

August 30, 2015

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My fellowship at the King County Bar Association Housing Justice Project was a fulfilling summer experience in which I learned a good deal of substantive law, and was able to make a tangible positive impact in our client's cases.

My daily work during clinic hours included assisting with clinic set-up (booting up laptops, finding the volunteer attorney and legal assistant nametags, and searching for returning client files), doing client in-takes, shadowing volunteer attorneys, and helping the legal assistants close cases at the end of clinic hours. In addition to daily clinic tasks, I did a number of research projects and other work.

I began the summer by writing a research memo for Jessica Todd Long, the staff attorney and my supervisor, on the USDA rural housing program. She had mentioned to me that we had recently had a couple of clients come in who were involved in that program and she did not know much about it. My memo focused on the nuts and bolts of the program so that volunteer attorneys could get a quick overview if they had a client who belonged to that program. Early on in my internship I also researched substantial compliance for a volunteer attorney who was preparing to go into a show cause hearing, and then after clinic I expanded my research and created a substantial compliance legal resource folder on the HJP G-drive so that future volunteer attorneys could access it.

Over the course of the summer, I completed three public records requests for the managing attorney Rory O'Sullivan. After doing some preliminary research on a former Kent City Code provision, I made a records request. Before completing the second and third record requests I investigated whether, as a nonprofit entity, HJP could request that records be provided to us free of charge, and I wrote a memo for Rory addressing that issue. I also researched for Rory whether a sexual assault protection order on a tenant's record would impact that tenant's section 8 wait-list status. Because of a glitch in our interpreter services provider, I translated to and from Spanish for a number of clients. Having not spoken Spanish since my college graduation, I was initially very shaky but my confidence and competency grew as the summer progressed.

Within the first couple of weeks, it became clear to me that I was most passionate about the issues mobile home owners face. These clients' stories and problems affected me deeply because homeownership is a key component of the American dream, and homeownership is something that my family values greatly. It is through homeownership that people can improve their economic status, and improve their quality of life. It was frustrating to see how easily a few hundred dollars of debt or a few bags of garbage in someone's yard could be the difference between continuing to own a mobile home, and being evicted from it. (While

technically these clients are only being evicted from the land on which the mobile home sits, most mobile homes are not truly mobile and thus the homeowner's home is functionally taken from them).

One of our mobile home clients came in very early in my internship in mid-May, and I followed their case through to its (seeming) completion. I assisted a volunteer attorney go over their paperwork for them and create a to-do list for them to clarify what habitability and maintenance problems they needed to fix in order to be in compliance. Unfortunately, despite the family's tireless work on the mobile home, they received an unfiled summons and complaint several weeks later. The complaint was several pages long with multiple comply or vacate notices attached as addendums. With Jessica's supervision, I went through the complaint line by line with the family to see which allegations we would admit or deny. At this time I also interviewed them in detail about a disability in the family. After clinic that day I wrote a formal answer and a reasonable accommodation request letter. I searched Washington Court Records online daily for the remainder of the summer and the case was never filed and the clients never returned. To the best of our knowledge, they are still living in the home and their homeownership was preserved through our assistance. I was so worried about this family and their home, and I was very relieved when Jessica said at the end of July that I fixed it, and that if the park owners had not filed by now they probably never would.

Another mobile home case that came through our doors was an instance of predatory contract practices. A family came to us with a writ of restitution that they had received and they had no idea why they had received it. The family was comprised of monolingual Spanish speakers and they had signed a stipulation that allowed for an immediate writ of restitution if they failed to comply with any of its terms. The stipulation was not only substantively unconscionable and predatory in its terms, but additionally it was never translated for the family. They were simply told "Make these payments and you can stay." After the clients left the clinic on a Friday, I wrote a motion to stay the writ and vacate the judgment which we could present on Monday if the client so chose. On Monday we worked with one of the homeowners until long after clinic was closed, negotiating with the opposing party's attorney and discussing with the client whether or not they wanted to go into court to challenge the validity of the stipulation. Ultimately, the client left the clinic Monday afternoon without having made a decision, and she did not return on Tuesday. Because we have seen numerous clients who received and signed the exact same egregious stipulation, I decided to write a memo expanding on the unconscionability motion I wrote. The memo details various ways in which we could challenge one of these stipulations if a client comes to us who wants to go into court rather than negotiate.

Thank you for everything you do to make Equal Justice America Fellowships possible.

Lina Delmastro
University of Michigan



Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886

HOUSING JUSTICE PROJECT

401 Fourth Ave. N., Room 1281
Kent, WA 98032
206.205.8060 Phone
206.205.8059 Fax
www.kcba.org

August 28, 2015

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

RE: Lina Delmastro-Smith's Summer Internship

Dear Dan:

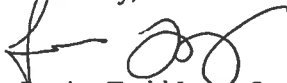
Lina Delmastro-Smith was an intern this summer at the Housing Justice Project which is a project of the King County Bar Association. We are a court-based eviction defense clinic located in Kent and Seattle, Washington. We have a small staff of five but hundreds of volunteer attorneys and paralegals who assist tenants each day. I was Lina's supervisor this summer.

Lina was a terrific intern and we are so grateful that the funding you provided enabled her to work with us this summer. She quickly learned the day-to-day operations of the clinic and was enormously helpful in keeping us running smoothly. She conducted intakes with new clients, opened and closed cases and assisted with filing. In addition she worked on several exciting projects this summer, including:

- 1) Becoming a resident expert on how to obtain public records. This included making public record's requests to several local municipalities on a variety of issues. One project she worked on involved researching the history of a fair housing ordinance that had been repealed.
- 2) Representing a public housing tenant in a grievance hearing. Lina took on a very difficult case and did an excellent job.
- 3) Working closely with several mobile home tenants to preserve their housing. These eviction cases are particularly tricky because the tenants are only renting the lot space, but own the mobile home (which is often not mobile). Most of these cases are monolingual Spanish speakers and Lina was the only member of our team who speaks Spanish. As a result she developed a close working relationship with those clients. This helped enormously with our ability to maintain relationships in that community.
- 4) Improving our legal resources in the clinic. Lina worked on two of our quick-reference binders including "Service of Process" and "Nuisance". These materials will be a benefit to our staff and volunteers for years to come.
- 5) Preparing a memorandum on how to overturn predatory stipulations.

As you can see Lina did an incredible amount of work this summer and we were delighted to have her. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work with her. Should you have any questions regarding Lina's internship with us please contact me at (206) 267-7027 or jessical@kcba.org.

Sincerely,



Jessica Todd Long, Staff Attorney
Housing Justice Project