



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



Name: Wook Bae

Law School: Cornell

Organization: The Legal Aid Society

Update 1:

A client wished me blessings today, although all I did was simply make a phone call about her case in housing court. I know it isn't much, but I'm glad that every day I can do something that matters. Thanks to the Legal Aid Society, Cornell Law School, and Equal Justice America for supporting more equal access to legal services.

Update 2:

Despite some much-needed reforms by New York State in 2019, tenants' rights are still not getting the protections that they deserve. The housing court in Brooklyn for the past several decades has been "temporarily" situated within a run-down office building with paint peeling off the walls and panels missing in the ceiling. I can't imagine how bad things would be without the work of public interest attorneys like those at the Legal Aid Society Brooklyn Neighborhood Office.

Update 3:

Yesterday in Brooklyn Housing Court my Supervising Attorney had to deal with a loud Landlord's Lawyer who accused legal services providers of being "socialist." Tenants' lawyers have to deal with some seriously unpleasant people in court.

Update 4:

It's already week 10 of my time with the Legal Aid Society's housing practice in Brooklyn. So far I've talked to and written motions for a couple dozen clients facing eviction proceedings. I hope I've at least made a dent in the struggle for secure and affordable housing.



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Update 5:

Reflecting on my internship with the Legal Aid Society's Housing Justice practice, I think there is a need to inform law students especially at business-oriented schools like Cornell about what it is like to work as a public defense lawyer in New York. Too many students dismiss legal aid jobs as unconventional positions that only a few peculiar people have a thing for. Legal aid lawyers' degree of autonomy and proximity to everyday legal struggles are unique advantages, not to mention the fact that every day you would be able to contribute bit by bit to justice for the people, not for corporations and their stockholders. While I am unfortunately ineligible for employment at legal aid organizations, I hope that more law students in the US would put some effort into exploring the possibility of working in the interest of the people. Thanks to The Legal Aid Society, Cornell Law School, and Equal Justice America for supporting more equal access to legal services.