



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Final Reflection:

I have now completed my internship with Rhode Island Legal Services. I went into my last week with about 20 clients outstanding, and it was a blur to try and close out their cases. Thankfully, my coworkers did everything they could—as always—to try and help me out, and I was able to wind things down so that I only needed to hand over four of them. A week removed from this rush, and after I've caught my breath, I can fully say that it really was an amazing experience and that it means so much to go out into the legal world with their support.

I've also begun to experience the impact of our work from another perspective – the long view. In the week or so since my last day, I've actually run into a few of our clients in my neighborhood – some of whom we were able to help maintain their housing, and another for whom we couldn't. As easy as it was to get caught up in the day to day visits to the courthouse, the phone calls and emails, and the never-ending paperwork that seemed to appear on my desk, my colleagues often reminded me to always try and keep the client's ultimate objectives in mind, as they were what ultimately mattered. For some, it was to remain indefinitely on a new tenancy, for other, it was to move-out as soon as possible, and for others it was to stay execution for long enough to remove their belongings and move into a shelter. These realities were certainly always at the forefront of our minds because it was impossible for them not to be – when working with a young single father with three kids in tow in the hallway outside the courtroom, you don't have much of a choice. However, it is the nature of eviction work that that would likely be the only interaction you have with that client – you meet, serve, and say goodbye to clients all within the span of half an hour, a time that does not seem commensurate with the weight of what you are doing and all that they are experiencing. Instead, it was running into these clients outside of the claustrophobic walls of the courthouse and in my own



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neighborhood that made me really appreciate the full work of what our Housing Unit does – through those little half-hour moments, it helps keep our communities together.

As always, my time here has been in large part made possible by Equal Justice America – if you are interested in supporting them so that they can help support other students like me, please consider donating.