

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

August 26, 2009

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I want to thank you and Equal Justice America for helping me spend my summer clerking for Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County. The clerkship was even more challenging and enriching than I had anticipated, and deepened my desire to dedicate my legal career to work that makes a positive impact on the lives of others.

Working in the Medical-Legal Community Partnership provided a fast-paced and frequently heart-wrenching glimpse into the array of problems facing the urban poor. Health clinic staff referred patients to us when they recognized that medical treatment alone would not ameliorate the health problems those patients were experiencing. I worked on cases where a legal fix could reach, at least partly, the underlying social problems causing the person's health to deteriorate. It was in this context that I worked with a survivor of domestic violence who needed work authorization to provide for her family, tenants whose substandard housing was endangering their children, and a mother who had become homeless because she could not care for her son with special needs and work at the same time.

After only ten short weeks, many of the cases I worked on are still pending. But I am proud to have played a part in moving each case in the right direction. In other cases, my clients finally achieved the resolution they needed. I helped to get families back on the public benefits to which they were entitled and to clear one client's name of a two-year-old invalid debt.

These successes buoyed my spirits in a legal landscape that could otherwise be emotionally overwhelming and intellectually frustrating. My clients, already struggling to maintain healthy, stable lives despite their poverty, faced problems that were frequently the result of failures in our social and legal systems. Perhaps a case worker in the welfare office made a mistake in data entry, knocking a family off of public benefits and issuing them notice in a language they did not read. Or a landlord failed to maintain her apartment building in habitable condition, betting that her tenants would be too fearful of retaliation or unaware of their rights to enforce the law.

More than one client remarked to me that it was only when she contacted our organization that she felt someone was really listening to her story and really cared about what happened to her. To me, this is the essence of why public interest organizations are so important, and support for students who want to enter this field is so crucial. I appreciate that Equal Justice America strives to make it more feasible for students to follow their hearts and work in the public interest. Thank you again.

Sincerely,



Maureen Hussain
Harvard Law School, Class of 2011