



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Daniella J. Cho

**Law School:** The George Washington University Law School

**Organization:** East Bay Community Law Center

---

### Update 1:

This summer, I've gotten the amazing opportunity to work with [East Bay Community Law Center](#) (EBCLC) to provide legal and social services to under-resourced communities across Berkeley, Oakland, Emeryville, and Alameda. The past few weeks have been an absolute whirlwind of training and learning—but with each passing day, I'm becoming better equipped to play my part in helping tenants secure not only their homes but also their livelihoods amidst a truly tumultuous time.

This week, I had the chance to practice servicing clients directly through our weekly Tenants' Rights Workshop session where I helped a couple sort out a number of complicated legal issues tied to subtenancies and Rent Board petitions. The immediacy in many housing situations is so real: not only is housing so deeply linked to a person's sense of self, but legally, unlawful detainer proceedings give a tenant just five days to answer—a timeline unheard of and one that really seems to reflect a system in place that heavily favors property owners. Against this backdrop, the services that EBCLC provides makes it possible for tenants to protect and defend themselves, and the experience has been a truly illuminating one so far.

I'm grateful to have embarked on this journey with the support of the Equal Justice America Fellowship and [The George Washington University Law School](#), which makes it possible for generations of future lawyers to act on the urgent need of providing pro bono assistance to our most vulnerable community members.

---

### Update 2:

This past week was an especially reflective one for me, as the housing hardships of my clients reminded me of my recent struggles in trying to find housing in preparation for the fall semester. The overlap is not at all comparable to what my clients are going through, of course, but it still afforded me a small sliver of understanding into the overwhelming stresses associated with just about any housing-related situation, and ones that clients are forced to face head-on for months—even years—through eviction lawsuits. Every story a client



shared hit just a little closer to my heart, and it helped me ground myself in gratitude instead of frustration in the present that gently nudges me to practice with more care and empathy.

As I approach the end of my first month at [East Bay Community Law Center](#), I am humbled by my own privileges that I take for granted so often and reminded once again of the need to continue this work of service with constant self-reflection and thankfulness.

---

### **Update 3:**

Last week was jam-packed with direct services for clients as we set up extra Tenants' Rights Workshop sessions to reach more clients within Alameda County. From defective eviction notices and unlawful rent increases to reasonable accommodation requests, clients brought a number of issues that reflected unjust treatment from landlords. As I listened to them share a vulnerable part of their lives with me, it was such a meaningful experience to be able to afford them at least a sliver of peace by confirming that their situations stemmed from unlawful actions by their landlords and that they had less to worry about than they had initially anticipated. I also learned that there is a subtle balance when it comes to advocating for clients through letters to landlords, in the sense that we push hard and aggressively for tenants' rights without educating the landlords too much for better long term tenant protection. It has been interesting, to say the least, to encounter these fine lines between tenant-landlord relationships as I continue my work in housing law.

My growth in knowledge and practice over the summer has only been possible with the support of organizations like [Equal Justice America](#), whose mission it is to make pro bono assistance a real possibility for our most vulnerable community members.

---

### **Entry 4:**

And that's a wrap! It's hard to believe that my time at [East Bay Community Law Center](#) has already come to a close. Working with the Housing Clinic this summer to defend tenants facing some of the toughest situations imaginable has been such a meaningful experience. I am grateful for my clients who taught me so much as they opened up to give me the opportunity to advocate for them, and I am thankful to have worked alongside attorneys and students dedicated to serving clients with zeal and compassion.

What I encountered was but a sliver of the harsh realities that many low-income tenants face daily, and I understand better now just how imminent and dire their needs are. Organizations like EBCLC and [Equal Justice America](#), whose presence and support have made this rewarding experience possible, are at the forefront of working for the defenseless to bring justice a little closer for them every day. Please consider supporting EJA.