Anti-Poverty Community Roundtable
Saturday, April 16, 2016
8:30 am - 12:45 pm
Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington, Ave., Montgomery, AL

Agenda
8:30 – Welcome: Morris Dees, Founder, Southern Poverty Law Center

8:45 - Purpose of Roundtable; Ted W. Small, Chair, Commission on Homelessness and Poverty
Today’s Agenda: Craig H. Baab, Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice

9:00 – First Framing Question: Jaffe Pickett, Legal Services Alabama

Only a small percentage of people requiring free civil legal assistance for such matters as evictions and protective orders receive such support. What is the best approach for legal services providers to collaborate with those providing education, housing, healthcare and other supports for the homeless and people living in poverty?

10:10 - Break
10:20 – Second Framing Question:

Two crippling manifestations of poverty are “stigma and lack of personal dignity” and “isolation from community and political infrastructure,” often resulting from interactions with law enforcement, the courts and the correctional system. How can we better collaborate with these entities, and legislative bodies, to remove inappropriate and damaging collateral consequences of criminal convictions?

11:45 – Lunch

12:00 – Third Framing Question:

How can we more candidly collaborate across racial lines to better educate the public, and public officials, about the functional reality of the relationship of race and poverty?

12:30 – Next Steps:
How can the ABA and the Alabama legal community support a local anti-poverty dialogue and your collaborative efforts?

12:45 - Adjourn
Background:
Nearly 50 million Americans now live below the federal poverty line. Recent societal, economic and political events (economic meltdown, mortgage foreclosure epidemic, Trayvon Martin, Hurricane Katrina, Ferguson, Missouri, Michelle Alexander’s “The New Jim Crow,” 9/11, the “school to prison pipeline,” unaccompanied minors coming across the border, etc.) have given rise to unprecedented public awareness of income inequality in America, the number of children living in poverty and the disparate treatment and impacts of the law and justice systems on communities of color and populations that face other barriers and obstacles to justice, such as disability, limited English proficiency, immigrant status and other factors.

Initiative Goal:
Identify and help promote and implement best practices for eliminating legal and justice system-related policies, practices and procedures that unfairly perpetuate or worsen the harmful effects of poverty on low-income people and communities, including obstacles and barriers to public benefits, employment, housing, treatment and services needed by people experiencing homelessness or living in poverty.

Working Definition of Poverty:
Poverty is a state or lived experience caused and perpetuated by various, often compounded, factors such as:
- Inadequate economic resources and opportunity to build assets, including employment, adequate income and assets to meet basic human needs such as food, housing, clothing, etc.;
- Insufficient access to social resources such as healthcare, justice and education;
- Weak political standing and limited opportunity for meaningful association and engagement;
- Isolation and lack of cultural identity support;
- Inability to hold institutions and individuals accountable for fair and equitable behavior;
- Disparate treatment based on poverty compounded by other forms of structural unfairness and disparity based on race, ethnicity, gender identity, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, indigenous identity, national origin, etc.
Manifestations of Poverty:
1. Substandard and unaffordable housing and homelessness;
2. Disproportionate involvement in criminal and civil justice systems;
3. Food inadequacy;
4. Inadequate healthcare and poor health outcomes;
5. Inadequate education outcomes;
6. Lack of opportunity for full employment at a living wage;
7. Living through an unending and continuous cycle of crises;
8. Lack of personal and physical safety;
9. Stigma and lack of personal dignity; and
10. Isolation from community and political infrastructure.

