American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness & Poverty: 5/18/16 DRAFT Minutes/Notes of Spring Business Meeting and Anti-Poverty Programming:

BIRMINGHAM
Community members in attendance:

- Cassandra E. Adams, Director, Cumberland Law School Community Mediation Center & Public Interest Project, ceadams@samford.edu
- Jenny Camp, Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama & Community Initiatives Manager, Collaborative Solutions, Inc., ashley@collaborativesolutions.net
- Stephen Bailey Davis, Program Manager, UAB MACN, ADC, baileyd@uab.edu
- J. W. Carpenter, Executive Director, Birmingham Education Foundation, jwcarpenter@edbirmingham.org
- Scott Douglass, Executive Director, Greater Birmingham Ministries, 205-326-6821, scott@gbm.org
- Michelle Farley, Executive Director, One Roof, michelle@onerofonline.org
- Mr. Kelleigh Gamble, Real Estate Director, Woodlawn Foundation, kelleigh@woodlawnunited.org
- Jeanne Jackson, Executive Director, Women’s Fund of Greater Birmingham, jjackson@womensfundbirmingham.org
- David Liddell, WIN Site Coordinator, Woodlawn Foundation, david@woodlawnunited.org
- Sally Mackin, Executive Director, Woodlawn Foundation, sally@woodlawnunited.org
- Judge Vanzetta Penn McPherson, judgemcpherson@knology.net
- Steve Rygiel, Birmingham AIDS Outreach, steve@birminghamaidsoutreach.org
- Kristina Scott, Executive Director, Alabama Possible, kscott@alabamapossible.org
- Anne Darden Wright, Executive Director, The Firehouse Shelter, awright@firehouseshelter.com
- Nancy Yarbrough, Executive Director, Birmingham Volunteer Lawyers Program, nyarbrough@vlpbirmingham.org

Welcome and Purpose of Roundtable

Ted Small, Chair ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty:

- The purpose of this roundtable is to convene stakeholders who are already engaged in addressing one or more manifestation of poverty areas and to facilitate the exchange of ideas about how these different programs can increase the level of existing collaboration across discipline areas.
- We do NOT believe we can help you solve poverty in a few hours. Instead we are here to share diverse perspectives of Commissions, liaisons from across the nation and exchange ideas about ways to address poverty in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner. I believe that we can make a difference by bringing together the type of smart people who care passionately about helping those less fortunate, as described in your biographies. Mother/now Saint Teresa put it best in her often repeated admonition: “We can do no great things, only small things with Great Love.”
- We currently have 7 (of 10) blueprints for action available on our website [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_services/homelessness_poverty/poverty_initiative.html] to provide best practices, strategies and information on manifestations of poverty such as inadequate education and lack of opportunity for full employment at a living wage and isolation from community and political infrastructure.
- We encourage you to think about how you have already been collaborating with community service providers, what you can do in order to enhance collaboration and what we, as the ABA, can do to help facilitate and encourage additional collaboration

Craig Baab, Alabama Appleseed:
This is the first of 3 roundtables we will be hosting in Alabama. In addition to Birmingham, we will visit Selma and Montgomery. Thank you to Sally Mackin, the Executive Director of the Woodlawn Foundation for hosting us. Thank you to those in attendance and those that have made this roundtable possible.

Poverty in Alabama: An Overview

Kristina Scott, Alabama Possible:

- Poverty is not having enough of anything, being powerless, and lacking basic needs.
- Alabama is the sixth poorest state, with 900,000 citizens, including 300,000 children, living in poverty. Poverty affects everyone, but in Alabama the African American community makes up the vast majority of those suffering from poverty.
- The state political system is pitted against the African American community.
- There is little state investment in education.
- Meeting the immediate needs of poor people is not enough to change centuries of oppression.
- Alabama Possible is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to reduce systematic poverty and its root causes by inspiring Alabamians to pursue a state in which no individual’s quality of life is diminished by poverty. Our work includes increasing college access and success for low-income and first generation college-going students, disrupting misperceptions about poverty and advocating for fact-based policy making.

1. What is the importance of a ‘community quarterback’ to collaborate for better housing, education and community wellness?

“The Woodlawn Experience”

Sally Mackin, Woodlawn Foundation:

- The Woodlawn Foundation follows a holistic approach to community revitalization based on the Purpose Built Communities model. Purpose Built Communities is an organization that helps struggling communities across the country implement proven and effective revitalization strategies, including a cradle to college and career education pipeline, high-quality mixed income housing, and community wellness programs. The Purpose Built Communities model for holistic community revitalization was crafted from the successful transformation of the East Lake community in Atlanta, Georgia from a poverty-stricken, crime-ridden public housing development into a thriving community with quality mixed income housing, a top-rated school, 95% reduction in crime rates and substantial investments in commercial and residential real estate.
- Three factors that influenced our success:
  - High quality education pipeline from birth to career
  - High quality, affordable, mixed-income housing
  - Community wellness-everything else, amenities in the neighborhood, things that insulate the education pipeline
- Woodlawn is funded through family foundation grants and the current capital campaign. There must be a focus every day on the community.
- What did Woodlawn do to become the place to invest? Woodlawn transformed 56 homes, bringing positive attention to the community. It was involved with Main Street Birmingham, Cornerstone School, citizen patrols in the neighborhoods etc.

