

ANA PEREZ

September 18, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben:

First of all I want to thank Equal Justice America for awarding me the summer scholarship without which I would not have been able to spend my summer interning at Make the Road New York. I literally would not have been able to afford the commute from Bayonne, New Jersey to Jackson Heights, Queens every morning for two months without this financial assistance. Thank you for the additional help you provided me once my internship started, responding to my emails promptly.

This summer I had an amazing experience interning at Make the Road NY (in their Queens location). My duties mainly consisted of assisting two attorneys: Magdalena Barbosa, supervising attorney for the employment cases, and Aura Zuniga, staff attorney who handles an array of legal matters (mostly housing cases.) The fact that I was assisting two different attorneys who work in two completely separate legal fields made my summer internship experience even more rewarding. I really enjoyed being able to switch from one area of the law to the other.

One of the most memorable employment cases I assisted Ms. Barbosa on was that of a live-in domestic worker who after providing her services for a family for over thirteen years was let go when she asked for a raise. This client literally helped raise the four children in the family (there was only a two year old when she started working, he is now fifteen.) She had to clean a four level residence, cook and help with the children from the time she woke up until she went to bed. She was never paid overtime and her vacation time consisted of tagging along on some of the family vacations where she had to work. She barely spoke any English and during her meetings with the other attorneys I was able to sit in and speak with her and make her feel comfortable. I also assisted her in obtaining a letter from her bank, which she needed in order to obtain an ITIN number. I was also able to be present during the deposition of one of her employers (the lady of the

house). Being able to assist this client in this very serious case was a great experience and I am glad I was able to assist in any way possible.

The housing cases I found much more exciting because the attorney and I would go to court a lot and I would be able to be present during the attorney and clients negotiations. One of the cases that touched me the most was that of a seventy nine year old client who had a rent control apartment in Manhattan. He lived by himself and clearly did not have the means to hire big shot attorneys (as often building owners do.) All he wanted and needed was for the windows in his apartment, which were falling off rusted frames, to be repaired. Even after requests from city inspectors, the building owners refused to make the repairs. In this case, the judge actually made an in person inspection of the apartment and we all went to the apartment to view the status of the windows and verify if the repairs were needed or not. Of course, the judge found that the repairs were needed and instructed the building owner to do so immediately. It was a learning experience for me to see how these building owners try any means necessary to force rent control tenants to feel uncomfortable in their own homes so that they will leave the apartment. At which point the building owner can rent the apartment at market value, which in this case, would have been about ten times more than what the rent control tenant was paying.

I could literally go on and on about the invaluable experience I had this summer interning at Make the Road NY. I was able to help so many members from intakes, to wage calculations to legal research, to even representing a member in front of an administrative judge for an SSI appeal. I am so thankful I was awarded this scholarship that afforded me the opportunity to take on this internship. Again, I am forever indebted to this organization. Thank you for helping me get closer to my dreams.

Sincerely,

Ana Perez
Rutgers School of Law - Newark
Juris Doctor Candidate, 2015