

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

From the moment I left Harrisburg until now there is a resounding quote that has been replaying in my mind from an attorney who spoke during training we received through the Fellowship program. He quite succinctly told us four things we should keep in our minds and hearts during our internships and our careers as attorneys: Be Kind, Be Professional, Be Patient and most importantly Be Human. Not only did these four qualities echo in my mind during my internship at Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania in Norristown but were more applicable than I could have ever imagined.

There is one thing that has remained static from the first time the thought of becoming a lawyer crossed my mind: I want to and will be committed to public service. Every public interest opportunity that has presented itself to me has widened my perspective of public service and how truly important it is. This internship has solidified my interest and has honed in me a deep respect and admiration for those who serve others in any capacity.

Before beginning my internship, I had a very limited impression of Norristown, Pennsylvania and an even narrower idea of what I would be exposed to in what I thought of as a pseudo-suburb of Philadelphia. The individuals that flow into the Norristown office present the staff and attorneys with every issue imaginable. The amount of clients that depend on Legal Aid for multiple issues is quite startling. Many clients have used Legal Aid for numerous issues that have spanned months. I have been exposed to issues relating to custody, protection from abuse, juvenile issues, bankruptcy, section 8 housing, unemployment compensation and landlord tenant issues. I have been able to learn about areas of the law that I never imagined could affect so many individuals in such a small community. The attorneys in the office are some of the most proficient, experienced and efficient lawyers I have ever come into contact with. But the characteristic that I admired the most and found most beneficial to the clients was their ability to relate: to be kind, patient and human to another individual during a time that they needed it the most.

Besides the exposure to various types of law I truly believe the one skill I honed during this summer was the ability to communicate effectively with clients and learn how to adjust my frame of reference to be able to relate to individuals from all walks of life. This is something that I realized is absolutely crucial when practicing law with a sect of individuals that have not received the benefit that many other individuals in society have. After conducting many interviews with clients and representing them in different matters I realized how incredibly easy it is to get frustrated, to blame and to get to the mental point where it just seems useless to continue giving the same advice. But when those thoughts began to run through my head I remember the quote from training and the advice from the lawyers in the office: Be human. The clients have been exposed to situations and have lived lives that I could never imagine. I learned that my job was to ensure that they were represented and, in at least their present situation, given the best opportunity to succeed and better themselves.

The attorneys and Legal Aid in Norristown were praised during every bar association luncheon by numerous judges and generally by the community. I am so proud to have been able to work at such a remarkable institution with attorneys who have sacrificed themselves to serve the community. I know positively that as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated during his Drum Major Instinct Speech, “I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so that we can make of this old world a new world.”

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