

August 27, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

The Equal Justice America (EJA) Fellowship clarified my vision. About a year ago, I finished my Peace Corps service in Peru. Reflections of two years of grassroots work championing disability rights flooded my thoughts as I boarded the plane heading back to the United States. Only two days after I landed in the U.S., I embraced UCLA Law as my new challenge. Soon eminent professors and textbooks replaced where the poor and marginalized had informed my notions of equality and justice. As such, my first year of law school represented a struggle between the lawyer I thought I could be and the framework of the legal institution presented to me. Often, I felt disheartened.

This summer revitalized me. For ten weeks, I worked with the Disability Rights Legal Center (DRLC) in downtown Los Angeles as a law clerk. My summer job introduced me to how lawyers can use the law to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Within the DRLC, I worked with the Education Advocacy Program (EAP), which provides direct services and impact litigation, and with intake counseling. These experiences allowed me to contribute to important impact litigation by writing legal memoranda and parts of legal briefs; present at a parent special education academy; and converse with various individuals with disabilities about their lives. These clients fueled my work.

During one of my conversations, I spoke with someone whom I'll call Pam. Pam explained to me not only her dire situation but informed me about her civil rights. She correctly told me about the laws that protect her from discrimination for being an individual who uses a wheelchair. Pam then cried out about the injustice she confronts by incompliant entities that do not provide appropriate accessibility, which limits her mobility and access to the most basic of services. Her voice rose with frustration, and I understood this conversation came after an accumulation of having spent day in and day out meeting the obstacles that society creates and the lack of institutional support to make changes. Change can be slow. Pam

understood this as well. But, there was something else missing: someone who would listen to her. I often lamented that the sheer number of people who call cannot all be served by DRLC. Pam represents hundreds of callers DRLC receives a month. Through DRLC, I helped address many of Pam's issues directly by sending her the information she needed, but in a larger sense, by working on litigation that may result in enjoining various institutions from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. As I ended the conversation with Pam she said, "You are the first person whom I've called who's showed me any compassion."

As the summer comes to an end, I return to UCLA Law reinvigorated, motivated, and with a new positive perspective of what lawyers can accomplish in the disability community. I reflect on all the stories I heard of various individuals with disabilities in the United States and recognize that the need for access, advocacy, and legal representation is great. More importantly, I see my own role as a legal advocate with more clarity. Equal Justice America (EJA) empowers law students to not only make positive changes in communities through the fellowship, but to achieve this sense of place in the legal community. I owe you my most sincere thanks, Mr. Ruben, for enabling me grow as an advocate for an oft-neglected population. And, I am honored to be part of the EJA community that works toward meeting the needs of those without representation.

Sincerely yours,

Katherine A. Perez
UCLA School of Law
J.D. Candidate, 2013



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September 19, 2011

August 31, 2011

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

Re: Katherine Perez

Dear Mr. Ruben,

It is my pleasure to write this letter on behalf of Katherine Perez to support her fellowship with Equal Justice America. I have come to know Ms. Perez as a hard-working, intelligent, and talented law student who has a strong commitment to social justice through the law.

By way of introduction, the Disability Rights Legal Center is one of the nation's oldest cross-disability civil right's organizations. Our mission is to promote the rights of people with disabilities and the public interest in and awareness of those rights by providing legal and related services. The Center provides assistance through litigation, education, and advocacy.

As the Senior Staff Attorney for the Disability Rights Legal Center's Education Advocacy Project, I supervised Ms. Perez during her 2011 Summer Clerkship with us. As a result, I have a good sense of her productivity, work habits, and interpersonal skills, all of which are exceptional. In fact, I was continually impressed with Ms. Perez's enthusiasm and work product.

Over the course of the summer, Ms. Perez handled a variety of difficult assignments, many of which were extremely time sensitive due to overlapping court deadlines. Ms. Perez completed her work quickly, and her written product was thorough and well-written. For example, Ms. Perez was assigned a research memo about the factors that a court considers in a motion to reduce the bond amount in a preliminary injunction. The answer involved both factual and legal research, and

Disability Rights Legal Center
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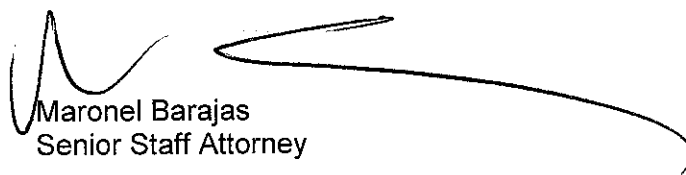
Ms. Perez's report was detailed and useful. Ms. Perez's findings were used to draft both the motion to reduce the bond amount and our client's declaration. What is more, Ms. Perez participated in drafting both.

In addition to the litigation work Ms. Perez performed, Ms. Perez also interviewed callers through our intake counseling services, delivered an excellent mock oral argument, and presented at our Special Education Self Advocacy Academy. The Academy is a one-day, hands-on course for parents and others about Special Education advocacy. As a presenter, Ms. Perez informed the community about their rights to special education. Her ability to convey the information was outstanding. In other words, in her addition to her clear, straightforward and accurate written work, Ms. Perez is able to communicate effectively across different environments.

In sum, I believe Ms. Perez has performed her duties admirably and have no hesitation in recommending her to any organization. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGAL CENTER



Maronel Barajas
Senior Staff Attorney

cc: Katherine Perez