

April 30, 2010

Mr. Dan Ruben, Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
Building 11, Suite 204  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I recently completed an Equal Justice America fellowship at the DC Employment Justice Center (EJC) in Washington, D.C. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the EJC, and I feel that over the course of my semester internship, I was able to make a lasting impact on the lives of many EJC clients, helping to level the legal playing field for low-income workers in Washington, D.C. Additionally, I gained valuable skills, developing an understanding of labor and employment law, conducting bilingual client intakes, and writing legal briefs and memoranda. I also gained a number of valuable mentors in the committed advocates at the EJC, and I hope that these relationships will serve me well as I prepare to graduate law school and to pursue a career in public interest law.

During my time at the EJC, I had a number of client interactions that I believe will stay with me throughout my legal career. At the EJC, I participated in a weekly Workers' Rights Clinic, conducting legal intake for low-income workers to assist them in understanding their legal rights, and the complicated legal processes and systems involved in disputes with employers. The Workers' Rights Clinics were usually packed, drawing large crowds of workers, who often had to arrive up to an hour early in order to secure a legal intake with an EJC volunteer. The majority of the workers I met with during the semester had been exploited by their employer, and many of the workers were immigrant workers. EJC Client claims included workers' compensation, disability benefits, wage and hour disputes, sexual harassment, discrimination, and whistle-blower claims, among others. Conducting legal intakes at the Clinics provided me with the opportunity to become more familiar with the plight of low-income workers in the area, and to develop important client communication skills.

In reflecting on my fellowship at the EJC, a number of client stories come to mind. I feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with so many exceptional individuals who were fighting for their rights in the face of considerable adversity. One of the stories that greatly impacted me during my internship was the story of Maria.\* Maria is a domestic worker who visited the EJC for assistance, after she had been kept against her will by an employer at a private residence. Maria was forced to work extremely long hours for no pay, was prevented from leaving her employer's house, and was constantly subjected to verbal abuse. Moreover, Maria was not even provided with adequate food in return for her hours of cooking and cleaning for her employer's family, and often she had to sneak food from the scraps the family left on plates after the evening meal. After a few terrifying months of modern-day slavery, Maria was able to escape from the house with help from a kind neighbor. She came to the EJC for assistance shortly after her escape, having no money or shelter, and feeling terrified about how to move forward following such traumatic events. I met with Maria first at the Workers' Rights Clinic, and then again in the EJC office, in order to get more information about her story. I helped Maria with her wage claim, in order to recover payment for the months of work she had completed at her employer's residence. In addition, I contacted a local immigration organization, who is assisting Maria in obtaining a T-visa,

allowing her to obtain legal immigration status in the United States on account of her status as a victim of human trafficking. Currently, Maria is also pursuing criminal and civil actions against her former employer, allowing her to seek the justice she deserves for the inhumane treatment she suffered for so many months.

Working with clients like Maria has inspired me to continue working with low-income immigrant workers, and has reaffirmed my desire to become a public interest lawyer. My time at the EJC has greatly expanded my knowledge of employment law, and the exploitation that low-wage workers face, especially low-wage immigrant workers. After taking the bar exam this July, I will begin work as a Skadden fellow at Ayuda, Inc., a local non-profit organization, providing legal assistance to immigrant victims of domestic violence. I anticipate that many of my clients will be domestic workers and victims of human trafficking, and I believe that my internship at the EJC will provide me with a wealth of knowledge to better serve my future clients. My EJA fellowship at the EJC has been an invaluable asset to my legal career and will continue to inform my legal practice for years to come.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Walters

J.D. Candidate May 2010

American University Washington College of Law

\*Client name and some details of the story have been changed to protect client confidentiality.



# D.C. Employment Justice Center

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Dan Ruben  
Equal Justice America  
Law Student Fellowships  
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13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Rebecca Walters, our Equal Justice America (EJA) Fellow, recently completed her spring 2010 semester clerkship with the D.C. Employment Justice Center (EJC). During her time with the EJC, she performed work mainly for the legal services program, including interviewing clients, doing legal research, analyzing claims legally and factually, and drafting documents. Rebecca did an excellent job in every respect.

On several occasions Rebecca was tasked with preparing summaries of cases which were being considered for referral to pro bono counsel. Rebecca's summaries were simultaneously concise and thorough; I appreciated that I could depend on her analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the cases in discussing them with pro bono counsel.

I was also impressed with Rebecca's initiative in finding referrals for clinic cases in which she was working closely with the client(s). On one occasion she served a client who had recently escaped her job as a domestic worker with an "employer" who was essentially enslaving her. While EJC could assist this client with her wage claim, the client obviously had many other unmet needs, both legal and otherwise. Rebecca was able to coordinate the referral of this woman to another service provider who could meet the needs that EJC could not. Rebecca also referred a case involving several unpaid workers to a clinic at her law school for representation and assistance that EJC lacked the resources to provide. In both of these instances, Rebecca displayed ownership of the cases to which she was assigned, including responsibility for and a stake in the client's ultimate success or failure.

Rebecca showed patience and compassion for our clients. While the opportunity to show compassion is obvious when serving a client such as the woman who had been victimized by her employer as a domestic worker, mentioned previously, Rebecca was also able to show the same compassion and patience to a worker who had not been paid his wages for three years but whose employer had kept no record of the hours worked. It required a great

deal of patience and empathy for Rebecca to work with this client to help him remember the hours he worked and to figure out his basis for the memory so that he could prove his claim.

In summary, Rebecca's work-product was uniformly excellent, she grasped legal and factual issues without difficulty, her research and writing skills were excellent, and she showed a genuine concern and passion for helping the low wage clients served by the EJC. We are certain that she will prove to be a caring and effective advocate, and we are delighted to welcome her to our public interest community!

Sincerely,

Laura Brown  
Director of Legal Services