

October 1, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

On the third day of my summer internship in the Housing Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services, I was ecstatic that what I was looking forward to most about my summer internship was already happening: fast-paced court room drama. We went to court in the morning for a status hearing with the intent to file an injunction the next day to prevent our client's Section 8 voucher from being terminated. Since our client is disabled and unable to work, a termination of her Section 8 benefits would be tantamount to her being evicted from her home and possibly becoming homeless. When the judge, however, informed us that the court would be closed the next day, my supervising attorney rushed to finish writing the injunction while I rushed to put together the relevant evidence to file with the court that afternoon. My supervising attorney won the motion and I was thrilled.

It wasn't until our client came into the office the next week that I recognized the importance of what we had done. She was crying and upset, even after we told her that her housing benefits would remain intact. Her housing was just one of her many concerns: her anxiety attacks, her disability leading to her inability to work, being alienated from her family members, and having her disability benefits terminated. Our client, like so many others we serve, is a person faced with so many desperate issues. During our meeting, she continued crying—until, that is, I began to talk to her not just as a client but also as a person. In filling out some paperwork, she mentioned that she grew up in the Midwest, on a farm with lots of animals. I wondered what that was like, having grown up in a large suburb. She asked about my family, and whether my parents were proud that I was in law school. We continued through the paperwork with much more ease, having developed a rapport. I soon connected with her not only on a professional level, but a personal one as well. This summer I learned valuable lessons: most importantly that lawyering is more than wearing nice suits, showing up to hearings, and speaking dispassionately before a judge, but faithfully and effectively advocating for those that need our help—which ultimately requires a deep understanding of our clients as people. I want to thank Equal Justice America for giving me the opportunity to learn these valuable lessons.

Sincerely,

Saroj Tharisayi  
Cornell Law School 2011