Implementation: Anti-Poverty Roundtables, Toolkit for Communities Seeking to Develop and Operationalize Local Anti-Poverty Agendas, and the ABA Online Quilt of Community Anti-Poverty Discussions
The goal of each roundtable is to bring together 10-15 community stakeholders who are interested in identifying, promoting and implementing best practices for eliminating policies, practices and procedures that unfairly perpetuate or worsen the harmful effects of poverty on low-income people in that particular local community. To connect other communities with the national anti-poverty discussion, the Commission will encourage the designation of at least one panelist in each community who is willing to develop an edited summary of the ideas exchanged and proposed new programming for posting to a Commission-moderated online blog entitled, “Operationalizing A New Anti-Poverty Agenda: An Online Quilt of Community Discussions.” This online blog would allow each roundtable to share its diverse perspective on the most pressing manifestations of poverty within their community as well as its proposed solutions. With the addition of notes from each roundtable, the Commission would add a patch to the national Online Quilt in order to bring together diverse patterns of anti-poverty ideas. These shared ideas could be implemented by other communities who in turn share their own strategies for combatting poverty, creating a resource for all communities to use in removing the practices, policies and procedures that worsen or perpetuate poverty. Additionally, in furtherance of its goal of educating the bar and the general public about homelessness and poverty and the ways the legal community can collaborate with other stakeholders to assist those in need, the Commission is developing a resource entitled: Toolkit for Communities Seeking to Develop and Operationalize Local Anti-Poverty Agendas, in which the Commission will compile a wealth of ABA policy and programming knowledge into a series of “blueprints for action” that are cross-disciplinary and specifically address each of the identified Manifestation of Poverty areas.

American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty
ambar.org/homeless • 202/662-1693 • homeless@americanbar.org
American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty  
Spring Meeting & Anti-Poverty Community Roundtables  
April 13 – 16, 2016  
Birmingham, Selma & Montgomery, AL

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Montgomery
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Montgomery Police Department

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American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty
ambar.org/homeless • 202/662-1693 • homeless@americanbar.org
Morris Dees

Morris Dees co-founded the Southern Poverty Law Center in 1971 following a successful business and law career. He started a direct mail sales company specializing in book publishing while still a student at the University of Alabama, where he also obtained a law degree.

After launching a law practice in Montgomery in 1960, he won a series of groundbreaking civil rights cases that helped integrate government and public institutions. He also served as finance director for former President Jimmy Carter’s campaign in 1976 and for Democratic presidential nominee George McGovern in 1972.

Known for his innovative lawsuits that crippled some of America’s most notorious white supremacist hate groups, he has received more than 20 honorary degrees and numerous awards. Those include Trial Lawyer of the Year from Trial Lawyers for Public Justice, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Award from the National Education Association and The Salem Award for Human Rights and Social Justice.

He was named one of the 100 most influential lawyers in America by the National Law Journal in 2006. In addition, the University of Alabama Law School and the New York law firm Skadden, Arps jointly created the annual Morris Dees Justice Award to honor a lawyer devoted to public service work. Dees has written three books: A Season For Justice, his autobiography; Hate on Trial: The Case Against America’s Most Dangerous Neo-Nazi; and Gathering Storm: America’s Militia Threat. In 1991, NBC aired a made-for-TV movie called “Line of Fire” about Dees and his landmark legal victories against the Ku Klux Klan.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile: Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
John A. Pickens, Executive Director
Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc., Montgomery, AL
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John.pickens@alabamaappleseed.org

Biography:
John Pickens was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He received his Bachelor’s Degree in Economics from Rice University in Houston, Texas, and his Juris Doctor Degree from Vanderbilt University School of Law in Nashville, Tennessee. Before returning to Alabama in October, 2002 as Executive Director of the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, John practiced law for thirty years in Atlanta, which included the formation and administration of a non-profit law project for poor people who did not have equal access to competent legal counsel in criminal cases.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, Inc.
www.alabamaappleseed.org
Twitter – AL_Appleseed
Mission - Alabama Appleseed’s mission is to work for systemic policy reforms that achieve justice and fairness for low-income and other vulnerable populations that have little, or no, voice in developing policies that impact their lives

