

Equal Justice America,
Building II - Suite 204,
13540 East Boundary Road,
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dan Ruben,

This summer I was able to serve as a law clerk for the Michigan Children's Law Center (MCLC) in Detroit, Michigan. The Equal Justice America Fellowship provided me with the financial and moral support that was necessary for me to spend my summer working for a non-profit.

During my time at MCLC my primary responsibility was to conduct legal research in the area of child welfare law and juvenile delinquency. Additionally, I had the opportunity to observe a wide variety of hearings and trials that took place in the juvenile court. Finally, at the end of my clerkship I had the experience of being sworn in as a student attorney and was able to cover a preliminary neglect hearing.

While I came to MCLC with my own experiences in child welfare law as a former Child Protective Services worker in Arizona, I realized that the system, laws, policies, and procedures in Michigan are very different than what I had experienced in my previous work and I had the opportunity to learn about Michigan child welfare law, juvenile law, and the specific challenges faced in the city of Detroit. I have found that it is particularly important for children growing up in impoverished cities like Detroit to have appropriate and effective advocates to ensure that instead of being funneled into a prison system, their talents are discovered and cultivated.

Prior to my time at MCLC I had no experience in criminal defense and during the summer I had the opportunity to learn more about criminal law and criminal defense. For the first time in my life I was able to observe a full criminal trial. It was a very powerful

experience to see a child facing charges that would impact the rest of his life and to watch an attorney represent this child successfully. This experience has created an interest in providing criminal defense for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. Too often the poor are not able to seek out legal representation on their own because of a lack of financial resources and as a result, are not provided with the adequate representation that they are entitled to. I found it inspiring to watch an attorney work so hard for a client. It was incredible to work with attorneys who were motivated by the pursuit for justice, rather than the pursuit of monetary compensation. I had the privilege this summer to work with a team of attorneys that operated under the true spirit of the law. Attorneys who sought tirelessly for justice and consistently worked in the best interests of their clients.

This summer helped to reinforce my desire to work in the field of public interest law. A legal education provides an individual with a tremendous amount of power in the ability to take action in the legal system, but with that power I believe comes a responsibility to advocate for those individuals in our society who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. The work in the classroom during law school is a vital part to becoming a lawyer, however, it is the practical experience of being in a real legal setting that essentially transforms an individual from a student to an attorney. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to experience real legal work this summer, an experience that would not have been possible if not for the Equal Justice America Fellowship.

Thank You,

Victoria Suber
Wayne State University Law School, May 2013