

November 6, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My fellowship at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law was a remarkable experience, made financially possible because of my Equal Justice America grant. I moved to Washington, D.C. for the summer to work at the Lawyers' Committee, specifically with their Educational Opportunities Project. Educational equity and its related legal issues are my primary professional interest, so the opportunity to work here was really exciting for me.

My summer included many highlights. My three favorite projects included working on complex litigation against the state of Maryland for its failure to operate its higher education system in compliance with Title VI and the Fourteenth Amendment; developing a parental advocacy program; and working on Justice Sotomayor's confirmation hearings. Thanks to these great projects and my overall experience, I am still externing with the Lawyers' Committee from Chicago.

The Maryland litigation has been a fantastic opportunity, and I am still heavily involved in the case. The Lawyers' Committee represents a class of minority students and alumni affiliated with Maryland's historically black colleges and universities. Our lawsuit addresses current educational policies traceable back to Maryland's prior *de jure* segregated system of higher education, and asks that true equality and educational equity be instilled in the state's system of higher education. Working on this case has taught me a lot about complex civil rights issues in the educational context. It has also allowed me to work in-depth with representatives from the historically black universities, and hear their stories.

Another wonderful project was the development of a parental advocacy program. I worked on creating training manuals on special education laws for attorneys and parents. These manuals will be used by volunteer attorneys to train parents on their children's rights in school. Our program specifically addresses special education and discipline laws, areas we felt were the most abused and where parents had the most confusion. This project is still in development, as the Lawyers' Committee searches for funding. Regardless, it was a wonderful experience to write the training materials, and I look forward to seeing the project launched within the next year.

Lastly, I helped the Lawyers' Committee write its report recommending Justice Sotomayor for confirmation. I developed the report's section covering Justice Sotomayor's education

jurisprudence. The final report was widely distributed, and relied upon by key members of the U.S. Senate. It was a great experience to know I contributed to this report.

Interning with the Lawyers' Committee isn't necessarily an exercise in direct client work. However, I strongly feel that the work I did this summer (and the work I continue to do) made great strides towards securing improved educational equity. The litigation against Maryland has the capability to change the face of Maryland's entire higher education system. The parental advocacy program, once fully operational, will help individual parents and their children in school districts across the country.

I am fully dedicated to a career in public interest law, specifically in education law and improving educational equity and access. The Lawyers' Committee was the ideal place for me to work, since it allowed me to tackle these issues on a wide-scale platform. Having an Equal Justice America fellowship made this internship financially possible, and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Coco
DePaul University College of Law
Class of 2010