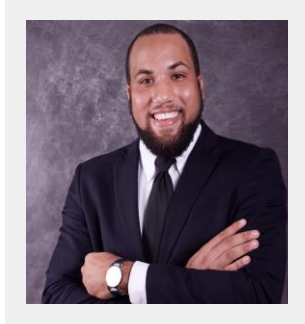




Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Oliver Telusman

Law School: Florida A&M University College of Law

Organization: Community Justice Project

Post 1: During a moment in which communities across the country have been forced to grip with racial injustice, supporting those who are pushing for transformational change has never been more important. That's why this summer, I'm beyond grateful to have the opportunity to work at Community Justice Project as an intern.

My work is being supported in part by Equal Justice America, an organization dedicated to financially supporting law students who are committed to public interest work. It is my firm belief that their work also becomes more crucial during this time, as law students continue to stretch both time and resources to help marginalized communities battling both structural inequality and a global pandemic.

You can also support that work by sharing this post. I also ask you to consider donating to my cohort's fundraising challenge. Right now, we're raising money to provide legal support to victims of domestic violence, asylum seekers, veterans, houseless folk, LGBTQ+ folk, and the indigent. As of this post, the campaign has raised almost \$19,000 of a \$20,000 goal.

I believe that transformational change is on the other side of struggle. But in the interim, the struggle continues.

Post 2: At this point the office successfully banded together with a larger coalition of advocacy groups, activist organizations to advocate for a month extension on the statewide moratorium. However, that victory wasn't without concerns: there were many landlords who were going through the process of the evictions. This represented a challenge to homeowners and advocates alike. Many homeowners were within their rights to file, and there was a growing confirmation of how inadequate CARES Act funding really was. There was nothing to do short of prepping the report to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Housing. This time I spend doing research and co-writing this report with housing and human rights attorneys.



Post 3: As I begin to wrap up my time at the Community Justice Project as an intern, the battle on fighting for rent relief and decriminalization of homelessness continues to intensify. In just a few days, close to one million individuals in Florida are at risk for eviction. The only protection for many of these individuals has come by way of statewide moratoriums. However, these moratoriums were only just a stop gap measure. Many of these same Floridians have overdue rent from previous months. Once the moratorium on evictions is lifted, they will be on the hook for that month's rents and all the previous months' rent as well. These are untenable conditions for many folk who already struggled with month to month expenses before the quarantine began.

Throughout the summer I've been involved with various efforts behind the scenes to combat this issue. This work has notably included partnering with multiple grassroots organizations who provide direct service and direct action. I also had the opportunity to collaborate with another intern, and other movement lawyers to create a report to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Housing. Their specific job was to create a consistent narrative from the various reports delivered from different cities on the effects of COVID-19 on housing insecurity. Chronicling Miami's struggles, we touched on the numbers of evictions, how Miami has chosen to both criminalize homelessness and police a public health crisis instead of proactively solving the problem. We also centered the voices of those directly impacted by this reality by featuring their stories within the report itself. This work culminated in a press conference that I was able to be a featured speaker at, demanding that the governor of Florida extend the moratorium through the end of the year, and provide long term for renters/homeowners struggling under mounting debt by providing debt relief.

This work is going to be crucial even after my internship ends. The fate of so many Floridians rests in the hands of a governor who needs constant pressure from Florida residents to do the right thing. Equal Justice America has empowered me to make sure those affected the most by his decisions have every resource at their disposal to apply pressure.

Post 4: I had the opportunity to finish my time at the Community Justice Project last week, and the end of the summer was just as enthralling as the beginning. Despite the facing the real possibility of close to a million people facing evictions in the State of Florida, the individuals working in the office came together during extreme and unexpected circumstances. Between a large volume of documents to review to prepare for a deposition in less than 48 hours, helping organize another press conference, and conducting research on work long-term legal strategy, I had the opportunity to experience an organization that doubled down on its commitment to represent indigent folk in South Florida. Their willingness to remain in solidarity with activists was incredibly appreciated, especially during a time where people's beliefs in non-traditional organizing was tested. My coworkers, and fellow interns were amazing, and in them I've found an intellectual home that I feel confident in pushing myself in. I'm grateful for this time, and this experience, and I'm grateful for the role that EJA played in making this happen.