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
For the past two years Alabama Appleseed has been involved in the prison reform/ex-offender re-entry reform efforts in Alabama in order to reduce the nearly 195% prison population overcapacity and to reduce the number of barriers faced by ex-offenders released from prison and returning to the community. Alabama’s Legislature in 2015 passed a fairly comprehensive prison/sentencing reform act that addresses (but does not completely solve) the prison overcapacity issues, and the Legislature in the current 2016 legislative session has before it several additional prison/sentencing reform measures, most notably an $800 million bond issues for new prison construction (i.e. 4 new prisons). During the current 2016 legislative session we are working with other stakeholders on a number of ex-offender re-entry issues, namely voting rights, ban the box, and the issuance of occupational and professional licenses.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
Alabama Appleseed’s Legal Director, Ms. Shay Farley, was appointed in 2014 to the Alabama Prison Reform Task Force as one of the voices on the Task Force to present the view and perspective of people going through the criminal justice system and those incarcerated. She played a very active role on the Task Force and pulled together a number of prison reform/criminal justice advocacy groups to draft and make recommendations to the Task Force. In 2015 the Alabama Legislature passed a comprehensive prison/sentencing reform bill that largely incorporated the recommendations from the Task Force. This bill became effective at the end of January 2016. During this same time frame we have been working on reforms related to the myriad of legislative, regulatory and practical barriers facing persons with criminal records released from incarceration. Our work has focused mostly to date on ex-offender voting
rights, occupational and professional licensing restrictions, and ban the box legislation. We have utilized in this work best practices, model approaches, and research data from several national social justice advocacy groups focused on these particular issues.

**Barriers and Challenges:**
Probably our main barrier and challenge for meaningful law reforms at the state level (and to some extent at the county/local level) is that Alabama is a very politically conservative, “red” state that usually manifests itself in criminal justice matters as harsh and unforgiving law enforcement-oriented laws, policies and practices. However, with the Smart on Crime initiatives that have been embraced by some conservative groups there may be some change in this regard. Alabama having passed a comprehensive prison/sentencing reform is some indication of this, but still a law and order mentality is the norm. In the private sector fear of hiring or giving housing or other benefits to people with criminal records remains a barrier, one that we will be trying to overcome with public outreach and educational efforts.

**Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?**
Alabama Appleseed collaborates in a number of ways with lawyers, law firms and legal services groups. A hallmark of the Appleseed network, and of Alabama Appleseed, is that we engage lawyers and their law firms on a pro bono basis in our public interest advocacy work and initiatives. This pro bono work for Alabama Appleseed includes factual investigations, legal research, report writing and drafting of legislation. Over the years we have worked on a number of public interest advocacy projects with Alabama Legal Services, drawing upon their on the ground, firsthand experience and knowledge on the advocacy issues undertaken by Alabama Appleseed. We have also given CLE presentations to a number of the Volunteer Lawyer Programs around the state and participated in several of their direct service outreach efforts, most notably an emergency legal services clinic after a devastating tornado roared through Alabama.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile: Alabama Arise

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Kimble Forrister
State Coordinator, Alabama Arise
kimble@alarise.org
334.832.9060

Biography:
Kimble Forrister is State Coordinator of Alabama Arise, a coalition of 150 congregations and organizations that promote fairer public policies on issues affecting low-income Alabamians.

As State Coordinator, Forrister was the first full-time staff member of Arise in 1991. Now Arise has a staff of 11 working to analyze poverty issues and equip Arise members as citizen advocates. In 2006 Arise helped win passage of Alabama's first landlord-tenant law and a tax reform plan that targeted $60 million in income tax reductions to those most in need.

Arise has also tackled a range of other issues raised by low-income Alabamians: transportation, the death penalty, health care, unfair lending practices, housing, constitutional reform, welfare reform, education reform, and immigration reform.

Forrister came to Arise in 1991 after nine years as Southeast Regional Organizer for Bread for the World in Washington, D.C. A native of Nashville, Forrister received his B.A. from David Lipscomb College and his M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary. For seven years in the 1970s he worked in urban ministry projects in the Northeast. He also has Alabama roots: His father, Vardaman Forrister, a Church of Christ minister and sociology professor, was a native of Marion County.

