



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

These past few weeks I have been learning how holdover and nonpayment cases get brought in housing court. Practicing supervising attorneys have been teaching myself and the other interns about precedential cases that have led to the logic behind housing law decisions, as well as supplying us with their commonly used defenses. I am learning that specificity is of the utmost importance in even the most initial, basic filings. If a petition is filed and does not specify parties or the law on which the petition is based, the case fails almost immediately. My Civil Procedure class has come in handy in my time with the Housing Conservation Coordinators, and I am incredibly grateful for Professor Ressler. As a part of my internship, I have had the opportunity to sit in with Organizing Components, as well as listen to my supervising attorneys problem solve in a weekly, communal case-review. These experiences have been insightful and meaningful to me, as I find myself understanding more and more of the nuances of figuring out how to defend, and bring, housing suits. I have been assigned to write Answers to landlord's petitions this week. Which feels like a great deal of responsibility. However, I am grateful that I have proven that I can handle this kind of work and that my supervisors trust me to take some things off their plate.

Update 2:

These past two weeks I became familiar with the ins-and-outs of motion practice. A lot of times landlords and people who can afford lawyers just sue tenants because they don't think they have the capability to oppose their motion. Legal Aid organizations combat this with even partial representation. This week, me and another intern wrote a motion to deny summary judgement to evict a Rabbi. The Rabbi's mother owned the apartment and it has existed in their family for over 20 years. Helping this Rabbi maintain tenancy halts just one drop in a flood of gentrification, but it felt good to do.



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Update 3:

The past few weeks I have been doing more client-centered work. I have done intake, written answers, and spoken to clients about their issues with housing more than ever before. I am learning that clients who are receiving assistance through publicly funded institutions like the Housing Conservation Coordinators want to remain anonymous. Asking for help is hard. Needing help can be harder. The people that we work with are in danger of losing their homes. I have been unable to post my updates with Housing Conservation Coordinators because the clients we work with are in incredibly vulnerable situations, and it feels unfair to use their circumstances to speak publicly about any work that I am doing. Especially when our constituents wish to remain anonymous in intake. That being said, housing court in New York City is the wild west. Today I watched a man lose his home because two institutions tried to help him at the same time and got in each other's way. The judge shrugged and gave the man 24-hours on a Friday to collect his things. Another person who exclusively spoke Spanish signed a stipulation agreeing to pay the landlord, regardless of them fixing any of the numerous items that were broken in her unit. I don't know if she understood what she was agreeing to, but the landlord's attorney looked incredibly smug as he passed his stipulation to the judge. Tenants need more help than the city is willing to give.

Update 4:

I finished out my internship on Friday. My final projects with the Housing Conservation Coordinators were writing a memorandum on NYCHA responsibilities upon incarceration of one of their public housing tenants, writing a letter to a landlord on behalf of a client giving the legal grounds for clearing his ledger of over \$6000, and participating in HCC's first in-person court intake since the pandemic started. Our organization was the guinea pig organization for restarting court intake with less resources than before the pandemic. We managed to help over 50 people with either brief advice or full representation. I mostly took down peoples' information and walked them to our temporary office to consult our attorneys. However, I also got to do intake and give some brief advice when the intake overwhelmed the number of attorneys we had. I felt capable of giving legal advice to tenants and presented them with necessary documents to submit a proper answer to their landlord's attorneys. It felt amazing to be able to culminate my education over the summer and put it to use in-person, and I enjoyed the human aspect to doing intake in-person at the courthouse. My supervising attorneys have told me to reach out to them if I need anything, and I will be participating in their immigration clinic on a Wednesday this fall. I am particularly interested in their immigration practice, as I will be focusing on that aspect of law in the fall during my time at Brooklyn Law.