2. How do we collaborate on housing, education and community wellness in a more cross-disciplinary fashion?
David Liddell, **Woodlawn Foundation**:  
As a WIN site coordinator, David Liddell works with community schools and parents in the areas of academic enrichment, family support, community engagement etc. He works with state agencies and non-profits as partners. Funding comes from public charity grants.  
- Woodlawn has individuals assigned community service hours from specialty courts to provide volunteer services in local schools.  
- UAB is not actively engaged in the community.  
- Charter schools are a tool in the toolbox, but should not be a threat to public education.

Ted Small:  
- There is a national issue surrounding parental involvement in schools.

Kristina Scott:  
- The high school graduation rate was 50% recently, and education is a generational problem.

Cassandra Adams, Cumberland Law School Community Mediation Center & Public Interest Project:  
- Woodlawn was successful because it was a better investment than other surrounding areas (i.e. Ensley). We must first focus on safety.

Sally Mackin:  
- Woodlawn was made up of a small, tightknit group of residents that helped ignite positive change. Woodlawn used to be just as dangerous as other surrounding neighborhoods.  
- The YWCA was fundamental in the rehabilitation of the community.  
- The Community Policing Revitalization Unit reduced crime by 26%.

Kelleigh Gamble, **Woodlawn Foundation**:  
- We start with existing homeowners as foundation for rebuilding a neighborhood.  
- The Family Resource Center serves residents in the 56 houses and also works on the macro level. Our group conducts rehabilitation work in existing homes, providing anywhere from $10,000-$15,000 worth of quality improvements.  
  - We are not just distributing dollars, but making available special bank loan programs, Home Depot training about home repairs and financial literacy classes.

  - The banking crisis killed a great deal of the collaboration between banks and community partners. To get banks to invest, they must understand what is being done and what the results will be.  
  - Our group used community reinvestment and loan products for residents who go through the program, which builds capacity for homeowners. The money goes to Woodlawn and its facilities, not to homeowners.  
  - There is an issue in Birmingham of “tangled titles,” and this is an area where lawyers can be extremely helpful.

Dina Schlossberg, Deputy Director/Senior Attorney for Multifamily Housing, **Regional Housing Legal Services**:  
- We are currently facing the same issues surrounding “tangled titles” in the Philadelphia metro area and have found that it is an area that attorneys can really make an impact.

Nancy Yarbrough, **Birmingham Volunteer Lawyers Program**:  
- We have issues in Birmingham with tenants finding safe apartments. Many landlords refuse to make repairs and tenants have nowhere to go. They need an attorney to negotiate on their behalf and the Birmingham Volunteer Lawyers Program is currently addressing the “heir’s property” issue.

Scott Douglass, **Greater Birmingham Ministries**:  
- We had several city bank and community collaborations which were embodied in Center for Affordable Housing before bank crisis effectively killed these programs.
3. **What racial and other challenges compromise each group’s ability to collaborate on various aspects of poverty alleviation?**

David Liddell:
- Birmingham community schools should conduct a “needs assessment.”
- Major challenges affecting our schools are mental health issues, the lack of resources, and the lack of positive role models for school children.

Anne Darden Wright, [Firehouse Shelter](#):
- Firehouse Shelter provides people with supportive services through collaboration and holds legal clinics every other Tuesday with Birmingham Volunteer Lawyers Program.
- Often, the work done at our shelter is a Band-Aid; there needs to be legislative changes.
- There is a great need for transportation in order to get those in need to our shelter to receive services.
- Our community needs to address how the police engage with the community, especially dealing with people who are homeless.
- The revitalization in our city affects homelessness and results in the criminalization of homelessness (i.e. Birmingham has no public restrooms)

Hon. Elizabeth Finn, Presiding City Judge
- Judge Finn describes her experiences in Arizona with establishing homeless courts and drug courts.

**ACTION ITEM:** Judge Finn will provide interested Birmingham community members with model state statutes and domestic violence laws.

Jeremy Rosen, [ACLU of Iowa](#):
- Mr. Rosen has experience in issues surrounding the criminalization of homelessness and police interactions with homeless people. We are often dealing with the effects of homelessness on the backend, but we must focus on the front end, involving positive police interactions.

