

During the summer of 2019, I interned with the Detroit Justice Center (DJC). DJC is a non-profit law firm that works alongside communities in Detroit and Southeast Michigan to create economic opportunities, transform the justice system, and promote equitable and just cities. Guided by the philosophy of movement lawyering, DJC situates itself in the midst of the grassroots and radical organizing movements of Detroit as legal advocates and resources. Working at DJC, I learned a lot about what I hope to do in the future, as well as the way that I hope to approach that work. I was involved in many different projects, including legal and policy research, case support, resource collection, and support of advocacy campaigns. I worked with and for a team of brilliant, compassionate, justice-minded individuals, who were an equally significant part of my summer's learning.

One of the major projects that I worked on, along with DJC's legal interns, was the research necessary for developing the foundations of a policy whitepaper. Much of my research was about the histories and policies of Detroit that ultimately led to the creation of a highly segregated city. This segregation enabled various municipalities to generate revenue from traffic-related crimes imposed disproportionately on the city's Black population, which makes up a vast majority of the city's population. This research is particularly relevant in the Detroit of today, as the forces of gentrification are actively displacing and pricing out Detroit natives, who are continuing to be overpoliced and over-charged for low level and victimless crimes. The research that I did both helped me develop a deeper understanding of the city that welcomed me throughout the summer, as well as provided the foundation for the policy recommendations that will be put forth as a result of this whitepaper, and help to lessen the burden of egregiously high

finances and fees that are imposed on the often unrepresented and un-advocated for population of Detroit, as a result of these racial policies and histories.

In addition, I was involved in researching and developing a proposal for an affordability plan for water accessibility in Detroit. Alongside DJC's Community Legal Workers who are a group of community activists and legal advocates housed in DJC, I learned that tens of thousands of Detroit residents have had their water shut off as a result of water bills that are egregiously high and consequently unaffordable. In a state that borders some of the largest fresh water reserves the country has (namely, the Great Lakes), it is clear that these water shutoffs are truly an issue of affordability and access, as opposed to availability. The research involved understanding best practices of affordability plans implemented in other cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore, building relationships with other water activists in Detroit, and drafting a policy for affordability to be implemented by the city.

I was also involved in many smaller research and writing tasks for the attorneys at DJC who work mainly on direct representation of individual cases. The vast majority of the cases that these attorneys represent are traffic violations and family matters, which are categories that rarely have attorney representation, though an individual can owe thousands of dollars for a single traffic stop, for example, through default judgments, fines, court costs, and fees. Much of my work involved understanding a client's case, contacting the courts for information that would be useful to the case, maintaining contact with clients, and assisting in drafting motions and briefs on the client's behalf.

Additionally, DJC has a partnership with The Bail Project, which is a rotating bail fund that operates in many cities, Detroit included. I had the opportunity to work with them as well, doing tasks mainly related to case upkeep and resource collection, so that those who were released on bail had access to places that could provide for them further support in the ways they needed it. This work showed me the deep inequalities that exist in regards to bail, meaning that there is too often a barrier of just a few thousand dollars exists, preventing someone from living freely.

I learned an immense amount about lawyering, about the pursuit and struggle for justice, radical movement building, and the city of Detroit this summer. I am hugely grateful to everyone who taught me these things at the Detroit Justice Center, as well as the Liman fellowship for enabling all of this learning and growth. I intend to bring my learning with me into my future, wherever I may go.