

August 31, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to thank Equal Justice America for my fellowship and to describe my experience this summer working for Bread for the City in Washington D.C. My internship at Bread for the City was the best internship I have ever had. I knew before this summer that I was interested in providing direct civil legal services to underserved populations, but my experience this summer really solidified my interest.

One of the reasons I enjoyed working at Bread for the City this summer was because of the “wrap-around” services the organization offers to clients. Bread for the City provides many services to low-income people in D.C. including a food pantry, social services, a medical clinic, and a clothing store. Our many other departments would often refer clients to the legal department when they heard the client was having an issue with which the legal clinic might be able to help.

One of the special things about the internship was the high volume of client interaction I was able to have. One day every week I was “on-call” at the office, which meant I answered the phone and met with anyone that walked in with a legal issue. I also helped our attorneys staff courthouse-based projects for child-support and eviction cases. Over the course of the summer I probably met and spoke with over a hundred clients. These client interactions were sometimes inspiring and enjoyable and at other times difficult and tragic.

There was one client I worked with as she sought assistance from Bread for the City because her landlord was seeking to evict her after she lost her job and fell behind on rent. After meeting with the client over the course of a couple weeks, the Bread for the City attorney was able to negotiate a move-out agreement with the landlord’s attorney and our client’s unpaid rent would be forgiven if she moved out in the next month. The outcome brought mixed emotions. Our client was grateful for the time we put into her case and the lengths we went to explore her options. I am confident we were able to get our client a more favorable deal than she would have had without an attorney. Yet our client entered into an agreement to move out of her home in just a few weeks. She didn’t know where she was going to move and she did not have the resources to pay for a new place. I was glad we were able to help her resolve the eviction suit, yet I realized our work often does not fix the systemic issues of poverty and the inadequate safety net in our society.

My experience this summer helped me build skills I know will be very valuable in my career. I started off the summer anxious about developing relationships with clients, but in just a few weeks I became more comfortable and confident than I had expected. I am grateful for the

support Equal Justice America was able to offer to help make my summer internship happen.
Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Benjamin Herskovitz
George Washington University Law School