



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This first week of active work has already given me so much knowledge about the world of housing law. I've been able to see how attorneys interact in and out of the courthouse; as well as how judges operate and how attorneys respond to what judge's do. Additionally, I've been able to engage in research and writing projects which help me grow as a writer and help me gain a better understanding of New York City's housing laws. For instance, I spent a whole day thinking and learning about how guardianship works in the city and how it interacts with housing as well as every step in litigation. Reading through the caselaw and statutory authorization for article 81 guardians and guardians ad litem, and seeing the ways in which they have helped and hindered people in tenuous housing situations has shown how deeply the intersectionality of disability, housing, and the law goes. Seeing the intersectionality of the law and basically everything else really shows the privilege so many of us have to ignore it, and shows the ways we can be better and do more. I hope to spend more time researching and to make a difference for tenants this summer.

Update 2: In the last 2 weeks, the pace of work has gone from 0 to 100 and I feel all the more energized for it. Going from trainings and not really knowing what I'm doing to writing motions and answers on my own has been an absolute thrill. I'm one hundred percent the type of person who learns best by doing; being thrown into the thick of things and writing multiple types of motions and letters has absolutely set me up for success this summer. Getting to write answers to petitions and thinking creatively of ways to respond to lessors is extremely fulfilling.

I'm also getting to do legal research and writing in a way that reflects actual practice, not the canned way that is taught in the classroom. Digging through statutes and caselaw, and building the web of references for my argument is absolutely more rewarding than I thought it would be. Currently I'm working on building a reference for my office on Article 81 and article 17A



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guardians, as well as guardians ad litem. Guardianship is a very interesting area of law for me because it involves the restriction of autonomy and rights, something which is treated very carefully by the courts and the law (in theory, never in reality).

I'm looking forward to the ways my research can contribute to the handful of cases I've already been introduced to which involve heavy issues of guardianship and housing.

Update 3: The last couple weeks have been quiet, almost too quiet... But in actuality it's because I've been writing a lot. Turns out law involves a lot of reading and writing. I've been continuing my work writing answers and motions, as well as my project researching rights retained by individuals who are placed under article 81 guardianships and under guardians ad litem.

Speaking of motions, I've also been able to get a fair amount of court time down at everyone's favorite civil court: Manhattan housing court. I got a sampling of the true lawyer experience after spending hours writing an opposition to a motion to restore only for the opposing counsel to acquiesce to an informal request for time with no issue. Which is of course, a good thing - clients facing eviction should have all the time in the world to fight against their case and to get the resources they need to satisfy the lessor's demands.

I also was able to do the thing I actually enjoy the most: interact with clients. Unfortunately, a lot of law offices, whether they're a non-profit, firm, or otherwise, are isolated from the communities they serve both geographically and socially. This is, of course, no accident and is the way of things for both formal and informal reasons. However, I was able to spend a day at the Harlem Community Justice Center doing community work and helping people file HP actions and discuss their legal rights as tenants. An HP action being a type of case brought by a tenant for something like repairs or lack of hot water. It was fulfilling to talk with residents of Harlem and interesting, albeit slightly enraging, to hear the ways that these landlords are treating their tenants.

Update 4: These last 2 weeks were super super busy (as if it's not always super super busy). Unfortunately, there will always be a need for public defenders and that need will always be high. The busiest days were Monday and Tuesday which I spent metaphorically running around like a chicken with no head. 4 clients all at the same time had some kind of motion, opposition, or order that needed to be written, all with different issues and requiring different research. Now, that may sound like a nightmare and that I'm complaining, but in reality they were the best 2 days of the summer so far. Similar to an F1 car, I'm awful at slow speeds but absolutely thrive at high speed. So having all of those things thrown at me was a godsend. The issues were interesting and allowed me to flex my creative muscle when thinking on how to respond.



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Aside from those 2 days, everything else was relatively normal and slow. The latter half of last week was spent on a really interesting issue involving personal property left in an apartment after eviction and the extent to which landlords have to care for it (hint: the answer is that they have to pay to store it and can't take it for their own). So there was a fun crossover episode between civ pro and property. Having to write about bailments and personal property in the same context as notice and civil procedure was fun. My favorite part of the internship process has honestly been applying 1L class material, as boring as it is, to real life and seeing how it's actually used. Seeing civil procedure especially used as a weapon in court is always satisfying. In an ideal world, that'd be all I do all day.

Update 5: Well, here at last, dear friends, on the shores of the sea comes the end of my fellowship in Middle Earth (aka Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem). I will not say do not weep though for not all tears are an evil. This is the last update for my summer as an EJA fellow and as an intern at Neighborhood Defenders. This summer has been extremely rewarding and I'm sad it has to end; though I am excited for what comes next.

My last 2 weeks have been wholly spent on preparing for an oral argument against restoring an eviction case to the calendar. I'm lucky enough that the facts and reason for trying to revive the case made for an absolute slam dunk on my end. The law was on my side, the facts were on my side, and I felt good the entire time I spent writing the opposition and prepping for oral argument. Anyone who knows me knows that I'm not a public speaker at all so the fact that I actually felt confident going into the courthouse says a lot. But here the big day comes, I'm at court discussing with my supervisor, and along comes the opposing counsel. Over the course of the next 10 minutes we go through a mini crash course on negotiation and practical lawyering and come out the other side in agreement to withdraw. My dreams of doing my best Phoenix Wright impression are dashed!

But the client wins, I get experience and knowledge, and everyone is happy. Knowing those things and exiting the summer with a lot more knowledge and experience than I came in with all make me happy. Now I get to spend the last day and a half of my internship finally writing that reference on article 81 guardianships, a sweet and easy task which I'll enjoy as a way to slowly offramp from the summer.