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I absolutely enjoyed my experience this summer as an Equal Justice America Fellow. I was placed at the Southwestern Pennsylvania Legal Aid Office in Washington, PA. I worked specifically on the juvenile dependency, fair housing, and bankruptcy cases. I was asked to interview parents and make sure they are complying with child custody court orders to ensure they were doing what it took to get their children back. I was conducting research and investigations to aid the fair housing center in pinpointing discriminatory practices implemented by housing associations in Southwestern Pennsylvania. I was able to use my bankruptcy background to assist in our clients' chapter 7 bankruptcy filings. Whatever expectations I had about how my summer would go were beyond exceeded not only by our very deserving and hardworking clients, but also by the experienced staff attorneys I was able to learn from.

This fellowship allowed me to really face our humanity and to acknowledge that everyone is just doing the best they can with the cards they have been dealt. I mourned with parents who lost their children to the system and was outraged when events did not go in our favor. I also shared in the joys of doing work that matters for people who often found themselves believing they did not matter. I remember speaking to one woman who I could just tell was having a rough day and she had been consistently complying with all the requirements that were demanded of her. She was a domestic violence victim who lost her child because of the unfit nature of the home they had been living in with the abusive partner. She was forced to relive traumatic moments through therapy as part of her court orders. During our meeting, she just seemed drained and depleted. She had a court date coming up where her custody determination would be reviewed, and I started the meeting with a compliment. I told her I appreciated that she was on time and that it showed me what a wonderful mom she was and that after reviewing her court packet, I was certain. In a system that does not give parents enough credit, I could tell how much that made her day. I was able to take her mind off, a little bit, from the heavy burden on her shoulders. It was moments like this during the summer that really made my fellowship experience so rewarding. I did not get to see any reunifications of families this summer like I had hoped I would, but to get as close as I did was well worth it.

Without this fellowship, I do not think I would have been able to fully engage myself in this experience like I did. I was the only African American intern and employee at this office. For a long time, I thought it was mostly people of color who used legal aid offices. Working in Washington, Pennsylvania, a rural township with a mostly Caucasian population forced me to leave behind this misconception. Poverty is not restricted to people of color; poverty is a humanities issue. It is an issue that can bring people together and all it requires is a little bit of empathy. Coming to this realization frustrated me because during my fellowship, I often found myself asking: *Why? Why have we not yet perfected this system? What if we afforded our fellow humans more grace? Would that make any difference in this already broken world?*

I do not know how we will ever be able to mend all the cracks in this world. However, this fellowship allowed me to see the potential and to dream a new dream. I dream of a new world, a world where all individuals can look past themselves and see that the way forward has always been together. Greed has no place in this new world, nor does ego, pride, and apathy. This new world will uplift the people, rather than disenfranchise them. This new world will be filled with individuals, who are advocates for justice, for peace, and for righteousness. I hope to God I can be one of these individuals and that when it is my turn, I will check all my faults at the bar and focus not on the fact that I am officially an attorney, but that I have been called to do a great service: to contribute to building this new world.

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