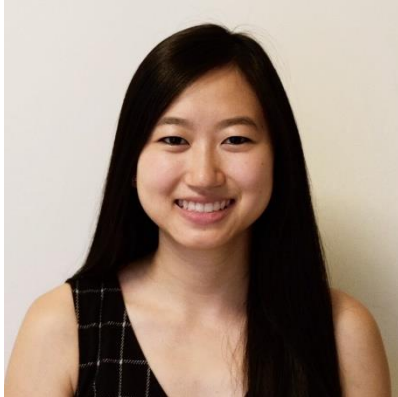




Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Diana Li

Law School: Stanford Law School

Fellowship: New York Legal Assistance

Entry 1: 06/17/19-06/28/19

I just finished my first two weeks with the Special Litigation Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group, and I've already had the fortune of working on a range of diverse cases. Our office helped fight for and win a temporary stay for a pregnant mother from Guatemala who fled to the United States in 2004, and it was inspiring to see the attorneys in our office put together all the materials to file for the stay on short notice and fight the order to deport our client. As part of another case where we are suing debt collectors who try to execute on fraudulently obtained judgments, I've had the opportunity to meet with clients and talk to them about their experiences dealing with these unscrupulous companies. It's been a great hands-on learning experience to see how these interviews get converted into complaints. In just these two short weeks, I've gotten a look at the kind of impact that NYLAG has for low-income New York residents, and I'm excited that this is only the start.

Entry 2: 07/01/19-07/12/19

The last two weeks, I have been working to assist a client who is facing a debt collection action on a debt that she never actually owed. The collector in this case is notorious for filing actions to collect debt on judgments that are over a decade old and the product of fraudulent sewer service. My supervising attorney and I assisted our client to file an affidavit explaining that she was never served in the case and that she has nothing to do with the alleged debt, and we represented her in Bronx Civil Court. We are now waiting on a response from the debt collectors, and our hope is that we are able to get the action dismissed for our client so she can regain access to her bank account, which has been restrained in this process. Seeing proceedings in civil court was a new experience for me, and I couldn't imagine going through the process without having representation from



lawyers like the ones at NYLAG. Thanks to EJA for giving me the opportunity to see our civil justice system in action.

Entry 3: 07/15/19-07/26/2019

Over the last two weeks, I've continued helping with legal research for briefs that my office is working on. One of the cases NYLAG is bringing is in response to asylum applicants with work authorization being wrongfully denied Safety Net Assistance. We are trying to show that while the law clearly states that these people are eligible for Safety Net Assistance based on published regulations, in practice, they are often denied these benefits. In particular, because we are filing the suit as a class action, I have been helping with legal research related to whether the class is appropriate for certification: specifically, whether the named plaintiffs are adequate representatives for the class. Being at NYLAG has made me more aware that changing the law on the books isn't the full picture - we also need to make sure that in practice, people are getting the assistance they need and that they aren't facing arbitrary denials of that assistance.

Entry 4: 7/29/19-08/09/2019

I have continued doing legal research for class actions that NYLAG is bringing. One of the class actions deals with these companies who make false promises to help people get rid of their student debt, when in reality, they have no power to do so. These defendants are currently the subject of multiple lawsuits, and I've been closely reading the documents that have been filed in other cases against the same Defendants to try to learn as much as possible about their operations. We've also had phone calls with their opposing counsel, and it's been very interesting to see the process of negotiating with opposing counsel on issues of discovery. We continue to get calls on our hotline every day from consumers who are being scammed by these defendants, and I'm glad that NYLAG is holding them accountable.

Entry 5: 08/12/19-08/23/2019

My supervising attorney and I went to help with Volunteer Lawyer For a Day (VLFD), a program where attorneys volunteer and assist individual clients in court. We specifically helped clients who were facing issues with debt collectors, and I was able to help represent two clients in Bronx Civil Court. Both clients were being threatened with debt collection, with one of them having her wages garnished. We helped our clients file the necessary paperwork to challenge the debt. Many of the other people I saw in the room who were going through court proceedings were *pro se*, and I simply can't imagine going through legal proceedings in this context without a lawyer. Even as a law student with a very helpful and competent supervising attorney, I was often confused about what the right protocol was - so I can only imagine how a *pro se* litigant would feel. I'm glad we were able to help some clients through VLFD, but there is a much greater need that I hope to be able to help fill in the future.