

August 28, 2016

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

From: Nora Kenty

### **Letter Summarizing My Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship**

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Due to the generosity of Equal Justice America, I was able to contribute my services as a certified legal intern to the Housing Unit of Community Legal Services, Inc. of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I am very grateful for this opportunity. Philadelphia is one of the poorest and most segregated cities in the United States, so I appreciated the ability to be able to return to the area from where I grew up and provide legal services for low-income and homeless individuals.

I conducted intake during each of the ten weeks of my internship, and met with a total of forty-nine clients. For clients who required only information or referrals, I gave them printed handouts and checklists of what actions they could take to remedy their situations. Most clients, however, required legal representation or significant follow-up. When I met a client who was facing eviction in Philadelphia Landlord-Tenant Court, I would explain the legal process and evaluate the client for possible representation. I assisted in representing several clients in eviction proceedings, and I successfully negotiated a continuance for a client in Section 8 subsidized housing facing eviction due to a high water bill from a broken toilet. That client was severely disabled and used an oxygen tank at all times, so being forced to move would have been very difficult for her. She and her daughter were relieved that they could stay an extra two months while her landlord considered the documents I presented.

A majority of the clients I assisted were African American women, a demographic which makes up two thirds of the Housing Unit's intakes. Many of these women were the sole caretakers of children, so an eviction affected more than just a single client. In addition to evictions pursued through the court system, I encountered some clients whose landlords resorted to "constructive evictions" meant to force the client to leave by shutting off utilities or refusing to make fundamental repairs to the dwelling. I counseled many clients on the Philadelphia law that prohibits evictions without a court order, and empowered clients to cite the law to the police if their landlord put a padlock on the door or, as happened in some cases, removed the door to a dwelling altogether.

One of the clients I worked with for many weeks over the course of the summer had her lights shut off, prompting a discovery by the electric company that the landlord had hooked up the electricity for most of the building to her meter. When the electric company charged the entire account to the landlord, he retaliated by refusing to make

repairs to the apartment, leading to the porch roof falling down. The client and her daughter were consistently worried about the rest of the roof caving in while they were sleeping. The client reported the violations to the city, prompting the landlord to bring an eviction case against her. The client was distraught, but I assured her that she was on the right side of the law and helped her fill out the paperwork to get an Emergency Transfer Voucher from Section 8. I explained her situation to Section 8 officials and submitted evidence that the apartment had failed inspections for Public Housing Quality Standards, and she received her voucher! That client is now able to move to a new apartment in time for her daughter to start her senior year of high school. This client and I spoke on the phone almost every day throughout the summer, and we established an amicable relationship while simultaneously achieving legal success.

Engaging on a daily basis with clients from poor communities in dire situations was disturbing, and yet provided strong motivation for me. I became acutely aware of how much my work mattered; often making the difference between a client and her children staying in their home, or going to a shelter. When I served as a dedicated legal advocate in the courtroom, unfair and unpayable judgments could be avoided. My clients were impressive and resilient people who were often quite capable of self-advocating, but they simply needed the appropriate tools and resources. When I armed clients with information, such as a ledger I drew up illustrating exactly what they owed or a law that could protect them, they tenaciously protected themselves and their families. It was fulfilling to be able to empower people who are oppressed and marginalized. I learned a great deal from each client and each case, and researching clients' issues could be just as illuminating for me as it was for them.

In addition to providing individual clients with representation and legal assistance, CLS afforded me the opportunity to engage in community outreach and legislative advocacy. I participated in an expungement clinic at Ardella's House in North Philadelphia to evaluate clients with criminal records for possible redaction of arrests and non-convictions that would help them get housing and employment. I also assisted the Housing Unit's managing attorney with research on the proposed Pennsylvania Fair Chance at Housing law that aims to protect people against discrimination based on their criminal histories. Taking part in supporting a law to help large numbers of potential clients was extremely rewarding, and was a motivational complement to the direct representation component of my internship.

Through this Summer Fellowship funded by Equal Justice America, I gained valuable legal skills while supporting individuals in need. I was able to help Community Legal Services of Philadelphia further its mission of providing legal assistance to low-income tenants in Philadelphia, and it is my hope that I made an impact on tenants' rights in the future.

Sincerely,

Nora Kenty  
NYU School of Law, Class of 2017



August 25, 2016

Equal Justice of America

RE: Evaluation of Nora Kenty

Dear Sir or Madam,

Nora Kenty worked for ten weeks as a Legal Intern at Community Legal Services, during the summer of 2016. I supervised her work. CLS is a legal aid program providing free legal services to people of low income. We ask our legal interns to function, in many ways, as staff attorneys, albeit with a great deal more supervision. The interns develop their own case load: conducting the initial client interview; identifying the issues; developing facts, evidence and case plans; advising the client; providing legal research; handling all follow-up contacts with the client; drafting pleadings and correspondence; negotiating on behalf of the client; representing the client in judicial and administrative.

Ms. Kenty is among the best students that I have supervised I want to add some emphasis here. I am a "Supervising Attorney" at CLS because, as part of my responsibilities, I supervise young attorneys. I have been a legal services lawyer for 39 years. In that role and over the years, I have supervised hundreds of law students. For several of those years I also functioned as an Associate Professor for the clinical program at Villanova Law School, during which time I supervised many more law students. The fact that Ms. Kenty stood out from this large crowd of bright minds is significant.

Ms. Kenty not only had all of the tools, but she actively used them. She has a keen analytical ability. She quickly learned the appropriate legal standards. She was excellent at spotting issues, developing evidence and facts, and arriving at effective case plans. She provided high quality legal research. Her writing skills, as evidenced by his clear correspondence, are excellent. She was also very organized.

Looking at a different dimension, Ms. Kenty has terrific interpersonal skills. She treated her clients with respect and with professional demeanor. They certainly had many good things to say about her. She did an excellent job in preparing her clients for both the good news and the bad news. She worked well with her clients, focusing them on getting the necessary evidence. This demonstrates a high degree of skill when you consider that we work with a client population that is faced with an overwhelming number of, quite frankly, overwhelming problems.

Similarly, Ms. Kenty demonstrated the same abilities with her co-workers: treating them with respect; helping out whenever called upon; taking on extra work; putting in extra hours. She made good use of her supervisor, fully analyzing problems in advance and asking thoughtful questions.

In terms of mechanics and productivity Ms. Kenty also excelled. She did not have to be reminded about deadlines nor did she not miss any. Among those students that I have supervised, she is among the very few students who accomplished everything that I asked—a fact that impressed me on at least two levels. First, there always seems to be a few things that we never seem to get around to doing. Second, in order to encourage growth, I intentionally provide students with at least a few tasks that are

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beyond their immediate ability. She was punctual in attendance and in keeping appointments. She handled nearly 50 cases during her internship.

There is no doubt in my mind that Ms. Kenty will be an exceptional and highly motivated public interest attorney and a highly effective advocate. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you wish any further information.

Yours truly,

Michael Donahue  
Supervising Attorney