

October 19, 2015

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you so very much for the wonderful opportunity to help renters in San Francisco know their rights and fight for them. My internship at the Eviction Defense Collaborative changed my life, as well as the lives of people who came to us for help, with no resources to hire an attorney, who were facing homelessness and having an eviction on their record.

The clients we served were all renters in living within San Francisco city limits, because of San Francisco's very specific laws regarding landlord/tenant issues. Sometimes, people would come to us from other parts of California, and we would try to point them in the right direction regarding state law, and organizations that could help them. Most of the people I encountered were low-income individuals, and many were far below the poverty line, although we had some clients of higher income as well. What I saw was that some people actually broke the law, and I could see how a landlord would want to evict them, but the majority of situations I experienced were simply landlords not following the law out of greed, and seeing how far people would challenge it. Once challenged, the tenants would win, and we at the Eviction Defense Collaborative were able to prevent homelessness for the most vulnerable residents of our city.

Even if a person breaks the law, I truly believe that every person deserves equal representation, and it is a sad state of our justice system that most people simply cannot afford attorneys. I must admit, some of the clients I saw were very difficult to work with. I came into the internship with a high degree of naiveté, and left with more sympathy for landlords than I expected. However, the majority of cases I saw still elicited more sympathy for tenants than landlords.

The clients we served were mothers, fathers, single people, couples, and groups of friends all living together. We saw many people with severe mental illnesses that were usually the cause of their lease or law violations. In most cases, we were able to work with the court system and the landlords to find a plan to have people address their mental health and keep their housing, with no further violations. We were victorious in helping families with children to keep their children in stable living environments. We were also able to help unmarried seniors after their partners passed away, when landlords claimed that they were not original tenants and therefore would try to raise their rent to market rate. On a fixed income, market rate rent would mean death for these seniors.

While the EDC helped individuals and families, I think it is also important to consider that the Eviction Defense Collaborative helped the community of San Francisco on a larger scale. First, the staff at the EDC prevented homelessness in San Francisco, which costs the taxpayers money and creates an unpleasant environment for people walking down the street dodging human feces and smelling human urine. Secondly, the EDC worked with tenant's rights groups to further protection for low-income individuals and

help create input for needs of our community. Lastly, the EDC reported to the city of San Francisco a detailed statistical analysis of all of the evictions occurring every day, which led to the Board of Supervisors drafting and passing unanimously further protections to renters by amending the San Francisco Rent Ordinance just a few weeks ago.

Mr. Ruben, I am so fortunate to have been given the opportunity to be a part of this amazing organization. Without the help of Equal Justice America, I would have greatly suffered through this internship, due to finances. I was broke, eating energy bars every day at lunch, and had no proper clothing to wear when interviewing clients. Public interest law is so important, and I thank you and everyone else at Equal Justice America for giving me the opportunity to serve my community in my favorite city, where I plan on staying for the rest of my life.

Sincerely,  
Jehmima Carril  
UC Hastings College of the Law  
J.D. Candidate, 2017