

July 16, 2010

Susana Silva
South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project
301 E. Madison Avenue
Harlingen, TX 78550

Re: Litigation Section Internship Program

To Whom It May Concern:

This summer I was given the opportunity to work with a non-profit organization named ProBAR in Harlingen, Texas. This experience was very helpful and educational for me since I had never worked with immigration issues with minors.

I was able to do different things while working at ProBAR. I worked on a young girl's asylum case, appeared before the immigration court, interacted with many minors at the detention centers, and sat in on an asylum interview. Before I began this internship I had no idea of the issues and legal relief undocumented minors dealt with. For me this whole experience was an eye-opener and extremely rewarding. I enjoyed interacting with minors on a daily basis and getting to know the problems and issues that they had. I got to meet a smart young girl that I worked on her asylum case and was present for her asylum interview. It was extremely rewarding for me to be able to help out this girl and hear other minors' stories. Had I never worked at ProBAR, I would have never gotten the opportunity to see and work with undocumented minors. I am extremely thankful and grateful for this experience.

I was also able to appear before the immigration court and represent minors. Although I had already been before an immigration court before, I had never represented minors. It was very different from representing an adult but I am glad that I got to learn how the court works with minors.

My favorite part of this internship was the face to face interaction with the children and young teenagers. I really enjoyed participating in things such as doing intakes, follow-ups, and meeting with my client. This aspect of the internship is what I enjoyed the most because I got to hear so many children's problems, talked to them, and helped them when it was possible. Also, by seeing these children so often I got to form a friendly relationship with them and to me this was very rewarding.

In summary, this internship has been great. I learned so much during this time that I had no idea about and had not dealt with. This experience let me see the world of immigration dealing with minors. I got to meet many children and teenagers and actually worked on a girl's asylum case. There is nothing that I would have changed about this experience and what it has taught me. I am extremely thankful to ProBAR for this opportunity and to its staff for everything that I learned from them. Words cannot explain how rewarding this internship has been for me and I feel blessed to have been part of their organization and to have met the many children that they try and help.

Thank you,

Susana Silva
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Texas Fair Defense Project

September 1, 2010

Litigation Section
State Bar of Texas
P.O. Box 12487, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711-2487

Re: Litigation Section 2010 internship report

Dear Officers and Executive Council :

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to work for the Texas Fair Defense Project (TFDP) this summer. I had great experiences while assisting my supervising attorney, Ms. Rebecca Webber, with civil rights litigation and researching indigent defense issues.

One of my first assignments with TFDP was to visit the Texas Third Court of Appeals and request the appellate court record for a constitutional deprivation claim TFDP had filed years ago so that I could help Ms. Webber cite the appellate record in a motion for rehearing that would be filed with the Court. I had never been to a court to browse records, and the only comparable experience I had was analyzing the "court record" provided to me in my Brief Writing class for my final exam, and that exam did not require me to follow the Texas Rules of Form. I enjoyed working directly with court documents and using the Texas Rules of Form to cite court records. I also enjoyed proofreading and cite-checking the motion, since doing so taught me how to use footnotes and use all manner of citation formats, including citations for electronic sources and recent opinions that had been appealed to the United States Supreme Court.

The Texas Fair Defense Project also helped me get a better understanding of the criminal courts process by requesting that I observe the misdemeanor court docket in Williamson County. Before working for TFDP, I had never been to criminal court, not even misdemeanor court. Relatedly, during my Criminal Law course, my professor had told my class that we should take the time to observe court proceedings so we can see firsthand how courts operate. During my court observation, I benefited from seeing misdemeanor defendants listen to the judge's admonishments and make decisions as to whether they would request the assistance of counsel. Most defendants did not request counsel, and some were sentenced to as long as ten days in jail, in addition to hundreds of dollars in fines.

I wondered as to the difference hired or appointed counsel could have made for the defendants who were sentenced to jail. I worked for a state senator for eight years before entering law school, and during that time, I learned that Texas's jails tend to be overcrowded, and

they often serve as incubators for communicable diseases such as MRSA and tuberculosis. Further, a person may lose their employment while in jail, and they cannot earn an income for their family while incarcerated. These collateral effects impact offenders, their families, and the community and could be diminished by providing greater access to counsel throughout the state so that offenders could avoid or lessen the time they spend incarcerated.

I also greatly enjoyed writing a legal memo distinguishing civil from criminal matters as relates to the jurisdictions of the Texas Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals. Before my research, I knew that each court exercised jurisdiction over certain cases, but I did not know how the courts discerned which cases were civil or criminal when they involved such issues as appointed-counsel compensation, or a challenge to the Board of Pardons and Parole's clemency procedures. Writing the memo helped me learn to organize my thoughts and writing for a reader who would use my work for a brief. During school, we were assigned memos discussing issues at the early stages of cases, thus requiring us to provide a general background on issues that may be disputed. But my memo for the TFDP may be used as part of an appeal to the Supreme Court, so I had to both evaluate the appellee's existing arguments as well as arguments they may raise in the future. I appreciated being given the chance to conduct legal writing that was responsive by nature, rather than purely informational.

