

August 22, 2015

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director, Equal Justice America  
13540 E. Boundary Road  
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you and the entire Equal Justice America organization for helping to fund my summer internship with the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC). Through LAJC, I was able to help prevent eviction, find new housing, and gain access to housing assistance for 20 clients. Several of my clients were threatened with eviction based on wildly inaccurate accounts of unpaid rent. Others were being forced out of their homes to do the alleged actions of others, including in one case, the actions of a complete stranger. For each client, I was tasked with gathering the facts, explaining the legal situation and options, and then working with my client's landlord to reach a mutually beneficial outcome. Two cases in particular stand out to me.

Client X (I won't use names for the sake of privacy) is an elderly man suffering from a debilitating disease. Consequently, he can only work part time. X was being charged \$600 per month to stay in one room and to share a house with five other people. His landlord never made repairs, even when the pipes burst, but also demanded his rent payments. X was always timely with his rent until early this spring when his housing assistance was discontinued because his sponsoring organization became defunct. It did not matter to X's landlord that X was an excellent tenant, a vulnerable man, and temporarily without housing assistance; he wanted him out. So he served him a notice of eviction and took him to court. The amount of unpaid rent that the landlord demanded Mr. X pay was easily two to three times as high as the actual unpaid amount, which Mr. X had documentation to prove. I called the landlord to discuss the situation but he refused to answer my calls. With no other options, we went to court. I worked with my supervisor to draft opening and closing statements, direct and cross examination questions, and to create exhibits for the judge. We walked into the courtroom, ready to make our case before the judge, when my supervisor took one last crack at persuading Mr. X's landlord to do the right thing and dismiss the case. After a half hour of wrangling, she did it. The landlord admitted that he was not actually sure how much rent was owed and that he just wanted to evict Mr. X for personal reasons. He then dismissed the case and it was over. The appreciation and relief in Mr. X's eyes was completely gratifying. He was so grateful to have us in his corner and to see how the law can help not just hurt people in his situation.

Client Y was a mother with a cognitive disability who married a man who used her home, without her knowledge, to deal drugs. He betrayed her trust but she was the one who was punished with an eviction notice. Even worse, she was laid off during this time so she did not have any money to move-out. She was in a truly desperate situation. When I spoke to the police about the incident, the officers were distressed that she was being evicted for her husband's crimes. In their eyes, she was a victim of this man so why should she be victimized again? My supervisor and I agreed. We spent over 6 weeks negotiating with her landlord to dismiss the eviction and let her move out on her own. We helped her find friends to stay with and a long list

of potential new apartments. At first, her landlord was angry at our suggestion. Drugs, she said, were inexcusable and our client should pay the price. I explained the situation to the landlord, over and over again, emphasizing that not even the police agreed with her. Dozens of emails and phone calls later and many stressful nights for our client, her landlord finally agreed to dismiss the eviction and to let our client move-out when she was able.

Without legal representation, neither Client X nor Client Y would be in their apartments, free from the legal issues with which they came to the Legal Aid Justice Center. Thank you for your funding, without which, I and many others like me would not have been able to do such work.

Sincerely,

Daniel S. Cohen  
University of Virginia School of Law  
Class of 2017

August 31, 2015

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

Re: Daniel Cohen's Equal Justice America fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Daniel Cohen recently completed a summer internship with Legal Aid Justice Center. Dana worked with the Civil Advocacy program in the Charlottesville office under the supervision of myself and four other staff attorneys for 10 weeks, beginning on May 26. The Civil Advocacy Program (CAP) provides assistance to individuals and families in Central Virginia who face legal dilemmas related to housing, public benefits, employment, consumer protection, or the rights of the elderly, and engages in systematic advocacy with and on behalf of low-income people in these issue areas.

Danny worked directly with our individual clients and families, interviewing, negotiating, and writing pleadings and letters. He helped us successfully defend the eviction of an HIV positive client who experienced an interruption in his housing subsidy when our local AIDS Services Group closed its door. He helped a public housing resident experiencing domestic violence avoid eviction for the behavior of her abuser and then helped her bar the same man from the property. Danny also helped many other tenants and consumers resolve individual legal problems favorably.

In the employment context, Danny handled an unemployment hearing at the highest appeals level of Virginia's state administrative agency charged with adjudicating contested unemployment cases. Under the supervision of an LAJC attorney, Danny drafted a brief supporting our client's position and conducted the oral argument before the adjudicator. During the oral argument Danny very ably responded to all of the adjudicator's tough questions with poise.

Finally, Danny was deeply involved in our office's preparations of a fair housing lawsuit against the City of Richmond on behalf of over thirty Latino mobile home park residents. He spent numerous late nights in the mobile home parks interviewing potential clients and then many hours using those interview notes to draft factual allegations on behalf of all the plaintiffs. Danny also helped our office deepen our understanding of the complex legal issues impacting the case through a series of articulate and thoroughly researched legal memos. The additional capacity Danny and his fellow interns gave us was critical in our office's ability to file this very important case.

Through his work this summer Danny decided to enroll in the consumer clinic this academic year and the housing and litigation clinic next academic year. This means Danny will continue to make a real difference in our clients' lives, as he sharpens his legal skills, for years to come.

We are lucky to have Danny as a continued presence in our office and are grateful for Equal Justice America's financial support which made her internship this summer possible. If you have any questions, please contact me at 434-529-1841 or [kim@justice4all.org](mailto:kim@justice4all.org).

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Rolla  
*Staff Attorney*