



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Sasha McEnaney

**Law School:** CUNY School of Law

**Organization:** Housing Conservation Coordinators

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**Update 1:** Upon finishing my first year of law school, I am so grateful to have been selected as a 2023 Equal Justice America Fellow to support my summer work! EJA is a nonprofit that helps law students who are working in civil legal aid, as these organizations typically do not have the funding to do so. Their goal is to increase the number of future lawyers who have experience doing public interest work, ensuring that everyone can access legal representation. If you are able, please consider donating to Equal Justice America to support future law students in their (usually unpaid) public interest work!

The Housing Conservation Coordinators is an organization which provides free legal services for low-income individuals in New York City. HCC focuses primarily on strengthening and preserving affordable housing through direct representation, weatherization, and community organizing. I am excited to continue learning from the brilliant individuals at HCC this summer!

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**Update 2:** Tenants in New York City do not have a right to an attorney when facing an eviction in Housing Court or Housing Authority proceedings, creating a power imbalance between landlords and renters. The Right To Counsel program creates access to free legal representation and advice provided by legal services organizations for individuals who otherwise have little to no support in maintaining housing. According to the Office of Civil Justice, over 540,000 New Yorkers had received free legal representation, advice, or assistance in evictions and other housing matters as of June 30, 2021. Unfortunately, the number of evictions keeps rising, and while low-income New Yorkers continue to be forced out of their homes, legal services organizations lack the capacity to take on every single case. During the past month working with Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC), I helped do intakes at the Manhattan Housing Court and supported the attorneys in providing legal advice. I am incredibly inspired by all of the work that the individuals at HCC do to support tenants in New York City, and grateful to Equal Justice America for giving me the opportunity to work with them this summer. Please consider donating to EJA to support future law students in their public interest work!

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**Update 3:** For another EJA Fellow Update, I am extremely grateful to be spending the summer learning more about eviction defense and housing advocacy. So far, I have significantly developed my understanding of the nuances of housing law in New York City, and how important legal services are in supporting vulnerable tenants. My experience with the Housing Conservation Coordinators has reinforced my interest in the



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connection between economic justice and housing rights. Economic justice is embodied by public debates and systemic advocacy, anti-poverty solutions, and the many ways that race and class is related to them. A conversation about economic justice cannot be had without a conversation about securing housing stability for everyone. I look forward to spending the rest of my summer learning from public interest attorneys and learning how to best advocate for low-income communities and increase access to economic justice.

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**Update 4:** As I finish up my final two weeks with Housing Conservation Coordinators, I reflect on how grateful I am for this experience. I was fortunate to work as a legal intern, providing support to low-income tenants in Manhattan and deepening my understanding of housing law. My work has consisted of direct client work, legal research, and motion drafting, all skills that I will carry with me during my career as an attorney. I have been thoroughly inspired to continue doing public interest work throughout law school and after I graduate from CUNY School of Law. I would like to thank Equal Justice America for their continued support during my time with the Housing Conservation Coordinators this summer, as it has truly been an invaluable experience.

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**Update 5:** For my final EJA Fellow Update, I wanted to share how grateful I am to Equal Justice America for their support while working with the Housing Conservation Coordinators this summer. It was truly an invaluable experience and I gained knowledge and skills that I will use throughout my career.

I realized how little I actually knew about housing law in New York City, and how complex it is. Over the summer, I was able to practice and apply what I had learned through contracts and civil procedure during the school year. I drafted answers and motions, helped to generate discovery, worked directly with clients and participated in court intake, and even had the opportunity to argue a motion in front of a judge in housing court. I also put together a legal research memorandum on Horizontal Multiple Dwellings in New York City to help with future cases at HCC. I loved being able to interact with clients in person after working remotely in legal services prior to law school, and it was great to see so much of what I learned during my first year come to life through the housing court process.

My time with HCC has inspired my career path to continue working in housing law and advocating for low-income tenants, along with preserving (and creating) affordable housing opportunities. The skills that I developed at HCC will be crucial in all of the future work that I do as a law student and as an attorney. This upcoming year, I look forward to taking courses on public institutions and property, learning even more on how to bridge the gap between housing instability and economic justice.

I am so inspired by all of the individuals at HCC that I worked with this summer. The organization is so special in many ways, but it was amazing to see systemic advocacy and direct client services working interchangeably. Their continued dedication to helping vulnerable individuals through political and legal avenues in New York City is something that I will always carry with me throughout my career.

Please consider donating to EJA so that future law students can help provide free legal services to low-income individuals.