

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice for America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia (Legal Aid). My experience at Legal Aid turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences I have had in law school and convinced me that I want to pursue a career in providing civil legal services for low-income people. I want to thank Equal Justice America for supporting me in both this opportunity and in my pursuit of a career in public interest law.

Legal Aid provides direct client services to low-income residents of the District of Columbia in a number of practice areas, including public benefits, consumer law, family law, and housing. This summer I worked in the Housing and Landlord/Tenant Section, where I focused primarily on cases involving eviction, housing code violations, and foreclosure. Throughout the summer, in addition to various legal research and writing projects, I was able to meet with clients, conduct housing inspections, attend meetings at the DC Housing Authority with other housing service providers, observe landlord-tenant court and the housing conditions calendar at DC Superior Court, and attend tenant association meetings.

The most meaningful moments of my summer involved working to make clients' lives better in comprehensive ways outside of the courtroom. One of my supervising attorney's clients that I assisted has severe mental illness and physical disabilities that are causing him to be unable to keep his apartment in compliance with the sanitary conditions provision in his lease. I assisted my supervising attorney in this client's case

by inspecting the apartment and taking photos, by researching and calling maid services that might be able to help the client keep his apartment clean, by calling supportive health service providers on his behalf, and by subpoenaing and collecting medical records. None of these tasks were necessarily “legal,” but all were an essential part of advocacy on behalf of the client.

I also found my interactions with clients themselves to be particularly rewarding and worthwhile experiences. I was able to shadow intake, where an attorney conducts an initial interview of potential clients and finds out basic facts of the case in order to decide whether Legal Aid will take the case. I also was able to shadow the “attorney of the day,” who picks up same-day cases in landlord-tenant court. There, I interviewed one woman who was in tears about her eviction case. The landlord was attempting to evict her based on a previous settlement agreement, which the landlord alleged she had violated. She was inconsolable, mostly because she did not want to tell her son, who was coming home from college for the summer. I interviewed her about the facts of the case and was able to calm her down before the attorney talked to her about the legal issues of her case. Ultimately, the attorney was able to get the case dismissed.

My experience working at Legal Aid this summer made clear to me that my passion lies in direct client services. I will be participating in the Neighborhood Law and Policy Clinic at GW this fall where I will be representing clients with similar issues as those of clients at Legal Aid. I hope to continue this kind of work post-graduation from law school. I want to thank Equal Justice America again for its support.

Sincerely,

Sonia Weil



Legal Aid Society
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

80TH ANNIVERSARY

August 22, 2012

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 this letter on behalf of Sonia Weil, who was an intern with the housing unit of Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia during the summer of 2012. I understand that Sonia received funding from Equal Justice America to support her internship with us this summer, and that you would like a letter evaluating her internship experience.

Currently, we have eleven attorneys in the housing unit, and although I was Sonia's direct supervisor, our interns work with all of our attorneys on a variety of projects. Interns assist with research and writing, often drafting answers, motions and discovery requests. They also help with litigation preparation, interviewing witnesses, serving subpoenas, preparing evidence lists and marking exhibits, and providing other support as needed to clients and attorneys.

Housing unit interns also assist with housing inspections, visiting our clients' homes, photographing housing code violations, drafting reports and sometimes acting as witnesses in evidentiary hearings. This summer, Sonia and our other legal intern worked on a "court watch" program in which they observed and documented the practices and procedures of a specific court. The results of their observations have been enormously helpful in our court reform efforts.

Sonia completed all of the tasks outlined above with great enthusiasm and skill. She was always eager to take on additional tasks, and completed her work in a competent and timely manner. She was a delight to work with, and demonstrated a deep commitment to working with clients living in poverty. Overall, we believe Sonia was extremely successful as an intern with Legal Aid.

If you have any other questions about Sonia's time with Legal Aid, please feel free to contact me directly. I can be reached by phone at (202) 386-6672 or email at rrintelmann@legalaiddc.org.

Thank you,



Rachel A. Rintelmann