

Michael D. Turilli

September 4, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

First of all, I would like to thank you and Equal Justice America for providing me the funding to work as a Summer Clerk at Bet Tzedek Legal Services. I had an incredible experience at Bet Tzedek this summer. I was assigned to the Employment Rights Project at the Valley office of Bet Tzedek. Although I did have the opportunity to work on some cases involving eviction defense and SSI benefits, the principal focus of my work entailed representing low-wage workers in their wage and hour claims against employers. As part of the Employment Rights Project I was able to work together with some incredible people – including both the legal services attorneys who have dedicated their careers to serving the poor and workers who are willing to stand up against their employers for the sake of achieving justice.

My responsibilities as a clerk involved working on every step of wage and hour claims, from the initial intake at our workers' clinic to client representation at the California Labor Commissioner. My supervisors took the time to provide me thorough training and with their open-door policy were always willing to answer my many questions. As a result, I learned a tremendous amount about the substantive area of employment law. This knowledge will be of great help to me as I am very interested in continuing to work with the immigrant community in the area of employment law.

Not only did I learn about a new substantive area of the law in which I am very interested in continuing to practice, but my experience at Bet Tzedek also reinforced my desire to enter into a career in direct legal services. I came to law school already interested in direct legal services, having worked at an LSC-funded organization in Chicago. However, I was incredibly impressed by Bet Tzedek as an organization and by the dedicated and talented attorneys of the staff. With the flexibility provided by the organization and its lack of federal restrictions, the attorneys are able to problem-solve in a creative manner. This makes Bet Tzedek a wonderful environment in which to work.

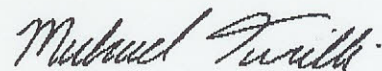
As a summer clerk most of my responsibilities involved working directly with the clients. I thoroughly enjoyed the client interaction and the satisfaction that comes from resolving their individual claims. In particular, one of the highlights of my summer was my participation in the Wednesday evening clinic for workers. All of the Employment Rights Project's clients come through this clinic. Over the course of the summer I had

the opportunity to interview all types of low-wage workers including day laborers, garment workers, hotel workers and janitors. Through the intake process I developed a strong connection with my clients and gained a profound exposure to the world and problems of the low-wage workforce. It was the interaction with the clients that I found to be the most memorable experience of the summer.

Although most of my work over the summer involved working on distinct parts of various ongoing cases, one case that I worked on was particularly memorable. The case involved an overtime wage claim for a bicycle mechanic who was paid a daily salary in cash, yet was required to work ten hours a day, at least six days a week. On my second day of work I was able to accompany a staff paralegal to the Meet and Confer at the Labor Commissioner. With the employer then unwilling to settle, the case was scheduled for hearing during my last week of work. I then had my first opportunity to represent a client at hearing. Unfortunate for me, but wonderful for the client, the case actually resolved itself before I was able to get very far into the hearing. After spending four hours negotiating with the employer, we reached a generous settlement for my client. Although I never was able to present the direct testimony that I worked so hard preparing all week, I could not have been more pleased with the settlement. Instead of a paper judgment against the employer, my client received all of his unpaid wages within a month.

My summer at Bet Tzedek was an incredible legal experience, both teaching me about a new substantive area of the law as well as reinforcing my desire to work in direct legal services. Thank you very much for providing me the opportunity to work with Bet Tzedek. With a doubt the experience will have a strong influence on my future career as a public interest lawyer.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Turilli
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