Forrister is married to Calli Patterson, a school counselor. They have three children ranging in age from 19 to 30.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Alabama Arise
Alabamaarise.org
@alabamaarise

Alabama Arise is a coalition of 150 congregations and organizations that promote fairer public policies on issues affecting low-income Alabamians.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
Our members vote every September to choose seven priority issues. This year we have achieved traction on

- Adequate General Fund budget: (especially Medicaid funding and conversion of Alabama Medicaid to a managed care system run by nonprofit corporations). Both chambers overrode governor’s veto of a budget that would cripple Medicaid.
- Payday lending: reform on the Colorado model, which passed the Senate this week. Now on to the House.
- Minimum wage: Opposing bill to stop localities from passing minimum wage ordinances. We lost.
• Voting rights: Streamlined restoration of vote to ex-felons, with shorter list of crimes of moral turpitude. Passed committee in both houses.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
We’re a membership organization with 150 congregations and organizations and 800 individuals. We have a 501(c)(3) and a 501(c)(4). Our staff includes 3 policy analysts and 4 organizers who build support across the state. Successes: In 2006 Arise helped win passage of Alabama’s first landlord-tenant law and a tax reform plan that targeted $60 million in income tax reductions to those most in need.

Barriers and Challenges:
Our chief challenges are the racist lens through which poverty issues are viewed by legislators and the public, and the widespread antipathy toward government and taxes.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
We have worked closely with Alabama Appleseed on several issues.
We have an even longer history with Legal Services of Alabama since our beginning in 1988.
Kimble has served on the Alabama Access to Justice Commission’s Delivery Committee.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile: Alabama Civil Justice Foundation

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Sue McInnish, Executive Director
Alabama Civil Justice Foundation
sue@acjf.org
334-263-3003 work, 334-221-2852 cell

Biography:
Sue McInnish has served as Executive Director of the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation for over 22 years. While there, she has overseen the foundation’s statewide grant making. ACJF’s primary focus has been on supporting nonprofits providing civil legal aid and other social services for disadvantaged families and children.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Alabama Civil Justice Foundation, www.acjf.org
Mission: to break down barriers to a civil and just society.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
One of ACJF’s primary funding categories is for civil legal aid services and access to justice. We support legal aid through Legal Services Alabama and the Volunteer Lawyers Programs. We have also funded Alabama Appleseed’s lobbying work on debt collection and payday lending among other projects.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches: We contracted for a Social Return on Investment study for the services provided by these organizations resulting in one of the highest returns in the country - $8.84. We also commissioned an SROI study that combined the civil legal aid services with Alabama’s successful Family Resource Centers. The results were an astonishing $15.54 for every dollar invested.

Barriers and Challenges:
Insufficient funds for grants.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes, in many ways. Lawyers associated with the Alabama Association of Justice (formerly the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association) created ACJF in 1992. Officers from the AAJ serve on the ACJF board although non-AAJ members of our board must be a majority. Members of the legal community are our primary contributors. In addition, we receive Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) receipts. We consider our charitable work/grant making to represent the legal community. As stated earlier, our grant making includes civil legal aid and access to justice.
**Expert Biography and Organization Profile: Alabama Rural Coalition for the Homeless**

**Speaker/Title/Contact Information:**
Lillian Zaworski  
Program Director, Alabama Rural Coalition for the Homeless  
lillian@archconnection.org  
334-239-7833

**Biography:**
Lillian Zaworski is the CoC Program Services Director for the Alabama Rural Coalition for the Homeless. She provides supervision over homeless programs for 42 rural Alabama counties. She has been part of the National Network to End Domestic Violence Safety Net Team since 2003. She earned her bachelor’s degree at Alabama State University (ASU), and her master of Sociology degree at Auburn University. She has been a faculty member Troy University since 2008. She serves on the Board of Central Alabama Fair Housing and NAMI Montgomery. She was appointed to the Governor’s Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2006.

**Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:**
The Alabama Rural Coalition for the Homeless, Inc. (ARCH)  
Post Office Box 451  
Montgomery, AL 36101  
www.archconnection.org

**Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:**
ARCH is a community-wide partnership to align public and private efforts to make homelessness in Rural Alabama rare, brief and one-time. We develop and implement data-driven strategies to respond to the crisis of homelessness and to address its root causes. Homelessness is solvable, and by acting together as a community, all people can have a home. Local governments, religious institutions, non-profits, philanthropic organizations, shelter and housing providers, the private sector and engaged citizens all have a role to play in tackling homelessness, and all are actively involved in the ARCH CoC.

**Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:**
ARCH uses a Coordinated Assessment in paper and electronic formats. Every agency involved with ARCH can fill out the assessment whenever a person or family contacts them and is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The assessment can be entered electronically or fax the assessment to ARCH. The assessment is recorded and given to a case manager of the appropriate program. ARCH has implemented a “housing first” approach. Housing First is a low barrier approach that people get into housing, then begin addressing other issues.

**Barriers and Challenges:**
ARCH has two major barriers. First, the sheer number of counties (42) is daunting from a geographic standpoint. Travel takes funds away from programs. We must rely on agencies to help with applications and sending materials often without compensation. Secondly-- funding. For example, our Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) requires a one to one match. For every dollar we supply to clients, we must supply another dollar from somewhere to match it. All of our member agencies are looking for funding themselves, so public fundraising in local areas is not an option.

**Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?**
We collaborate with Legal Service Alabama to provide assistance when our clients are being evicted for non-payment.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile: ACLU of Alabama

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Susan Watson, Executive Director ACLU of Alabama

Biography:
Susan Watson was appointed Executive Director of the ACLU of Alabama on April 15, 2013. Prior to coming to the ACLU of Alabama, Watson served as the Regional Director of the ACLU of Florida. In 1999 when the Florida Legislature and then Governor Jeb Bush passed a voucher scheme to divert money from public schools to private and religious schools. Susan volunteered her children to be plaintiffs in contesting the law. Susan and her children prevailed in this lawsuit, protecting public education in the state of Florida.

In 2000 she and others revitalized a long dormant ACLU chapter in Pensacola and she served as the first Panhandle Chapter Chair. Susan also served on the State Board of Directors of the ACLU of Florida and held several positions on the Board’s Executive Committee. Susan joined the staff of the ACLU of Florida in June of 2005 as director of the Northwest region of the ACLU of Florida which stretches from the Alabama line east to Jefferson County. Susan loves being a trouble maker for a living. In her free time she enjoys traveling, reading, dancing and roller-skating. Susan is thrilled with the opportunities and challenges that come with leading the ACLU of Alabama in protecting the civil liberties and civil rights of the people of Alabama.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
ACLU of Alabama
aclualabama.org
@aclualabama

The American Civil Liberties Union is our nation’s guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
We are working in Jefferson County to speed up bail reduction hearings and access to an attorney. In the past people were detained in jail for weeks and weeks before they got a bond reduction hearing losing their jobs and housing. As a result of our work there are fewer people in jail and people are getting out faster.

Debtor’s prison work; Assist with Rights Restoration; Know your Rights workshops and voter rights toolkit

Barriers and Challenges:
Resources we are a small office with a small staff; difficult to work in rural areas

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes, Jefferson County Public Defender’s office private lawyers
Expert Biography and Organization Profile: Equal Justice Initiative

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Ryan Becker
Staff Attorney
Equal Justice Initiative
122 Commerce St.
Montgomery, Alabama 36104

Biography:
Ryan Becker joined EJI after graduating in 2011 from New York University School of Law, where he was in the Equal Justice and Capital Defender Clinic and interned with the Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem and Cabrini Green Legal Aid in Chicago. He graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a B.A. in Political Science, and before that served active duty in the United States Marine Corps for four years.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Equal Justice Initiative
http://eji.org/
https://twitter.com/eji_org

