



KIAH DEBOLT

August 28, 2017


Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Dan Ruben:

Thank you again for funding my work at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid this summer. It has been a rewarding experience, and has helped me confirm my own commitment to legal aid work as a career. As an intern on TRLA's Environmental Justice program, I worked on a variety of EJ and Fair Housing projects with attorneys throughout the TRLA service area. At the beginning of my internship, my work focused on preparations for a Clean Water Act citizen suit. The law suit addressed the concerns of Texas coastal citizens whose nearby waterbodies have been polluted by the dumping of a neighboring industrial company. As an intern, I helped to research the various factors used to determine penalties in a citizen suit of this nature, as well as potential settlement proposals. Once the suit was filed, I helped TRLA attorneys by researching the possible realm of discovery available in a CWA citizen suit. Working on this case gave me a peek into the realm of legal aid litigation, and I really enjoyed working on it. This suit is still ongoing, but our clients hope that it will end that dumping as soon as possible.

In another part of the service area, I worked with TRLA attorneys who represent a group of public housing residents opposed to the future sale of their housing development. I researched the applicable rules regarding the sale or transfer of Public Housing Authority (PHA) properties, focusing on any restrictions for the use of proceeds. I then looked into how the PHA's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program would impact the future use of this specific property. This included considering what options our clients would have in terms of relocation assistance during conversion, as well as future housing options.

My last major project at TRLA involved general fair housing research. Many cities within the TRLA service area will soon be completing their first Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH). The AFH is part of a new HUD rule that requires municipalities and other entities



to assess, and then address, fair housing issues in their communities. Doing so will enable these entities to meet the obligation set out for them in the Fair Housing Act: to affirmatively furthering fair housing. As an intern, I researched successful city AFHs, as well as how cities within the TRLA service area planned to conduct their plans. Additionally, I looked into how the new administration, and its various goals and plans, may affect the AFH process in the future.

I am currently in the process of developing a fair housing fellowship for after I graduate, and my work at TRLA this summer has helped me gain important skills in the fair housing realm. This experience will allow me to develop an effective fellowship, and pursue my passion of helping those in need. Again, I would like to thank you for helping me to do this work during my summer.

Sincerely,

Kiah DeBolt

University of Texas School of Law
Class of 2018