

August 6, 2012

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

Re: Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship Experience

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked with Public Counsel's Consumer Law/Debtor Assistance Project because of my interest in bankruptcy law. I had a variety of projects during the summer that were focused on assisting low-income debtors through the bankruptcy filing process, from advising a debtor whether or not to file, to reviewing his petition, to counseling a debtor before his reaffirmation hearing. Two days out of the week, I worked at the bankruptcy self-help desk in Downtown LA, providing direct client services by meeting with individuals who could not afford legal representation. The other three days, I worked at Public Counsel's main office to do client intake, legal research and writing, deposition preparation, and more. Public Counsel not only gave me the opportunity to gain practical legal skills and experience in bankruptcy law, but also provided me with further insight into the hardships facing the indigent. Without the services of a public interest law firm such as Public Counsel, many of the individuals we met with would have been unable to achieve a successful discharge.

Working with the Debtor Assistance Project has also opened my eyes to a wide range of issues impacting the bankruptcy community that need to be addressed. I have personally met with and spoken to debtors seeking legal help after being defrauded in egregious ways. The issues that have been brought to my attention specifically include bankruptcy petition preparer fraud and bankruptcy hijacking. These fraud issues are a common topic of discussion amongst bankruptcy judges, trustees, and attorneys, and there is no easy solution. I remember in particular a family that had paid a paralegal over \$1,100 to file a bankruptcy petition for them. After receiving the money, the paralegal then disappeared and could not be found. These individuals spoke little to no English and had no other money to pay somebody else to do the work. After coming to us for help, we placed them with a pro bono attorney through our placement program and they are now well on their way to a fresh start.

Thank you for providing me with an Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship which enabled me to work with the amazing attorneys and volunteers at Public Counsel. Without this support, I would have been unable to have the rewarding and worthwhile experience of serving as a law clerk for the Debtor Assistance Project. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Claire Wu
Loyola Law School – Los Angeles
Class of 2013

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August 8, 2012

VIA MAIL & EMAIL

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

Re: Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I manage Public Counsel's Debtor Assistance Project ("DAP"), which is the largest *pro bono* bankruptcy program in the county serving the needs of thousands of individuals and families every year. I had the great pleasure of supervising Claire Wu during the summer of 2012 and would like to thank Equal Justice America for making her fellowship with Public Counsel possible this past summer.

Public Counsel's DAP provides greatly needed *pro bono* legal services to over 4,000 individuals and families every year by:

- Providing counsel and advise at the Los Angeles Self Help Desk;
- Guiding *pro se* litigants in the Chapter 7 bankruptcy process at monthly Chapter 7 clinics;
- Advising *pro se* litigants regarding their rights at monthly reaffirmation hearings in the Los Angeles and Woodland Hills divisions;
- Representing consumer debtors in Chapter 7 *pro bono* cases; and
- Defending consumers against non-meritorious non-dischargeability complaints.

As a non-profit, the participation of *pro bono* attorneys and outstanding summer law clerks like Claire are critical components to the success of our program. Claire took on a variety of legal research projects and challenging client matters. This is not an easy task considering the volume of clients DAP


handles and the limited amount of time she often had in researching issues that came up during her clerkship. Her level of maturity and capacity to effectively handle time-sensitive projects was remarkable. More importantly, she maintained a positive attitude despite the volume of work she had during the summer.

Claire possesses a genuine interest in helping others and calmly handles the stress associated with assisting individuals who are often angry or depressed about their desperate financial situation. Due to her extraordinary work, Public Counsel's DAP was able to provide assistance to a greater number of individuals and families with pressing legal matters.

In addition, Claire combined a professional, task oriented style with a deep empathy and compassion for clients. Her commitment to social justice will make her an excellent attorney because she understands first-hand the challenges faced by *pro se* litigants in our legal system. This understanding is crucial given the large numbers of unrepresented litigants in both state and federal courts.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to supervise Claire this past summer. Fellowship opportunities offered by Equal Justice American assist us in being able to provide greater access to indigent individuals and families who desperately need legal assistance, guidance, and representation. I look forward to having the opportunity to host another Equal Justice Fellow next year.

Very truly yours,



Magdalena Reyes Bordeaux
Senior Staff Attorney
Consumer Law Project
Debtor Assistance Project