

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

Dear Dan Ruben:

I would like to thank you for providing me the opportunity to work for the Public Law Center this past summer. Without the funding from Equal Justice America I would not have been able to gain the valuable experience I received.

Working at the Public Law Center this past summer opened my eyes to the problems with our justice system. People are not aware of the vast number of the disadvantaged that are falling through the cracks of our justice system. People who are low income, non-English speakers, or just unfamiliar with the legal system are not getting the legal help that they require.

At the Public Law Center, I helped run the South East Asian Legal Outreach Project. In that clinic, we helped many monolingual Vietnamese people with legal issues such as housing, dissolution, immigration, child custody, guardianship and many more. I interviewed clients, mainly in Vietnamese, and conducted intakes at the Clinic and then presented the cases to the attorneys at the case presentation meetings.

I worked on several cases involving domestic violence which I felt were the most difficult. Hearing their stories and how they did not know that what was happening to them was wrong was beyond my imagination. Some of the victims stayed in the abusive relationship because they needed the spouse to help them with their immigration papers. They did not know that there are other ways for them to secure residency. We helped many of them seek protection under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and got them out of the abusive relationship.

I also witnessed many people being taken advantage of by credit card companies and telephone companies because they did not understand English. One of our clients paid three different affiliates of the credit card company for benefits she did not know existed. They sent her checks in her credit card statement, which she deposited because she thought it was a refund from the bank, not knowing that she had enrolled in the program. She paid membership fees for three years thinking that it was related charges to having a credit card. I also worked with several clients who were victims of "slamming and cramming" by their telephone company. The company would have telemarketers calling the home asking people if they wanted to enroll in a "better plan." The clients, being limited English speakers, did not know what they were enrolling in and did not understand the details of those plans. One client was charged over \$2000 for a month's phone bill.

Seeing this and knowing that this is happening has opened my eyes to a whole different world. I met many admirable attorneys who take time out of their busy schedules to volunteer at the Public Law Center. They took cases that they were not required to and represented those clients with as much vigor as if they were paying clients. Seeing how grateful the clients were for our help was very inspiring and I now realize the power of the volunteer. Thank you for your support and providing me with this valuable opportunity to grow as a person.

Sincerely,

Johnny Tran  
UCLA Class of 2007