

August 24, 2013

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 fortunate enough to be an Equal Justice America Fellow and legal intern at the Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project ("MHP"), which serves low-income New Yorkers with mental illness on a wide range of civil issues. MHP engages in direct individual representation, strategic litigation, as well as policy advocacy and community education.

My internship was challenging, satisfying and rewarding. The diversity of legal issues I was able to work on made the experience particularly exciting and memorable. For example, I represented a schizophrenic mother in administrative hearings to restore public benefits, attended a fairness hearing before a federal judge, and drafted a class action complaint against a government agency.

In particular, a few clients I served left a lasting impression on me, because they showed such strength and perseverance in the face of so much misfortune and adversity. For example, I drafted an appeal of denial of parole for a highly-educated, schizophrenic inmate who ended up in prison for a non-violent offense. It was his first brush with the criminal justice system. He was denied parole, likely as a result of his mental illness; he had racked up disciplinary infractions during a period when he was denied proper medical care and became symptomatic. In writing the appeal, I was able to hone in on the strongest arguments through record requests and research. I highlighted his otherwise exemplary prison record and the strength of his rehabilitative process, as well as the inadequate treatment mentally ill inmates often receive and systemic issues that place particular burdens on those with mental illnesses seeking parole. While the appeal is pending, I am hopeful that his drive, and exceptional record once he received the proper medical attention, will lead to his eventual release.

Another client I worked with was a woman who suffers from agoraphobia, and other mental and physical conditions that made it extremely difficult for her to work. She was appealing the denial of her federal disability benefits. I co-wrote a post-hearing memo, and was able to strengthen her case by tracking down additional treating doctors and obtaining letters and medical records that were not previously available as evidence. What I was most struck by was this client's sheer will to be there for her young children; despite her disability, she was somehow able to leave her apartment to drop them off at

school, even though it often meant triggering crippling panic attacks. While this appeal is also still pending, my supervisor is optimistic about the strength of her case and the outcome.

I am truly grateful for the valuable experience I was able to gain this summer as an Equal Justice America Fellow. I hope to continue the work of advocating for mentally ill indigent people upon graduation from law school.

Sincerely,

Tomoeh Murakami Tse
Brooklyn Law School
Anticipated Year of Graduation: 2014



Urban Justice Center
123 William Street, 16th floor, New York, NY 10038
Tel: (646) 602-5600 • Fax: (212) 533-4598

August 27, 2013

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Via e-mail

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter is to confirm that it was a pleasure for the Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project to host Tomoeh Murakami Tse for a summer legal internship placement through Equal Justice America. Although Ms. Tse's time here was short, she quickly became a well-liked and well-respected member of our team.

Ms. Tse worked with our attorneys, advocates, and social workers on a wide variety of projects to assist low-income New Yorkers with major mental illness. The Mental Health Project is involved in both individual advocacy and impact litigation on civil legal issues that affect persons with mental illness. We particularly focus on civil legal issues that affect those who are institutionalized, including in hospital systems and in the criminal justice system.

Through her placement, Ms. Tse was able to work on both individual representation cases and impact litigation. For instance, she drafted an appeal of a parole denial and also drafted a post-hearing Supplemental Security Income appeal memo. She also researched causes of action for a potential impact case against the City housing authority and she interviewed class-members who are incarcerated as part of our monitoring work on a large ongoing case of ours.

Additionally, Ms. Tse shadowed our attorneys at a number of hearings, including a fairness hearing on a class action, fair hearings to contest the termination of welfare benefits, and a housing appeal.

If you have any questions about Ms. Tse's experience at the Urban Justice Center, please feel free to contact me at (646) 602-5664 or mkuns@urbanjustice.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mara A. Kuns", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mara A. Kuns
Staff Attorney