



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Tim Rosenberger
Law School: Stanford
Organization: Sola Caritas

Week of June 15th

I am settling into the work at the community legal clinic and very much enjoying the work. This coalition of churches is particularly inspiring because it is so diverse and responsive to the needs of the community. People often remark that Sunday morning is the most segregated time in America, and that may still be true, but these churches have pulled together to offer excellent legal services to the community.

We see many hurting people every day, and most of them are the working poor in our immediate community. The organization is helping people who have been unfairly fired, are facing unfair collection practices, and other matters, but the meat of its work remains housing law. They have a strong track record of helping people maintain housing. I have been particularly inspired by the admonition of one lawyer to “listen to people” who we are serving. There is a lot of work, and it can be easy to dive right in to solving problems, but taking the time to hear, know, and serve our clients honors their human dignity and ensures that our solutions are responsive to their needs. I am very grateful to EJA for the opportunity to return to Cleveland and serve in this way this summer.

Week of July 6th

The work continues in earnest, and I have found that the most common request remains that we assist people with unemployment claims. This is not a usual part of the organization’s work, but during this trying time of pandemic, they are stepping in to meet an urgent need in the community. People are having terrible times filing for the benefits to which they are entitled. The state employs some kind of automated system that does not allow people to get through to a human person. This is a big problem because some people then can never file. For example, I worked with one client who could not get a pin to log in online. When she tried to set up an account, the system said she already had one and she should reset her pin. When she tried to reset the pin online, the system told her it could not help her



and she should call. The phone number led to an automated number that requested information. When that was plugged in, the system said it did not match the information it had and to try again. When she tried again, the phone said “thank you, goodbye” and hung up. She could not find a way to access benefits.

People are understandably frustrated and struggling. The lawyers here are working hard to meet the needs of the community and having a real impact on people’s lives. I am very grateful to EJA for the award that allows me to work here and serve in this way.

Week of July 27th

We are seeing unemployment claims slow down, which is a good thing, but people still are struggling. Benefits are not coming in. People are being denied for bizarre reasons. Even with benefits, some people are still not able to make basic payments like rent payments and so we are now seeing more people worry about evictions. Fortunately, Cleveland is not doing evictions right now, so there is not particular urgency in these cases.

The mentorship this summer has been very strong and has solidified my interest in doing public interest work, particularly among the working poor in the inner city. I am so inspired by the way that this organization positively impacts lives, and hope that I can put the things I’ve learned this summer into practice going forward.

Week of August 10th

It is bittersweet to be submitting my final EJA Fellow Update. While I’m very excited to be returning to Stanford, this has been a wonderful summer and I’m grateful to have learned so much from so many talented people. Equal Justice America has made it possible for me to have a great summer working with very talented people doing important work in my home community. We have helped hundreds of people with unemployment applications, kept dozens of people in their homes, and worked with people on many other issues. Sola Caritas Cleveland continues to do great work and it will be sad not to be a part of it this fall. At a time when so much seems uncertain, and the country feels so uneasy, it has been a blessing to be a small part of healing the world in my small corner of it. It would be a great blessing to return next summer.