

East Bay Community Law Center

EBCLC Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 2

May 2005

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Dear [EBCLC Alums and Friends](#),

I am pleased to share our second [Newsletter of 2005](#), describing developments at EBCLC during the last few months.

I am delighted to report that EBCLC recently entered into an 8-year affiliation agreement with Boalt Hall! In exchange for increased support, EBCLC will expand the number of students in the clinical program and deepen its partnership with Boalt.

The new agreement – together with the building EBCLC is under contract to purchase – secures EBCLC's dual role as the community centerpiece of Boalt's clinical program and the East Bay's largest provider of legal services to the poor.

Program Highlights

From February through April, EBCLC's [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](#) program provided free tax help to low-income clients. Funded as part of the [United Way's Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Coalition](#), students and volunteers received professional training from the IRS, including the use of specialized software and training on the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#). Over the last 2 years, [VITA volunteers at EBCLC helped over 150 clients with tax returns resulting in more than \\$140,000 in refunds for working families in our community!](#)

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- In March, [CED student Marcela Ruiz](#) was one of several speakers at a town hall meeting about the [Wal-Mart/MetroPort Development in East Oakland](#). A coalition of labor, environmental and neighborhood groups is seeking community benefits from the developer to mitigate the impact of Wal-Mart in Oakland.
- In April, [CED student Ben Geiger](#) spoke at a regional dialogue on the [California Environmental Quality Act \(CEQA\)](#). Representatives from the [Greenbelt Alliance](#) and the [Sierra Club](#) also participated in this important gathering of planners and policy-makers on the future of CEQA as it relates to needs in low-income communities.

- In May, former **Congressman Ron Dellums** weighed in on behalf of EBCLC and a coalition of community groups working to ensure **living wage jobs, local hiring preferences, historic preservation, affordable housing and environmental mitigation** in connection with the proposed **Central Station/Wood Street Development in West Oakland**. Negotiations continue with the developers to achieve a project that benefits everyone in West Oakland.

DECRIMINALIZATION OF POVERTY (SUITCASE CLINIC)

- In March, EBCLC welcomed **Alumnus Kevin Gordon** as a **Community Service Fellow** in the **Decriminalization of Poverty Practice**. This fellowship is made possible through the generous support of the law firm of **Perkins Coie**, and is a unique feature of the firm's *pro bono* work. Kevin has coordinated EBCLC's involvement in the **Criminal Records Expungement Summit** and the establishment of **Criminal Records Clinics**.
- In April, EBCLC co-sponsored an inaugural **Criminal Records Expungement Summit** with **Congresswoman Barbara Lee**. The summit was a huge success, with **more than 80 volunteer attorneys counseling more than 700 formerly incarcerated people** on how to overcome obstacles to housing, employment and civic participation through legal remedies. Congresswoman Lee recently raised criminal records expungement at a meeting of the **Congressional Black Caucus**.
- In May, EBCLC launched the **Criminal Records Clinic** at the **Alameda County Superior Court's Self-Help Center**. EBCLC staff, students and volunteers will staff the clinic every Tuesday and Thursday, providing assistance to formerly incarcerated people who are trying to clean up their criminal records. Additional **Evening & Weekend Criminal Records Clinics** are being held at EBCLC.

HOUSING & EVICTION DEFENSE

- This spring, in partnership with the **Alameda County Bar Association's Volunteer Legal Services Corporation (VLSC)**, EBCLC began representing Oakland clients in matters before the **Rent Adjustment Board**. Under a contract with the **City of Oakland**, EBCLC assists low-income tenants and VLSC assists low-income landlords, in an effort to ensure access to justice for all parties.
- Discovery continues in EBCLC's first-ever **class action lawsuit**, filed with the **Public Interest Law Project** and the law firm of **Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP**. The lawsuit seeks damages on behalf of low-income tenants who were deprived of their security deposits by a local provider of rental housing.
- Beginning this summer, EBCLC will enter into a formal partnership with **Centro Legal de la Raza** to provide housing and eviction defense services to low-income clients in **Oakland's Fruitvale District**. The collaboration is supported by a **Community Development Block Grant** from the **City of Oakland**.

HIV/AIDS & HEALTH

- In April, **Attorney Linda Tam** was an invited speaker at **The American Foundation for AIDS Research's 2005 National HIV/AIDS Update Conference**. Students under Linda's supervision recently won two more **political asylum cases on behalf of HIV-infected clients**. The cases involved gay men from El Salvador and Columbia, both facing persecution because of their sexual orientation and HIV status. **Asylum has enabled one**

client to pursue his education at UC Berkeley and the other to access critical medical care.

