

# New York State Bar Association Presents Tania Khatibifar with 2023 Outstanding Young Lawyer Award

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January 24, 2023 Tania Khatibifar

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**PRACTICES** Real Estate, Real Estate Finance

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The Young Lawyers Section of the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) honored Haynes Boone Associate [Tania Khatibifar](#) with the 2023 Outstanding Young Lawyer Award. Traditionally awarded to one lawyer in New York State, Tania is one of two lawyers to earn the prestigious award this year, which recognizes a lawyer who has actively practiced less than 10 years and has a distinguished record of public service and professional activities.

NYSBA presented Tania with the award during its Annual Meeting, held virtually on January 26, 2023.

The honor reflects Tania's career-long commitment to pro bono and public service. She has dedicated substantial time to a broad range of pro bono matters, advocating for clients in asylum, clemency and constitutional law matters.

Tania also has used her legal skills to form a local non-profit education organization, to prepare simple estate planning documents for frontline healthcare workers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to educate voters in a non-partisan voter education effort ahead of the 2020 elections.

In a brief Q&A, Tania discussed her path to Haynes Boone, her passion for pro bono, and the important skills she has developed from handling pro bono matters.

## **Q: Did you always know you would be a lawyer?**

**Tania:** Yes, I did. In my elementary school yearbook, I wrote that I wanted to be a lawyer when I grow up.

## **Q: What drew you to Haynes Boone?**

**Tania:** I first learned about the firm while preparing for on-campus interviews in law school (at Fordham University School of Law). I was interviewed by (Partner) [Alex Grishman](#), who gave me a great impression of Haynes Boone. I ultimately started my legal career elsewhere, but when a position became available in Haynes Boone's Real Estate team in 2017, I was very excited to apply. All the lawyers I met during the interview process made me feel that the firm is a uniquely warm, collaborative place where colleagues respect each other and want to see each other thrive. I'm now involved in mentorship and entry level recruiting for our New York office, in part because I want to continue actively contributing to what makes the firm a special place – its people.

## **Q: What sparked your passion for pro bono?**

**Tania:** Recognizing from a young age that legal assistance can be a luxury that not everyone can afford, but that can profoundly impact an individual's life, with potential ripple effects on the lives of

the individual's family and community members. I hope to continue doing pro bono work for the rest of my career.

**Q: What are some of the particular challenges of representing pro bono clients?**

**Tania:** Many pro bono clients face significant challenges like poverty, unemployment, unstable housing, incarceration, and untreated trauma. In many pro bono cases, understanding the facts of a traumatic experience can be critical to building the case, but reliving those experiences can be distressing for the client. In those circumstances, I try to be sensitive to emotional reactions and respond with empathy and a willingness to listen.

**Q: How does working on these cases impact your other work, for paying clients?**

**Tania:** Pro bono matters teach you to be more resourceful. I sometimes have to educate myself on the intricacies of an area of law unrelated to my day-to-day commercial real estate practice by attending CLEs, reading articles, and doing legal research. This has helped me become more self-sufficient in my commercial real estate practice and has made me a better lawyer all-around.