

August 24, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thanks to the generous support of Equal Justice America, I was able to spend my summer working for the pilot year of the Street Law Program's Summer Enrichment Law Academy (SELA) at Rutgers University School of Law-Newark. SELA is a full-time, six-week summer program for incoming 10th grade students from at-risk and/or disadvantaged backgrounds in the Greater Newark area. Through participation in the program, students were exposed to an intense legal curriculum, sessions on setting and achieving goals, college preparation workshops, and a life skills series.

For the first month of the fellowship, I vigorously worked under the guidance of the program's director to finalize the schedule of the program and develop the curriculum. I was able to research a variety of cutting edge legal topics as they pertained to youth interactions with the legal system including Kyleigh's law, wilding and curfew laws, sexual offenses and Megan's Law, and the delinquency adjudication process. I used this research to create daily lesson plans to interactively teach the students the law. The experience that I gained in curriculum planning is beneficial to my future plans in academia.

It was exciting for me when the students arrived for their first day of the program, as I recognized my role to not only serve as an educator, but also as a role model for the students. At the same time, I was anxious and feared that perhaps I would not get the buy-in of my passion for their personal betterment and educational success. The first week of the program was overwhelming in that the students asked so many advanced and detailed questions about the law, many of which I did not know the answer to. Nonetheless, I appreciated being challenged by the students to conduct further research on the topics so that I could satiate their hunger for knowledge. For the first time I understood the role of the first year law school curriculum as my foundation to my future understanding of legal issues that I may encounter. And, it was fulfilling to be able to share some of my knowledge with the students.

Working to educate teenagers about their rights and laws that are relevant to them was a challenge. While it was inspiring to see their interest, it was disheartening to know that the interest was sparked by the misfortune of their families or friends who somehow became involved in the criminal justice system. A few of the students had even experienced the juvenile justice system first-hand, but did not understand their rights or the process until participating in this program. It was refreshing to see the direct impact of the program on the lives of the students and by the end of the program I realized that my fear was unfounded. As I read over students' papers detailing their experience and outlook on SELA,

I was relieved to see that students not only learned a lot about the law, but were able to relate this knowledge to themselves, their families, and their communities.

I genuinely appreciate Equal Justice America for selecting me as a Summer 2010 fellowship recipient and affording me the opportunity to work with SELA and lay the foundation for future years. As a result of this experience I am certain that I want to pursue a career in public service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Portia Allen-Kyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Portia Allen-Kyle

Candidate for J.D. Degree, 2013

Rutgers University School of Law-Newark