

08/30/2012

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

Dear Dan Ruben,

I am writing to thank you and Equal Justice America for supporting my fellowship with Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund in New York, NY this summer. My experience at Lambda Legal exposed me to a diverse range of issues impacting the LGBT community, and was an invaluable opportunity to develop the skills and perspective that I will need to progress in my legal career.

Lambda Legal is well-known for its marriage equality work; I was fortunate to work with Susan Sommer, Director of Constitutional Litigation, on the organization's California-based challenge to the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), *Golinski v. OPM*. DOMA impacts over 1000 federal benefits and programs, denying legally-married LGBT couples equal protection and recognition. I arrived at Lambda Legal on the heels of a federal court victory in California, and spent much the summer conducting preparatory research for the case's eventual appeal to the Supreme Court - DOJ did eventually petition for certiorari before judgment in the Ninth Circuit on July 3. Working on *Golinski* broadened my understanding of DOMA's far-reaching consequences, and I will be anxiously tracking the case as it moves through the Supreme Court next term.

My second major project took me into the realm of criminal justice. While *Lawrence v. Texas* held that sodomy laws were unconstitutional, pursuant to substantive due process protections under the Fourteenth Amendment, police officers continue to enforce unrepealed sodomy laws against LGBT individuals across the country. These arrests are patently unlawful and cause significant injury, yet courts have been willing to grant qualified immunity to enforcing officers when plaintiffs have sought a civil remedy. My project involved figuring out the precise boundaries of qualified immunity doctrine, so as to identify and categorize potential avenues of legal redress.

My final assignment arose from my work with Lambda Legal's Legal Help Desk. The Help Desk, manned primarily by legal interns over the summer, is a national toll-free hotline that is open to any individual facing LGBT-related legal issues. I processed approximately 25 help desk cases over the course of the summer, with issues ranging from family law to trans recognition to HIV confidentiality matters. The majority of cases involved creating intake files for review by our supervising attorneys, who would then provide general legal advice and, potentially, follow-up services. One of my help desk calls did lead to the provision of direct legal services; the caller was a municipal employee who was attempting to remedy a discriminatory workplace practice. This case allowed me to delve into the intersection of employment law and LGBT discrimination, which is an area that I continue to be deeply interested in.

Finally, Lambda Legal provided ongoing training throughout the summer in the form of brown bag lunches addressing a number of important issue areas. For example, we heard from the director of Lambda Legal's Youth in Out of Home Care Project; LGBT youth are overrepresented in foster care, the juvenile justice system, and homeless settings, and face significant obstacles in securing legal representation. Attorneys at Lambda Legal work directly with clients to address discrimination and deficiencies in these settings through both direct litigation and policy reform efforts. It was inspiring to meet attorneys working in such an important, challenging area of law and with such vulnerable clients.

My fellowship at Lambda Legal this summer has shaped the course of my legal career. Working at a

well-regarded civil rights organization in New York City offered me an incomparable setting to explore, network, and learn. The energy and commitment of Lambda Legal's staff, and of my fellow interns, deepened my passion for social justice and advocacy work. The opportunity to interact with clients and help desk callers on a daily basis made me even more sensitive to the needs and problems that lawyers are uniquely positioned to address.

Thank you so much for your support, and for all the vital legal work that you are enabling.

Sincerely,

Jason Z. Qu
Harvard Law School, Class of 2014