

August 27, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to have an Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship. This past summer, I worked as a family law intern at Lone Star Legal Aid in Houston. Having taken family law courses, I thought I knew what to expect. I knew the documents that needed to be drafted for family law cases and how to draft them, but I didn't fully understand how it would affect me to deal with real clients. Dealing with people has never really been a difficulty for me, but nothing could have prepared me to deal with the clients that Lone Star Legal Aid services.

The family law unit at Lone Star Legal Aid mainly serves victims of domestic violence. It is these types of clients who are in most need for our legal services as most of them cannot afford an attorney but need legal help to get out of their situations. During my internship, I was able to do quite a few client interviews. During these interviews, . Listening to so many heart breaking stories was difficult, but being able to help both women and men who were put in difficult situations by their spouses was very rewarding.

Almost immediately upon the start of my internship, I was thrown into working on cases. One of the first cases I worked on was a divorce for a woman who was a victim of extreme domestic violence. The facts of the case shook me down to my core, I could not fathom how someone could hurt someone the way she had been hurt. My client had been hit with such force that one of her eyes popped out of its socket during the last episode of violence during her marriage. When I was able to meet with her and hear her story, I couldn't help but cry at what her and her children had gone through due to her spouse. Using the Texas provision that allows for waiver of the 60-day waiting period for a divorce due to domestic violence resulting in a protective order, I was able to see the entire case be finalized during the summer months. With the help of my supervising attorney, I drafted all of the documents needed to file the divorce and serve the husband. Then I drafted the documents needed to finalize the divorce so it could be done as soon as the law allowed us to finalize the case. With the use of a 3L bar card and under the supervision of a licensed attorney, I was able to do the prove-up for this divorce in court. This was the first prove up that I did this summer and I was so thankful that my client understood that I was only a student and that she agreed to let me practice my skills with her case. The moment the judge said the divorce was granted, my client started to cry. While I was able to make my

first step in the practice of law, at the same time I was helping her close the chapter in a 20-year marriage that ended badly. It was a bittersweet moment.

My fellowship this summer taught me a majority of the legal skills that I will need to practice family and probate law. One of the most significant documents that I learned to draft was a Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO). Our firm does not usually do these, but in order to help a client who had been in a terrible situation we agreed to do it. After extensive research, I was able to learn how to draft this document. The QDRO has not yet been finished, as it is a long process for completing one but knowing how to do it is a valuable skill I learned this summer. I also had the opportunity to research the probating of a will. It was an amazing learning experience to do this, it was even more amazing to go into court and find that our research had been correct and the documents we had prepared were the ones we needed to get our client the inheritance that she deserved.

This fellowship gave me the opportunity to help people who really needed legal services. I truly felt like I was doing God's work. For this reason, I have decided to continue on as an intern at Lone Star Legal Aid to continue the work I was doing this summer.

Very Respectfully,

Nora Stephanie Morales

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