

KENDRA D. SPEARMAN

August 31, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am very grateful for my summer at Lawndale Christian Legal Center (LCLC). I spent the summer assisting the lead and fellow attorney at LCLC provide low cost or free criminal defense to the youth of North Lawndale. I also co-coordinated LCLC's Mock Trial Program. My experience was very rewarding and an indelible part of my training to become a public interest lawyer.

One of the cases that I worked on involved a client that I will name John Doe for the purposes of confidentiality. John was neglected and abused as a child. His father died when he was very young and his mother was a drug addict. Alas, John Doe had special education needs as well mental and social development problems throughout his childhood. He also ran away as a young child. He has been in and out of numerous foster homes. He has also been in and out of the criminal justice system for crimes such as theft and drugs. John Doe was facing a very heavy prison sentence because of an Illinois Law that gives strict sentencing to repeat offenders. I was able to do the research and help draft a motion to help John fight this case. He was able to receive a much lesser sentence than what the prosecution sought. We were also able to find Joe Doe a home with a local youth pastor once he is released from prison. John Doe is just one of many examples of youth that come from broken homes of neglect, poverty, and or/abuse that need the second chances and alternative programs that LCLC offer.

Under the Mock Trial Program, I was able to work with about 15 North Lawndale Youth. The kids developed critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as public speaking skills. I was able to find volunteer judges and attorneys that came in to lecture the students. At the end of the summer, the students put on two fictional trials in front of the North Lawndale Community as well LCLC's Board of Directors. Some of the youth in this program were youth that were in the justice system and received legal services from LCLC in the past. This is direct evidence of how the rehabilitative measures that LCLC uses to complement legal services ensure that these youth do not re-enter the criminal justice system. Many of the youth were inspired to go to law school after their experience in the Mock Trial Program.

The proceeds from the Mock Trial Events were used to fund tuition for LCLC's college scholarship recipient, a student that faced a very heavy prison sentence a few years ago at the age of fifteen. Because of the work of LCLC and the Mock Trial Program this student started college last Monday with a full scholarship. He is the first in his family to attend college. I am very grateful that my work with LCLC was conducive to changing the course of this young man's life as well as many others. Because of my summer at LCLC, I am more adamant about my career as a civil rights lawyer.

With Appreciation,

Kendra D. Spearman
Chicago-Kent College of Law
JD Candidate, 2015