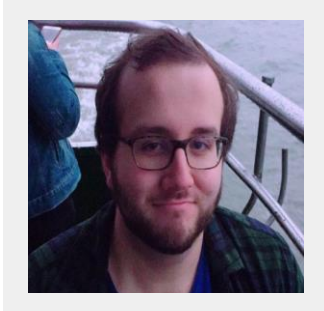




Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Kyle Gornick

Law School: Rutgers

Organization: Essex-Newark Legal Services

Week of June 15th:

For my internship with the expungements unit of Essex-Newark Legal Services this summer, I am receiving a generous funding stipend from Equal Justice America. I will provide occasional updates throughout the summer detailing my experiences.

So far, I am two weeks in on the job and absolutely loving it. The thing that has been most eye-opening to me is learning about the arduous process that must be undertaken for an expungement request to be successful. For our clients who are desperate to move forward with job opportunities and other benefits that come from a cleared criminal record, this can be an especially difficult process. I have been helping prepare documentation that is distributed to various state and municipal law enforcement agencies for clients' expungements. Our unit is also grappling with the changes to New Jersey's expungement statute that occurred this week. I am looking forward to continuing my work for our clients as a part of this team.

Week of July 6th:

I am continuing to enjoy my work with the expungement unit of Essex-Newark Legal Services. One of the biggest challenges we are facing is the impact of COVID-19 on local police departments' workforces, as the pandemic has rendered these departments backlogged with expungement-related requests. Nevertheless, we are working hard to try to meet our clients' needs. This week, I started writing my first expungement petition for a client. A petition is the most important document for an expungement request. It details a client's past criminal wrongdoings and why he or she is eligible to receive an expungement order. I am embracing the opportunity to help this client in such a meaningful way.



Week of July 27th:

Our team in the expungement unit of Essex-Newark Legal Services is continuing to work through these trying times. I can't say that there is too much to report this time around – my work has become routine at this point, and that stability is something I can appreciate. I finished my assigned portion of the petition that I had mentioned in my last post and am working on clients' paperwork at various stages of the expungement process. This is my penultimate post; I will provide one final update in a couple of weeks.

Week of August 10th:

It's time for my fourth and final EJA Fellow Update!

Today was my last day of work at Essex-Newark Legal Services, which made for a bittersweet feeling. I am going to miss the work that I've been doing, yet I'm also very gratified to have been given the opportunity to help individuals in need of an expungement. I decided to take on this internship in February, before the recent protests for racial justice that began at the end of this spring, but these protests have reaffirmed the value of my work. In the context of a criminal justice system that disproportionately impacts people of color, it was a privilege to assist those in the greater Newark area who needed an expungement to move forward in life. I couldn't think of a better post-1L internship than what I had this summer.

Please consider supporting Equal Justice America.