

SAM KEEN'S SUMMER 2013 INTERNSHIP REPORT
EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

August 31, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
134540 East Boundary Road
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, thanks to funding from Equal Justice America, I had the wonderful opportunity to work at the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing. LCBH has been providing free legal services for Chicago's tenants and homeowners since 1980. LCBH's mission is to promote the availability of and access to safe, decent, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing in Chicago through legal representation, individual and public advocacy, supportive social services and education. LCBH provides a wide range of services, from advocacy and intervention on behalf of the tenants to litigation, such as seeking a receivership in housing court so that rents can go to a third party and necessary improvements will be made. Our work with tenants includes educating them on their rights under the Chicago Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance, condominium conversion laws, state laws, fair housing, foreclosure and other laws as applicable. LCBH operates many specialized programs to serve the variety of Chicago's housing needs, including the Eviction Defense Program, Tenants in Foreclosure Intervention Program, and Affordable Housing Preservation Program.

I worked primarily with our Eviction Defense Program which provides high-volume defense to low-income renters facing eviction. In essence, it was my job to preserve housing for those whom, without our help, would likely end up homeless. I also helped operate our Tenants in Foreclosure Intervention Program help desk. This help desk provides legal advice to *pro se* defendants facing eviction because the building that they are living in had been foreclosed on.

My experience with LCBH could not have been better. Not only was I in court almost every day getting to argue motions, conduct trials, and negotiate settlements, but I was actually winning my motions and trials, and I was settling cases with terms favorable to my clients. This is because LCBH gave me the training and supervision I needed in order to be successful in the eviction court setting. One of my most memorable moments came after I just won a Motion for Summary Judgment on a very technical issue that is by no means well-settled law. After somehow convincing the Judge to rule in my favor, he called me and my supervising attorney to the bench to compliment me on how well I had been doing in his courtroom throughout the summer. It was one of my proudest moments as a law student thus far.

In total, I worked about 400 hours at LCBH this summer, stepping up as lead counsel on a little over 20 cases. Though each case was a wonderful experience, there are a few highlights that stand out, including:

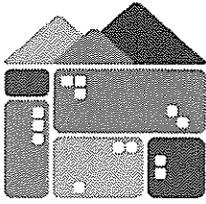
- The aforementioned case in which the judge complimented me. This particular Judge is notoriously difficult and typically unwilling to grant a motion on such a technical basis. Knowing the odds I was up against made this particular victory that much sweeter.
- I was lead counsel on a case that went all the way to a bench trial. This is somewhat unusual for defendants with lawyers, as most cases are settled, dismissed, or transferred to a jury trial. At trial, I was able to get all the money claims against my client dismissed and her eviction record sealed. Again, this was a huge victory because the odds certainly were not in my client's favor.
- Finally, I argued and won a Motion to Reconsider that resulted in vacating an erroneous order of possession thereby preserving a single mother's Housing Choice Voucher.

In short, thanks to the funding given to me by Equal Justice America, I was able to work a job this summer that allowed me to have a clear and immediate positive impact on this very vulnerable population. Without organizations like LCBH, decent, affordable housing for low-income renters would be non-existent. Our work was the last line of defense for people on the precipice of homelessness by way of eviction, often times due to unfortunate dealings with unscrupulous landlords. This work is important because, without our help, there is no doubt that our clients would have been railroaded by their unfamiliarity with the rights provided for them by our legal system.

I would also like to recommend an internship or externship at LCBH to any Chicago-area law student who is interested in litigation and is able to obtain a 711 license. The experience that I received through my time at LCBH has undoubtedly set me apart as someone who will be courtroom-ready straight out of law school. My learning curve is so much smaller as a result, and I feel like I have already proven that I am capable of being an effective trial lawyer.

Sincerely,

Sam Keen
DePaul University College of Law
J.D. 2014



Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing

Advocating for Chicago Tenants

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August 29, 2013

Equal Justice America
Building II – Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing this letter in support of Samuel Keen's Equal Justice America fellowship which funded his summer internship with the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (LCBH). Sam volunteered with LCBH from May 20, 2013 through August 16, 2013 donating nearly 400 hours of his. In my role as Staff Attorney and Pro Bono Coordinator for LCBH I directly supervised Sam during his internship.

By way of background, LCBH is a public interest law firm that advocates for safe, decent, and affordable housing for all Chicago area residents. Sam worked with our Eviction Defense Project which provides high volume, no-cost legal services to families facing eviction, many times providing the last defense against homelessness. Sam was a wonderful asset to our office and we were very sorry to lose him at the end of his internship.

Sam is a compassionate individual whose deep commitment to public interest was obvious in his work. No matter how busy he was, he always took time to listen to clients to ensure that they understood their case and that our office understood their needs. He went above and beyond the requirements of his internship to help other program areas and to fill in for staff attorneys on leave. He is a hard worker and a team player who is always available to help out in a crisis and always eager to take on more work.

Sam is well on his way to being a great litigator. He worked on over 20 cases this summer ranging from simple settlement negotiations to bench trials. He stepped up in court on numerous occasions to argue motions. While he had many great victories on behalf of his clients, there are a few cases that I would like to highlight as examples of the impact of Sam's work this summer:

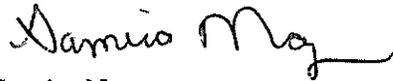
- Sam won a Motion for Summary Judgment based on a defective eviction notice that he argued in front a notoriously difficult judge.

- Sam was lead counsel on a bench trial which resulted in dismissal of all money claims against the client and sealing of the eviction record.
- Sam argued and won a Motion to Reconsider that resulted in vacating an erroneous Order for Possession thereby preserving a single mother's Housing Choice Voucher

Through Sam's zealous advocacy and diligent work, he was able to help countless individuals and families preserve their housing and get back on the path to security and stability.

If you have any questions about Sam's time at LCBH, please feel free to contact me directly at snazem@lcbh.org or (312) 784-3517.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samira Nazem". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Samira Nazem

Pro Bono Coordinator/Staff Attorney
Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing