

Michelle Milagros Lehrer

Final Report for the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas Internship Program

Family Violence Prevention Service, Inc.

San Antonio, Texas

Summer 2009

Reflecting on my internship with Family Violence Prevention Services (FVPS), it is incredible that in just ten weeks, I was able to gain such a wide array of skills and practical knowledge about the area of family law. It was such an honor to participate in the internship program at FVPS through the Litigation Fellowship from the State Bar of Texas. It was my fervor and determination to be a voice and a champion for clients in need of legal representation that sparked my desire to become an attorney, and working alongside Ms. Shelly Siegfried, the director of legal services, has strengthened that desire and redirected my focus and drive in law school.

FVPS was the perfect avenue for me to learn about the field of law and become personally involved with clients who desperately needed a counselor to represent their case. The faces of the men, women and children whose lives were forever changed flash in my mind, and I can still hear their gratitude and feel their warm embraces. To be involved in such an acclaimed organization that shelters battered women and provides so many services to break the cycle of family violence is among the most rewarding experiences of my life. During my first meeting with Ms. Siegfried, I was immediately captivated by her devotion, and brilliance in this area of law; therefore, I aspired to absorb as much as I could from her. Her words "our program creates an avenue for crime

victims to receive free civil legal services that allow them to be protected and move on to a life without their abuser” were inspiring. At times the cases were devastating, but the energy and passion at FVPS coupled with the knowledge that our legal services would aid these crime victims was an extremely motivating force.

I was impressed by the legal department’s commitment to their clients, and their dedication to me as an intern. The FVPS attorneys and the paralegal immersed me in the law, and went to great lengths to make sure I was involved in all areas family violence litigation. From the onset, I was amazed how rapidly the legal picture came into focus for me. I had obtained pieces of the puzzle during my first year of law school yet I was still not aware of how these pieces fit together. However, as I worked on pleadings, drafted legal documents, filed petitions at the courthouse, attended hearings, responded to motions and discovery, conducted legal research, and observed depositions, the light bulb was illuminated. Not only did I understand where the puzzle pieces belonged, but also I was validated in the choice I had made to become an attorney. Moreover, I felt that I was better prepared for my second year of law school and the family law course I would be taking in the Fall, as I learned a great deal about family law, particularly divorces, custody, child support, protective orders and even wills and property issues.

Working alongside the attorneys at FVPS has been invaluable. I had the unique opportunity to gain exposure to the San Antonio legal community, such as attorneys, judges, clerks, et al. I regularly was invited to go to the courthouse and with the guidance of Ms. Siegfried, distinctly learned the system. This included seeing the life of a suit from filing, setting a hearing, the system of presiding, conferring with opposing counsel, recording, and observing the FVPS attorneys passionately represent their clients before a

judge. As much as I appreciated this, I did not realize how special it was to become familiarized with the court system at this stage of my life until a practicing attorney told me that many litigators do not see the inside of a courthouse until after they pass the bar exam. I am incredibly thankful that the attorneys at FVPS took me under their wing and am very fortunate work alongside attorneys who hold such prestige in the legal community.

One of the most rewarding and unforgettable experiences of the summer came about during a final hearing for a client whose case I had become deeply connected to. Working on this case was representative of the many skills and invaluable legal education I had obtained from my internship. I had personally worked on this client's case, and will never forget the look in her eyes when the final hearing concluded. She embraced Ms. Siegfried and I, and beyond her words of appreciation, I could feel the weight of the world lift off her shoulders. For the first time, the tears in her eyes were tears of joy and hope for a bright future rather than fear and pain. I felt so grateful to FVPS for allowing me to be so involved, teaching me so many valuable lessons and strengthening my passion for the law. Ms. Siegfried made that incredible moment even more extraordinary when she asked the judge if she could approach and introduce her intern. The judge graciously accepted, and to my surprise, he began an impassioned discussion about the legal profession. He took the time to share his experience, was heart-felt in his dialogue and very encouraging. I was overwhelmed with emotion, as this was one of my final days in my internship, the culmination of my entire experience, and illustrative of the most amazing summer of my life. I did not anticipate gaining so much, both professionally and personally.

What I take away from my ten week internship with FVPS is a new found responsibility to the legal community and potential clients, an awareness of what it truly means to work hard and be ethical, a priceless legal education that cannot be taught in a classroom, and a stronger desire to become an attorney. Words cannot adequately express how grateful I am to Family Violence Prevention Services and to the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas, who made this experience possible.

My Sincere Gratitude,

Michelle M. Lehrer

Legal Intern to Shelly Siegfried, Director of Legal Services / CVCLS Attorney

Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc.

JESUS ELIAS HITA LOYA
LITIGATION SECTION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FINAL REPORT
SPECIAL IMMIGRANT JUVENILE STATUS: TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CHILDREN WHO MAY
QUALIFY AND HELPING THEM TELL THEIR STORY.

My greatest fear is overlooking a child's cry for help. As a 3L law clerk at El Paso's Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc., I screen children that the Department of Homeland Security and its various sub-agencies detain throughout the interior United States and the southern border.¹ Once the U.S. government processes the various unaccompanied minors, they are then transferred to a federally funded facility that houses unaccompanied undocumented minors during removal proceedings.² The purpose of this writing is to shed light on the cultural subtleties involved with undocumented unaccompanied minor intake interviews and to make immigration practitioners aware of interviewing strategies that may nurture trust.

DMRS represent's some of these undocumented unaccompanied minors in three facilities throughout El Paso and surrounding communities. Once the children are placed in a facility, DMRS' unaccompanied minor unit takes over and serves as a first response legal triage center and works with the children in an effort to find legal relief. Of the few options available,³ Special Immigrant Juvenile Status proves to be the toughest to identify in the field. To this end, DMRS is the first, and probably the child's only opportunity to accurately tell his story.

Before a legal defence is identified however, the unaccompanied unit must accurately screen each and every child in order to get a preliminary feel for what a given child is hiding from or running to. Some children make their journey from as far away as the Ecuadorian Andes to reunite with parents they have not seen since birth. Others make the journey from the nearby Mexican State, Chihuahua—a state that shares an international border with Texas—seeking refuge from President Calderon's violent war on drugs and corruption. And in between this vast

area of land, children from South and Central America arrive searching for a better way of life, simply because they have nowhere else to go.

Luckily, Congress has recognized a need to aid these children and has recalibrated the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act in the last quarter of 2008 to comfort these children.⁴ But before DMRS can identify relief, vital information must be accurately extracted from the children. Moreover, many children have experienced situations that are so traumatizing that they are not able, or are unwilling to relate important facts. In other situations, the child is unaware that their situation constitutes neglect, abuse, or abandonment. In this respect it is that much more important to help the child narrate his story so that legal relief can be fully developed.

Take for example child “M,” a neglected Honduran unaccompanied minor who made his way to the United States on his own and without the aid of a *coyote*.⁵ On his initial intake interview, we spoke of general niceties regarding his name, his age, his voyage to the United States, and his family environment back home. During his interview, “M” disclosed a very interesting story. “M’s” initial declaration however, did not rise to the level required under SIJV.⁶

“M” traveled to the United States from Central America by way of eighteen Union Pacific commercial freight trains. Along the way, he witnessed his stowaway travel buddy fall from the train to his peril as he slept during their voyage along the eastern coast of Mexico. In Mexico City, “M” was struck twice with a dull hatchet that left a nasty scare on his head. Making matters worse, he was twice kidnapped and held for ransom in Southern and Northern Mexico. While in the northern city of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, he was enslaved for thirty days

working as a domestic servant in a safe house operated by the dreaded narco-paramilitary group: *Los Zetas*.⁷

My experience interviewing children over the summer has taught me that most children have no idea their familial circumstances constitute abandonment, neglect, or abuse. It follows then that special attention is given and that every child is properly screened to reveal information that would otherwise not be related to an interviewing attorney. For instance, the first time I visited with “M,” he made it clear that he was not afraid to return to his country thus eliminating an affirmative asylum claim.⁸ “M” stubbornly insinuated he was a normal child from a normal family; a claim that was obviously not true, considering both his parents suggested over the phone that *Los Zetas* kill the child because they could not afford the ransom.⁹

The majority of the children I speak to are remarkable survivors. For them to admit to an act of abuse, abandonment, or neglect is tantamount to a first class admission to possessing an undesirable trait: Mental Weakness. To break through this social barrier, it is important to keep in mind what is at stake with these resilient children. They are acutely aware that survival depends on their ability to appear uninjured and robust—both mentally and physically—even to a person who wants to help. Establishing trust early on and in a hurry is not an easy task. I found it useful to talk about and share my struggles and weaknesses in life. Depending on the child, I would share my family’s experience with immigrating to the U.S. I also noticed the children loosen-up when I told them how much I struggled with Algebra in middle school. In sum, I found it useful to mention my own struggles or weaknesses in a way that reassures the child that you are not going to think he is a freak, weird, or vulnerable—this is an important element to observe throughout an interview.