The Equal Justice Initiative is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides legal representation to indigent defendants and prisoners who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
EJI litigates on behalf of condemned prisoners, juvenile offenders, people wrongly convicted or charged with violent crimes, poor people denied effective representation, and others whose trials are marked by racial bias or prosecutorial misconduct. EJI works with communities that have been marginalized by poverty and discouraged by unequal treatment.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
EJI provides extensive resources on our website, including reports, factual information, and litigation manuals
- http://eji.org/reports
- http://eji.org/fact-sheets
- http://eji.org/manual

Barriers and Challenges:
Through our work, EJI seeks to address the history of racial inequality and economic injustice, to address the issue of mass incarceration, to address the impact of treating children as adults in the criminal justice system, and to represent individuals who have been sentenced to death.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes.
Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Jaffe Pickett, Esq.
Director of Resource Development
Legal Services Alabama

Biography:
Jaffe is Director of Resource Development at Legal Services Alabama. Prior to becoming the Director of Development, she served as Statewide Call Center Director and Director of the Alabama Elder Law Helpline. Jaffe grew up in Tallassee, Alabama, and was the daughter of a West Indian immigrant who dreamed of one day coming to America. Public service work was encouraged at a very young age.

Graduated with honors from Reeltown High School in 1995 where she was president of the Student Government Association (SGA) and started the first recycling initiative in her high school's history in her role as SGA president. Jaffe attended Troy University and graduated Cum Laude in 1999 with a B.S. in Political Science and dual concentrations in Journalism and History. While attending Troy University Jaffe was active in a public service sorority, was initiated into Gamma Phi Beta Honors fraternity and served as a student panelist on President Clinton's Initiative on Race for Troy University. Jaffe attended Law School at Louisiana State University and graduated with dual degrees in 2002: Bachelors of Civil Law Studies and a Doctorate of Law. As a law student Jaffe co-founded Unification of Diversity under the Law (UDL) and began to visit Angola prison in New Orleans to help prisoners have a better start entering the community once released. She also volunteered for two years at the Center for Constitutional Justice in Baton Rouge, LA while working as a law clerk at an employment rights law firm.

Jaffe has worked for over a decade helping poor people as an Attorney at Legal Services Alabama where she now serves as an Executive Team member. Jaffe was appointed to the Board of Trustees for the Middle District of the State Bar’s Lawyer Referral Service and was appointed to serve on the Alabama State Bar’s Pro Bono committee. She also serves as a founding board member of the Central Alabama Aids Research and Advocacy Center (CAARAC).

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Legal Services Alabama, Inc.
Website:  http://www.legalservicesalabama.org/
Twitter:  https://twitter.com/LSAlabama

LSA’s mission statement: Legal Services Alabama is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to providing access to justice and quality civil legal assistance to educate and empower Alabama's low-income community.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
LSA addresses food inadequacy by helping to make sure that people eligible for SNAP benefits (food stamps) receive those benefits. When the Department of Human Resources (DHR) sent termination notices to hundreds of people who had used food stamps to purchase food at stores that were later found to have trafficked food stamps, LSA represented dozens of people and showed that they had not been involved in any trafficking – and that DHR was wrong to presume trafficking solely from the amount of food stamps the clients had used at these stores. LSA took one case to court and got a disqualification reversed and got a statewide injunction against the assumptions that DHR was making. Sharing ideas effectively across the program, LSA then won several disqualification hearings and negotiated with DHR to get other clients’ food stamps restored. DHR then changed the focus of its
trafficking work from disqualification of recipients to disqualification of stores that were acting improperly.

DHR has just this month terminated food stamps for thousands of people who are between the ages of 19 and 49 and do not have dependent children. LSA is representing dozens of people and helping them to establish their entitlement to an exemption from the limitations on SNAP benefits for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependent Children (ABAWDs). It is working with Alabama Arise, the food banks and homelessness organizations to make sure that people get the benefits to which they are entitled according to DHR’s pronouncements.

