

August 20, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13450 East Boundary Road
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank you and Equal Justice America for supporting my work this summer at New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice (NOWCRJ). NOWCRJ was founded in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to organize and provide legal support to working class communities of New Orleans and Louisiana.

From my first day, walking up to the office of the Workers' Center in the Iberville-Tremé community, a stone throw away from the tourist thoroughfares of Canal Street, I knew this would be a summer to never forget.

Immediately I became immersed in providing legal support to combat a range of civil rights issues in New Orleans including the Orleans Parish Prison's pattern of discriminating and falsely imprisoning Latino day laborers in its jail, guestworkers in the rural South subjected to labor exploitation at the hands of their employer, and low income African-American workers and community members access to affordable housing and living wage employment.

Every assignment I was given reflected the exact reasons I decided to attend law school. From drafting a subpoena to a government agency to calculating back wages and analyzing the civil rights violations from a warrantless law enforcement raid, to giving community members the strength and peace of mind of having the support of an organization that truly cares for them. I attended community meetings where members gave testimony of the abuses they had suffered at the hands of law enforcement. I accompanied community members to immigration court, traffic court and the police station and assisted often limited English speakers navigate government systems. I drafted a legal memorandum and calculated the back wages under the Fair Labor Standards Act for a group of guestworkers subjected to labor exploitation in rural Louisiana.

Of particular importance, I spent many weeks providing legal assistance to a client who was detained in Orleans Parish Prison for more than 160 days without any charges. The individual was held in the jail based solely on an expired Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) hold, a request from ICE asking the jail to hold an individual for 48 hours. With the assistance of the Workers' Center, this individual was brave enough to come forward to fight for his civil rights and file a lawsuit challenging the jail's actions. I assisted the legal team in gathering evidence of his unlawful detention and the damaging effect that egregious prison conditions had on our client.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from such an innovative and holistic organization and I return to law school fired up with my experiences this summer. I am thankful to you and Equal Justice America for your work in making this possible.

Sincerely,

Bryan Lopez
J.D. Candidate, Class of 2015
University of California, Berkeley, School of Law