



St. Thomas Law News

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In Rural Georgia, in Solidarity with the Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative

By Professor Lauren Gilbert



Two weeks before school started, five St. Thomas law students and one professor were freedom riders, fighting to get immigrants out of detention at the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, a two-hour ride from Atlanta. They returned late Friday night so that several of them could volunteer during 1L Orientation. The team of volunteers from the Immigration Law Students Association (ILSA) included student coordinators **Florencia Cornu Laport** (3L) and **Marvin Roblero** (2L), President of ILSA, Professor **Lauren Gilbert**, ILSA Vice-President **Claudia Perez** (2L), **Shedwin Eliassin** (2L), and **DeAndre' Augustus** (3L). They spent the week of August 5, 2019, working alongside lawyers and staff from the Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative (SIFI) on behalf of immigrants detained at the Stewart Detention Center, one of the largest for-profit detention centers in the country. This was Professor Gilbert's fourth journey with students to do detention work. The other three trips were to the Karnes Family Detention Center in Texas.

St. Thomas Law: Gateway to Great Legal Careers

Andres Duran, (3L) accepted a paid Summer Law Institute Counselor position with the Hispanic National Bar (HNBA) Foundation in Washington D.C. In D.C., Andres coached a team of high school seniors in the Securities Fraud Mock Trial Competition.

Jaime Noicely, (2L) accepted a Summer Internship with alumna Judge **Phoebe Francois '94**, Seventeenth Judicial Circuitry of Florida in the west satellite courthouse in Planation.

Gabriel Baca, a 2019 graduate, accepted a post-graduate position with the Law Offices of Jason Turchin in Weston, specializing in Personal Injury.

Bradley Cook, a 2019 graduate, accepted a post-graduate position with Lowy & Cook, P.A. in Miami, specializing in Civil Litigation. ❖

In many ways, Professor Gilbert comments, these experiences were very different: at Karnes, they spent the entire time inside the detention center. In Georgia, she shuttled teams of students back and forth to Stewart, but their home base was the office of SIFI, where they worked alongside attorneys and staff. At Karnes, they helped parents and children who had gone or were going through the credible fear screening process, to determine their eligibility for asylum. Their work was limited to preparing them for their credible fear interviews (CFIs) before an Asylum Officer (AO) and their Immigration Judge (IJ) reviews. At Stewart, which is limited to men and a few trans women, they saw people at all stages of the process, from recent arrivals, to persons here for years who had just been detained, to lawful permanent residents who had committed some offense that made them deportable.

Professor Gilbert stated that the experience at the Stewart Detention Center was much less devastating than their work in Texas but no less valuable. From a pedagogical standpoint, this experience was arguably more valuable for the students, who developed a range of skills, from screening clients at initial intakes, to Skyping with them through an interpreter, to preparing bond applications and parole requests, including drafting motions and letters, gathering documentation from family members and sponsors, and doing legal research. In short, the entire team acquired new skills that they could take back with them and transfer to other immigration contexts.

Although they faced some bumps along the way, including having their free housing fall through two nights before they left, once they arrived, everything ran smoothly and the lawyers and staff at SIFI were outstanding. Furthermore, the Airbnb where they stayed allowed them to escape, decompress and enjoy each other's company each evening. On the last day, at a final debriefing, each participant compared his or her experience to a rose, where the highs were the flower, the lows were the thorn, and the possibilities for the future were the unopened bud. Several students indicated a commitment to continue to work remotely, which may blossom into a new ILSA project.

For more information on previous trips please visit <https://ilsa60.wixsite.com/ilsadetentionproject> ❖

Campus Events

- September 2: Labor Day Holiday (No School)
- September 9: SBA Organization Fair, Cordero Breezeway @ 10:00 a.m.
- September 10: Career Development Open House, CPD Building @11:00 a.m.
- September 11: Recent Developments Under the "TCJA" Symposium, Moot Courtroom @ 9:00 a.m.
- September 12: Solo & Small Law Firm Practice Program
- September 12: Spring Clinical Application Deadline
- September 17: JAG Panel L & L, CPD-113 @ 12:00 p.m.



