencing some mental health and relationship difficulties that resulted in criminal justice contact, NYCHA brought termination of tenancy proceedings against her. She was fiercely committed to reestablishing stability in her life and fought to demonstrate evidence of rehabilitation to NYCHA. I worked with Ms. B to develop a hearing strategy and advocated on her behalf to her NYCHA attorney to try to settle the case so that she might keep her home and be relieved of the constant stress of ongoing proceedings. My discussions with Ms. B

highlighted the severe mental toll that the looming threat of eviction can take on an individual and I greatly admired her strength as she persevered through many bureaucratic hurdles so that she could keep her home and regain her health. While the outcome of her case is still pending, I am hopeful that she will receive a favorable settlement and be allowed to remain in her apartment.

Another formative client experience I had this summer was my work with Mr. A. Mr. A. was also a NYCHA tenant who had lived in his apartment his whole life. He was the primary caretaker for his mother in her old age and supported her until her death. After she passed, he attempted to petition NYCHA to be the successor on the lease. However, an arrest many years prior had resulted in his permanent exclusion from NYCHA housing. He was thus ineligible to take over the lease. I worked with Mr. A to petition NYCHA's decision to deny him the right to stay in his life-long home. In hearing Mr. A's personal story I learned that he was very engaged in his community and beloved by his neighbors. Despite being disabled, he found part-time work and started a small business. He went to great lengths to put together an incredibly personal package telling his narrative which I wove together with legal precedent to argue for his continued tenancy. The result of this case has also not yet been decided, but the experience of getting to know Mr. A and assist him in fighting an unjust agency policy that negatively affects hundreds of individuals and families across New York City was tremendously rewarding.

These two client experiences exemplified the frequent mismatch blunt agency policies and the lived experiences of the individuals they affect. The advocates at the Bronx Defenders work tirelessly to bridge this gap by telling their clients stories to humanize them in the face of bureaucratic and legal systems that don't see them as individuals. It was a privilege to learn from these attorneys and the clients I worked with this summer, like Ms. B, Mr. A. The Equal Justice America fellowship made this wonderful experience possible. I am incredibly grateful for your support.

Sincerely,  
Clara Potter  
NYU Law School  
Class of 2018

August 29, 2016

Dan Ruben, Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
Building II – Suite 204 13450 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I supervised Clara Potter this summer during her internship at the Bronx Defenders, where she did the amazing hard work that doesn't grab headlines but is so very important for our clients' lives and stability. One day, it was zooming over to the 43rd Precinct to demand the return of our client's house keys and cell phone that she urgently needed to begin to put her life back on track after a scary knife attack and ending up arrested and in custody for 36 hours with no food or medication. Another time, it was trekking out to Brooklyn to let our client, whose phone suddenly stopped working, know that she didn't need to appear for a NYCHA hearing that was going to be adjourned. Through all this, Clara has been helping research and write excellent memos and persuasive motions to support our litigation strategies. Clara's strong research and writing dealt ably and sensitively with a variety of legal issues, from defending an ejectment action to preparing for a jury trial in a holdover eviction proceeding. Most impressively, she wrote an impassioned plea for a lenient settlement in a public housing termination of tenancy proceeding, drawing on her knowledge of the rules, forum, and adversary, as well as her extensive interactions with our difficult client. She nimbly dealt with a number of complex issues while playing to the audience appropriately and effectively. Clara will certainly be a terrific lawyer. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Steven T. Hasty  
Staff Attorney