

August 30, 2008

Dan Ruben, Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
Building II, Suite 204  
13540 E. Boundary Rd.  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to express my sincere thanks to Equal Justice America for funding my summer at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau. This was an invaluable experience and will most certainly aid me in my future endeavors. My work at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau has provided me with a better understanding of the practice of law in general, and an in depth knowledge of what it means to be a public interest lawyer.

This summer, I worked as a student attorney representing indigent clients in the Greater Boston area. Pursuant to Massachusetts SJC Rule 3:30, I was able to appear in civil proceedings under the general supervision of a licensed attorney. Throughout the summer I prepared pleadings, wrote memoranda, took depositions, argued motions, counseled clients and prepared trials.

As I had interest in and experience with both real estate law and landlord-tenant law, I was assigned to the housing division of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau. I represented tenants in a wide variety of landlord-tenant disputes, but a majority of my clients were tenants who were being evicted after a bank had acquired title to their apartment building at a post-foreclosure auction.

My work with post-foreclosure evictions was particularly rewarding because Harvard Legal Aid's representation and community outreach has contributed to tangible changes in the banks' practices regarding these post-foreclosure properties. When the "foreclosure crisis" first struck Boston, the banks refused to take responsibility for these properties. They evicted all of the tenants, boarded up the buildings and left them to sit vacant. These vacant buildings rapidly fell into disrepair, attracted squatters and became a haven for criminal activity. Entire neighborhoods were being destroyed and the Boston housing shortage was becoming more pronounced. The tenants who fought the eviction proceedings and remained in the building were forced to endure extreme hardships. The banks often did not assign a manager to the properties, so the tenants had no one to call to facilitate repairs. We had several clients who lived in their apartments for months without heat, water or electricity. Others had to endure severe roach and rodent infestations, sewer back ups and extensive mold problems. After negotiating large settlements for these clients, the banks began to understand that they are entirely

responsible for the upkeep of the buildings. The banks have also been reconsidering their belief that evicting the tenants of the foreclosed properties is a necessary business practice. In fact, the banks have recently dismissed their claims for possession in many post-foreclosure cases, thereby allowing the tenants to remain in their homes. Although the “foreclosure crisis” is far from over, and its after effects are sure to be felt for years to come, progress is being made in Boston. Organizations like Harvard Legal Aid Bureau have had a large role in initiating this progress.

My experiences at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau have taught me a great deal about myself, my interests and the practice of law. I have been able to cultivate my talents and develop my skills. Most importantly, I have determined that I am a perfect match for public interest work. Upon graduation, I hope to begin work either as a Sacks Fellow at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau or as a legal services attorney. I am extremely grateful to Equal Justice America for allowing me to pursue my interests this summer, and I thank the organization for assisting me in embarking on my career in public interest law.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Little  
The University of Michigan Law School  
Juris Doctor expected May 2009