Scott Douglass, [Greater Birmingham Ministries](#):
- Greater Birmingham Ministries (GBM) was founded in 1969 in response to urgent human and justice needs in the greater Birmingham area. GBM is a multi-faith, multi-racial organization that provides emergency services for people in need and engages the poor and the non-poor in systemic change efforts to build a strong, supportive, engaged community and pursue a more just society for all people.
- There is no ongoing civic engagement process for low-income people, but there should be (i.e. public transportation). Our community needs to start building life-long working collaborations to identify problems and strategies to address them.

Jenny Camp, [Collaborative Solutions](#):
- One of the main problems is that there are people that benefit from the oppression of those in poverty and they are preventing change of the status quo.
- There is no comprehensive affordable housing plan in the state.

Craig Baab:
- The Alabama constitution is oftentimes a major obstacle. It has hampered the ability of people to organize locally, there is no home rule, and all changes have to be made through state amendments to the Constitution.

Cassandra Adams:
- The court system is not going to give up fines because of the budgetary situation.

Hon. Vanzetta Penn McPherson, Retired U.S. Magistrate Judge:
• Racism is structural in Alabama. It began with slavery, and then after slavery African American males were leased to businesses to pay off fines for minor crimes.
• In 1901, the Alabama Constitution was written and it is the longest in the world. It was used to disenfranchise African Americans and poor whites. It creates a stigma for whites that want to help blacks. Everything at the local level must be voted on by the state legislature.
• There is no home rule in Alabama.
• There is no taxation on real property, only income taxation.
• No African American federal judges have been appointed in Alabama in 36 years and no African American judges are on the state appellate bench. All Alabama state judges are elected.
• If whites would just leave blacks alone, then blacks would catch up.
• “If you have only your ‘white-ness’ to empower you, then you are going to do everything you can to protect that.”
• Schools remain de facto segregated—8,000 out of a total 32,000 Montgomery school aged children attend mostly all white private academies which leaves the public schools with mostly black students.
• In 2014, a case challenged how funding for education was done. It was a fail-proof case of inequitable distribution, but it was mooted when the State Legislature removed the right to public education from the Alabama Constitution.
• One of the fixes in other states is the influx of “outsiders” as new residents, which is not happening in Alabama.
• Other fixes, such as anchor institutions and unions, are also not present in Alabama, as the state bans unions and has only one Fortune 500 company.

4. Is there a local anti-poverty dialogue, does it include a candid appraisal of race and poverty, and does it functionally relate to any state-wide dialog?

Steve Rygiel, Birmingham Aids Outreach:
• The mission of BAO is to enhance the quality of life for people living with HIV / AIDS, at-risk, affected individuals, and the LGBTQ community through outreach, age-appropriate prevention education, and supportive services.
• The Deep South is the epicenter for HIV/AIDS. The fastest growing segment of the population with HIV/AIDS is African American males, ages 13-24. It is also the segment with the highest rate of incarceration.
• Alabama is “pet project territory.” Oftentimes, groups come to Alabama to tackle issues such as poverty and then leave.
• It is important to have guidance from outside of our state to suggest model programs, identify best practices and aid collaboration.
• Reflection on quote from MLK’s Letter from a Birmingham Jail, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Michelle Farley, One Roof:
• One Roof is the clearing house and center of coordination for the homeless Continuum of Care system of central Alabama. As a continuum organization, One Roof coordinates services provided by homeless agencies regionally.
• Project Homeless Connect is one of our programs that connects homeless people with housing, recognizes barriers and provides what is needed to help individuals overcome those barriers.
• We want to connect homeless people with community volunteers. For example, One Roof pays for services like obtaining identification. Our organization also offers a wills clinic for LGBT people. Possible future clinics include topics like landlord-tenant, child support, and a “know your rights” clinic.
There are currently no medical-legal partnerships in Birmingham.

Renato Izquieta, Legal Aid Society of Orange County

- I have learned from my experiences with our homeless court in Orange County that creating multifaceted partnerships with other community members and service providers is the most important. We must always communicate and engage.

Nancy Yarbrough:

- It is also important to collaborate with an attorney. An attorney can break down “roadblocks” for clients, such as ID issues, payday loan issues, and issues surrounding “tangled title.”

Stephen Bailey Davis, Program Manager, UAB MACN, ADC:

- Beginning this month we are launching a non-narcotic medication-assisted treatment care program. We need legal aid to work with individuals that have child support related barriers.

Kristina Scott:

- In Jefferson County, you must have an attorney to get a divorce (even an uncontested divorce). We need simplification of the divorce process.

**ACTION ITEM: Stephen Bailey Davis agreed to host follow-up meeting on May 20th at noon.**

- Agenda-most pressing needs for additional collaboration
  - Family and children including child support
  - Ways to collaborate to utilize available data collection resources at local colleges and universities in order to collect data that is useful to support advocacy for additional funding and programming for groups addressing various manifestation of poverty areas.