

August 17, 2017

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

With the support from Equal Justice America, I had an amazing experience this summer at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area. I worked in the racial justice project on a combination of direct services and impact work. Through this work, I saw how the two forms of advocacy can work together—with clients' experiences directly informing what needs to change, and how that change should be implemented.

Through the Lawyers' Committee's Second Chance Legal Clinic, I assisted clients facing barriers to employment, housing, and occupational licenses as a result of their criminal convictions. Under the supervision of an attorney, I conducted initial interviews with clients, reviewed their criminal records, advised them of potential remedies, and assisted in drafting declarations. I also attended community-based clinics, where we coordinated with pro bono attorneys, who often ended up representing the clients in connection with their criminal records. In speaking with clients and reading their records, I saw how cycles of drug addiction and poverty put people in a revolving door in and out of the criminal justice system. I was struck by how an administrative print-out of a person's criminal history could reveal so much about what is wrong with our carceral state and the lack of rehabilitative services available, when it showed 20 convictions over 10 years for possession of narcotics or paraphernalia, public intoxication, and petty larceny. The clients were appreciative of the opportunity to share their stories with someone and get help in cleaning up their record, since their criminal histories were not reflective of the lives that they now lead.

Additionally, I worked with clients whose driver's licenses had been suspended due to unpaid traffic tickets. New laws in California require courts to review a person's ability to pay a traffic fine, even once it's gone to collections, and removes the authority to suspend someone's license for failing to pay a traffic fine. I spoke with clients with suspended licenses and worked on putting together petitions to the traffic court to evaluate their ability to pay and to reinstate their licenses. These cases were very compelling because they are clear examples of how our systems make it very expensive to be poor. For some of my clients, after having their licenses suspended when they couldn't pay a fine, they were arrested for driving with a suspended license, which can be a misdemeanor and comes with additional monetary penalties. For a long time, there was nothing that could be done short of helping clients arrange to pay their fees. Now, with the new laws, the clients were very grateful that we could really advocate for them to get their licenses back and manage their traffic debt.

I learned so much from working at the Lawyers' Committee and from the clients themselves. I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to do this work.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Emily Friedman
UC Berkeley, School of Law
Class of 2018



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Dan Ruben

Executive Director, Equal Justice America

Via email: katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

August 28, 2017

Re: Emily Friedman Letter of Support

Dear Dan Ruben,

We are pleased to write this letter to support Emily Friedman's Equal Justice America summer fellowship funding.

From May 30, 2017 through August 10, 2017, Emily worked as a law clerk within the Racial Justice program at Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. Emily came to Lawyers' Committee with experience working directly with clients, which showed in the care and dedication with which she approached our Second Chance Legal Clinic. Not only did Emily handle phone intakes for our Second Chance clients, she also gathered documents from the clients, determined if they were eligible for any criminal record remedies, and attended our twice monthly legal clinics to meet with clients and pro bono attorneys.

Emily also researched complex issues related to potential litigation about discriminatory policing practices. Her analysis of overbreadth and vagueness in local ordinances was invaluable and helped us take immediate steps toward curtailing overpolicing in the Bay Area. Emily also grappled with difficult First Amendment jurisprudence, which helped our legal team to assess the strength of our various legal claims. All of her analyses were careful, nuanced, and demonstrated her facility with legal research.

Finally, Emily supported Lawyers' Committee's legislative efforts by traveling to the state capitol in Sacramento and voicing the organization's support and co-sponsorship of several bills. Emily also participated in coalition meetings in which a number of organizations strategized about the language of our bills, the likely effects of each bill on our clients, and how we will ensure successful implementation after bill passage. At Lawyers' Committee, we believe that our direct services should inform our impact work, so it was especially useful to have Emily working on solutions to problems that exist statewide.

Emily was a fantastic addition to our team this summer. If you have any questions about her contributions, please feel free to contact either of her supervisors below.

Warmly,

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