¹ Raya Jarawan, Note, *Young, Illegal, and Unaccompanied: One Step Short of Legal Protection*, 14 WASH. & LEE J. CIVIL RTS. & SOC. JUST. 125, 127 (2007). (explaining the process in which the Department of Homeland Security determines whether a child is in fact unaccompanied and the means in which the Department transfers such children to the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement) "ORR manages the custody, identification, and release procedures for all unaccompanied minors caught at the border or in the interior United States." *Id.* at 128.

² Christopher Nugent, *Whose Children are These? Towards Ensuring the Best Interests and Empowerment of Unaccompanied Alien Children*, 15 B.U. PUB. INT. L.J. 219, 229 (2006). (illustrating DHS' role as a gatekeeper to determine which children are transferred to ORR within seventy-two hours after detainment pursuant to *Reno v. Flores*, 507 U.S. 292 (1993)).

³ See Devon A. Corneal, *On the Way to Grandmother's House: Is U.S. Immigration Policy More Dangerous Than the Big Bad Wolf for Unaccompanied Juvenile Alien?*, 109 PENN ST. L. REV. 609, 625-42 (2004) (reviewing the five options available to unaccompanied undocumented minors during removal proceedings: Voluntary Departure, Political Asylum, Convention Against Torture, SIJV, Exploited Person Visas U & T).

⁴ Sally Terry Green, *Protection for Victims of Child Sex Trafficking in the United States: Forging the Gap Between U.S. Immigration Laws and Human Trafficking Laws*, 12 U.C. DAVIS J. JUV. L. & POL'Y 309, 341 (2008). (outlining the elements required in order to qualify for special immigration juvenile status)

[I]n order to qualify for SIJ status under the original language, a child must establish that (1) he has been declared dependent on a juvenile court located in the United States, (2) he has been deemed eligible by that court for long term foster care, and (3) it has been determined in administrative or judicial proceedings that it would not be in his best interest to be returned to his previous country of nationality. *Id.*

⁵ Ginger Thompson, *Crossing with Strangers: Children at the Border; Littlest Immigrants, Left in the Hands of Smugglers*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 3, 2003, § A, at 1. (describing the new trend with the rising demand to hire *coyotes* because of heightened border security).

⁶ Green, *supra* note 4, at 341.

⁷ Ginger Thompson, *Sleepy Mexican Town Awake to Drug Violence*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 23, 2005, § 1, at 1. (observing the sharp rise in drug violence on the border and the powerful special forces unit, *Los Zetas*, which is among the most ruthless drug gang on the Texas/Mexico border).

⁸ William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-457, § 208, 122 Stat. 5081, 5082 (2008). (amending the Act to provide an asylum officer initial jurisdiction over any asylum package filed by an unaccompanied undocumented minor).

My Experiences at Human Rights Initiative

By Austen Swaim, Summer 2009 Asylum Intern

I had a unique experience this summer at HRI because I was fortunate enough to work two internships in the asylum and advocacy programs. For purposes of this paper I will discuss my experiences as an asylum intern.

The asylum program at HRI consisted primarily of doing intakes, writing memos, researching country conditions and included a day in the court room. All experiences greatly shaped my perspectives on the law and filled in a lot of gray areas about litigation and the law that I did not learn about as a first-year law student.

Intakes are a crucial part of HRI's program where I was met potential clients. Chris Mansour, the Asylum attorney at the time and I sat down in a room behind closed doors with the potential client to find out their personal history and to ultimately evaluate whether or not we thought we could offer services to them. Once we had seen a client and taken notes, Chris and I discussed where we felt the client had a strong case and tried to decide whether or not there were any holes in the individual's story. If necessary, I would do research to collaborate the intake's narrative of the events surrounding their persecution. Research included browsing news sites from all over the world, the State Department's Country Condition Reports and other political websites. This experience nurtured both my interest in foreign cultures and the law. I enjoyed this process a lot because I was able to voice my opinion on the credibility of the client's case and truly felt like I played an important part of the decision making process.