I already know that my experience with the Texas Fair Defense Project will help both my educational and professional careers. For example, I used an excerpt from my memo as a writing sample for job applications, and as a result, I secured a term-time clerkship with a reputable firm in Austin. Further, I will be taking Texas Civil Procedure and a criminal prosecution course this fall, and I am confident that my research regarding appellate court jurisdiction, as well as my court observations, will serve me well while studying these subjects.

Thank you again for helping facilitate my working with the Texas Fair Defense Project, and I appreciate that the Texas State Bar is supportive of law students and public interest legal practices. The grant that supported my work helped provide for my family during a summer in which paid legal jobs are hard for students to come by, and the work experience has proven to be invaluable.

Sincerely,

/s/

Athena Ponce
University of Texas, School of Law - 2L



Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc.

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El Paso, Texas 79903

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The Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas
Attn: Ms. Paula W. Hinton, Esq.
Vince & Elkins

August 2, 2010

Re: *Summer Internship*

Dear Litigation Section,

I am a student at Southern Methodist Dedman School of Law. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to work for Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services, Inc. This summer has been a great experience. I was able to help the community while visiting my family back home in El Paso.

This summer I learned a wide array of skills in immigration law. I was able to interact with many clients in the unaccompanied minors unit. This included "Know Your Rights" presentations; interviewing children in order to identify legal defenses for which they may qualify; research and writing; and, most importantly, representation in court. Going before an immigration judge provided real world experience many do not encounter until they are practicing attorneys. Although this experience made me a little nervous, in the end it was rewarding helping real clients with their needs in court. As my internship comes to an end, I realize that I gained experience that will help me further my goal in becoming an attorney.

*Serving the Pilgrim People of God
Sirviendo el Pueblo Peregrino de Dios*



Once again, I am thankful for the summer internship. I am ready to go back to law school with the skills I learned this summer to enhance my learning. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Yajaira M Halm

Yajaira M. Halm

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*Serving the Pilgrim People of God
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Jennifer Lee

This past summer at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid I was an intern for Texas C-Bar. In addition to working with for C-Bar I spent some time on projects for the Microenterprises group. My clients consisted mainly of non-profits and small businesses based in Texas. During my time at TRLA I got the opportunity to see a variety of clients, cases, and legal issues. My work varied from researching the taxicab industry, advising a client as to whether his workers were properly classified as independent contractors, and helping set up a tutoring business. It was an excellent learning experience to see how the law works in practice, outside of the classroom.

Much of my work consisted of advising clients how to best proceed to avoid a lawsuit. Texas C-Bar and Microenterprises actively try to prevent their clients from litigation. For one project, I drafted an article about social media in the workplace as a part of C-Bar's Legal Minute series describing what legal action employers can take against employees who inappropriately use social media and what employee actions may be protected by law. C-Bar's intention was to advise non-profits how to make an enforceable policy about social media use in the workplace that did not violate employees' rights and result in a lawsuit. For another project I researched the client privacy provisions of the Violence Against Women Act. Our client wanted to know what their responsibility was and the proper procedure for maintaining client files after the closing of a domestic violence shelter. Since the information was confidential, proper handling was important to avoid a lawsuit for inadequate treatment of the files.

I did also have the opportunity to research if there were potential grounds for a client to bring suit against his employer. Though that case ended up getting sidelined, I got to see/read/work on some documents involving the litigation of a similar case. It was interesting to see the steps that must be taken before a lawsuit can even begin. The documents require such formality and must follow a specific template. It is unlike anything I have had the chance to experience yet at law school.

I appreciated that my internship at TRLA allowed me to do substantive work and see the progression of actual cases. Not only did I learn more about the law from the work I did but also from the people I had the opportunity to work with. It was a constructive way to spend my 1L summer and I appreciate being given the opportunity.

September 28, 2010

Paula Hinton
Chair of the Pro Bono Committee
Litigation Council
State Bar of Texas
Vinson & Elkins, LLP
1001 Fannin Street, Suite 2500
Houston, TX 77002
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Re: South Texas Civil Rights Project Litigation Internship Summer 2010

I spent 11 weeks this summer working with the South Texas Civil Rights Project in San Juan Texas. I received a lot of on the job training regarding the writing and filing of various documents such as pleadings and complaints, various pretrial motions, client intakes, legal research memos, depositions, affidavits, and many other skills related to being an active litigator. I am now more certain than ever that I would like to pursue a career in litigation once I graduate from the University of Texas School of Law in 2012.

