

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I was privileged to be selected as the Georgetown University Law Center/Foley & Lardner LLP Pro Bono Intern. My summer experience consisted of seven weeks at the Archdiocesan Legal Network of Catholic Charities DC (“ALN”), and three weeks working on *pro bono* cases at Foley & Lardner LLP. My ALN experience was client-centered: the bulk of my time was spent interviewing clients and discussing their cases with staff attorneys and other interns so that we could either place their cases with volunteer attorneys or refer them to other legal aid agencies that could better help them solve their problems. At Foley & Lardner, I was able to work on two *pro bono* cases I had helped place while at ALN. Through client interviews, legal research, and meetings with attorneys, I was able to help my clients take the next step in resolving their legal issues.

While working at ALN, I met a large number of clients, many of whom had engaging stories and problems. There are two, however, that stand out, partially because I spent so much time on their cases, but mostly because of the personal effect they had on me. The first is a Filipino woman whose husband was in the hospital due to a stroke. Her English was limited, as was her knowledge of American legal and financial institutions, which made her particularly vulnerable when her sisters-in-law approached her about obtaining a court-appointed guardian for her husband’s finances and other affairs. To make matters worse, it was difficult for her to resist them because she had little to no money of her own to pay her rent and monthly bills. Her sisters-in-law wanted her to hire the same attorney they had hired to draw up the guardianship papers in exchange for money to pay the rent and bills.

This client’s case is still ongoing, and I hope it reaches a successful conclusion. Regardless, my experience with her to this point has been incredibly rewarding: having interviewed her myself, and having heard how she cried every night over her husband’s health and the pressure from her sisters-in-law, it was difficult to have to call her every two weeks and tell her we were still searching for an attorney for her. But that disappointment was nothing compared to the happiness I heard on the other end of the line when I called to tell her we’d found her an attorney that would look to her best interests instead of those of her sisters-in-law. I truly felt like I had done something that would help solve this woman’s problems and help her sleep more easily at night.

The second client I brought with me to Foley & Lardner had a story just as compelling as

the first. She had contracted with the District of Columbia to have rehabilitation work done on her home. She was required to move out and place all of her belongings in storage. A three-month project had not been completed in six months, leaving the client with rent and storage bills she could not pay, and a dispute as to the scope and nature of the work to be done on her home. On top of all of this, the client had brain surgery during the ordeal.

When I called to tell the client that ALN had found her an attorney and that I would be working on her case, she was overjoyed. Much more poignant, though, was what happened after the first interview with the client at Foley & Lardner: an attorney, myself, and a summer associate were just beginning to discuss what to do first when the client burst back into the conference room crying and gave me a hug. And that was only the beginning – just over a week later, I was able to call her and tell her we'd talked to the storage company about her bills, and that we had convinced them not to sell her household possessions at auction. You can only imagine how relieved she was.

This has been a truly remarkable summer experience, and shown me how much *pro bono* legal work means to the clients who receive it. When I first applied for summer positions in the legal field, I thought the best part about *pro bono* work was that it was good hands-on legal experience for law students and young attorneys. If anything, my experience this summer has shown me that it is not the legal education, but the time spent helping people resolve the big problems in their lives, that is most rewarding.

Sincerely,
Steven A. Nigh
Georgetown University Law Center
J.D., 2010