

September 17, 2014

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13450 East Boundary Road  
Building II, Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I would like to thank you for awarding me the Equal Justice America fellowship this past summer. This fellowship granted me the opportunity to work at Youth Represent in New York City in both the Family Stability and Community Lawyering Projects, where I gained strong legal training from passionate and dedicated attorneys and was exposed to new areas of law.

Throughout the summer in the Family Stability Project, I had the opportunity to work on a number of cases involving child custody, visitation, and support issues. A case that was especially memorable for me was one involving a young man who wanted nothing more than to spend time with his son. This client's situation was unique as his son was living in another country with a relative who had obtained custody of him through the courts of that country. This client had tried unsuccessfully in the foreign country's court system to enforce his rights to visitation. He was further informed by the New York City family court system that it lacked jurisdiction to hear his visitation petition. As such, he was frustrated and came to Youth Represent for assistance, and I was fortunate to be assigned to his case. After extensive research, I found a helpful case that provided our client with a strong argument to support the NYC family court system's jurisdiction over the matter, finally allowing him to have his day in court. This case was particularly meaningful to me as it demonstrated to me how dedicated advocacy can truly change an entire family's life.

I also had the opportunity to assist with workshops at community-based organizations in the Community Lawyering Project. With this project, I accompanied Youth Represent attorneys to various NYC organizations where we provided legal services to the youth who attended the programs. I had the opportunity to assist the attorneys in correcting mistakes on clients' criminal records and then educating the clients about their records, all with the hopes of reducing employment barriers.

My internship at Youth Represent was one of the most meaningful experiences I have had in law school. The practical experience I gained this summer was invaluable to my development as a future public interest attorney. It not only provided me with a vision of my future career, but also excited me that I was on my way towards fulfilling my aspirations. I am thankful to Equal Justice America for awarding me the fellowship and providing me with support to pursue my career goals in public interest law.

Sincerely,

Saskia Valencia  
JD Candidate, Class of 2015  
American University Washington College of Law