

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I write to thank Equal Justice America for providing me with the resources to spend my summer committed to public interest work in the city that has become my home. Prior to attending law school, I lived in Washington, DC and gained both a deep love for the city, and an awareness of the difficulties many in the community suffer—many of which could be aided by quality legal counsel. It was quite clear to me that I wanted to return to the city and spend my summer serving those communities.

This summer I worked as an intern for the Washington Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs in Washington, DC. The organization provides direct legal services to underserved communities in DC, Virginia, and Maryland. Substantive practice areas include a Prisoners' Rights, Workers' Rights, Education, Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO), Police Misconduct, and Immigrant and Refugee Rights Projects. I worked on a variety of projects, but most were in the EEO, Police Misconduct, and Immigrant and Refugee Rights Projects.

In terms of responsibilities, my daily legal tasks included researching civil rights issues and writing memoranda for the Committees attorneys, drafting motions in pending litigation, including one for a major employment discrimination class action, and speaking with clients and potential clients about the legal issues their cases presented. Each week the attorneys in each practice group also took the time to teach us about different practice areas such as disability rights, overtime laws, and policing consent decrees. My eyes were opened to so much incredible work. But in the end, it was my interactions with the clients that were most meaningful to me. Two in particular stand out.

The first was a man who immigrated to the United States as a skilled beekeeper, but when his job was over he stayed in the country until his visa expired. He was unable to work until a fellow immigrant enlisted him to provide agricultural expertise and farm labor. Our client lived and worked on the farm for years, often with no access to running water or electricity. In the winter months when it was too cold to work on the farm, he worked in his employers' chain of restaurants. He was hardly paid a cent for his years of work. In fact, not only did he spend years uncompensated for this backbreaking labor, but he was also forced to pay for farm expenses using his family's own credit line. He has yet to be reimbursed for these extremely high costs. Instead, his employer held his immigration status over his head and continued to make empty promises about a "partnership" which would never materialize. While he and his wife could not afford the cost of private legal counsel, the Committee was able to help. I wrote a demand letter

on his behalf and the organization will likely soon begin litigation over the wages he is owed under the Fair Labor Standards Act and its state law complement.

The second is a juvenile who crossed the Mexican border fleeing violence in his home country but was immediately detained by Customs and Border Patrol. Over the summer I was able to work with his legal team to protest the unconstitutional conditions of his confinement. While most children his age are in school spending time with friends and family, he is alone and subject to abuse. I drafted a motion asking the court to protect his privacy, and researched any other issues the lawyers were willing to throw my way. I was grateful to have even a small part in this important work of ensuring a better future for him.

Additionally, the substantive experience I received while at the Washington Lawyers' Committee was unparalleled. Interns were given important projects and responsibilities that made it clear we were important and valuable member of the Committee's work. For example, on my first day my supervisor allowed me to draft a complaint for a woman who had been paid less than her male co-workers for years despite having far more experience and superior reviews. From there the responsibility never let up and I felt a deep sense of connection and commitment to our clients.

My experience at the Washington Lawyer's Committee cemented my commitment to public interest law. Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity.

Best,

Britany Riley
Stanford Law School
Class of 2019