

# East Bay Community Law Center

EBCLC E-Newsletter

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Dear **EBCLC Alums and Friends**,

I am delighted to send you the second quarterly **EBCLC E-Newsletter** and share recent developments here.

## ➤ **Program Highlights**

EBCLC staff and students continue to serve hundreds of individual clients and community groups each month. Selected recent program highlights include:

- In January, EBCLC launched a **Tenants' Rights Workshop for Monolingual Asian-Language Clients** in Oakland. Ayako Nagano, a volunteer attorney and EBCLC alumna, will give advice in the bi-monthly clinics to tenants on housing-related matters. Cantonese and Mandarin interpreters are available at each clinic, and other Asian languages will be accommodated as needed. EBCLC conducts over 100 Tenants' Rights Workshops throughout the East Bay every year.
- In February, EBCLC's **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** program opened to provide free tax help to low-income clients. Through the VITA program, directed by **EBCLC Deputy Director Deborah Moss-West** and **EBCLC Volunteer Coordinator Chauniqua Young**, students and volunteers received professional training from the IRS, including the use of specialized software and training on the **Earned Income Tax Credit**. VITA volunteers at EBCLC helped 80 people with returns resulting in more than \$63,000 in tax refunds for working families in our community. In addition to assistance with tax returns, each client was provided with asset development counseling, including information on childcare, health care, food stamps, banking, individual development accounts, financial education and homeownership.

- In April, EBCLC was selected to administer the **Shartsis Friese & Ginsburg Public Interest Fellowship**, a three-year commitment on the part of the firm to support the provision of direct legal services to clients in the Bay Area. The selection process is underway, and we look forward to announcing the inaugural fellow soon!
- This month, co-counseling with the **Public Interest Law Project** and the law firm of **Lieff, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein, LLP**, EBCLC filed its first-ever class action lawsuit on behalf of low-income tenants who are systematically deprived of their security deposits by a major provider of rental housing in northern California.

## ➤ Clinic News

A very busy spring semester recently concluded, with 34 Boalt students enrolled at EBCLC. A record number of students represented clients and community groups under the supervision of staff attorneys, and made court appearances, argued motions and conducted depositions. Sample highlights include:

- Under the supervision of **HIV/AIDS Law Immigration Project Attorney Linda Tam, Lynsay Skiba** ('05) helped win EBCLC's first-ever **political asylum** case, granted to a client from Guatemala, who suffered persecution there as a bisexual living with HIV.
- Under the supervision of **Employment & Income Support Director Ed Barnes, Michael Rosen-Molina** ('04) presented at a regional town hall meeting on budget cuts and social services.
- Under the supervision of **Community Economic Development Director Margareta Lin**:
  - **Guy Johnson** ('05) authored a report and engaged in advocacy before the Oakland Housing Authority for the **West Oakland Food Project Collaborative** on the economic benefits of a worker-owned, cooperative approach to the retail needs in this developing community;
  - **Carol Chacón** ('05) wrote a policy advocacy report in partnership with the **Coalition to Protect Rental Housing** and presented it before the City of Oakland's Community and Economic Development Agency, analyzing proposed changes to Oakland's condominium conversion ordinance to identify the impact of the changes on affordable housing and low-income tenants; and
  - **Lisa Wang** ('04) developed and provided a training on legal and political anti-displacement strategies for community activists, which will provide the foundation for a new affordable housing research initiative in partnership with the **Northern California Land Trust**.

In June, 16 law students will join us for **EBCLC's Summer Program**, from schools including: **Boalt Hall, Boston College, Harvard, Hastings, Iowa, Lewis & Clark, McGeorge, Michigan, NYU, Santa Clara, UCLA and Yale.**

### ➤ Recent Awards

EBCLC staff and students continue to receive well-deserved recognition for their work:

- In March, EBCLC executive director **Jeff Selbin** visited **Harvard Law School** as a **Wasserstein Public Interest Fellow**, awarded to recognize “exemplary lawyers who have distinguished themselves in public interest work and who can assist students who are considering similar career paths.”
- **HIV/AIDS Law Unit Director Sheila Hall** recently was selected by the state **Office of AIDS** to serve on the **California HIV Planning Group**, the top advisory body on HIV policy and planning in the state.
- **Housing Unit Director Laura Lane** recently was invited to conduct **Benchmark Institute** trainings for new legal services lawyers.
- In April, EBCLC students **Hilary Armstrong** ('04, Employment & Income Support) and **Sarah Barnes** ('04, Suitcase Clinic Legal Services) received honorable mentions at Boalt Hall's annual **Sax Prize** luncheon honoring graduating clinic students.

These honors come on top of a number of local, state and national awards for EBCLC's teaching and service during the last few years.

### ➤ Keep in Touch

In order to improve our ability to communicate with alumni/ae and friends, please send address changes, news or updates to **EBCLC Development Director Jon Marley**, at [marley@ebclc.org](mailto:marley@ebclc.org).

To **make a gift** to EBCLC, and allow us to continue to provide critical legal services to clients and clinical opportunities to law students, please visit our website, at: <http://www.ebclc.org/support.htm>.

### ➤ EBCLC's Mission

A core value of our society is equal access to justice, yet the complex nature of the legal system limits such access, especially for people in poverty. Equal access is further

limited by the dearth of lawyers and advocates for poor people. The East Bay Community Law Center addresses these issues by:

- Providing desperately-needed **legal services** to low-income individuals and community groups in the areas of housing, employment and income support, HIV/AIDS, and community economic development; and
- Offering hands-on **clinical education** to law students in the form of training and supervision in the provision of legal services to low-income clients and community groups.

**EBCLC's goal is to make the lives of East Bay community members more healthy, secure, productive, and hopeful.**

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