

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

August 20, 2010

Dear Mr. Ruben,

In a year when the real estate market continued to scrape the bottom and many Pennsylvanians lost their homes to foreclosure or eviction, I was lucky to be part of a much happier story, which begins with a settlement meeting for a Habitat for Humanity property. It was a first for her: the single mother, a first-time homebuyer who had worked hundreds of hours to help construct her own four walls; and a first for me: the wide-eyed first-year law student, aiding the team. Like all closings, there were a few mix-ups, including some mismatched dollar figures and a last-minute licensee agreement. But it wasn't just a meeting—there was laughter, and tears, and finally pizza.

On this particular project, the organization I interned for this summer, Regional Housing Legal Services, represented the seller, Habitat for Humanity. We prepared most of the documents for closing, including the note, the mortgage, the second mortgage, and that licensee agreement—so I had a lot of opportunities, on this project and others, to develop transactional lawyering skills and contract-writing acumen. But it wasn't until I got to settlement—with the title agent, our client, and the buyer—that I finally saw how public interest lawyers can work on a macro scale, creating change throughout the community. Although Regional Housing doesn't do direct representation of low-income clients, they help build all kinds of affordable housing for thousands of people each year. Which enabled me to meet people like this woman, who was one of many benefited by the results of our work in the community.

Overall, however, Regional Housing's reach is much broader, taking a high-level view of the housing picture. The organization advocates for and helps homeowners apply for HEMAP loans, which allow Pennsylvanians beset by sudden tragedy avoid foreclosure. As a summer intern, I worked on an advocacy piece comparing HEMAP funding, awards and repayment data over the last 25 years. Regional Housing is a participant in the Philadelphia Bar Association's Civil Gideon task force—and as an intern, I researched and drafted a section of the Civil Gideon whitepaper, advocating for free legal services for indigent senior citizens. Regional Housing also helps neighborhood groups use low-income tax credits and other federal funds to develop housing and commercial space, or partner with for-profit developers to do so. As a summer intern, I wrote memos, participated in client meetings, and did legal research to help our clients. In addition to efforts placing people in homes and keeping them there through hard times, Regional Housing works with community groups to do rehabs and combat neighborhood blight.

One of the most rewarding aspects of public interest law is a personal connection to the work. Our first-time Habitat homebuyer was not the only opportunity I had to see the real and personal effects of my summer contribution. And even as I return to school this fall, those moments will continue: some of the projects we worked on will establish charter schools, business incubators and mixed-use apartment buildings within walking distance of my house.

Thanks again to everyone at Equal Justice America for a fantastic summer experience working in affordable housing and community economic development.

Best Regards,

Rebecca Trela
Drexel University
May 2012



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August 30, 2010

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

Re: Summer Intern Rebecca Trela—Regional Housing Legal Services

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am delighted to report that Rebecca Trela's work with Regional Housing Legal Services ("RHLS") this summer was absolutely stellar. She worked diligently, and understood the nuances and complexities of the work, as reflected in her astute questions and excellent written work. She worked well in a team with our other summer legal intern, and in fact seemed to be the leader on almost every joint task. She had great organizational skills, keeping track of assignments and details with great accuracy and appropriate follow-up. She also initiated numerous requests for work assignments.

Rebecca's substantive work included work on:

- Writing an entire chapter of a white paper on Civil Gideon housing issues for seniors.
- Writing a memo on HUD's Sustainable Communities NOFA.
- Drafting a construction contract and researching some recent PA law on contractor registration and recent federal law requirements on lead hazard requirements.
- Researching a Low Income Housing Tax Credit development issue.
- Analyzing a recent Philadelphia ordinance on lobbying.
- Analyzing data on the PA HEMAP mortgage assistance program and presenting her findings in chart form.
- Drafting corporate governance documents for a new non-profit.
- Writing and researching an in-depth memorandum on the PA installment land contract law, with a comparison to other jurisdictions, analysis of recent trends in the law, and recommendations for reform.

The entire RHLS staff enjoyed working with Rebecca this summer, and we hope she will sign up for a stint with RHLS as a Drexel Co-op Student during the coming academic year.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judy F. Berkman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Judy F. Berkman
Managing Attorney

JFB/m