In addition to conducting intakes I wrote two memos this summer. This was an important undertaking because having only written one memo in my first year law class, and having a lot of time to do it, I was unsure of my ability to write a memo in a time pressure situation. I did just fine. My first memo was about "material misrepresentation" in immigration documents. I also wrote a memo on "material support in the persecution of others." Again, since both memos were related to specific cases I felt like I was making a worthwhile contribution to the company. One pro-bono attorney even told me that I did a great job on the "material support" memo which is encouraging to hear as a young law student.

I also spent a full day in court. My experience at the courthouse was great not just because our client was granted asylum but also because I got to see litigation take place in a court room under Federal jurisdiction. Having never been in a court room before this experience was an important one for me as a young lawyer. Seeing lawyers interact with each other and the judge as well as the examining and cross-examining of the witnesses shed light on an aspect of law that one does not see in the classroom or the office.

My experiences this summer at HRI were enjoyable, informative and fulfilling. I took great pride in nurturing my passion for the law as well as being a part of a group of people that help out individuals whose lives have been crushed and are trying to pick up the pieces in America.

Internship Experience at Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, Inc.

Roxanna Manoochehri

I spent the second half of my summer working for Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, Inc. thanks to the grant provided by the State Bar of Texas Litigation Division. The funding gave me the opportunity to work with an agency that I have the utmost respect for because of the tremendous impact they have on immigrant communities in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. My time at HRI was spent working for the Legal Education and Asylum Program, under supervising attorney Sunil Varghese. During that time, I was given the opportunity to actively participate in every aspect of the program by assisting with client intake interviews, giving feedback in legal team discussions, researching timely asylum issues and country conditions, and attending an immigration interview.

One of the most important steps in the immigration litigation process is the initial interview with a potential client. Initial assessments about a client's perceived credibility and the validity of their asylum claim are crucial to determining litigation strategies. This can be a very stressful experience for a new immigrant, but every potential client that came through the door at HRI had a welcoming environment and compassionate attorneys waiting. During these interviews, the potential client took as much time as needed to tell his or her entire story. The attorneys gave the potential clients the professionalism, empathy and compassion the potential clients needed to talk openly about the most traumatic experiences of their lives. Some interviews would take up to two full hours, but the attorneys never rushed the process. Each and every potential client received the same amount of undivided attention as established clients. Even if the attorneys decided not to take the case, it was obvious that the potential clients felt relieved by the opportunity to tell their stories to empathetic ears.

At the weekly legal team meetings, the attorneys and interns discussed every intake done that week. Even though I was just a law student, my feedback and perspective was always welcome during these discussions and I was treated as a professional. I presented the country conditions research about each potential client's situation, and my opinion was factored into each decision made at those meetings. I truly felt that I was a part of the HRI litigation team.

The event that will remain in my mind the most is the interview I attended with two HRI clients who applied for permanent residence. The morning of the interview, the attorneys, clients, and I met at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services building and it was obvious how nervous the clients were about this very important event in their lives. As we waited to be called by the immigration officer, the mother and daughter quietly spoke reassuring words to each other. Once we were in the immigration officer's office, the interview began and I was able to see a part of immigration process that I had never before experienced. After waiting for years to be granted the interview, waiting for over an hour in the lobby, and answering questions for an hour, the clients were granted their status as legal permanent residents. The joy in their eyes was without measure.

When I decided to be a lawyer, I wanted to provide marginalized communities with access to justice. My summer at HRI inspired and motivated me to pursue my passion for public interest, immigration, and legal assistance. Working at HRI made me understand, in no uncertain terms, that I had made the right choice.

8/31/09

To Whom It May Concern in the State Bar of Texas Litigation Section:

RE: My summer clerkship at Legal Aid of Northwest Texas, Dallas office.

Foremost, I would like begin by stating that my summer as a law clerk at Legal Aid of Northwest Texas this past summer was the single most educational and rewarding experience I have had the opportunity to undertake since the beginning of my law school education. I would like to sincerely thank the Texas Bar for providing the funding for the internship and making this experience possible. I would also like to thank Kervyn Altaffer, my manager at LANWT, and also Sophia Palat, a staff attorney at Dallas LANWT for making this an unprecedented learning experience that will last a lifetime and no doubt benefit my career more than anything I have done to-date in law school.

I began my internship in early June and was fortunate enough to be able to stay until August 14, 2009, the week before my 3L fall semester started, staying on as a volunteer after my grant ran out. I spent the summer in the **Housing, Consumer Protection & Economic Benefits Division** and also worked with the **Consumer Bankruptcy Group**.

My summer at LANWT provided exposure to a vast array of legal issues in a wide variety of practice areas and I was able to, for the first time, interact one-on-one with real clients. This internship provided me the opportunity to personify that which hitherto, I had only read in textbooks. I was rewarded with the opportunity to truly assist in the process of helping people. I was exposed to and able to help people and the staff on housing issues such as evictions and foreclosure, on personal things like social security benefits, workers compensation benefits, labor and employment issues and virtually all aspects of consumer bankruptcy.

During my clerkship, my duties included client intake interviews during the "intake" process. This was very rewarding because I was able to hear their stories, ask clients questions and to sort through the facts and figure out the issues and the merits of their claims, and to assist in formulating a plan of action that would best aid their particular situation. I also performed legal research, drafted client letters, aided in drafting and editing all kinds of legal documents including discovery, pleadings and obtaining and sorting through various types of evidence. I learned practical things regarding the practice of law of an infinite variety, from where and how to file things with the court, to simple things like the importance of the fax machine and the mail.

Mr. Altaffer and Ms. Palat were the attorney's I worked most closely with over the course of the summer. I would again like to thank them both for taking me under their wing and really showing me the ropes and sharing their years of experience and expertise with me. I attended an eviction hearing with Mr. Altaffer, a 341 Hearing with Ms. Palat and a variety of other court actions before we got to the biggest and best case of the summer. Around the middle of my clerkship this summer, we took on defending a young man in a serious Trade Secret misappropriation, Breach of Fiduciary Duty and Fraud case brought by a large corporation with which the defendant had previously been engaged as an independent contractor. I was able to see from start to finish; the true workings of a major civil litigation case. While I could write on all day about this case and this experience, in the interest of brevity I list but a few of the major highlights of what I was able to witness, assist and

experience: the client's first interview, working through a tireless settlement negotiation attempt, all aspects of the discovery process, depositions, drafting and serving subpoenas, conducting research and preparation for a temporary restraining order hearing, scheduling and working with the court and the opposing counsel in the various aspects of the case. We worked through, and I was able to witness and assist in everything about the case. I was able to see from the actions of the opposing counsel exactly why many lawyers have a bad name and what I will never do in practice in terms of pressing the ethical bounds. And most importantly, I was able to see the client walk away from this as unscathed as was possible in the circumstances of what had happened in his life to lead him to the moment when he was sued.

While there is no possible way to place everything I was able to do and to learn over the course of 3 months in this one writing, I have attempted to sum it up as best I can. Again I cannot iterate enough how grateful I am for having had this opportunity and cannot give justice to all I have learned and will take away from this experience in this letter. The knowledge and experience gleaned from this once in a lifetime experience, I will take with me and use in practice for the rest of my life and will be a better lawyer and indeed, a better person for it.

Sincerely,

Brett Russell Schoenherr

Candidate for Juris Doctor, May 2010

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Email. {HYPERLINK

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State Bar of Texas, Litigation Section

Litigation Intern Report – Sam Lloyd-Hughes/University of Texas – Lone Star Legal Aid

Summer 2009

When I arrived at Lone Star Legal Aid (LSLA), I was a fresh-faced 1L with no prior legal experience and little work experience generally. I was somewhat intimidated by the prospect of spending time in court and representing clients by myself, but my experience this summer has been both a fantastic education in litigation and a revelation that it is something I would love to do again.

One of the most exciting aspects of my work was taking on eviction cases at the Justice of the Peace courts in Houston. While I had a lot of assistance from my colleagues at LSLA, particularly Mark Grandich who guided me through the summer with his wisdom and patience, once I was in the courtroom it was my case to win or lose. However, both the intellectual challenge of preparing for a case in all of its strategic possibilities and the more physical challenge of appearing before a judge and speaking coherently ended up being enjoyable to me. It was uniquely stimulating, and every case was different. I also represented clients at informal hearings before the Houston Housing Authority, which, while quite different, was another chance to represent clients by myself. While I won few cases, for the odds are quite stacked against the people LSLA represents, I learned a great deal: always bring the law you are relying on with you, always think ahead of opposing counsel. So few of my 1L compatriots had this opportunity, and I feel very blessed to have received it.

There were many other litigation-related experiences that I had this summer. One of these was working on documents for the court. For instance, I drafted several motions and

orders for use at the county court, including summary judgments, amended answers, and IFPs. In writing these motions I learned the language of the courts, and had a chance to work with both the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure and the Texas Property Code. I also had the opportunity to sift the discovery documents that one opposing counsel had sent over. This large, and largely unsorted, stack held many of the keys to the case. Lastly, I was asked to file documents at various courts and serve documents on our clients' landlords. All of these jobs together instilled familiarity in me with the diverse aspects of being a lawyer.

