

# HANNA S. COHN EQUAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP

## Post Graduate Legal Fellowship Opportunity

The goal of this prestigious, two-year fellowship is to increase systems change legal advocacy for Greater Rochester's low-income families in high priority areas that are currently underserved. The Fellowship will be awarded to a dynamic and talented new lawyer beginning a career in the practice of public interest law.



**Hanna S. Cohn, Esq.**

## 2022 - 2024 Application

The Hanna S. Cohn Equal Justice Fellowship will be awarded to a talented, committed law school graduate at the beginning of their career in public interest law. All applicants must be in their final year of law school. The Fellow will be placed in the Rochester, NY office of the Empire Justice Center and will represent low-income clients through litigation, policy and systems change advocacy. The Fellow's background and interests will be matched with high priority legal issues facing low-income families that are not currently being addressed or are in need of additional resources. The duration of the Hanna S. Cohn Equal Justice Fellowship is two years; starting salary is \$54,500. In addition, Empire Justice offers a generous benefits package, including an affordable health care co-pay plan and loan forgiveness program.

### **Kristi Hughes, Cohn Fellow Administrator**

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The Hanna S. Cohn Equal Justice Fellowship program is committed to building diversity in the workplace. People of color, women, persons with disabilities and LGBTQ individuals are encouraged to apply.

# Application Components



1-2 page personal statement detailing what influenced your decision to attend law school, and why you want to represent low-income people



Official law school transcript



Two letters of recommendation highlighting your ability and commitment to practice public interest law



Resume



Completed application indicating selected legal area

The application deadline is October 29, 2021. The Fellow will be notified in January 2022 and will begin work in September 2022.

## Application Process

### Checklist

- Completed application
- Personal Statement
- Law school transcript
- Resume
- Two letters of recommendation
- Send electronically as pdf documents or fill out and submit online application: [empirejustice.org/hannafellowapp](http://empirejustice.org/hannafellowapp)



### FAQs

**Q: When will I know if I've been chosen as a finalist?**

**A:** The Fellowship Administrator will call finalists in late November/early December to schedule a personal interview. Those applicants not chosen for an interview will be notified by mail.

**Q: In developing an application, can I contact Empire Justice?**

**A:** Absolutely. We welcome questions. We want your application to be as strong as possible.



Applications must be received via email to [fellow@empirejustice.org](mailto:fellow@empirejustice.org) or via submission by online application form by October 29, 2021. If emailing, please send all documents as .pdf or .doc files. Please do not scan fillable pdf documents.

# 2022 - 2024 Application Form

## **Applicant Information**

Name:

Preferred pronouns:

Mailing Address:

City:

State :

ZipCode:

Telephone:

Email:

Law School:

## **Community Service and Work History**

Briefly describe significant community service activities that you engaged in prior to, or while attending, law school.

1.

2.

3.

Please describe any employment experience during law school. For each employer give: employer's name, address, dates of employment, contact name, phone number and email address of immediate supervisor, and briefly describe your responsibilities.

1.

2.

3.

Briefly describe any employment experience engaged in prior to attending law school relevant to the practice of public interest law.

## **Law School Clinical Programs / Internships / Externships**

Briefly describe clinical programs, internships and/or externships you participated in, including the area and nature of representation, the advocacy skills acquired, and the number of credit hours earned for each clinic.

1.

2.

## **References**

For each individual completing a letter of recommendation, please provide: name, address, phone number, email address and the reference's relationship to you (law school faculty, supervisor, employer, etc.)

1.

2.

## **Legal Areas of Need**

The Fellow will work in one of the following areas of law during their two-year term. Please choose the area of law in which you are most interested:

### ■ **Crime Victims**

The Fellow will represent victims of crime who are disabled with a particular emphasis on seniors, engage in statewide policy and provide training and outreach to people with disabilities and advocates who work with them regarding their rights as victims of crime.

### ■ **Landlord Tenant**

The Fellow will work as part of the Tenant Defense Project, the right to counsel program that was established in Rochester in October 2020 representing tenants, engaging in local and statewide policy work on issues relating to housing, and provide training to other advocates on how to spot systemic issues.

### ■ **Disability Advocacy Program - SSI/SSD**

The Fellow will represent individual claimants who have been denied benefits in disability hearings and appeals before SSA Administrative Law Judges and possibly in U.S. District Court appeals, provide training to other advocates, conduct community outreach and research.

### ■ **Homelessness - Public Benefits**

The Fellow will represent homeless families in the Greater Rochester area in various public benefits matters, provide outreach, connect with tenants rights groups and with attorneys in Rochester who practice landlord tenant law. As part of the benefits team, the Fellow will explore whether there is a legal right to a public assistance shelter allowance that is sufficient to pay actual rent, and whether such a right can be addressed through systemic litigation. The Fellow will also advocate at the state legislative level addressing issues that contribute to homelessness.

## **Essay/Personal Statement** (Limited to 2-3, double spaced pages typed in standard 12-point font.)

For your essay, please include:

1. What influenced your decision to attend law school and why you are interested in representing low-income and marginalized communities
2. Your experience and interest in pursuing the type of legal area selected
3. How your skills, knowledge, background and experiences will contribute to the work in the legal area selected

## **Selection Criteria**

All applicants for a Hanna S. Cohn Equal Justice Fellowship will be judged according to the quality of the personal statement, demonstrated commitment to meeting the unmet legal needs of low-income communities, personal references and prior work and community service activities. Applications will be evaluated by a selection committee consisting of Rochester-based attorneys familiar with the legal needs of the low-income and marginalized communities and members of Hanna Cohn's family. Finalists will be personally interviewed by members of the selection committee in Rochester.

