

September 6, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

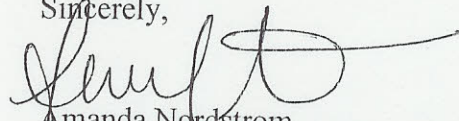
My summer at Women Against Abuse was not the usual carefree, easy-breezy summer vacation. Working with survivors of domestic violence is no easy task: it takes a lot of heart, sweat, and tears, and the outcome wasn't always the happy one I wished it would be. Sometimes victims went back to their abusers, sometimes they didn't show up to court, and sometimes they didn't listen to our advice. In the end though, I know that this summer I helped many survivors along in their journey, and provided them with the support and strength they needed to make the decision they felt was right for them at the time. At Women Against Abuse, they stress the empowerment approach: empowering victims and survivors with the knowledge, tools, and resources to change their own lives. I truly believe that I was able to help encourage that positive change in the women and men I worked with this summer.

Although there were tough cases this summer, many times there were survivors who won their cases, got full protection orders, and were on their way to changing their lives. One particularly poignant case I worked on was a woman whose husband and father of her children had beaten her regularly for 15 years. When she was finally ready to leave the situation and have her husband evicted, she filed for a protection order to do so. Unfortunately, when she went to court, she was denied a full order with eviction, and instead was given a temporary "Protection Only" order that allowed her abuser to continue living in the house. The judge told the client that her order would be dismissed if there were no further incidents in the next 90 days, and for the first 19 days after that hearing, things were fine. However, on day 20, her husband brutally beat her and fractured the bones in her face, and she immediately called Women Against Abuse for

help. When I met with her for an intake, I could see the years of pain and heartbreak in this woman's eyes, and I knew she was close to the point of giving up. I could not stand to let her down, and so I advocated zealously on her behalf with the attorneys at WAA, and we accepted her case. I was in close contact with her in the days before her trial, talking to her multiple times each day to make sure we had everything in order for the big day. I was really honored when the supervising attorney asked me to draft the argument for trial! When the trial came up, however, it was even easier than we expected: the attorney was able to get her husband to agree to a full protection from abuse order with eviction. The client finally was able to return to a home she knew was safe from abuse. I know that my work with this client changed her life. Tonight she is at her home with her children sleeping safely and peacefully, knowing that her husband cannot come back into her house and hurt her again, without facing dire consequences.

My summer at WAA was incredibly rewarding and I am so honored and thankful to have gotten to opportunity to work with the outstanding attorneys, staff, and clients at the organization. I am very grateful to Equal Justice America for providing me with a fellowship to enable me to do this work full time. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generosity and dedication to supporting law students, like me, pursuing careers in public interest law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Amanda Nordstrom", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Amanda Nordstrom
Rutgers University School of Law,
Camden, NJ
Class of 2009