The other area of responsibility I had was that for the last two weeks I conducted a majority of the intake interviews for my group. This gave me more time with the clients, and I learned several valuable lessons about assertiveness and patience. After the interviews, I presented each case before the attorneys in my group for consideration. This process allowed me to see how clients are taken on at a legal aid firm like LSLA, and to explore the considerations of what makes a case good or bad.

The diversity of my tasks at LSLA this summer allowed me to experience many different facets of a lawyer, particularly those related to litigation. I am now convinced that, no matter what I do after law school, I would like it to involve working in a courtroom, and direct contact with my clients.

Additional Comments from Mark Grandich, Supervising Attorney, Litigation Intern:

When I was in the military, I learned that a tank needs about 10 hours of maintenance for every hour it spends rolling around in the desert. Litigation is a lot like that. Sam not only spent a lot of time helping me prepare for various trials (which included the drafting of various motions), but he also had his own clients which he represented.

Sam appeared for, and advocated directly on behalf of, his own clients both at JP trials and in administrative hearings. He was usually successful. Every trial and hearing Sam attended required him to research the issues and the facts, to develop a strategic defense based upon his research, and to understand how to use the available procedural mechanisms to his benefit. For each of his clients, Sam was required to understand the federal law for federally subsidized tenancies, and also to understand the interplay between federal requirements and state law. For each case, he had to use the facts available to him in order to develop a legal theory as to why his client should win, in light of both federal and state law. Then Sam had to navigate the procedural hurdles to presenting the best case he could develop for his client. The bulk of his work this Summer required him to actively engage in the practice of litigation. In short, our litigation intern got thrown directly into every aspect of litigation, including the role of lead counsel.

Summer Litigation Fellowship Report

I had little idea what was in store for me when I started my summer clerkship at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid after receiving a Litigation Fellowship from the State Bar of Texas. I knew that TRLA provided excellent legal services and that they worked hard to represent both worthy and vulnerable clients. But I quickly learned that the attorneys at TRLA are much more: they are counselors, therapists, friends, mentors and champions of those they represent - both in and out of the courtroom. Receiving the Litigation Fellowship and having the opportunity to work with such an outstanding organization has truly been an honor and privilege.

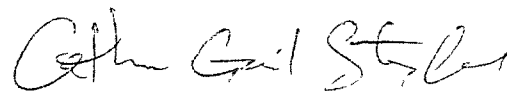
I came to TRLA in hopes of working in all types of law, but with a specific interest in domestic violence and sexual assault litigation. Throughout my ten weeks, I had an opportunity to work on many different issues from immigration to family law to property and tax issues. Beyond research, I was able to get hands-on experience in domestic violence litigation. The attorneys at TRLA went above and beyond to involve me in cases. Often, I had the chance to follow a case from start to finish and get personally involved with the client and their problem. My workload in litigation included drafting crosses, directs, pleadings, orders and looking into specific legal and evidentiary questions that might affect our case. Nearly everyday, an attorney would stick their head in my office and ask if I wanted to come to court, a client interview, community outreach or the weekly case review. From day one, I was welcomed as more than just a clerk, but a part of the team. I was able to watch first-hand how attorneys can make a difference in the lives of others, and the important role that legal aid serves.

Looking back at my summer, I am certain that the time I spent at TRLA has affected my life in a tremendous way. I have become a better student, researcher, thinker and person. I have

had the chance to watch just how much preparation, hard work and talent can affect the outcome of a case. The cases I worked on were often shocking. Cases of abuse, rape, neglect and victimization were a day-to-day reality for me. It was heart wrenching. Yet somehow, the attorneys at TRLA pieced together these terrible situations and worked hard to fight for these clients- when no else could or had. I was continually humbled by the work that they did and the spirit that they carried with them each day.

On the last day of my clerkship, I was asked what I took away from the experience. The question is easy to answer: working at TRLA made me excited to join the legal profession and inspired to use my education for good. I learned valuable legal skills and lessons that I will take with me for the rest of my life. Without the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas, I would have never had this amazing opportunity. I am forever grateful to have had such a rewarding and challenging summer clerkship. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Gail Stanford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Catherine Gail Stanford