

August 30, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer, thanks in part to my funding from Equal Justice America, I had the opportunity to work in the Brooklyn Neighborhood Office of The Legal Aid Society. While I worked primarily on issues pertaining to the Housing Unit, I had the opportunity to work on a broad range of topics and in a variety of settings.

My experience greatly strengthened my legal research and writing skills. I worked closely with my supervising attorney, who gave me numerous assignments that included writing orders to show cause, motions to dismiss, and memorandums of law. I researched a variety of issues, including joinder, the effects of res judicata and collateral estoppel, remaining family member grievances, and the effect of mitigating circumstances on termination-of-tenancy proceedings. Additionally, my supervisor was extremely thorough in explaining my assignments and the relevant legal issues. He was available throughout the summer to answer my questions and provide regular feedback on my work.

Although I did not have any experience with housing law prior to the start of my internship at The Legal Aid Society, one of the aspects of the practice that I found extremely interesting was the number of forums in which housing matters are handled. For example, while a lot of the work takes place in housing court, I was also able to attend proceedings in federal court and state court, as well as administrative proceedings before the New York City Housing Authority. This exposure to such a wide variety of legal settings strengthened both my litigation skills as well as my understanding of the legal system more generally.

My favorite aspect of the internship involved working directly with clients. From what I have seen, it does not seem as though there are always abundant opportunities for law students or recent law school graduates to regularly communicate with clients. But at The Legal Aid Society, I had the opportunity to interact with clients in a variety of settings, such as during initial intake screenings, regular client meetings, hearings, and while conducting interviews in order to learn more about a client's case. None of my previous work experiences have involved such client interaction, and learning about each individual's circumstances really added a different dimension to my internship. Their stories made me more passionate about my assignments and more committed to public interest work in general.

My summer with The Legal Aid Society was extremely educational and rewarding. Thank you

again for providing this fellowship and for so generously supporting my efforts to work in the public interest field.

Sincerely,

Melissa Koven  
Cornell Law School  
Candidate for J.D., 2012