

August 30, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a third-year law student at the University of Miami School of Law. I came to law school knowing that I wanted to pursue a career in public interest after graduation, and this summer solidified my dedication to working in public interest.

This past summer I received an Equal Justice Fellowship to intern at The Door at its Legal Services Center. Each year The Door serves more than 11,000 young people from all over New York City, and provides a wide range of services including reproductive health care and education, mental health counseling and crisis assistance, legal assistance, GED and ESOL classes, tutoring, college preparation services, career development, job training and placement, supportive housing, arts, and nutritious meals, all for free, and under one roof. The Door is unique in its ability to meet the complex needs of New York City's disconnected youth because of the range of services available all under one roof.

While at The Door, I interned with a very experienced attorney, Michael Williams, who had 20 years of experience. Mr. Williams worked with young people who were facing civil legal issues. The issues ranged from immigration to adoption subsidies, to child support, even defamation. Due to the unique position Mr. Williams was in, I was able to experience new areas of law every day. The varied areas allowed me to dramatically improve my ability to complete legal research, brief issues, and exercise advanced legal analysis. While Mr. Williams did litigate cases over the summer, specifically child support and housing cases, a lot of his work was not litigation based. Mr. Williams helped mediate issues that young people had with social services agencies, schools, businesses, individuals, etc.

Mr. Williams and I were able to help new clients every week, but there were a couple that really made an impact on me over the summer. The first one that comes to mind is a young man from the Ivory Coast who was a green card holder here in the United States. He was invited to try out for various soccer teams in Europe, but needed a passport to get there. The young man was working with the consulate to receive a passport from his home country, but each time he spoke with them they had no updates for him. Nine months had passed and there was still no word from the consulate. With summer coming to a close, the window of opportunity to make a soccer team was closing as well. After a week of phone calls and another week of drafting letters on behalf of the young person we were finally able to figure out the passport issue and resolve it. It may be a small part of legal work, but for that young man it meant that he was able to pursue his dreams. That situation opened my eyes to alternatives to litigation. There are issues that attorneys can resolve for a person that may mean more than any successful court case, and I believe that concept is very overlooked in the legal field.

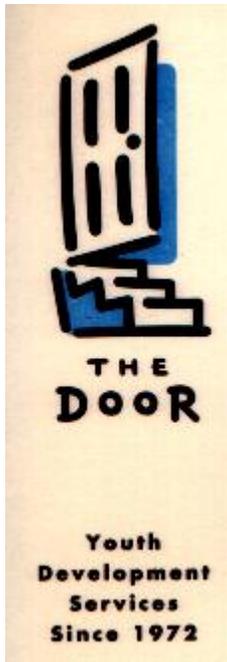
Another very memorable client was a young man who was diagnosed with a couple serious mental illnesses. This client was very concerned because he went to a local hospital for general medical treatment and faced what he believed to be discrimination based on his psychological history. The client ended up involuntarily committed and came to The Door to learn about what his rights are as a patient. After some research, we met with the young person again to inform and advise the client. When all was said and done, the young man expressed his gratitude and told me that it was the first time in his life that he felt he could speak openly about his mental illness without feeling judged. Again, no major litigation took place, but taking the time to meet with that client, inform him of his rights, and making him feel safe, secure and empowered was the most beneficial solution for that individual.

My summer spent at The Door taught me what I deem to be my most valuable legal lesson yet. That lesson is that all legal issues are important; many times in public interest we are forced to take a triage approach to selecting clients. Unfortunately, that is just the reality based on funding, but that does not mean that minor legal issues aren't as equally life changing for our clients. We are geared to focus on issues we can litigate, but there are so many times that all a client might need is advice, a letter, or even just a legal representative to speak on their behalf. It seems to me that there are a lot of times that a lawyer could take on a case at the point of a disagreement, and that disagreement could be resolved before it even gets to court. My hope is that when I graduate this year and pursue my future job in public interest that I will be given the opportunity to not only litigate, but also meet and assist clients with smaller legal issues or conflicts.

Sincerely,

Amanda B. Powell

Amanda B. Powell
JD Candidate 2017
University of Miami School of Law



August 29, 2016

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
BY EMAIL
Equal Justice America
Midlothian VA 23112

Re: **Evaluation of Amanda Powell**
Equal Justice America Fellow,
Summer 2016

I am the Senior Staff Attorney at The Door's Legal Services Center. This letter serves as an evaluation of AMANDA POWELL, who worked as an intern with my department, under my supervision, during the summer of 2016.

The Door is an organization that provides various services, including legal services, to minors and young adults between the ages of twelve and twenty-one years old; in certain programs we provide services to young people up to twenty-four years old. Amanda provided direct services to young people in those age ranges. As an intern, Amanda met with and interviewed clients on her own, researched various civil legal issues, and did some limited writing, including a memorandum of law in support of a motion to dismiss a New York Housing Court case. Her work involved legal issues in the areas of housing, immigration, benefits, civil rights, torts, foster care, and others.

Amanda was very organized and responsible as an intern. She quickly grasped the projects that I assigned to her, and was able to work responsibly and in a self-directed manner once she was given an assignment. She was able to balance a number of assignments with varying due dates, and was good at checking in to see if she was prioritizing her assignments properly. She was comfortable interacting with clients on the phone, by email and in person. She was empathetic to the difficult challenges that many of our clients face, without letting that empathy interfere with her work on individual cases.

Amanda was comfortable being supervised as a legal intern, and did not hesitate to ask me questions about individual projects and about the practice of law in general. She had good working relationships with other summer legal interns in our office.

Amanda was genuinely interested in public interest legal services, and approached new projects with enthusiasm. I believe that she found the experience this summer valuable in bringing her closer to deciding on the type of law she may want to practice once she graduates from law school.

Amanda's internship this summer did not require a great deal of writing, though she did prepare memos presenting the results of research that she had done, and some advocacy writing. I thought her advocacy writing was good; Amanda would benefit from additional opportunities in the future to practice her advocacy writing skills.

I was pleased with Amanda's performance as an intern this past summer. She was a valuable addition to our office and a pleasure to work with.

Please feel free to contact me at 212-941-9090 extension 3250 if you need any further information about Amanda's work as an intern at The Door's Legal Services Center.

Sincerely,

Michael Williams
Senior Staff Attorney
The Door's Legal Services Center