

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

August 28, 2013

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank you and your organization, Equal Justice America, for the very generous fellowship that you gave to me for the summer of 2013. My supervisor at East Bay Community Law Center, Clean Slate Practice Clinic was Clinic Director and Supervising Attorney Eliza Hersh. The focus of the Clean Slate Practice Clinic is to provide free legal services to low income people trying to clean up their Alameda County criminal records. This type of post conviction criminal record remedy is limited in California because in most instances a person's record is never truly expunged. The area where it was most helpful to most of our clients is for employment purposes, where a post conviction dismissal will allow the person to be able to truthfully state on most job applications that they have no convictions.

Over the summer, I had an opportunity to both work directly with clients, advocate for the clients by appearing in court, as well as advocate for clients outside of the courtroom. The majority of client contact was at the offsite clinics, which were held two days a week in Hayward and Oakland, as well as meeting with clients at our Berkeley office. Generally, meeting clients at clinic was to do intake and provide information to clients on how and where to obtain the items that we needed to assist them further, helping clients fill out paperwork so they could handle matters on their own when possible, and advising clients of their legal rights in regard to past convictions, mostly in the context of employment. I also was able to interview clients, and draft a number of declarations for filing with the court in support of motions to dismiss past convictions. I appeared in court a number of times for different clients, usually for post conviction dismissals, but also for a felony reduction and an actual innocence case. Finally, I was able to contact a number of government agencies and background check companies to have records that had been erroneously reported updated or corrected.


While there were a number of clients that I was able to assist a few in particular stand out to me. One man I appeared in court for, and shortly afterwards he was offered a job that he would not have been eligible for had his conviction not been dismissed. I have never actually met Mr. F, but have spent a significant amount of time on the phone with him. He had multiple convictions in Alameda County that were a number years old, but had since significantly turned his life around. He had moved out of the area, got married and had a daughter. Mr. F was also about to finish school, and was hoping to be placed in an apprenticeship program. The problem that he was encountering was that his felony conviction was limiting the number of employers that he could apply to with the hope of obtaining a placement. The judge granted our motion, reducing Mr. F's felony conviction to a misdemeanor, and dismissing the conviction. Following up with Mr. F after the motion was granted, he told me that he was hoping to interview with a

few potential employers for an apprenticeship. I was able to send him an electronic copy of the order to bring to an interview the next day.

Another client that I particularly enjoyed working with had been granted a Certificate of Rehabilitation through the assistance of our office a number of years before. Ms. J had been contacted by the governor's office about re-opening her pardon application that had been denied by the previous governor. I was assigned the task of assisting the client, and we updated everything that had happened since her pardon had been denied. The timeline for this was just a few weeks, but we were able to get everything filed on time, with new updated information and new photographs. What particularly struck me about this client was her gratitude for the assistance that we were providing.

The training provided by the Clean Slate Practice Clinic was excellent. The experience of the attorneys there, combined with the passion for their work, and their ability to zealously advocate for their client was not only impressive, but inspirational. Their generosity and patience was also noteworthy. I would strongly recommend them for future students who may be interested in this area of law.

Sincerely,



Omar Boyan

J.D. Candidate May, 2014

University of California

Hastings College of the Law



Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
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August 30, 2013

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I had the pleasure of supervising Omar Boyan this past summer at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC). Thanks to your organization's generous funding, Omar made an invaluable contribution to our organization.

I am the director of the Clean Slate Practice at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC), a legal clinic of Berkeley Law School (Boalt Hall). The Clean Slate Practice provides reentry legal services to low-income people with criminal records who are attempting to reenter society as full and productive members. Additionally, the Clean Slate Practice advances policy initiatives that aim to expand the civic participation and advance the rights of people who have had contact with the criminal justice system.

This past summer, Omar's work included client interviewing and counseling, legal research and writing, document drafting, and oral argument. Omar did in-depth legal work on individual cases and also worked with walk-in clients each week at our community-based clinics. Omar made numerous appearances in Alameda County Superior Court on clients' petitions for post-conviction records remedies.

Motivated by a strong sense of justice, Omar enthusiastically took on even the most difficult cases and challenging clients. He approached his work with dedication and served his clients very well. Although Omar was initially apprehensive about making court appearances, he ended up doing numerous hearings over the course of the summer. Omar prepared meticulously for these hearings, and I saw his oral advocacy skill- and comfort-level increase exponentially. I had a glimpse of the great criminal defense attorney he will become.

In one particularly challenging case, Omar drafted a brief setting forth complicated facts from numerous conflicting police reports and other sources. He also developed an innovative theory of the case, which I had not considered. While we are still awaiting a final decision in that case, just today in court I learned that the deputy district attorney withdrew his initial opposition and submitted the matter after reading the brief that Omar drafted.

I am deeply grateful to Equal Justice America for its support that allows wonderful interns like Omar to work at the East Bay Community Law Center. It was an important learning experience for Omar and a tremendous benefit to our clients whose lives were improved by Omar's work on their cases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eliza Hersh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eliza" and last name "Hersh" clearly distinguishable.

Eliza Hersh  
Director & Supervising Attorney  
Clean Slate Practice