

Dan Ruben  
Founder and Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
Building II – Suite 204  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

August 15, 2007

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I'm writing to offer my sincere thanks to Equal Justice America for its generous support of my public interest work this summer. You already know how difficult it is for law students to find financial backing for internships with nonprofits. I am grateful that Equal Justice America is funding this work and supporting law students as we prepare for careers serving the public interest.

Equal Justice America's Fellowship enabled me to help Hurricane Katrina survivors rebuild their lives and communities through an internship at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, D.C. At the Lawyers' Committee I contributed to two areas of post-Katrina advocacy. One used traditional litigation tactics to preserve the current stock of affordable housing, particularly FEMA trailer parks and public housing complexes. The other used community development and transactional tools to encourage construction of new affordable housing units for low-income families.

The most rewarding part of my summer was being able to spend part of my time with our clients in Mississippi. Almost two years after Katrina, the situation has changed very little for low-income communities. Affordable housing is nearly impossible to come by. Insurance and government rebuilding funding goes to homeowners, not renters, while the cost of housing has skyrocketed. Residents of FEMA trailer parks – who live in cramped, unhealthy conditions – remain in near-constant danger of losing their trailers, without other options. And this is to say nothing of the ongoing health, employment, and discrimination challenges that survivors face.

For much of the summer I worked on behalf of FEMA trailer park residents threatened with eviction by the City of Pascagoula, Mississippi. I gathered facts and interviewed clients on the ground, did legal research on potential claims, and assisted the Lawyers' Committee and our local allies with filing a challenge in state court. Back in Washington, D.C., I brought our clients' situation to the attention of media outlets and our national allies.

Later in the summer I researched the FEMA appeals and recoupment processes on behalf of individual clients wishing to challenge adverse FEMA decisions. I also helped our nonprofit clients rebuild affordable housing by researching tax, economic development, and board management issues.

In a time when many organizations are turning away from the challenges facing Gulf Coast residents, Equal Justice America's funding of this work provides a desperately-needed source of optimism and assistance. Thank you so much for continuing to support these clients and other individuals with great need across our nation.

Best Regards,

Andrew Canter  
Stanford Law School Class of 2008