



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: On the heels of a genuinely enjoyable first year of law school, I'm wrapping up my second week as an intern in Mobilization for Justice's housing unit, which advocates for renters and working people across New York City. In my first two weeks, I've begun navigating the "impenetrable thicket" of NYC's patchwork of housing law, shadowed my attorney supervisor settling a tenant's eviction case in a busy courthouse hallway, and jumped into a few legal research assignments. My co-interns and I also researched and wrote testimony on the FARE Act, which would save New Yorker renters thousands in up-front costs by requiring landlords to pay the fees for brokers they hire. It was energizing to join the coalition of renters, unions, and public officials supporting the bill outside city hall before the bill's day-long committee hearing. I've really enjoyed my first two weeks, and I'm really looking forward to diving into the rest of the summer assisting MFJ in the fight for housing justice. I'm privileged to be able to spend the summer doing this work with the financial support of a number of generous funders, including the Penn Carey Law Equal Justice Foundation and Equal Justice America.

Update 2: Wrapping up my fourth week at Mobilization for Justice, and it's time for the EJA Fellow update you've all been waiting for. I've been diving into MFJ's litigation practice these past two weeks, drafting motions for clients facing eviction and meeting them outside their court appearances. Today's *Grants Pass* decision from the Supreme Court has offered me a stark reminder of the importance of the work legal aid attorneys do across the country: Eviction prevention is homelessness prevention, full stop. Take a visual example from Bronx Housing Court last week. Outside the building, beside the line for tenants to get inside—a line that stretched to the edge of the block—was a lone sign: An advertisement for moving services, an ominous reminder of what awaited tenants if they failed to navigate the mess before them. Inside, I assisted as MFJ attorneys and staff conducted an intake for the city's access to counsel program, which, in theory, provides low-income tenants with housing attorneys. The loud, crowded hallway, not the courtroom, is where things happen: Clients are interviewed, tears are shed, negotiations are conducted, and a stable life is won or lost. I'm grateful to be able to



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witness and, I hope, contribute to a small part of this work this summer, and looking forward to the lessons that await over the next few weeks.

Update 3: It's been another interesting few weeks at Mobilization for Justice as an EJA Fellow! I've spent much of my energy knee-deep in motion drafting for a client seeking to prevent their eviction. While wading through New York housing law can be a challenge, it's very rewarding to know that it will make a difference for our client, and eye-opening to see what civil legal aid attorneys are up against every day. I've also really loved being able to work with my supervising attorney to put some of the research and writing skills I developed in my 1L year into practice. Also this week, we got to sit down with one of MFJ's experienced attorneys for a conversation about the organization's impact litigation work. In fact, MFJ just received this week in federal court that not only keeps MFJ's in their home, but also sets important precedent protecting homeowners from predatory lending practices. All around, it's been a great few weeks to both see the impact of our work and get a sense of what an impact litigation-oriented career might look like.

Update 4: It's been another educational few weeks at Mobilization for Justice as the summer is beginning to wrap up. My work this summer has continued to demonstrate the essential role that civil legal aid attorneys play every single day in protecting tenants and keeping families stably housed. This week, I assisted with the intake process for new clients in Manhattan Housing Court, where MFJ provides no-cost representation to some tenants facing eviction under NYC's Universal Access to Counsel law. While the assistance I could personally provide clients paled in comparison to the depth and complexity of the legal issue before them, I was struck by how grateful clients were even to just be considered for representation. For some clients, it was apparent that we were the first people all day who'd been willing to sit and listen to their stories. I also got to network last week with members of the city's Right to Counsel Coalition, which advocated for the city-provided counsel program. The statistics Coalition members shared about how even just a few years of access to counsel had improved the outcomes for New Yorkers facing eviction were remarkable. Together, these experiences showed me that civil legal aid attorneys offer the first step towards a more just and equitable housing system.

Update 5: It's been a privilege and a pleasure getting to learn from Mobilization for Justice's attorneys as an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer. As my internship comes to a close, I am reflecting on the crucial role civil legal aid attorneys play in advocating for justice and stability for tenants across New York City.

Throughout the summer, I dove into the complexities of housing law, from drafting motions and conducting client intakes to participating directly in client litigation and settlement negotiation. Each task reinforced the significant impact legal aid organizations like MFJ have on the lives of everyday tenants. One of the most poignant experiences was assisting clients during the intake process at Manhattan Housing Court. The gratitude expressed by clients, simply for being heard and considered for representation, underscored the immense need for and value of the services MFJ provides.



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Reflecting on my time at MFJ, I am particularly struck by the dedication and expertise of the attorneys and staff. Their relentless commitment to fighting eviction and securing stable housing for families is inspiring. Whether negotiating in crowded courthouse hallways or setting legal precedents to protect homeowners from predatory practices, the work of civil legal aid attorneys is indispensable. It is clear that eviction prevention is not just about keeping a roof over someone's head; it is about preserving dignity, stability, and hope for a better future.

This summer has also offered a broader perspective on the systemic challenges and opportunities within housing justice. Connecting with members of the Right to Counsel Coalition and witnessing the tangible benefits—and ongoing challenges—of NYC's Universal Access to Counsel law have been particularly enlightening. These experiences highlighted how collective efforts and sustained advocacy can lead to significant improvements in the lives of many, and how much work there is left to be done.

As I conclude my internship, I am filled with optimism and enthusiasm for the future. The lessons learned and the experiences gained at MFJ have deepened my commitment to pursuing a career in public interest law and civil legal aid work.