



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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**Organization:** Brooklyn Legal Services

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### Update 1:

Working at Brooklyn Legal Services' Foreclosure Prevention Unit has been an incredibly educational experience so far. I've never purchased a home, and thus have basically no experience when it comes to mortgages, but I understand the importance of home ownership for working-class people, especially those in New York's black and brown communities. Not only is it a way to preserve the community and build and pass down wealth, but I've learned more about how homeownership is important for families, housing stability, and an individual's sense of pride and accomplishment.

Thus, learning more about how unscrupulous lenders and debt collectors have tricked or taken advantage of homeowners to gain title to their home has been upsetting. These tactics, while generally appalling, are especially concerning with the enormous health and financial disparities that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work is pretty technical and I've had to learn a lot about financial documents and how to navigate the New York court system, but I feel extremely proud to be working here.

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### Update 2:

Working at Brooklyn Legal Services' Neighborhood Economic Justice Unit, doing foreclosure prevention work, has remained impactful. Working with a small team that does direct service and systemic advocacy has given me a lot of experience. I've been doing a significant amount of legal research and writing; although the work isn't 'fast-paced,' especially due to the foreclosure moratorium, the number of different cases and matters has meant that I have a lot of assignments.

I also had the opportunity to communicate and meet clients. We had a face-to-face meeting with a client and his family a week or so ago. It was the first client meeting that the attorneys had done in a long time. I appreciated meeting the client and finally having a face to a name, but also learned a lot from seeing how the attorneys



conscientiously explained the legal aspects of the case to the client. We currently have a federal and state case going on for him, so it was quite complicated, but they wanted to make sure that he knew what was going on, which I appreciated.

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### **Update 3:**

My time at Brooklyn Legal Services' Neighborhood Economic Justice Unit continues to challenge and teach me. Lately I have been assisting the attorneys with our opposition to a motion for summary judgment. Our clients' home was stolen in a deed theft scam that targeted working-class homeowners in Brooklyn. The scammers took out a mortgage on this stolen home, and now we are arguing against the bank's attempt to take the home. It isn't our clients' fault that these people took out a mortgage using their home, and the bank can surely survive without having this home. For my host organization, this is just another example of a situation where our clients are fighting against an entity much bigger and better-resourced just to keep their house.

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### **Entry 4:**

In my last few weeks at Brooklyn Legal Services, I researched and drafted a memo for a case regarding a condominium foreclosure suit. It was challenging, as I had not learned much about condominiums, let alone the state and local rules on condominium foreclosure. It was a learning experience to really dive deep into a subject I knew little about and to build my understanding from the ground up. It was also a challenge to write the memo, as this is only the second legal memo I've ever written, and it was helpful to get feedback from the attorneys afterwards. I am really grateful for the time I've spent at Brooklyn Legal Services and am honored with how much they trusted me with numerous responsibilities.