The first week of working with STCRP was a basic orientation. We were given a copy of the docket and participated in our first staff meeting. Staff meetings were divided into two components. The first portion was a general staff meeting; the second portion was the legal team meeting. Legal interns were a part of both meetings. During the legal portion we would go over the docket. Our first week we were assigned tasks to complete for whatever cases interested us. Sometimes we would all be asked to focus on a portion of a case because deadlines were fast approaching and we needed to finalize this or that. Every week we would meet on Wednesday and give updates on what we were working on, we would also be assigned new work as we completed assignments or as we asked for them, whichever came first.

During my time with the STCRP I worked on cases involving lost wages, discrimination, violations of the Miranda warnings, police abuse of power, prisoner's rights, and many other interesting and important areas of civil rights litigation. Because STCRP is a non-profit organization, they can only afford to take a fraction of the cases that come their way. The cases that I worked on usually involved Latinos who were at the low end of the socio-economic scale. I worked closely with several clients through out the summer, and I still think about their cases to this day.

One such client would be an individual who has a mobility disability and was injured by a ramp at a local college campus. The ramp did not comply with the ADA. We worked with him on his case for a long time. I helped out with his affidavit of indigency and several other documents for his case. I also had the privilege of working on his pleading and researching legal issues for his case. It was a very rewarding experience.

I also worked with a group of clients who had not been paid by an independent contractor who had hired them to clean a chain of stores. I had the privilege of working on their initial intakes, and then researching the issues for that claim as well. I found a very on-point case from an appellate court that governed the majority of my research in determining whether an employer is truly an independent contractor or if they are an employer masking themselves as independent contractors to limit liability. Also, a big issue was whether we could claim there was a joint employer relationship between the "independent contractor" and the store chain so we could guarantee recovery if this case went to court. Most independent contractors don't have the kind of assets necessary to provide our clients with their lost wages. We would need to sue the store chain to get our clients the wages that are owed to them.

There were many cases that I worked on through out the summer. It took me ten pages to describe most of my work with STCRP in good detail for my end-of-summer memo. I enjoyed working with STCRP because of the interesting docket and the wonderful staff. I also really enjoyed working in the Rio Grande Valley, because that is where I am from and where I plan to practice once I graduate law school. Thank you for funding my position with STCRP, I hope you will continue this practice, and give another individual the same opportunity next summer.

Sincerely,

Juan R. Flores

The ten weeks I spent as an intern at Legal Aid in Longview proved to be invaluable an experience to me as a first step to the beginning of my legal career. I started the internship not knowing a great deal about legal aid, and being even less sure about the direction I wanted to take my practice of law. At the close of the summer I feel very positive that I was able to learn about the day to day environment at a legal office, and what the lives of attorneys is like.

My work and assignments varied day to day. At the beginning I was able to sit in with the managing attorney while she spoke to clients at various stages of their legal situations. I was able to attend intake interviews, and afterward discuss the legal issues and other factors that go into accepting a case. Other times I was able to sit in with currents clients while they received legal advice. I was also given the opportunity to do several initial interviews on my own, which I found quite interesting. After doing these interviews I discussed the merits of the case with Robyn, and she asked my opinion on whether this was a case legal aid should take. I was also able to attend several trials in Justice of the Peace Court, which were terrific learning experiences as I have never been to JP court before.

Periodically I was given a specific legal question to research, a task that was made more difficult when legal aid made the decision that summer interns were not to use the internet. There was a positive for me to this decision however, in that I was able to become much more comfortable doing legal research in a legal library. This is a skill that is barely touched on in the first year of law school, but once it became a necessity to learn how I actually enjoyed it.

In addition to research, I wrote a few documents for legal aid, including a predictive memorandum. I felt comfortable writing the memo as I felt like this was one of the things that first year of law school effectively teaches you how to do. Robyn was complementary of the memo, while still giving me critiques on it, which I appreciated.

In addition to the great deal of black letter law involving the Texas Housing Code, Health and Human services, and more that I learned, I will also take with me many general lessons about being an attorney. I enjoyed discussing every detail of the profession with the lawyers at this office, from tips on how to handle your clients to advice on juggling your personal life with your professional life. I have a clearer picture of what it is to be an attorney now because these are things that I could have never learned in the classroom.

This internship has shown me how exploited poor people can be, and moving forward with my schooling and my career I would like to put myself in a position where I can help these individuals out, be it in a non-profit organization like this one or doing pro bono work on the side. I really do buy into the notion that being a lawyer is a noble profession, and I would like my career to exemplify all the best things about the job, and not the worst. Being around attorneys who truly care about their clients has been a motivational experience for me, and one that I hope I remember when I have clients of my own.

I would like to thank everyone involved to the opportunity afforded to me this summer,

- Christopher Myrick