## **Terms of the Fellowship**

The Hanna S. Cohn Equal Justice Fellowship requires a two-year commitment from the candidate selected to complete the Fellowship term, which runs from September 2022 through August 2024. A Fellow must have graduated from law school and be available to begin work by September 2022. It is an expectation that the Fellow will sit for the NYS Bar exam when the first opportunity arises.

## Hanna S. Cohn, Esq.

Hanna Cohn was the Executive Director of Volunteer Legal Services Project (VLSP, now JustCause) and a national leader in providing pro bono services for over twenty years.

Her passion for justice for those in need inspired all who worked with her or came in contact with her. Few lawyers could turn her down when she called to ask them to volunteer their services for low-income people. She demanded more from lawyers, however, than just their time. She was the architect of the Campaign for Justice, a fundraising effort that annually raised more than \$250,000 for civil legal services providers in Rochester.

During her years at VLSP, she transformed a fledgling, pro bono lawyer program into one of the best of its kind in the country. Hanna was universally respected because of the outstanding accomplishments of VLSP locally, including the development of innovative programming and outreach efforts to serve battered women and people living with AIDS, and the tireless commitment that Hanna brought to the effort of expanding the availability of volunteer lawyers to serve low-income persons in need of legal help.

Because of her accomplishments, Hanna was called in as a consultant by pro bono programs across the country that wanted expert help in improving their programs. She was deeply involved in numerous statewide efforts in New York that aimed to improve the delivery of legal services to low-income communities.

Hanna received many awards over the years to commemorate her professional accomplishments. She was intensely active in community organizations, state and local bar associations, and effort that aimed to make the world a better place. But she is also remembered - her memory cherished - for many other reasons. She was a loving, caring person who always had a smile, who easily made other smile. She never said an unkind word. Whenever she entered a room or attended a meeting, the atmosphere brightened. When she spoke, people listened. She was a joy to be around.

Hanna leaves a legacy that inspires and challenges each of us to renew our commitment to equal justice for all. The Fellowship is one way of realizing this goal.

## Former Fellow Spotlight



**Michael Mulé**  
2005-2007

During his fellowship, Michael Mulé represented clients who were limited English proficient (LEP), Deaf, and hard of hearing. He also provided lawyers and community groups resources and training on federal mandates to provide LEP individuals meaningful access to programs and activities and worked with state agencies to create and improve language access policies. When he looks back on his fellowship, Michael explains "It gave me the opportunity to explore an area of law that would be the foundation of my career." He joined the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice in 2010 where he enforces Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



**Persis Yu**  
2009-2011

Persis' fellowship focused on consumer and fair credit reporting issues, including issues involving fair credit, fair debt collection, student loans and bank/credit cards. Through her work, she raised community awareness of the problems associated with credit reporting and scoring and created greater access for people to correct problems on their credit report. Additionally, she provided training and support to clients and other legal and non profit advocates and worked on legislation to end abusive and unfair credit reporting practices. After her fellowship ended, Persis accepted a position as Staff Attorney/Director of the Student Loan Borrower Assistance Project at the National Consumer Law Center where she is employed today.



Located on the southern shores of Lake Ontario in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, Rochester is a diverse and progressive metropolitan community of more than one million people, representing the third largest urban area in New York State. Yet, this high tech community has preserved so many links with the past that it claims more sites on the National Register of Historic Places than any other city its size. Encompassing a long tradition of civil rights advocacy and social justice, Rochester was home to suffragist Susan B. Anthony and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Conveniently located, Rochester is a six hour drive to New York City, 3 hours from Toronto and 90 minutes from Niagara Falls.

The Greater Rochester area boasts 19 exceptional colleges and universities with close to 80,000 students and nearly 19,000 graduates per year resulting in one of the highest levels of skilled workers in the world. Rochester has a thriving arts and cultural scene and is home to the internationally renowned Eastman School of Music as well as numerous art galleries, museums and theatres and dance companies. The Rochester International Jazz Fest attracts more than 200,000 music lovers from around the world and was ranked one of the top four jazz festivals in the U.S. by the New York Times.

With 21 parks encompassing more than 12,000 acres, and many waterways including Lake Ontario, Genesee River, Irondequoit Bay, the Erie Canal, and the nearby Finger Lakes, Rochester is an outdoor-lover's dream.

Affordable housing in diverse, historic neighborhoods, short commutes and little to no traffic result in a high quality of life.

## Empire Justice Center

Empire Justice Center is a statewide nonprofit law firm with 6 offices outside of New York City: Albany, Long Island, White Plains, Yonkers and two in Rochester.

Our mission is to make the law work for all New Yorkers, especially for those who need its protection the most. Our advocates achieve our mission by engaging in three areas of work.

We teach the law by providing training and technical assistance to other attorneys and nonprofit advocates so that they can better serve their clients. We practice the law by providing direct, civil legal representation to low-income New Yorkers. We change the law by engaging in impact litigation and legislative and administrative advocacy regarding issues that impact low-income New York families.

We take a 360 degree, comprehensive approach to our work, which centers on the client experience. From our work with low-income families we learn about trends, barriers, patterns and practices that our advocates then address using the legal tools to tackle the issues systemically. It is a powerful model that leads to lasting change.