

August 4th, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, with the assistance of a generous grant from Equal Justice America, I was able to intern with the Urban Justice Center's Community Development Project. I worked in the consumer law and housing units.

I had an *amazing* time this summer with the Community Development Project, primarily because of my clients. Almost all of the clients I worked closely with this summer were immigrant women, and as an immigrant woman myself (from Nigeria), I felt a very strong affinity to them and admired their strength in the midst of difficult circumstances. One such person I met this summer was a lovely Bangladeshi woman living in Queens with her sons and husband. Her husband used to be the primary breadwinner of the family but then became ill. In the meantime she had several court cases filed against her with judgments requiring her to pay large amounts of money that she wasn't sure she actually owed. All of these court cases she had automatically lost because she never knew that she was being sued. In many of these cases, the lawyers who file the lawsuits don't properly inform the defendant that they're being sued, and in New York state courts, if you're being sued and you don't show up on the court date, you automatically lose.

In this case, the other side had mailed the papers informing our client of the lawsuit to the wrong address. I wrote the motion asking the court to dismiss the judgment because they sent the information to the wrong address and our client never had the opportunity to fight the case. Later during the summer, the other side's lawyers agreed to throw out the case entirely!

But the best part of that experience for me wasn't writing the motion, but getting to know our client, who was incredibly warm and kind. One day she couldn't come to the office so my supervisor and I went to her house in Queens. She gave us food, and we got to meet her sons and husband. Meeting our client in her home, in her neighborhood, and with her family, is an opportunity that I don't think legal aid lawyers get enough.

As someone who entered law school with the desire to be a legal aid lawyer, this summer was wonderfully reaffirming for me. I love providing direct legal services for people. Having the honor of learning about people's lives, and playing a small part in easing a burden—whether it's a debt collection lawsuit, federal loan, or racist landlord—is truly one of the best feelings in the world. The grant I received from Equal Justice America was an integral part of making that possible, as it allowed me to concentrate on advocating for my clients to the best of my ability rather than constantly worrying about money. I am so grateful, and hope that Equal Justice America continues to allow other future public interest lawyers the ability to do the same work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dami Obaro', with a stylized, flowing script.

Oluwadamilola (Dami) Obaro
New York University School of Law
Class of 2017