

William Lim

August 12, 2005

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I wish to thank Equal Justice America for awarding me a summer fellowship for my work in the housing law unit at South Brooklyn Legal Services. My internship experience has been terrific and I now have a greater appreciation for the difficult but necessary work that legal services agencies perform.

Before I started my internship, older students and practicing attorneys warned me that Brooklyn housing court would be a zoo. On my first day of work, I finally understood what they meant. On multiple floors of the civil courthouse, children ran about, lawyers and clients conferenced noisily in the hallways, and pro se litigants generally seemed lost. Some of the housing court judges did not even bother to wear robes while hearing cases. My supervisors had coined the term “five minute justice” to describe the daily chaos of housing court, in part because the average time a litigant spent in front of a judge was about five minutes.

I came to realize that most of the work I did for our low-income clients was hand-holding. They felt comforted just by having someone explaining the process and being a friendly face in court. While many clients were no strangers to dealing with governmental bureaucracies – from public assistance to Section 8 – most lacked the lawyer’s ability to think strategically about their cases and how to deal with their landlords. Several clients required a holistic legal approach – requiring not only housing court assistance but also needing help with government benefits like Medicaid or even needing guardians ad litem.

Having just ended my internship, I feel recommitted to public interest law because I have now seen first-hand how pressing the need is for lawyers to serve the poor. I do not know if I will go into housing law again or find another area of law which directly affects the lives of low-income people. Nevertheless, this fall I will be taking a Poverty Law class in order to learn more about how the law can be used to help serve the public. Perhaps next summer I will be back at South Brooklyn Legal Services.

Thank you again to Equal Justice America for giving me this opportunity.

Sincerely,


William Lim

Fordham Law School, Class of '07