- In May, with representatives from the **Positive Resource Center** and the **Department of Rehabilitation**, **Attorney Gail Silverstein** conducted a training on returning to work for people living with HIV. A student under Gail's supervision successfully represented an **HIV-infected transgender** client in a recent **Medi-Cal hearing**. The state had repeatedly denied the client injectable hormone replacement therapy, despite the side effects from her current therapy.
- In a policy effort that will benefit hundreds of East Bay clients, **Attorney Liam Galbreth** persuaded Alameda County to **drop plans to disclose the HIV status of disabled In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipients to their care providers**. In lieu of such disclosure, **the county agreed to train IHSS care providers to use universal precautions in all IHSS settings**.

INCOME & EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

- In April, **EBCLC student Ann O'Leary** testified before the **State Assembly Human Services Committee** in support of **AB 503, a "Bill of Rights" for welfare recipients in California**. **Ann** and **IES Director Ed Barnes** have continued their legislative efforts to extend CalWORKs benefits for families who meet monthly welfare-to-work requirements through the **"Work Stops the Clock"** provisions of AB 503.
- In May, **Luan Huynh**, a 2005 graduate of **UCLA School of Law**, was selected as the second **Shartsis Friese Public Interest Fellow**. Luan will join **EBCLC's Income & Employment Support** practice in August, providing services primarily to Southeast Asian families who are being improperly denied welfare benefits due to their disability or language access needs.
- After five administrative hearing decisions and two Superior Court appeals handled by **IES Director Ed Barnes and his students**, the state has settled **an important welfare case** involving the punitive application to a limited-English speaking family of the **maximum family grant rule**. The litigation was supported in part by a generous grant from **The Impact Fund**, and results in **substantial retroactive benefits** to the family.

Clinic News

- In April, EBCLC hosted an inaugural **Alumni/ae Reception** at Café Zebulon in San Francisco. Organized by the co-chairs of **EBCLC's Development Committee**, **Margaret Jung** and **Shannon McGriff-Smith**, the event brought together EBCLC staff, board members and current and former students for an evening of good food, good drink and great company.
- In May, we completed the academic semester with **39 Boalt students enrolled in the Clinic, the largest single class in EBCLC's history!** 33 Boalt students have been selected from among 63 applicants for the **fall 2005 semester**.
- This summer, 20 law students will join EBCLC from schools across the country, including: **American University (1), Boalt Hall (5), Boston College (1), Columbia (1), Golden Gate (2), Harvard (2), Hastings (1), Penn (1), St. Thomas (1), UC Davis (3), UCLA (1) and Washington University (1)**.

Recent Awards

In April, **EBCLC student Ann O’Leary** received **Boalt Hall’s 2005 Brian M. Sax Prize for Excellence in Clinical Advocacy**, awarded annually to a graduating clinic student who has demonstrated excellence in advocacy, sound professional judgment, and reflection on the lawyer’s role.

Donor Appreciation

Special thanks to some of our **recent major funding partners**, including:

- The **Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration** for renewal of **Ryan White CARE Act** funding.
- The law firm of **Alexander, Hawes & Audet LLP** for its 3-year commitment of cy pres fund to support a 4-agency regional workers’ rights collaborative.
- The law firm of **Shartsis Friese LLP**, for its on-going, three-year commitment to support the provision of direct legal services to clients in the Bay Area.
- Numerous lead “quiet phase” commitments to **EBCLC’s Building Campaign**, which will be announced publicly this fall.

Our **2003-2004 Annual Report** acknowledges **individual, law firm, foundation, corporate and government gifts** made through June 30, 2004 – **thank you to all of our donors, whose generous support makes our work possible!**

Keep in Touch

In order to improve our ability to communicate with EBCLC alums and friends, please send address changes, news or updates to **EBCLC Development Associate Michelle Shin**.

EBCLC’s Mission

A core value of our society is equal access to justice. The complex nature of the legal system limits equal access, especially for people in poverty and those faced with language and cultural barriers. Well-trained legal advocates should be available to all, regardless of economic status. To that end, EBCLC provides:

- hands-on **clinical education** to law students to make these future lawyers aware of and skilled in addressing the needs of indigent communities; and
- desperately-needed **legal services** to the low-income community in the areas of housing, welfare, HIV/AIDS, homelessness and community economic development.

Since its founding in 1988 by law students at UC Berkeley’s Boalt Hall School of Law, EBCLC has become the **largest provider of free legal services in the East Bay** and **one of the nation’s premier poverty law clinics**.

EBCLC’s work helps to build an East Bay community that is more healthy, secure, productive, and hopeful.