Lunch & Learn with the U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Attorney's Office

Please join the Office for Career Development for its **first** Lunch & Learn of the new school year. Attorneys from the U.S. Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida will be on campus Thursday, September 5, 2019, at noon in CPD-113. Students must RSVP via Symplicity by September 4, at noon to confirm your attendance. The application **deadline** for the summer law intern program is **September 8th**. Please review the application prior to lunch and learn in order to have any questions you may have answered by the attorneys. ❖

Register for Max

Students are encouraged to register on-line for their free MAX account at <https://www.accesslex.org/maxonline>. All you will need to provide to register and personalize your Max experience, as well as track your progress is your name, email address, school, and class year. No other personal information is required and all information remains confidential.

New on-line lessons are live and waiting on you. Students can access their [MAX Lessons](#) and complete as many lessons as possible to receive up to eight entries toward the annual MAX scholarship drawings. ❖



Miami Dade Legal Initiative Program

Last month St. Thomas Law had the pleasure of hosting the 6th Annual Miami Dade County Public School Legal Initiatives Program. The brainchild of Kymberlee Curry Smith, Esq., the event brings local area high school students to campus for a day of discussion on topics such as constitutional rights, and the opportunity to meet representatives from organizations such as the Public Defender's Office, FBI, voluntary bar associations, the U.S. Attorneys' Office, and the Admissions teams from both the law school and undergraduate programs. St. Thomas Law is proud of its many year tradition of hosting such events. ❖

Legal Aid Bridge to Justice Event

On June 7th, Legal Aid hosted its 9th Annual Bridge to Justice breakfast event. Attendees had the pleasure of hearing from keynote speaker Nadine Strosser, a New York Law School Professor and leading expert in constitutional law and human rights. Ms. Strosser, former president of the ACLU (its youngest and first female president) addressed how censorship and anti-hate speech laws around the world are disproportionately enforced against the minorities and groups they were intended to protect. Each year the event raises much needed funds for Legal Aid Programs in Broward County. ❖

Judicial Intern Opportunity Program (JIOP) Reception

On June 6, 2019, the ABA Section of Litigation held a reception celebrating the Judicial Intern Opportunity Program (JIOP) for the Class of 2019. The reception was hosted at Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson in Miami. **Angela Nieves** (2L) was awarded a JIOP scholarship and is interned with Chief Judge Barbara M. G. Lynn of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas. St. Thomas Law is a proud sponsor of JIOP. ❖

MSP Recovery & MSP Recovery Law Firm Corporate Headquarters Grand Opening

On June 5, 2019, MSP Recovery & MSP Recovery Law Firm Corporate Headquarters held its Grand Opening in Coral Gables. The celebrations which included cocktails, hors' d'oeuvres, and live music brought together practitioners and Judges from all over South Florida. Mr. Mark A. Trowbridge, President of the Chamber of Commerce in Coral Gables, and alumnus **Jorge L. Fors, Jr. '11**, Coral Gables Commissioner participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony. MSP currently employs approximately thirteen St. Thomas Law alumni, a number of current St. Thomas Law students, and incoming Fall 2019 students. ❖

Broward County Hispanic Bar Association

On June 1, 2019, the Broward County Hispanic Bar Association celebrated its 30th Annual Installation & Scholarship Gala at Pier 66 Hotel & Marina in Fort Lauderdale. The Master of Ceremony was alumna **Judge Tarlika Navarro '10**. Alumnus **Aron Gibson '11** was sworn in as the incoming President of BCHBA. One of the annual scholarships was awarded to a St. Thomas Law alumnus **Peter Abraham '19**. The BCHBA Scholarship is matched by St. Thomas Law. In addition, the Palm Beach County "Bravo Award" was given to alumna **Victoria Mesa-Estrada '08**. ❖

