

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

I began my internship with no prior knowledge of elder law or elder care. After a summer working full time in the elder unit at GBLS, I gained a substantial understanding of landlord tenant law, elder abuse, and the troubles many senior citizens face as they grow older. Many of our clients suffered from physical and mental disabilities, and were on the verge of getting evicted. The first client I spoke to was a veteran threatened with a discharge from a soldier's home. I was able to have him come in for an interview which I lead, and speak with him about the issue. After finding some common ground, he opened up and told me stories about his experience abroad serving the U.S Military. This type of interaction was common throughout my internship; talking to indigent elders, finding common ground with them, and ultimately understanding them and their situation. I appreciated these conversations because it helped teach me how to communicate with people from all walks of life, which is a tantamount skill in the legal profession.

After interviewing clients, and doing case research for a short period, I was able to write a motion for a client's case. Finally a chance to get my feet wet. I wrote a motion for a preliminary injunction that required a landlord to let an elderly woman—who was stranded at a nursing home—into her apartment. The woman was sent to the nursing home for a 3-week treatment, and while she was gone, her landlord leased her apartment to another tenant. The situation was dire because the woman was on the verge of getting discharged from the nursing home, with no home to return to. Sadly, without our help, she could have been thrown out onto the street. I wrote that motion and 2 others that day, just before the attorney filed it in court, the landlord's lawyer called to settle the case.

In the midst of the summer, I was able to travel to client's homes to interview them and evaluate their situation. Talk about eye-opening, being able to go to an indigent client's home was one of the things I can never forget about this internship. I traveled to Dorchester, Revere, Forest Hills, to speak with client's and further my understanding of people that I sometimes don't understand, which is the true value of the experience. Many of the clients just want to feel respected and dignified. Talking with them in person and at their homes reminded why I am here doing this work. I am thankful that I had the chance to make people feel dignified and cared about.

Overall, I enjoyed the constant client interaction throughout this internship. It gave me the chance to sharpen my communication skills, and helped me discover my strengths and weaknesses when talking to clients. I aspire to be a trial attorney, and comforting clients, gaining their trust, are much needed skills I were able to work on. When I wasn't speaking with clients, I mostly did case research, and some outreach with other GBLS interns. I actually wrote an article on tenant's rights that was published in Boston Seniority Magazine, which was a great honor.

Throughout the summer, I attended meetings, met new people and friends. It was a great networking opportunity, and I am thankful for the friendships I have made, the experience I gained, and the understanding I've developed about the indigent population. This was a truly worthwhile experience that I could not have had without funding from EJA and my University.

Best Regards,
Connor Gilbert
Suffolk University Law School 17'