

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
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Midlothian, VA 23112

August 31, 2013

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you very much for the Equal Justice America Fellowship grant that helped make possible my summer interning for Sanctuary For Families. Having the opportunity to help survivors of domestic violence obtain orders of protection against their abusers, custody of their children, and financial support for their families cemented my desire to pursue direct legal services as a career choice.

I had taken both a family law class and domestic violence seminar in school, but knowing how much discretion family court judges and referees have in theory is very different than seeing the process in action. I helped facilitate the Court Room Advocates project once a week and saw the women we were helping get questioned closely by exacting judges and encouraged by sympathetic judges. Often having someone at their side to speak for them seemed to be an influential if not deciding factor in the victim gaining a temporary order of protection against an intimate partner. I am more impressed than ever by the pressing need for legal representation for economically disadvantaged women of color, who already have so many odds stacked against them. Two clients particularly stand out in my memory.

One client, Ms. R, had undergone years of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse by her husband, with whom she had two children. After Ms. R left her husband, she allowed him to visit the children often, as he had never abused them. However, after one such visit he refused to return their son and prevented Ms. R from having any contact with the son. Her husband bribed the children with gifts and coached them to make false accusations of abuse against their mother. After a difficult legal battle, Ms. R obtained full custody of her children and her husband was granted only supervised visitation in light of the fact that he orchestrated the alienation of the children from their mother. Ms. R's husband was now seeking very expansive unsupervised visitation that was premature given that he presented no evidence of reform. Now to draft Ms. R's motion to dismiss her husband's petition to modify the order of custody, I navigated through six hundred pages of trial transcripts to piece together a coherent narrative that presented the seriousness of his past abuse and manipulation. I wove into this narrative, relevant caselaw and excerpts from forensic reports that demonstrated that the children's father was an unfit parent who had shown little regard for his children's wellbeing. This case is still pending, but I was grateful for the opportunity to be of some assistance in Ms. R's courageous efforts to keep her children safe.

Ms. B, another client, was seeking child support from the father of her son. She had been a successful high fashion stylist whose work was featured in nationally syndicated magazines

and the music videos of famous artists. During the course of her pregnancy, her partner became very physically abusive. Simultaneously, the economic recession limited her job opportunities. I helped her file a petition for the violation of a child support order against her son's father, who was a very successful real estate agent but who claimed that he did not have the assets to pay anything beyond a meager sum far below the contribution ordered by the family court. I compiled information on the history of Ms. B's ex-partner's sales as evidence that he was being disingenuous about his financial situation. In addition, I interviewed Ms. B to apply for a financial assistance grant and enroll in an economic empowerment program. This way, she would be able to pay her rent, ensuring her from impending eviction and could update her computer knowledge to promote her services on the web.

I am very grateful for EJA's support of both aiding domestic violence victims' access to legal services and of my opportunity to help these women their stories. This is the type of work I hope to have the privilege of building a legal career around.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rosie Wang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R" and "W".

Rosie Wang