The Honorable Peter R. Palermo Program 2019 Mock Trial Competition



St. Thomas University School of Law Honorable Peter R. Palermo Mentorship Program hosted its annual Spring Mock Trial Competition with Miami Carol City Sr. High Law Magnet Program. The Palermo Mentorship Program is a community

partnership that involves regular visits from St. Thomas Law students to the Law Magnet Program at Miami Carol City Sr. High School. With the guidance of Ms. Asiah Wolfolk-Manning, lead teacher for the law magnet program at Miami Carol City, St. Thomas Law students guide and assist the high school participants with various trial techniques, teach students basic evidence, and oral advocacy in preparation for the final exam, which is the Spring Mock Trial Competition. There were 6 teams for a total of 39 students playing the roles of state attorney, defense attorney, expert witness and lay witness. In addition, there were several Florida attorneys, former judges, and Palermo Mentorship Alumni who served as judges for the Spring 2019 Competition as well as approximately 22 parents present to observe the educational growth and legal training their child has received due to their participation in the Palermo Mentorship Program. Students were excited to receive their participation award and excited to learn who won best state attorney, best defense attorney, best state witness, best defense witness, and best overall attorney. ❖

Alumni(ae) News

Danielle Capitini, a 2018 graduate, recently accepted an Attorney position with the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County.

Christopher Cooper, a 2014 graduate, recently made partner in the Miami office at Chartwell Law. Cooper concentrates his practice on defending insurance carriers, corporate clients, and condominium associations in general civil litigation disputes, including the areas of first-party

coverage and property claims investigation, subrogation, property damage disputes, premises liability, and negligence.

Danielle Demahy, a 2018 graduate, recently accepted a new position as an Associate Attorney position with the Schlesinger Law Group in Miami, specializing in Commercial Litigation.

Jean Fernandez-Brea, a 2018 graduate, recently accepted a new position as an Associate Attorney position with Koch Parafinczuk Wolf Susen in Fort Lauderdale, specializing in Property Insurance Defense.

Kathryn Hill, a 2018 graduate, recently an In-House Counsel position with the 33rd Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Island in Saint Croix.

Elizabeth Irazabal, a 2018 graduate, recently accepted a new position as an Assistant Public Defender with the Broward Public Defender's Office.

Marcus G. Mahfood, a 2007 graduate, was selected to the 2019 *Super Lawyers* Florida Rising Stars list for general litigation. Marcus, a partner at the Miami office of Chartwell Law, focuses his practice in Maritime Law, specifically crew and passenger claims, marine insurance claims, personal injury and wrongful death claims. ❖

Faculty Announcements

Assistant Professor of Academic Success **Tia Gibbs** was recognized as 40 under 40 South Florida Black Leaders of Today and Tomorrow in *Legacy Magazine* in the Sun Sentinel Newspaper on August 19, 2019.

Professor **Michael Vastine** recently completed his terms as President of the South Florida Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and as a member of the AILA National Board of Governors. He will continue to serve the Chapter for a term as Immediate Past President. Professor Vastine was appointed to serve on the steering committee of the AILA National Federal Court Litigation Section, directing federal court training and resources for the 17,000-attorney organization. He also was appointed to serve as a leader of AILA's (National) Law Student Division Outreach Committee.

At AILA's recent annual national conference in Orlando, Prof. Vastine received the AILA (National) Platinum Award in recognition of the extensive programming and legislative advocacy (including a congressional roundtable hosted by St. Thomas, featuring Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz and representatives from the offices of the South Florida delegation) from his term leading the South Florida Chapter. The Chapter also received AILA's initial Diversity and Inclusion Award, in recognition of its recent initiatives during his leadership. At the conference, Prof. Vastine presented on the panel, *Ethical Issues in Removal Cases: Pinocchio and His Advisors?*, and published a companion article that he co-authored. ❖



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