



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Camille Valmonte-Zapata
LAW SCHOOL	Temple University Beasley School of Law
ORGANIZATION	Harvard Legal Aid Bureau

Update 1: Let's start with a few statistics: Around 90% of landlords in housing court in Massachusetts are represented by counsel, while less than 5% of tenants have the ability to do the same. There is no right to counsel for eviction proceedings in MA and figuring out the complicated and speedy court process is difficult even for those who have law degrees. As a result, most court-involved tenants are forced out of their homes or pressured into signing agreements that are impossible to comply with. Most tenants go through the entire process without knowing what procedural defects to look for or properly asserting any defenses or counterclaims they might have which would entitle them to possession.

During my time so far at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, I have learned to spot various procedural defects that can be used to argue for dismissal, such as an expired VAWA form which is required to accompany a Notice to Quit (the document that gives notice of eviction proceedings). While an expired form may not seem like a big deal, in actuality, it is. Summary process actions are designed to be quick in order to return possession to the owner. However, because these actions proceed so swiftly, it makes it all the more important to hold landlords and their attorneys strictly liable to the rules that dictate the system, especially because the vast majority of tenants are unfamiliar with navigating the legal system on their own. In a court where the playing field is already extremely uneven, it is necessary to ensure the rules are followed and corners are not cut. Unfortunately, we are unable to help all court-involved tenants in Boston, but I hope that by being unrelenting in identifying defects and leveraging them for our clients, landlords and their attorneys are compelled to follow the strict rules of summary process actions on their own. Without legal aid organizations like HLAB fighting back against oppressive behaviors, integrity in the legal system would be diminished. I look forward to learning more ways to empower my clients and keep people housed this summer!



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Update 2: As I described in my first Equal Justice America update, tenants in housing court experience extremely unequal access to legal representation when facing eviction proceedings. This often leads to tenants signing unfavorable agreements that are impossible to keep up with out of fear or lack of knowledge about their rights and defenses in court. When these agreements are not maintained, tenants end up losing their homes and must face the uphill battle of finding new housing during a nationwide housing crisis.

Earlier this month, I was fortunate enough to be part of the team at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau who took a case to jury trial and won on directed verdict! I am inspired by the strength our client had to overcome all the challenges thrown at her on this journey, and the tenacity the team maintained over the course of this case. This case is a testament to the power of quality legal representation and the difference in outcomes when people are afforded access to such representation rather than being bullied by the system.

Update 3: Much of the work done at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau focuses on movement lawyering, which entails lawyers working in conjunction with community members to build power and work towards more systemic change. This model of lawyering takes direction from directly-impacted communities and organizers, rather than having the lawyers call the shots. Through this model, lawyers use the law as both a sword and a shield to advance the communities' systemic goals.

This past week, I had the opportunity to engage in movement lawyering with my fellow interns at a tenant's association meeting in Boston. At this meeting, conversation was flowing regarding the consistent mistreatment of subsidized tenants by management. While the stories people shared were heartbreaking, it was inspiring to watch tenants empower each other and build power through numbers. Management might be able to ignore one singular person, but it is much harder to ignore a group of people who know their rights. My fellow interns and I were also able to hold an eviction sealing clinic to seal many tenants' past eviction records, helping to make finding housing easier in future.

Update 4: As I reflect upon this summer at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to work with and learn from the amazing advocates at HLAB! This summer, I expanded my knowledge of housing law and tenants' rights, learned how to be a creative advocate through the use of reasonable accommodations, advocated for rent control in Massachusetts, participated in a jury trial win, and met tons of amazing people in the process.

Legal aid organizations like HLAB provide high-quality representation to people who do not have easy access to legal services due to their disabilities, financial situation, or other reasons. The legal system, especially highly technical areas like housing law, is difficult to navigate on



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one's own and often serves to further marginalize specific groups rather than act as a tool of empowerment. However, high quality, accessible legal services can drastically change the outcome for many people. Too often, unrepresented people are bulldozed in court by those with more money and power. In pursuing a career in legal aid, my goal is to empower people to know their rights and how to enforce them in order to secure favorable outcomes that they deserve. Everyone deserves a fighting chance, not only those with funds and ease of access.

Final Reflection: As the summer comes to an end, I want to reflect upon my summer internship and EJA fellowship experience at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau. As I have previously shared, this summer I focused on learning the ins and outs of housing law in Boston, Massachusetts. Through this experience, I was able to build upon the foundation of knowledge I developed during my time working as an eviction defense paralegal prior to law school. I am thankful for the opportunity to dive into the nitty gritty aspects of housing law and more deeply understand the importance of procedural rights in a court where power dynamics are severely outweighed in the favor of the more powerful. Some highlights from this summer include a jury trial win on directed verdict, successfully obtaining reasonable accommodations for clients, and working with an amazing group of interns who wanted to see success for each other as much as themselves.

I am also thankful for the opportunity to learn from the fantastic, passionate staff at HLAB who took all of us interns under their wings, taught us the law and many invaluable skills, and trusted us to work as student attorneys on behalf of our clients.

My experience this summer has only solidified my desire to pursue a career in civil legal aid. When people have access to high-quality legal representation that they deserve, their chances of attaining a positive outcome increase substantially. All people deserve a fighting chance in our legal system, especially when the party they are up against has the power and resources to force unfavorable agreements and outcomes. I will carry these lessons and experiences with me as I embark on my final year of law school at Temple University - James E. Beasley School of Law and in my future career as a legal aid attorney.

My experiences this summer would not have been possible without support from Equal Justice America. EJA's commitment to uplifting civil legal services is essential to protecting the integrity of the judicial system, especially in times like these. If you want to support others like me who are pursuing a career in legal aid, please donate.