

7/21/17

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I have truly enjoyed my time at LAF and have gained some valuable legal experience. I want to thank you for making my internship at LAF possible.

I have worked mostly in immigration law doing labor-based U visas. Unfortunately, USCIS takes a long time to process U visas so I will not get to see the fruits of my work. However, I feel that my clients are put much more at ease knowing that someone is supporting them through their difficult time.

Most of my clients are undocumented and fear deportation. They are victimized and struggle to report crimes committed against them to the police. Those who do go to the police face the complications and hurdles of applying for a U visa. The U visa involves numerous forms, including a certification from law enforcement, an affidavit from the client, waivers for inadmissibility, and many other forms. Even a very educated client would have difficulty filing the U visa application without the assistance of a lawyer.

During my time at LAF, I have had a lot of client contact. It has made me realize that these people are not all that different than I am. They are hard working individuals who want their children to get an education in the US and live a life easier than theirs. However, because they are undocumented, they are relegated to the fringes of society. They do not have the privileges I had of living in a middle-class community and going to college.

I spent a lot of time working on a case involving four male construction workers. These men were all immigrants and did not speak much English. Several of these men worked for months without pay. They believed that the boss would pay them when he had money, but he never did. When they continued to ask for their pay, the boss threatened to call immigration on them. Between the four clients, they were owed around \$50,000. Because they were not paid, they had difficulties supporting their families. They had trouble paying rent and one had to move to a smaller apartment. They were unable to send funds back to their home country for the children they had to leave behind. Sometimes they didn't have enough money for food or gas to get to work. This caused a great amount of stress and the clients suffered psychologically. Additionally, they lost trust in future employers. While a U visa cannot fix the past, it can help these clients in the future. With a U visa, they can find better work and will not have to live in constant fear of deportation.

My other large project for the summer was a case involving 50 workers who were fired for trying to unionize. In this case, I conducted most of the initial intakes and many of the follow-up interviews. Since LAF does not have enough attorneys to take on all of these clients and file all 50 applications, we are contracting the work out to pro bono attorneys. Since many of the attorneys do not have U visa experience, we wanted to get as much information from the clients as possible to guide the attorneys in the right direction. I have been struck by how open the clients are with me about sharing their stories and bringing back bad memories to the surface. They are very thankful for my work and very trusting. Several have children in their home

country that they long to bring to the US legally as derivatives on their application. The majority of these clients are hard workers who have had no problems with the criminal justice system. For many their only crime is that they came to the US illegally. The problem is that for citizens of Mexico it is extremely hard to come to the US legally. I spoke to an elderly man whose dad had applied for a visa for him. He has been waiting for 10 years and the visa is still not current; he could wait another 10 years before he can legally enter with a family based visa.

I have also worked briefly on numerous cases with one woman from Mexico. This woman calls me frequently to check up on the status of her cases. She is always so thankful for all of the work I am doing, even if it is a very small thing. She has struggled with a variety of issues including immigration, housing, divorce, domestic violence, and school support. Each small thing we do for her gives her one less thing to worry about.

Leaving LAF is bittersweet. After this summer, I have one more year of law school before I will take the bar exam and become a lawyer. However, I will miss the attorneys who supervised me, my fellow interns, and my clients at LAF. I know that when the clients call my work phone, a new intern will answer. I will not get to see their cases come to a close. However, as I move forward, I know that I have touched many lives and put the clients more at ease, as they know that someone has their back. They are not alone in their struggles. Someone is fighting for justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura Voegeli".

Laura Voegeli
University of Wisconsin Law School- Class of 2018