LSA is working help clients avoid having to live through an unending and continuous cycle of crises by helping them to exempt their wages from garnishment so that they can pay their bills and achieve a level of financial stability. LSA had long helped clients file declaration of exemptions. Collection lawyers had challenged those declarations in the past, and LSA had succeeded in getting some victories in appellate courts confirming their rights to the exemptions. Last year, the collection lawyers got a bill passed that claims to prevent people from exempting wages – even though the exemption is guaranteed by the Constitution, which cannot be changed by passing a law. LSA was successful in exemption contests based on the new law, but collection lawyers appealed one case where a middle class pro se debtor had filed to exempt his wages. The collection lawyers won that case (without any opposition) and are now using it to say that a garnishment can go into effect as soon as a debtor has received more than $1000 in wages. LSA has won numerous contests by showing that our clients use their entire pay on bills and do not accumulate their wages – since the case talks in terms of “accumulation of wages.” It appears that we will have to attempt to prevail on that argument in the appellate courts.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
LSA has succeeded in its efforts to address food inadequacy by carefully coordinating our strategies across the program and by making use of ideas from cooperative efforts involving lawyers in Legal Services and related organizations across the Southeast and across the nation.

LSA’s success in protecting clients’ wages also derives from close coordination of strategies across the program and with lawyers from the Southern Poverty Law Center. We have also shared these strategies with VLP lawyers.

Barriers and Challenges:
The collection bar has considerable influence in the Legislature. The Court of Civil Appeals decision denying debtors the right to protect wages indefinitely as they accumulate them also indicated in a footnote that the act passed last year will apply to attempts to exempt wages from collection on debts that arose after the act passed. LSA has the challenge of getting the Court of Civil Appeals to rethink its decision in that case and to issue an opinion preserving the holdings of the Supreme Court in earlier cases.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
As noted above, we are currently collaborating with both Southern Poverty Law Center and VLPs on issues around the exemption of wages from garnishment. We are also working with Southern Poverty Law Center on a mater relating to poor people’s access to the courts. In the wake of an Alabama Supreme Court decision finding no jurisdiction over a poor person’s tort case because of the failure of a circuit court to rule promptly enough on an affidavit of substantial hardship, lawyers from LSA and SPLC have approached the Alabama Administrative Office of Court to revise the procedures for hardship affidavits. We are asking that clerks be able to approve applications for people who receive benefits such as food stamps or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and for people for whom LSA lawyers or VLP lawyers certify their poverty. Our last meeting this past Monday was very encouraging, but we will have to wait to see if the necessary changes are made to the Alabama Rules of Judicial Administration. At the request of Win Johnson at AOC, we are also seeking to get Lisa Borden of Access to Justice involved.
Expert Biography and Organization Profile

Please complete this template to describe your work and/or the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty highlighted by the Commission below. Templates will be circulated to the Commission and other roundtable participants prior to the program to provide background information and context in an effort to allow for more time to delve deeper into the critical issues and best practices. Please feel free to attach/hyperlink documents.

Ten Manifestations of Poverty:

1. Substandard and unaffordable housing and homelessness
2. Disproportionate involvement in criminal and civil justice systems
3. Food inadequacy
4. Inadequate healthcare and poor health outcomes
5. Inadequate education outcomes
6. Lack of opportunity for full employment at a living wage
7. Living through an unending and continuous cycle of crises
8. Lack of personal and physical safety
9. Stigma and lack of personal dignity
10. Isolation from community and political infrastructure

Speaker/Title/Contact Information:

Jaqueline Aranda, Law Fellow | jaqueline.aranda@splcenter.org

Biography (Please insert a short bio):

