

From: Scott Ventrudo
Re: Summer Report
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I had an excellent and diverse set of experiences this summer at ILG. I learned an amazing amount about a range of topics. Broadly speaking, I learned about being an immigration lawyer, about working in a public interest private law firm, about integrating advocacy work into legal practice. On a more narrow level, I learned a great deal about immigration law, regulations and procedure, and the legal requirements for various forms of relief.

Projects

My summer was divided between a range of projects. I worked on affirmative and defensive asylum cases, worked on memos and motions for 9th circuit litigation connected to the Adam Walsh Act's immigration provisions, crafted and helped plan the launch for a series of animated immigration law educational videos and contributed to on a variety of other 'smaller' projects as well. On another note, it was very interesting to be in this office as the country was gripped by the 'child migrant crisis', both in terms of watching how the situation was reported by the media and reflected on by the public and in observing and participating in ILG's response to the events at the Artesia Detention Facility.

Asylum Application Support

In law school, I had exposure to affirmative asylum in the clinical setting, where we had a whole semester to craft a legal theory and collect documents. Over the course of the summer, I was involved in support of the cases of various asylum clients. On my first day at ILG, I did not spend too much time before I was given a project with a quick deadline! This, in and of itself was a great experience, because I think I got better at working quickly and well in doing country conditions research and in asylum-related brief writing. I was able to work on various parts of three different affirmative asylum application over the course of the summer.

One of my most substantial projects this summer was writing the prehearing statement, brief and compiling country conditions evidence for a client in removal proceedings with a pending merits hearing. This client was a very young woman from Guatemala who faced family violence and attempted forced marriage as a child. I wrote the brief and did research on how forced marriage and attempted forced marriage 'fit' into the rubric of persecution. In writing the brief, I grappled with showing how our client's circumstances met the legal standard while at the same time writing persuasively and advocating for the client.

Ninth Circuit Litigation Support

Another multifaceted project involved the Adam Walsh Act's immigration provisions. In one case regarding the BIA's interpretation of the AWA I was responsible

for learning the law regarding retroactivity and crafting a lengthy memorandum aimed at helping the ILG team craft a Ninth Circuit brief. Retroactivity was initially daunting, and remains complex, but I feel that I have a good grasp on that area of the law now. That the government attempts to deport individuals because of very old criminal convictions that took place prior to a statute's enactment is very troubling and I enjoyed the opportunity to learn the law in this area and hopefully contribute to change.

In addition to drafting a memo, I also drafted and filed two motions with the Ninth Circuit's electronic filing system. I wrote the initial petition for review and filed it online, learning not only the mechanics of writing an appellate motion but also the procedural components of filing documents with the Ninth Circuit's system.

Immigrant U

Another major piece of my summer was involvement in Immigrant U, a series of videos and other educational content aimed at teaching clients and immigrants more broadly about the immigration process and about immigration proceedings.

Working on these videos was exciting in two main regards. First, I gained skills in working with software that I did not have before. These skills and the ability to make these types of videos to communicate with clients and the public at large, are important. Additionally, writing the scripts forced me to learn the law that relates to representing people in proceedings and gave me the vocabulary to talk about and explain the law to clients. I am sure that this particular skill will be useful as I continue to work with clients in this area. I also participated in ILG's advocacy team and worked with ILG staff to craft a campaign for launching the Immigrant U video series.

Other Briefs and Projects

In addition to the above, I was involved in a number of other, projects over the courts of the summer. I supported a client's challenge to regulations which limit those whose removal orders have been reinstated to 'withholding-only' proceedings if they express a 'reasonable fear' of persecution or torture on return to their country or origin. Significantly, I researched how constitutional proportionality arguments can be used in opposing deportations. In that case, I also drafted a motion to consolidate for the Ninth Circuit, because there were two separate petitions for review pending for the same client.

I also worked on researching and drafting an amicus brief related to the refugee adjustment of status process and the proper standard that applies for inadmissible refugees seeking waivers to adjust status.

Artesia

My summer was influenced by the events at the southern border, the national response and ILG's actions. It was inspiring to be at a place like ILG when this was taking place. I got to see not only the passionate response of staff, but also the mobilizing of pro bono representation that ILG was a substantial part of. ILG'ers responded by going to Artesia, but also by countering the anti-immigrant circulating in response to the crisis at the border. Artesia and ILG's response was a major takeaway from the summer for me.

I think it taught me that the line between action and legal representation is much more porous than we are often lead to think in law school. I think that law school often focuses on writing in a certain way and thinking in a certain way. We are taught that the law is about applying rules to facts. This summer has confirmed for me that there is more to this.

To be an effective advocate for one's clients is more than just showing how the law applies to a certain set of facts. The advocate also has a role in advocating for changing the law and for pushing the government to comply with law. I think that I became more comfortable with making arguments that the law is incorrect, or that a certain interpretation is unjust. As another clerk previously wrote, this summer made clear to me that the law can be 'pushed' and that advocates are not stuck with bad law. Rather, we have a duty to change bad law and ensure that existing law and procedures are followed. In Artesia, it seems that both of these phenomena are harming innocent women and children. They are subject to asylum law's harsh requirements *as well as* executive decisions that intentionally prevent individuals from taking advantage of the rights and procedures that the law already affords. To this end, I also helped draft a blog post summarizing a recent 6th Circuit decision interpreting TVPRA provisions in a manner that fails to afford unaccompanied child entrants the process that the law reserves for them.

Conclusion

I had a wonderful experience at ILG this summer. I developed legal skills that will serve me well in my future and I confirmed for myself that I want to remain involved in this area of the law. I am passionate about working with and improving the lives of immigrants and this summer I was able to contribute to those efforts in a variety of ways. I contributed to pending litigation projects in the Ninth Circuit, helped develop a means of communicating with and educating clients and the community at large, and provided direct support for those in removal proceedings.

Most importantly, though, I think that I developed a more nuanced understanding of how the immigration and deportation systems work and the different procedural steps that face immigrants. One crucial piece of being able to help people threatened with deportation is to understand the processes that face them and the legal options that they have. In that regard, I think I have made strides to become a better advocate through my work this summer and have also, through conversations and observations, discovered a number of areas ripe for change.