

A Note from Bridgett Simmons

DAVID B. BRYSON FELLOW

Dear Friends,

Last September, I joined the staff of the National Housing Law Project as the second David Bryson Fellow. To past and present supporters of the Bryson Memorial Fund, thank you for your role in making this opportunity possible. With your donations, you have invested in me and I, in turn, have invested my time at NHLP to changing housing in the United States for the better.

I'm writing today to share my thoughts on why these investments matter so much and to ask for your support of the memorial programs.

This year, NHLP marks its 50th anniversary. NHLP was founded as part of the War on Poverty to support a cadre of newly-created legal services attorneys in their representation of low-income clients with housing challenges. 2018 also marks the 50th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. As the last major piece of 1960's civil rights legislation, the Fair Housing Act was envisioned as a tool for lowering the barriers of housing discrimination and residential segregation. Fifty years later, we have "come some of the way" but have not fully realized "fair housing for all... (as) a part of the American way of life." Against this backdrop, recent moves by the current Administration signal efforts to move backwards in our country's housing policy. The Administration has sought to decimate the housing budget and suspend implementation of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule. HUD's proposed legislation to shrink housing benefits has tarnished this 50 year anniversary by effectively declaring war on people in poverty.

To stand against this tide and move the arc of justice forward, we need to foster a rising generation of advocates to accept the torch that has been carried for 50 years by NHLP and its allies in legal services. The Bryson Fellowship is one such vehicle for cultivating new housing advocates. In my time at NHLP, I'm monitoring housing authorities' implementation of the small area fair market rent rule, a new strategy that could improve access to neighborhoods



of opportunity. I am focusing on growing numbers of local nuisance ordinances adopted nationally, uncovering their discriminatory aspects, both intended and unintended, and the harmful impacts of these ordinances on the housing of people of color and survivors of family violence. In doing so, I am seeking to identify ways to shield inadvertent victims from these laws.

The Bryson Fellowship is special not only as an investment in future housing advocates, but as a means to carry on David's legacy. He reflected the soul of NHLP in his commitment to housing justice. During the HJN National Meeting in 2017 and through my interactions with the Network, a number of HJNers have shared their stories about David's passion for his work, his collaborative nature, and his brilliance. As the Bryson Fellow, it is fitting that I am serving as the managing editor of the upcoming fifth edition of NHLP's flagship publication, HUD Housing Programs: Tenants' Rights (the "Green Book"). The Green Book, a fundamental resource of advocates who work with families in federally-assisted housing, was special to David Bryson; he was a primary author of the earlier editions and intended to continue work on it in his retirement.

The Bryson Fellowship has truly been one of my most rewarding professional experiences. I ask that you please support others like me who will embrace the opportunity to continue the work of David Bryson. Help NHLP continue this important investment in the future of housing justice advocacy with a generous gift today.

My best,

Bridgett Simmons

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