

August 31st, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I had the opportunity to work in the Child Advocacy clinic. There I was able to serve communities in Flint, Detroit and Ann Arbor. This experience has been very humbling and it has taught me lessons that I would carry with me for the rest of my life.

I had 3 big cases and each were special to me. My first clients were a group of kids [whose] mother was on drugs. Three went to live with their biological father while the youngest was placed with her grandmother because her biological father was on drugs as well. This case was different from the rest of the cases that I handled. The mother was able to convince the state to let her home school her kids despite not graduating high school. The kids weren't taught, and one I had just learned his ABC's at the age of ten, once he was sent to live with his father. But this case was the most impactful to me because of what I argued in court. I argued that she wasn't fit to keep any of her kids, that the youngest child should be placed in juvenile guardianship. This was a big moment in my life. What makes me a 22-year-old law student [who's] never had a child in her life qualified to argue that this woman isn't fit to raise a child. The biggest question I asked is who am I? This case made me realize that it's bigger than me, I represent a child and I need to do what's best for that child.

Another case that was special to me was a group of five kids who were abused by their mother's boyfriend. The grandparents had to uproot their life in Florida and move to Detroit to take care of their grand kids. In this case, I watched the kids mature over time through therapy and the love and support of their grandparents. I am happy to say that they have moved to Florida and have begun a new life leaving their past behind them.

My last big case was a teenage girl from Flint. Her father physically abused her and she was able to go live with her mother. This case was important because it made me see how young teens look at the court system. There was a lot of evidence showing that her dad physically abused her and he only got probation. To her the court made her feel that she was worthless. That her father could beat her and nothing would happen to him. The sad thing is, is that this happens every day. Everyday someone gets off a crime or gets a light sentence. You can imagine how it makes a child feel. I just hope that she does see herself as worth more than what she thinks the court thinks she's worth. This case meant a lot because we were able to keep her with her mom and away from her father.

This summer I was able to learn a lot and interact with a lot of people from different backgrounds. I truly appreciated my experience and I wouldn't change it for anything.

Megan Giles
University of Michigan Law School
Anticipated graduation: May 2019