

Mr. Dan Ruben
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

September 19, 2013

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for allowing me to have an incredible experience in Public Interest this summer. I worked at Bet Tzedek Legal Services at the company's self-help conservatorship clinic, at the Los Angeles, Stanley Mosk Courthouse. I went to court almost every morning, met with prospective conservators and conservatees, had them fill out conservatorship questionnaires so that I could help them file their petition with the court. I also played a role helping clients with their hearings.

I applied for the job at Bet Tzedek with the words "conversant in Spanish," I found my language skills were of great use to me this summer, and by the end of it, I felt like I was almost fluent. There was one family in particular that I will always remember. A mother came in with her two daughters, her husband, and a son who had been diagnosed with cerebral palsy. They had been referenced to us by their regional center, and expressed that they had never done this before, had never been to the courthouse, and were having trouble bringing their son back and forth. There was a bit of a language barrier, but somehow when I really needed to, the words came to me. The mother and father could also not read or write. I sat down with them and went through each question on a ten page questionnaire, I then explained to them, that I would do everything I could do to get their petition ready that same day. Typically, after the family comes to the courthouse once, they have to come back for their petition. I did not want this family to have to go through that, so I told my supervisors that we needed a petition expedited, and finished it right there at the courthouse. I helped the mother and father sign the paperwork, and together we waited in line at the courthouse, served their son, and asked the staff for the soonest hearing date. Everything was done in one meeting at the courthouse, in what is called a Temporary Conservatorship. This conservatorship would be permanent, but was opened that way, so we could accomplish it quickly.

The family was living on government benefits, as both the mother and father and son were disabled. The mother told me how she had researched all the programs and developmental activities for her son, and I was moved by her commitment to her son, love and devotion to him. Here was a woman, disabled herself, helping her son reach heights that weren't expected of someone diagnosed with cerebral palsy. The father similarly, expressed such a deep commitment to his family. The daughters each took turns taking shifts from work to help with their families; they washed and bathed their brothers, and did all of the tasks that were too difficult for either of the parents to perform. They were all working together and displayed so much gratefulness towards me. I told them that I was the one who was grateful, because their family was simply amazing. One of the daughters, an 18 year old, told me she wanted to be an attorney someday. I told her that she would be a great one. I then explained to her the steps that it would take, and

gave her my email if she ever had any questions about the LSAT or application process, and beyond.

After this family was granted a conservatorship over their son, they all came and gave me a hug. They thanked me for helping them and for making the process simpler for their family. Meeting this family at the courthouse made me realize how apprehensive families can be about going to court and filing their own petitions, or approaching law students or lawyers for help. I felt humbled to be in the presence of a family who had overcome so much, and am still in deep inspiration.

Thank you for enabling me to have an incredible experience this summer.

Absolute Best Regards,

Raquel Nieves

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Loyola Law School, Class of 2015