

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112
August 21, 2015

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I completed my Equal Justice America fellowship in the Family Law Unit of the Northwest Justice Project, the largest publicly funded civil legal services provider in Washington State. The NJP Family Law Unit primarily provides direct representation to low-income victims of domestic violence in securing decrees of dissolution, parenting plans, and in other related legal affairs.

As an intern, I worked to support the Family Law Unit's nine attorneys through drafting pleadings and portions of an appellate brief, preparing witnesses and clients for trial, researching and strategizing for trial, observing and assisting attorneys in three trials, completing intake assessments, helping a pro se litigant complete the discovery process, and in writing many research memos about such jurisdictional, evidentiary, and policy issues. While I was privileged to work with many different clients, the bulk of my work centered around three women, AM, ER, and TA.

When I began my internship, one of the attorneys was preparing for the AM trial to enter a parenting plan which would restrict the abusive father's contact with AM and her three children and renew her protection order. Under the supervision of the attorney assigned to the case, I completed extensive witness research, reviewed all of the pleadings, police reports, witness statements, court-ordered evaluations, etc. to look for inconsistencies, patterns of witness credibility, etc. in preparing AM for her testimony and in preparing cross-examination questions for the opposing party's witnesses. I participated in several meetings with AM and witnesses for AM to prepare for trial and explain the court processes. I sat behind AM during trial, taking notes, explaining what was happening to her during the court breaks, walking with her in the courtroom hallways so she would never feel unsafe in the presence of her abusive ex, and shared in her joy when we received a favorable verdict.

ER won primary custody of her four-year-old son during trial before I began my internship. Unhappy with a finding he had committed domestic violence and restrictions on his residential time with the child, ER's abusive ex-husband appealed the entry of the final parenting plan. In assisting the attorney to respond to the ex-husband opening brief, I reviewed the legal file, police reports, medical records, trial and hearing transcripts, court-ordered evaluations, and researched evidentiary rules about the admission of certain exhibits and expert testimonies. The attorney incorporated portions of my research memo in writing the responding brief. While the case will not be heard by the Washington Court of Appeals until the fall, we are optimistic about the outcome after receiving a small but important victory. After receiving ER's responding appellate brief, ER's ex-husband filed a motion to admit additional evidence, making new, unfounded allegations against ER, but the attorney on the case and I researched and drafted a response to the

motion arguing the new “evidence” was irrelevant and inadmissible, and the appellant’s motion was summarily denied.

After years of experiencing horrific abuse, TA and her family wanted to file a motion to make a minor modification to the parenting plan which would prevent future visits between the abusive father and the children and permit two children to attend private school outside the state of Washington. Working under the guidance of the attorney assigned to the case, I reviewed the pleadings and the materials from an unsuccessful settlement conference to draft a memorandum of law in support of a minor modification to the parenting plan and a declaration from TA in support of the modification. Drafting these documents required frequent revision and a meeting with TA to review the materials, explain the processes, and ensure the declaration I wrote on her behalf, compiling information from the legal file and her previous declarations, was completely accurate and current.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to intern with the Northwest Justice Project’s Family Law Unit and humbled by the resilience and courage of the clients I was fortunate enough to work alongside. While I have had experience working with survivors of domestic violence, I had not supported DV victims through legal advocacy and representation. In working with the attorneys to represent victims of domestic violence, I had the privilege of entering our client’s lives when they needed an advocate. I was able to review their accounts of some of the most private details and disturbing abuse and write court documents on their behalf using their own words. I was inspired by the bravery our clients showed in speaking up and speaking out about the abuse, to protect their children and themselves. I was fascinated by the complexity and practicality of family law, and the ways in which the courts can intervene to protect women and their families; after my internship, I am eager to begin my family law courses and am considering a career in family law.

It has been my privilege and great joy to intern with the Northwest Justice Project, an opportunity generously facilitated by the Equal Justice America Fellowship. I am so grateful for this remarkable opportunity and deeply humbled and inspired to continue my work in public interest law.

Thank you so much,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivia Gibbons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Olivia Gibbons
New York University School of Law
Class of 2017



Northwest Justice Project

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César E. Torres
Executive Director

September 2, 2015

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
1350 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Summer Intern – Olivia Gibbons

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Olivia Gibbons interned with the family law unit of Northwest Justice Project (NJP) in Seattle this past summer. The unit consists of nine attorneys, including myself, who serve low income victims of domestic violence in all aspects of family law litigation. Although Ms. Gibbons worked under the direct supervision of several experienced attorneys, I served as primary supervisor and conducted regular case review with her. In writing this evaluation, I have considered and incorporated the thoughts of other attorneys in the unit who had the pleasure of working with her.

Ms. Gibbons was exposed to our very busy motions practice, several trials, and appellate work. She was able to observe different types of court proceedings and participated extensively in trial preparation. Ms. Gibbons also worked on several legal research projects, some of which was incorporated in appellate briefing. Ms. Gibbons also wrote an excellent memorandum regarding supervision in custody cases which will be of use to all attorneys in the unit.

We were all very impressed with Ms. Gibbons' work. She showed initiative, enthusiasm and genuine interest in issues that affect domestic violence victims. She demonstrated strong legal reasoning and analytical skills, and prepared well-reasoned memoranda.

Ms. Gibbons attended weekly unit meetings with attorneys and had direct contact with clients. She was professional and appropriate at all times in her communications with clients, attorneys, and support staff.

Dan Ruben, Executive Director

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Ms. Gibbons was given multiple tasks by several attorneys in our unit. She completed all tasks given. She was able to prioritize the tasks appropriately, showed good organizational skills, and always asked appropriate questions.

It was a pleasure to have Ms. Gibbons join us this past summer. We have no doubt that Ms. Gibbons will have a successful career in the legal profession. We would like to express our gratitude to Equal Justice America for facilitating this fellowship and allowing us the opportunity to teach law students about our practice and hopefully inspire a future generation of public service lawyers.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at (206) 464-1519, extension 0895.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lupe Artiga', with a stylized, flowing script.

Lupe Artiga
Senior Attorney