



Focus on Core Mission:
Legal Service, Policy Advocacy, and Teaching
JUSTICE THROUGH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

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FALL 2010

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2010 has been another dynamic year for the East Bay Community Law Center, as we continued to grow our work to meet the service needs of clients and the education demands of law students. EBCLC both broadened and deepened its work by serving more clients and students, but also working on broader policy and legislative campaigns to address root causes and fundamental rights. Following are just a few highlights from EBCLC's year:

CLEAN SLATE PRACTICE (Community Reentry)

River Abeje, Eliza Hersh (Practice Director), Jesse Hsieh, Serina Rankins, Jessie Warner (Policy Director)

The Clean Slate staff and their students provide assistance to people seeking to clean up their criminal records and support policy advocacy with the goal of fostering community reentry and reduce recidivism by helping clients overcome barriers to employment, housing, education, and civic participation.



Saturday, December 4th, EBCLC will co-sponsor a "Day of Forgiveness and New Beginnings." This will be the fifth annual event EBCLC has co-sponsored with Rep. Barbara Lee, CA Senator Loni Hancock, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, and other officials. The Alameda County Superior Court will hold a special session to remove significant legal and financial barriers to community reentry for pre-screened candidates who are getting their lives on track after prior contact with the criminal justice system. Same day services will likely include reentry services, DMV print outs, free RAP sheets, public benefits counseling, Social Security replacement cards, other substance abuse screening. Clean Slate will provide legal counseling, and there are still opportunities to volunteer! If you are interested, please contact: Jessie Warner 510-548-4040 ext 344 or jwarner@ebclc.org.

HEALTH PRACTICE (Medical-Legal Partnerships)

Liam Galbreth, Sheila Hall (Practice Director), Rosa Loya, Linda Tam, Yvonne Troya

The Health Practice attorneys and their students use a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the complex and varied health-related legal needs of low-income people. Health now consists of four distinct projects that share the core mission of stabilizing and improving health: 1) an HIV/AIDS law project; 2) a Medical Legal



Partnership with Children's Hospital and Research Center Oakland; 3) an Immigration & Health Project that bridges the Health practice to stabilize families' immigration statuses as a component of steady health; and 4) a new collaboration with [Safe Passages: Elev8 Oakland](#).

This October, EBCLC was thrilled to welcome back EBCLC alumna, Rosa Loya (Boston College '08), to launch our latest medical-legal partnership: Elev8 Oakland. EBCLC has partnered with Safe Passages on the Oakland Elev8 project to help provide wrap-around support services to families with kids in five high-need public middle schools. Rosa will design know-your-rights workshops and provide legal counseling, referrals, and representation for the families accessing Elev8's holistic services, which include a health clinic, dental care, benefits counseling, mental health services, tutoring, youth mentorship, tax assistance, and ESL classes. EBCLC's work with Elev8 will bring legal advocacy and access to hundreds of underserved Oakland families. [More information about Elev8](#).

HOUSING PRACTICE (Eviction Defense / Preserving Affordable Housing)

Jaimee Arnone Modica, Brendan Darrow, Sharon Djemal, Marc Janowitz, Gracie Jones, Laura Lane (Practice Director)

The Housing Practice staff and their students represent clients in civil eviction defense proceedings and administrative hearings, assist pro per clients, conduct outreach and education workshops for tenants, and develop affirmative lawsuits to enforce habitability standards and other applicable housing laws.



This year, Brendan Darrow (BerkeleyLaw '10) was awarded a two-year Equal Justice Works fellowship (sponsored by Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP) to continue working in the Housing Practice, where he has interned since 2008. Brendan designed a project to help tenants living in foreclosed properties. Over 40% of foreclosed properties in California are home to lawful, rent-paying tenants who typically learn of foreclosure after the fact. Already confusing, the legal notification of foreclosure is meaningless to monolingual Spanish speakers, as it is usually provided in English. These tenants are ill-equipped to exercise their rights under federal, state, and local laws. Brendan's fellowship project will provide counseling and representation to help vulnerable tenants navigate these complex legal processes and advocate for their housing rights.

INCOME SUPPORT PRACTICE (Welfare Advocacy)

Ed Barnes (Practice Director), Luan Huynh

The Income Support attorneys and their students seek to insure and increase the minimum income and support services for low-income individuals and families by representing clients in administrative hearings regarding welfare-to-work requirements, and engaging in local, state, and national policy efforts to support low-income and working-poor families.

The Income Support staff and students are actively engaged in a campaign to end



“child exclusion” policies as part of the federal government’s reauthorization of TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). California, and 20 other states, currently have child exclusion policies that deny assistance to children who are born into families already receiving welfare in order to discourage welfare recipients from having additional children. These policies are ineffective and counter to the value of autonomy in family planning decisions. Most important, child exclusion policies put struggling families in greater financial distress and intensify the

impact of poverty on vulnerable children. [More information on EBCLC’s coalition work.](#)

NEIGHBORHOOD JUSTICE CLINIC (Homeless Rights / Consumer Law / General Civil)

Elisa Della-Piana (Practice Director), Dominique Ruegg, Osha Neumann, Megan Ryan, Owen Thompson



The Neighborhood Justice Clinic (NJC) staff and their students provide self-help assistance to unrepresented litigants facing a range of legal issues. NJC specializes in consumer debt issues and homeless rights (homeless status citation defense and policy advocacy) at its day-time clinics and evening workshops. Since launching NJC’s Consumer Law Clinic, EBCLC has worked with hundreds of low-income people facing monstrous debts, often because of unexpected financial hardships, unconscionable loan terms, unscrupulous collection tactics, and identity theft. Following is just one NJC client’s story:

In 2006, James was a victim of identity theft and his information was used to purchase and mortgage a condominium. When James found out, he immediately filed a police report and notified the bank. In 2009, he was sued by the homeowners association to recover a debt of more than \$9,000. James explained that he was a victim of identity theft and provided the police report and substantiated bank claim, but the homeowners association still would not dismiss the case. EBCLC helped clarify that the association was violating California identity theft law, and could be liable in a cross-complaint for continuing to pursue the suit once James had established identity theft. The homeowners association finally dismissed their suit. For more information about NJC’s consumer work, see the [New York Times article on our homepage:](#)

INVEST IN EBCLC

EBCLC is recognized as one of the premier poverty law clinics in the country, having received local, state, and national awards for its dual mission of teaching and service, and an emphasis on innovative, multidisciplinary practices driven by community need.

With the continued help of our constituents, stakeholders, and partners, we will remain at the forefront of innovative and effective advocacy on behalf of clients and communities in need.

For more information on ways to support EBCLC, please visit:

<https://secure.groundspring.org/dn/index.php?aid=10389>.

KEEP IN TOUCH

In order to improve our ability to communicate with EBCLC alums and friends, please send address changes, news, or updates to Jon Marley, EBCLC Director of Development & Planning, at marley@ebclc.org.

Back issues of the EBCLC newsletters can be found at www.ebclc.org.

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