

August 14, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to thank you for selecting me to receive an Equal Justice America Fellowship for the Summer of 2015 and to tell you more my experience this summer at the Legal Aid Society Prisoners' Rights Project (PRP).

At PRP, I worked under the supervision of staff attorney Milton Zelermyer on disability rights of New York State prisoners and medical parole. As part of PRP's monitoring effort in *Clarkson v. Coughlin*, I corresponded with state inmates with hearing disabilities on accommodations they requested from state facilities, such as Shake Awake alarm clocks and repairs to TTY devices (text telephone). I also advocated on behalf of these inmates to New York Department of Correction and Community Supervision officials. As part of PRP's monitoring effort in *Medina, et al. v. Fischer, et al.*, I interviewed inmates at Sullivan Correctional Facility regarding their vision disabilities and accommodations provided at the facility.

In order to provide inmates in state prison with information on a recent amendment to the law on medical parole, I drafted a medical parole guide. With Milton's help, I wrote an informative guide that clarified the process for requesting medical parole and the requirements for a grant of medical parole.

Under the supervision of Sarah Kerr and Dale Wilker, I interviewed New York City detainees to learn more about their access to mental health and medical care. I interacted with inmates in person, by phone and by mail. After learning about New York City Department of Corrections non-compliance with Board of Corrections Minimum Standards, I advocated on behalf of inmates to ensure they were receiving adequate care, living in sanitary conditions, receiving accommodations for disabilities, and being protected from officers or other inmates who threatened their safety. Altogether, I wrote close to 100 advocacy letters and emails on behalf of inmates.

Most memorably, I advocated on a behalf of an inmate held in solitary confinement. On his behalf, I wrote to jail officials to ask that officials from the Department of Correction meet with him to explain his assignment of solitary confinement. I corresponded with officials at the Department of Correction to ensure that his punishment of punitive segregation was not in violation of Board of Corrections policies. During his time in solitary confinement, a corrections officer allegedly punched this client in the face. Because of a blood disorder, my client bled on his clothes and in his cell. I requested that the Investigations Division of the Department of Corrections take pictures of his clothing and cell. I also requested that he be seen by medical staff to have his injury documented. I helped the client file a notice of claim against the city for this assault. Although he was not released from solitary confinement and the DOC still refused to provide more information on why he was being held in solitary confinement, my client was grateful to have an advocate working on his behalf.

The interviewing, advocacy and writing skills I have honed under the supervision of Milton, Sarah and Dale will be invaluable as I continue to train to be a prisoners' rights attorney. I learned how to control an interview, while at the same time empathizing and relating to the client. I learned to be direct in my advocacy requests to prison officials. As I go forward with law school and my career in

prisoners' rights, the skills I learned and the connections I made at PRP will serve as a strong base on which to build. I am truly grateful to Equal Justice America for providing me with the support I needed to complete this internship and begin my career as a passionate advocate for prisoners.

Please let me know if you have any further questions about my experience.

Sincerely,

**Rekha Arulanantham**