Jaqueline Aranda is an attorney at the Southern Poverty Law Center. She is part of a legal team litigating a class action lawsuit against the Alabama Department of Corrections for failure to provide adequate medical and mental health care. Prior to working with SPLC, Jaqueline was a clinical student with the Berkeley Law Death Penalty Clinic. She is a graduate of Cornell University and Berkeley Law.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:

Southern Poverty Law Center, Mass Incarceration Group
https://www.splcenter.org/issues/mass-incarceration

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:

Over the past four decades, our country’s incarceration rate – the number of prisoners per capita – has more than quadrupled and is now unprecedented in world history. Today, roughly 2.2 million people are behind bars in the United States, an increase of 1.9 million since 1972. We have the world’s largest prison population – with one-quarter of its prisoners but just 5 percent of the total population. And, on any given day, some 7 million people – about one in every 31 people – are under the supervision of the corrections system, either locked up or probation or parole.

We’re using litigation and advocacy to help end the era of mass incarceration, to root out racial discrimination in the system, and to ensure humane, constitutional standards for prisoners:
• Reforming policies that lead to the incarceration of children and teens for minor crimes and school-related offenses;
• Working to transform a juvenile system that subjects children to abuse and neglect without providing necessary medical, mental health, educational and rehabilitative services.
• Ensuring that prisoners are not subjected to unconstitutional, inhumane conditions and that they receive proper medical and mental health care.
• Seeking to stop the prosecution of children in the adult criminal justice system and their incarceration in adult prisons and jails.
• Advocating for rational policies and laws that keep communities safe while vastly shrinking the prison population and reducing the social and economic impact of mass incarceration on vulnerable communities.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:

We recently reached a settlement with ADOC that will ensure that prisoners with disabilities receive treatment and services required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

See: https://www.splcenter.org/news/2016/03/16/alabama-agrees-improve-conditions-inmates-disabilities-following-splc-lawsuit

Barriers and Challenges:

One of our current challenges is coordinating our litigation and legislative advocacy efforts around “prison reform.” For example, the Governor has proposed a plan to tear down many of the current ADOC facilities and replace them with four “superprisons.”


Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?

The prisons lawsuit (Dunn v. Dunn) was brought in conjunction with the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP).
Speaker/Title/Contact Information:
Micah West
Staff Attorney
micah.west@splcenter.org
334-314-8976

Biography:
Micah West works with the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Economic Justice Project, seeking to address
the public and private systems that trap people in poverty and punish them simply for being poor.
Before joining the SPLC, Micah clerked for the Honorable David M. Lawson of the Eastern District of
Michigan. He earned a B.A. from Wesleyan University and a J.D. from Berkeley Law School. Prior to law
school, Micah worked for the Vera Institute of Justice in New Orleans, the civil rights firm Neufeld
Scheck & Brustin, and as a Luce Scholar for the Lao Bar Association.

Organization Name, Website, Twitter and Mission:
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
https://www.splcenter.org/

The SPLC is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable
members of our society. Using litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy, the SPLC works
toward the day when the ideals of equal justice and equal opportunity will be a reality.

Describe the work of your organization to address (one or more of) the manifestations of poverty:
The Economic Justice Project, one of five practice groups within the SPLC’s legal department, works on
three primary areas: (1) reforming policies – such as debtors’ prisons and private probation – that trap
the poor in a cycle of court debt; (2) protecting low-income consumers from predatory practices such as
payday loans and title lenders; and (3) protecting the safety net for the poor.

Success, Best Practices, Model Approaches:
We’ve brought a number of successful legal challenges to debtor prison practices in Alabama and
private probation throughout the State of Alabama.

Barriers and Challenges:
The challenges in addressing the above areas are myriad, but include identifying problematic
jurisdictions, particularly in rural areas with little outside scrutiny; legal barriers to bringing legal
challenges to the criminal justice system in federal court; and remedying the causes of debtor prison
practices such as state and local governments’ failure to adequately fund courts.

Does your organization currently collaborate with lawyers/legal services/court programs?
Yes