

August 31, 2011

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
1730 M Street NW, Suite 1010
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Ruben,

The purpose of this letter is to share my experience as a Summer Fellow at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau in Cambridge, MA. Supported by my Summer Fellowship, I provided free legal services to indigent clients in landlord-tenant disputes in the Boston-area. My clients primarily battled eviction and foreclosure, and engaged in litigation to both preserve and improve their housing situations.

As a student attorney at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, I was responsible for working directly with clients to achieve their legal goals. Specifically, my duties included in-person meetings and telephone conversations with clients, corresponding with opposing counsel, drafting, filing, and arguing motions in the Boston Housing Court and Somerville District Court, reviewing and requesting discovery, negotiating settlements, and even conducting the deposition of the opponent's key witness. In performing these responsibilities, I learned the complex system of private, public, and subsidized housing in Massachusetts, and the labyrinth of state and federal law that protects the rights of tenants and homeowners in this system.

I worked with minorities, the elderly, the young, men, women, parents, children, the disabled, U.S. citizens, and undocumented immigrants. Despite these differences, my clients uniformly sought justice. They may not have understood their legal rights, or the intricacies of the civil justice system established to protect these rights, but they understood the concept of justice.

Although I wish I could share all of my clients' stories, I understand this is not possible. Accordingly, I would like to share the story of Maria Rodriguez, a client of mine who has been

waiting for justice for many years.¹ Less than ten years ago, Ms. Rodriguez came to the United States with her three children. She settled in Boston, MA and began renting a two-bedroom unit. After three years of paying her rent on time, Ms. Rodriguez learned that her apartment building had gone into foreclosure and that the new owner had moved in court to evict Ms. Gomez and her three children. Ms. Rodriguez immediately fought the eviction and claimed damages for Sanitary Code violations and conditions of disrepair within her apartment. Two years later, the new owner claimed that the foreclosure had been technically defective, and therefore it could not be held liable for Ms. Rodriguez's claims. With the help of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, Ms. Rodriguez' claims are scheduled for trial this fall, and Ms. Rodriguez should finally receive the justice she seeks.

After assisting Ms. Rodriguez and my other clients, I leave the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau both professionally and personally enriched. I learned important legal skills and have confidence that I possess the necessary tools to capably represent clients upon graduation from law school. More importantly, however, I leave the Bureau inspired by my clients' resolve and toughness. I witnessed the truth of Martin Luther King Jr.'s words, "the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Ben Golden
Suffolk University

¹ I have changed my client's name and the specific facts of her case.