

August 31, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for making my summer internship experience possible. Because of the support from Equal Justice America, I was able to spend my summer in Oakland, CA working with the National Employment Law Project (NELP), a non-profit advocacy organization that strives to protect the employment rights of low-wage workers. In this devastating economy, communities of color are especially hard hit; African Americans and Latinos consistently have higher unemployment rates than their white counterparts. Given that people of color are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, the exponential increase in criminal background checks for employment has especially impacted communities of color. My work at NELP addressed this growing societal challenge through a combination of direct education and policy work.

As an intern with NELP, one of my responsibilities was to staff the workers' rights hotline that the office operated. Each week, we received several calls from workers from all over the United States who believed they were unfairly terminated or denied a job because of their criminal records. I was able to provide these callers with information regarding their rights under federal and consumer protection laws, contacts to local reentry and legal resources, and steps on how to file complaints with the EEOC. I also educated private employers about Title VII protections and the incentives for hiring people with criminal records during training workshops that NELP conducted in San Francisco and San Jose.

In addition to providing educational support, I had the opportunity to advocate for important policy changes in California. I spent considerable time this summer in Sacramento where I worked alongside attorneys and reentry advocates to push AB 1831—a bill that would have prevented city and county employers from considering an individual's criminal history until after the individual has been deemed “minimally qualified” for the position. In June, I provided testimony at an Oakland City Council hearing in support for a similar “ban-the-box” feature in the Oakland army base development project. And throughout the summer, I drafted memos on key legal issues affecting people with criminal records, and performed research and writing for policy round-up papers that NELP was preparing.

Through my experiences at NELP, I have come to recognize how critical it is that we restore fairness in our employment hiring processes. People with criminal records are labeled “criminals” for the remainder of their lives and are stigmatized in this society with the indelible “mark” of a criminal record. But to reduce recidivism and minimize reliance on our criminal

justice system, we must provide job opportunities—and hope—to people with arrest and conviction records. This summer, I was able to play an instrumental role in cultivating this hope, and I am truly grateful to Equal Justice America for making that happen.

Very sincerely yours,

Deep Kaur Jodhka  
J.D. Candidate 2013  
UC Berkeley, School of Law



National Employment  
Law Project

September 5, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Thank you for Equal Justice America's support for Deep Jodhka, who was our summer intern of 2012 in Oakland, CA working with my organization, the National Employment Law Project (NELP) on the Second Chance Labor Project.

Millions of Americans - one in four adults - have arrest or conviction records that often follow them throughout their lives. Most employers now conduct criminal background checks, potentially derailing qualified workers who are rebuilding their lives or who have inaccurate records or minor offenses. As a result, many employers are losing out on qualified workers. NELP has been a leader in the movement to restore fairness to the process of criminal background checks and reduce barriers to the employment of people with criminal records.

As an intern with NELP, Deep had several responsibilities. She staffed the workers' rights hotline, in which workers across the United States called because they have concerns about their employment rights as people being denied work because of their criminal records. She responded to workers by educating them about their employment rights and directing them to relevant services. Her approach to clients was always respectful and appropriate.

In addition, Deep, performed research and writing which delved into relevant legislative changes this past year. This timely research was used as a foundation for reports that will help advocates move forward fairer policies for people with criminal records.

Deep's research approach was methodical and thorough. I felt the utmost confidence that she found the relevant caselaw and applicable laws. She was conscientious and her care in thoroughly canvassing the body of research allowed me to feel comfortable with publishing her summaries as NELP documents. Her writing excluded tangential issues and remained clearly on point.

Deep also supported our work in advocating for policy changes at the state level. Her work in educating legislators and their staffers on AB 1831, a bill to remove the question about conviction histories from the initial job applications for city and county employment, was excellent. She absorbed the materials quickly, focused on the key points, and was able to present the information concisely. Over the course of her presentations, her arguments became even more cogent. Deep also

presented materials on bonding for workers (opportunities to acquire federal bonding insurance for workers) to a couple of audiences in public education settings. Her presentations were persuasive and clear.

Deep has demonstrated a high degree of maturity and good judgment. She was a pleasure to have in the office and the staff enjoyed her presence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MiR", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Michelle Natividad Rodriguez  
Staff Attorney