

August 31, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a second-year student at Columbia Law School and am writing to thank you and everyone at Equal Justice America for the crucial support this summer. I spent my summer doing public interest work with the ArchCity Defenders in St. Louis, MO, and could not have done it without the generous support of EJA's summer fellowship program. The fellowship was an incredibly enriching and important experience and has galvanized me to pursue a career in public service.

The ArchCity Defenders is a non-profit public defender organization serving St. Louis city and the surrounding county, meeting indigent and homeless clients' legal and holistic defense needs. They have also been on the ground doing civil rights impact litigation and policy advocacy leading up to and especially in the wake of the Ferguson movement that was sparked in August 2014 after the death of Michael Brown. My work with the ArchCity Defenders consisted mainly of interviewing plaintiffs for upcoming class action lawsuits targeting the due process violations involved in the policing and court practices in place in the municipalities of the greater St. Louis area, including Ferguson. The cases are pursuant to the recommendations for reform that were listed in the Department of Justice's report on Ferguson. I also did legal research and wrote memos, participated in court-watching, and drafted the new governance charter for the Continuum of Care, a partnership of local non-profits and governmental agencies to provide legal and social services to St. Louis' indigent and homeless population.

My work with ArchCity has deeply impacted my budding legal practice. Even after completing the fellowship, I still think about the clients I met and their stories. In particular, one of the last clients I interviewed was a young man who shared harrowing accounts of his treatment at the hands of municipal police and how those encounters negatively affected his life. He had been invasively strip searched, starved, forcefully restrained naked in a chair, and held in solitary confinement in Hazelwood (a municipality neighboring Ferguson) for 24 hours—for a broken side-view mirror. That was one of over five jailings in this past year alone for traffic stops, and yet he had never had a court hearing for a single one of these jailings in which he heard the charges against him. He used to be married, but after his wife was locked up for two months under similar circumstances, their marriage dissolved and they lost their home. After one of these jailings, he was also pressured to plead guilty without any legal counsel for a violation he had not done, simply because doing so would allow him to be freed from jail.

Meeting this client and numerous others whose stories shared common themes brought me to see that what is happening in Missouri is not only a violation of constitutionally-protected civil rights, but also an infringement upon basic human rights. People who are unable to afford cash bonds are being locked up for weeks at a time without access to legal counsel, medications, or communication with family or employers, which has devastating effects on their records, health, jobs, and personal lives. One of the municipal jails ArchCity is suing has been known for having “dogfights” in which the inmates are forced to engage in gladiatorial matches. A client who spent time there said that she has been in federal prison and would rather go back there than spend a single day in this municipal jail. I was thankful to have been able to interview the individuals I was able to track down, such as the man who had been invasively strip searched, and get them to join the class action so that they could be vindicated. At the same time, I came away acutely aware that what I observed was just a glimpse of the decades of suffering and abuse endured by the black and poor communities of St. Louis and by so many other parallel communities all over the U.S.

After encountering such realities, it is difficult for me to imagine pursuing anything other than a legal career dedicated to demanding just redress for those who have been wronged in such ways, and just consequences for those responsible for such abuses. This fall, I will be working in the Immigrants’ Rights Clinic at Columbia, representing refugee women and children in their asylum cases who are currently detained in southern Texas. As I prepare to interview and advocate for a new set of clients who are being deprived of their liberties and denied basic rights, I am very conscious of the lessons I learned and perspectives I gained in St. Louis this summer. I also have the honor of being on the editorial staff of the Columbia Journal of Race and Law, and intend to write a note about the application of human rights law in civil rights cases based on the legal strategies we used at ArchCity.

This was all made possible thanks to the generous support I received for my public interest summer fellowship, including from Equal Justice America. I hope that I can carry these lessons with me going forward to continue to lift up suffering communities, and that soon, I, too, will be able to support future legal generations in their educational endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca N. Kim". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Rebecca N. Kim
J.D. Candidate, 2017
Columbia Law School

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September 1, 2015

Dan Ruben
Executive Director at Equal Justice America,
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Rebecca Kim-Intern for Summer Semester 2015

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing in regards to Rebecca Kim and her work for our non-profit during this past summer semester.

ArchCity Defenders mission is to end revolving door justice in the St. Louis Region through direct representation of the homeless and working poor. We enable clients to remove legal barriers to exiting homelessness. We also pursue impact litigation to end racial and socio-economic discriminatory practices in the area and nationwide.

Rebecca Kim worked in both direct representation and impact litigation. Her duties included research involving statistics to support impact litigation. She was also responsible for attending court-watching sessions for the purpose of finding civil litigation clients. She helped interview these clients and gather data for class actions as well. Legal research for client cases for individual attorneys was also a part of her day to day responsibilities.

In regards to direct representation, Rebecca interviewed women at local homeless shelters to assess their legal needs. This practice is critical in St. Louis. If a client has a warrant on their record for minor traffic violations, that warrant will prevent them from entering into transitional housing. Rebecca helped us identify clients in need of our services, gather data on these individuals, and assisted in moving forward with representation.

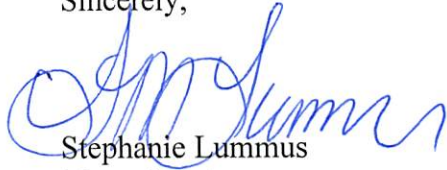
It was a pleasure to have Rebecca in our office for the summer. Her dedication to our mission and for helping those in need was evidenced in all aspects of her work and professional demeanor. Her contribution was very important. She was able to witness first hand the legal barriers to exiting homelessness and the predatory and discriminatory



practices in St. Louis Municipal Courts including but not limited to Ferguson Municipal Court.

Our mission and work was enlightened and furthered by Rebecca's presence. We cannot thank her enough for her time.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Lummus
Managing Attorney
Client Services Manager



Thomas Harvey
Executive Director

