

# Daily Journal

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## Clinic Hopes to Boost Green-Collar Economy

By Jill Redhage

Soon after graduating from UC Berkeley School of Law this year, Sushil Jacob will be bringing the green-collar economy to San Francisco's East Bay.

It's coming this fall in the form of a new law clinic - the Green-Collar Communities Clinic (GC3) - made possible by a partnership with the East Bay Community Law Center in Berkeley, a pro bono fellowship from Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and Affiliates and a year's worth of Jacob's hard work. It appears to be the first clinic of its kind in California.



Sushil Jacob, 3rd yr at UC Berkeley School of Law is starting a legal clinic to help "green" start-ups.

What's a green-collar venture? According to Jacob, it's an entity that provides working-class jobs while making strides in environmental sustainability - for example, a nontoxic cleaning company or a solar panel installer.

"The Green-Collar Communities Clinic aims to catalyze the green-collar economy in the East Bay Region," a flier for the clinic reads, "by providing free, comprehensive professional assistance to low-income workers and entrepreneurs of color." Specifically, its goals are to promote environmental justice, cultivate worker-owned businesses and train green business lawyers.

GC3 may look more like a startup incubator than a traditional law clinic, Jacob said, because it is partnering with UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business and the school's urban-planning department to offer economic and engineering advice in addition to legal counsel.

Popular during the dot-com boom, technology incubators have resurfaced in the Bay Area in the past two years to help fledgling software, clean technology and social networking companies get their bearings. But most charge a fee for their services or take equity in the companies and none are focused strictly on low-income communities.

GC3's plan is to provide three types of services: workshops with themes, such as energy efficiency, sustainable food or green transportation; clinics in which industry experts offer one-on-one counseling; and an incubator that provides formal legal research and business planning services to a select group of startups for one to two years.

Jacob's passion for community economic development began during his undergraduate years, but was honed when he moved to India afterward to work with a cooperative that helped small farmers, women and other tribespeople empower themselves financially.

"That's when I understood the power of cooperatives to help people gain economic self-reliance," Jacob said. He said he attended law school for the express purpose of gaining tangible skills that could help people start cooperatives and other socially

responsible businesses, ultimately bringing wealth into their communities.

He expects his clinic to be able to run on \$100,000 per year to start - Skadden committed \$47,000 annually for two years, and the East Bay law center is working on fundraising for the remaining \$53,000.

Tirien Steinbach, executive director of the law center, said Jacob's pitch for it to host his clinic aligned perfectly with her team's own goals. Two years ago, the center's community economic development director had left for a position in Oakland city government, creating a gap in the clinic's services. At that time, Jacob was collaborating with fellow law student Jalle Dafa on the project.

"When Sushil and Jalle came to talk to us, it was all we could do not to jump on them," Steinbach said. Over the year, she said the students' commitment to the project came to mean as much to the law center as the idea itself. "Part of it was just truly believing they were taking their intelligence and vision and directing it at something that was going to be incredible."