

September 2, 2010

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

Dear Dan Ruben,

First, I would like to thank Equal Justice America for awarding me funding for an Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship. Without EJA's funding, I probably could not have afforded a summer legal internship at all. I learned an incredible amount this summer at Farmworker Justice in terms of substantive law and advocacy techniques, but more importantly, the importance of supporting a community that is so largely invisible to the American public.

My time at Farmworker Justice through the EJA fellowship opened my eyes. Early on in the summer, during a meeting concerning occupational safety and health with other farmworker advocates from across the country, I was surprised to learn of the disconnect between their efforts and this country's burgeoning food politics movement. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to accompany members of Central Virginia Legal Aid Society on an outreach trip in Virginia, where we met local farmworkers and witnessed their living conditions. Some of those farmworkers were employed by a farm that supplied some of the fruit used at a gelato shop where I worked part-time over the summer that prided itself on using local produce. This was a simple, direct connection that seems almost ridiculously obvious but I had never witnessed that connection firsthand before. It hit me then the sheer difficulty that farmworkers face in having the attention they deserve paid to them, for they are, perhaps more than any other community, so often out of sight and out of mind—even for someone like myself who thought she had some awareness of issues surrounding the American food system.

Most of the work I did over the summer was composed of research and writing, and most of that work made me aware of the mountains that farmworkers and their advocates must climb to even find initial information about services such as access to and eligibility for Medicaid. I examined efforts to incorporate Mexican labor law into causes of actions in U.S. court and the rights of H-2A and H-2B workers to be reimbursed for relocation costs that usually include huge recruitment fees that keep them in debt. I discovered the complex relationship we have with Mexico in terms of their own labor laws and our own agricultural trade practices. Throughout, I gained insight into America's history of migrant workers and the intertwined relationship between Mexico and the U.S. that was most formalized during the Bracero Program, another piece of a puzzle that seems so easily lost in this age of debates about immigration.

I learned a lot about immigration status and labor laws and their connection to other integral aspects of life such as housing and medical care. But more importantly, I learned the importance of remaining vigilant about who is so easily disregarded and why that is so. This

academic year, I am participating in a community and economic development clinic, and my experiences this summer have added fuel to the fire of why I applied to law school in the first place. As I said in my fellowship application, I ultimately want to help give voice to the voiceless. Just realizing that such voicelessness exists is not enough and I'm thankful that this fellowship gave me the opportunity to support some of the nation's most integral workers and the chance to learn about my own mindfulness and awareness of their issues.

Sincerely yours,

Janet Choi
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J.D. Candidate 2011