

Dan Ruben, Executive Director, Equal Justice America
October 1st, 2016

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you so much for the opportunity that I was provided by Equal Justice America this summer through their fellowship program. This summer I worked at the East Bay Community Law Center in their Community Economic Justice Clinic. This clinic focuses on both large-scale policy advocacy and direct service to clients in the fields of Affordable Housing and Economic Opportunity in the East Bay area.

For my work on Affordable Housing policy I spent a lot of time meeting with community members and hearing their stories and experiences with housing issues in the East Bay. I heard from people who were on the brink of being put on the street, as their fixed income could not keep up with the drastic rent increases. I heard from people who come from families that have lived in Berkeley for 5 generations but are unable to imagine that this opportunity would extend to the upcoming generation. I heard from community organizers and leaders trying to figure out what is the best way to fix the situation that they see is befalling their community. With the input of these community members and leaders, I drafted some background on possible local regulatory tools and programs that might help. If implemented, we believe that these programs would be able to help ensure that low-income communities of color are not pushed out of the East Bay by the forces of gentrification.

For my work on Community Economic Justice we focused on supporting worker-owned businesses. I worked with many communities that rely on an alternative economic model to support themselves including undocumented women and young people of color. I helped draft documents for their businesses and did a workshop on the basics of how to start a business that was targeted towards people of color and specifically people who had served time in jail or prison. The clients we served all had incredible stories and a passion for being part of a new model of economic justice. Many had stories of feeling exploited in past traditional business models that had inspired them to explore the worker-owned business model in order to promote a more equitable distribution of capital for the benefit of themselves and their community.

Working with these community members inspired me beyond I had thought possible at the beginning of the summer. Seeing so many people inspired to help each other through their community organizing or with their alternative business models made me feel like I have a duty as a human being to be a part of a community that is doing good. After this summer I am committed to a career in public interest, whereas at the beginning of the summer I was not sure what my path would be after law school. Thank you Equal Justice America for this opportunity and eye-opening experience.

Sincerely,



David Gomez

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