

Daniel Williams

Social Justice Fellow at CEOs for Cities

Cleveland, OH

This summer, I served as a Social Justice Fellow with the nonprofit CEOs for Cities and, in doing so, gained exposure to a field I wish to work in one day. CEOs for Cities is a national non-profit that aims to connect urban change makers across the country. They aim to create a broad coalition of progressive minds by connecting members, sharing resources and hosting national workshops. The organization recognizes the role that social justice reform plays in the development of urban areas. The internship gave me the opportunity to research ways that social justice issues dealing with police are being handled in the city of Cleveland and also how social justice issues can be directly affected in the urban sphere.

CEOs for Cities has a major interest in social justice issues and, in particular, in the work being done by the newly formed Cleveland Community Police Commission (CPC). The city of Cleveland has entered into an agreement with the Department of Justice to introduce systematic reforms to the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP). One of the notable features of this agreement is the inclusion of a commission that includes both civilians and members of law enforcement. The Commission is tasked with reviewing the policies of the CDP, making recommendations for the new policies, and standing as a conduit between the greater Cleveland community and the CDP. Lee Fisher, the CEO of the nonprofit, was selected to serve on the Commission and created the Social Justice Fellow position to assist him carry out his responsibilities.

My position required me to be well versed in the issues surrounding police reformation and, in particular, in how reform could take place in Cleveland. I attended the monthly meetings held by the CPC, analyzed their documents covering community concerns and policy recommendations, and familiarized myself with police reform measures taken elsewhere. My

Capstone Project focused on the Cleveland Police reformation, so I was incredibly grateful for the opportunity to continue my research.

In addition to my work with the CPC, I was fortunate enough to explore other social justice issues of interest to me. I ended up writing an expansive proposal to address food deserts and food insecurity in the Cleveland area. In fact, realizing that the project I wished to propose would take more time than was available in the summer, CEOs decided to extend my position through the school semester. The Fellowship has thus shifted my mindset from wondering how one can work towards issues of social justice to creating proposals based on my own ideas.

Overall, this summer gave me invaluable guidance for how I wish to shape my future. The CEOs framework really helped me to see ways in which urban change can be fostered. I now have a template on which to build. I am incredibly grateful to have been selected as a recipient of the Wellman Hill grant. Without Judge Hill's generous donation, none of this would have been possible. My experiences this summer were only achievable through your generosity, and have immensely helped structure my planning for future social justice initiatives. With that, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the committee and the family of Wellman Hill for allowing me to obtain a head start on my aspirations.

Sincerely,

Daniel Williams