

**MIGUELINA MERCEDES**

August 17, 2015

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Building II, Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA23112

Re: Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for selecting me to be an Equal Justice America Summer Fellow. I went into my summer fellowship with New Haven Legal Assistance with high expectations. However, I can truly say that my summer fellowship experience exceeded those lofty expectations. Over the course of the summer, I played a major role in supporting my supervising attorneys as they assisted low-income clients with family law matters. By the end of my internship, I assumed significant responsibility and felt a strong sense of obligation to several clients whom I had the distinct pleasure of serving on a daily basis.

One such client, with whom I shared a particularly strong bond, was a mother of three who came to NHLA because she was seeking a divorce as a result of domestic violence suffered at the hands of her abusive husband. My client's goal was to retain sole custody of the kids and place them safely beyond the reach of their abusive father. As one would expect, the divorce proceedings were emotional affairs, wrought with the strain of a marriage gone bad and the pain and suffering of three young children.

As an intern, I assisted with this divorce case in several ways. I routinely performed legal research on custody and evidentiary issues and presented my findings to my superiors. My legal research memos often served as the foundation of briefs and formal memoranda that were submitted to the court. As things progressed, I was tasked with taking the first crack at drafting motions. One such motion was a motion to introduce a new witness whose name did not appear on the witness list. Because of concerns that divulging that witness' location of their practice would tip the husband off to the location of the children, our team – at the direction of our client – made the decision not to introduce the witness. However, because of an inadvertent mistake, the location of the children was disclosed on the eve of trial. Thus, we moved to introduce the new witness. While the law on our side was scant, I worked creatively to fashion an argument to allow the introduction of the witness and argued that this would not prejudice the father because it was the type of witness that he could have expected. After being edited by my supervising attorney, the motion to supplement the witness list was accepted and that witness' testimony proved crucial in realizing a favorable result for my client. Our client received full custody of her children, with no visitation rights being assigned to the father.

Helping this client through such a trying time in her life was a tremendously rewarding experience. However, it was an experience that I would have been unable to have if not for my Equal Justice Fellowship. The fellowship allowed me to make a real-world impact at a time in my life when the strain of student loans and financial obligations would have surely prevented me from doing so. Thank you again for your generosity and kindness.

Sincerely,

Miguelina Mercedes  
Boston College Law School, 2017