

September 6, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank you for the opportunity that Equal Justice America gave me this summer to work for Legal Services for Prisoners with Children in San Francisco, California. My experience working with LSPC was immensely transforming, and I am thankful that EJA funding enabled me to take advantage of this opportunity.

Going into my summer, I had no expectation of what it would be like to work on prisoners' rights issues; I only knew that I wanted to combine my experience in family law with a growing curiosity in prisons, prisoners, and California's prison crisis. My expectations in this respect were completely fulfilled almost immediately. Right off the bat, I began working on an investigation of a mother/child prison facility in San Diego. LSPC had received reports that the facility's staff was neglecting critical medical needs of the children in the facility and ignoring mothers' attempts to have their children taken to the hospital. As an intern, I was able to learn how groups like LSPC garnered media attention around the issue (a NY Times article came out about the dire conditions at the facility the second month I was there), to observe first-hand how advocates lobbied for administrative and legislative change at the state level, and to learn in a very real way how our prison system impacts not only those who have been convicted of crimes, but also their children and families.

I also had completely (and positively) surprising experiences at LSPC. I have developed a philosophy that social justice involves empowering those who are powerless, not merely providing services to a client. LSPC's model of advocacy—which gives prominent voice to formerly incarcerated people who work as LSPC's organizers, coordinators, and directors—embodies this philosophy. Because of this, I was able to work with people who had not only experienced the brutality and despair of the prison system, but who were so passionate about changing the system that they would commit their lives to the work. I was inspired particularly by those with whom I worked who had lived the problem that we were trying to address.

Finally, I found LSPC to be a warm, welcoming place in which my desire to pursue social justice through law was valued and nurtured. While I came to

LSPC with a commitment to work in the public interest after law school, LSPC staff broadened my conception of what it means to do the work and live the work. Most of the staff were passionate about issues that ranged outside of the prisoners' rights realm and shared those passions with the interns. A few staff saw social justice and environmental justice as part of the same project and influenced my own view of environmental activism. Quite a number of the staff were racial justice advocates (of course, this was not far off the beaten path as prisons disproportionately affect people of color) and shared stories of their activism and work. I found LSPC to be a place that tried to develop not just my facility in the prisoners' rights realm, but wanted to expose me to a holistic view of social justice.

My summer, as you can see, was quite a wonderful experience. Again, thank you for making the experience financially possible for me. As a third year law student, it only gets financially and mentally more difficult to maintain a commitment to public interest. EJA's work, I know, is essential to the success of many young public interest lawyers like me.

Sincerely,

Sarah Webb
Boalt Hall, UC Berkeley School of Law
JD Candidate, 2008