

Alisa R. Whitfield

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Zarghona was a single mother supporting three children when she came to the East Bay Community Law Center with a paycheck missing one-quarter of her wages for that pay period. A creditor she had never even heard of had garnished her wages, and she didn't have enough money to meet her basic expenses. We represented her at a hearing where the judge decided that she needed all of her wages to support her family, and she won a claim of exemption. Now she is fighting the creditor's case in court with the help of the East Bay Community Law Center. I said goodbye to Zarghona at the end of the summer. She was very tired because she was fasting for Ramadan, but she gave me a very enthusiastic hug.

The connections with individual clients are what make the East Bay Community Law Center special. Every week I met with at least three new clients, while continuing to follow up with the clients I had seen before. Every day I saw new legal issues. Often, these issues were new to the staff attorneys as well! Our clinic was intentionally very low barrier, and so any person seeking any kind of legal help was welcomed.

The many different legal issues gave me the opportunity to do research in many different areas. Over the summer I learned more about legal research than I did in an entire year of my legal practice class in law school. I had the chance to write motions that were filed with the Court for the first time, which was very exciting for me.

I really appreciated the opportunity to work with the East Bay Community Law Center this summer, thanks to Equal Justice America. Keep up the amazing work supporting public interest law students.

Sincerely,

Alisa Whitfield
University of Michigan Law '13



August 8, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I had the pleasure of supervising Alisa Whitfield while she was a summer intern at the East Bay Community Law Center's Neighborhood Justice Clinic ("NJC"). NJC provides direct legal assistance to low-income individuals in Alameda County. Our clinics focus on the areas of the homelessness criminalization, debt collection defense and small claims litigation. Community members obtain assistance by meeting with law student advocates at one of several walk-in and appointment-based legal clinics. Student advocates perform follow-up legal work during their non-clinic hours. Alisa spent approximately seven or more hours per week meeting with clients one-on-one and served over thirty clients during the course of the summer.

NJC clients are often mentally ill and always in crisis. I was particularly impressed by Alisa's calm and professional demeanor with her clients and her ability to put clients at ease. She manages to strike that perfect balance where she both connects with her clients and remains their professional counsel. She received nothing but glowing reviews on the client surveys they fill out at the end of their appointments.

Alisa's ability to multi-task and follow-up with her clients was exceptional. She worked extremely efficiently, and consistently requested more work from the supervising attorneys. When during the course of a client's representation, we encountered unforeseen legal issues, Alisa volunteered to do the research without being asked. She also developed templates for future students' use. Her legal writing is cogent and her ability to present the facts of each case in a compelling way distinguished her from her peers this summer.

On a personal level, Alisa was always a cheerful, positive presence in the office, and the lead organizer of social events and office bonding. Other students relied on her for assistance and a first edit of their work. I appreciated her energy and ability to create office camaraderie. She works well with everyone.



The East Bay Community Law Center is grateful to Equal Justice America for providing Alisa the funding necessary to allow her to work on behalf of our clients. Our clinic model is based on student advocacy under the supervision of attorneys. We would be unable to work on behalf of the community without these students and the assistance provided by organizations such as Equal Justice America. We really appreciate Alisa's great work with our clients, and we loved getting to know her.

Sincerely,

Allison Anderman

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