

# UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | LAW CENTER

Clinical Legal Education Program

# IMMIGRATION CLINIC

2018—Early Spring Edition



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

**Geoffrey Hoffman**

I have never been more impressed with our students, staff and faculty as I was during this past year.

The Harvey floods, and their aftermath, coupled with the many changes to the existing immigration enforcement regime, have created legal needs in the community like never before.

Under the leadership of Clinical Supervising Attorney Josephine Sorgwe, the clinic participated in or led over 60 outreaches during 2017. These outreaches have been instrumental in educating the community, providing guidance to pro bono attorneys, and advice and counsel to individuals who were affected by the floods and the recent changes to immigration law and policy, including the rescission of DACA announced September 5, 2017.

We also appreciated the service of Clinical Assistant Professor Janet Beck, who retired as of December 30, 2017. Clinical Supervising Attorney Rosemary Vega is the recipient of a new grant which relates to detained immigrants, their representation and the mentoring of pro bono counsel.

Finally, we have hired two excellent new part-time clinical staff attorneys, Brandon Roche and Cara Wilkins. Brandon comes to us from the ABA's Childrens' Immigration Law Academy, and Cara Wilkins, from private practice.



**Geoffrey Hoffman**  
UHLC Immigration Clinic-Director

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# Immigration Clinic joins volunteer effort to aid in Harvey Relief Effort

The Clinic organized or participated in over 60 outreaches during 2017

Professor Hoffman led several volunteer efforts assisting flood victims with pressing legal questions.

"The most urgent needs are going to be lost documentation such as a green card or a work authorization," Hoffman said. "If somebody is undocumented, they may be afraid of deportation; they need to know how to deal with those issues."

Students, faculty and staff first volunteered at the George R. Brown Convention Center in partnership with the Tahirih Justice Center. They later helped evacuees at the NRG Center where Hoffman volunteered alongside Dean Baynes and Janet Beck.

Students Rebecca Chavez, Allie Trujillo, Danny Avila, and Gloria Jauregui also volunteered, among others, on behalf of the Law Center.





# Immigration advocates learn basics of asylum law in annual Joseph A. Vail workshop at UHLC

The University of Houston Law Center's Immigration Clinic hosted the annual Joseph A. Vail Asylum Law Workshop in September 2017 to educate immigration lawyers and advocates on current issues and to provide practical information to help them better serve their pro bono clients.

While the main thrust of the day-long program was asylum, primarily for families and children, a special focus this year was placed on challenges immigrants face in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

"We have all been through Harvey," said Geoffrey A. Hoffman, director of the Law Center's Immigration Clinic, in the opening segment. "Imagine if you are an immigrant, undocumented, DACA, and your documents were lost."

He said he researched FEMA eligibility requirements while volunteering to help immigrant flood victims who had taken refuge at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Benefits are available to non-U.S. citizens, depending on their legal status, he said, including those holding green cards, those granted asylum or admitted as refugees, victims of domestic violence with pending petitions, and others.

"A lot of what you learn here today will make you a better lawyer," he said,

In a presentation she dubbed "Asylum 101," Josephine Sorgwe, a clinical supervising attorney at the Law Center's Immigration Clinic, detailed two visas potentially available to those seeking refuge: U visa and T visa.

"There is nothing easy about representing asylum seekers, especially children," said Anne Chandler, Director of the Houston Tahirih Justice Center.

Rosalie Hyde, a clinical social worker and therapist, discussed trauma in the context of children swept up in the turmoil that would lead to a bid for asylum.

Other speakers and discussion topics included: Brian Schaeffer, YMCA International Legal Services, "Right to Counsel;" Wafa Abdin, Catholic Charities, "How to Prepare the asylum Application and Ethical Considerations;" Jill Campbell, BakerRipley, "Legal Research and Immigration;" Susham Modi, The Modi Law Firm, and Rosemary Vega, clinical supervising attorney, discussing preparation for a merits hearing and pretrial practice. Retired Honorable Immigration Judges Rose and Zimmer also spoke and participated in the day's events, in their individual capacities.



# Litigating in Federal Court, students defend client in Hague Convention dispute

Student Attorneys Saif Ali and Dalya Alabbassi Worked on the Case

Clinical Staff Attorneys Rosemary Vega and Josephine Sorgwe and Director Hoffman supervised the students

Two student attorneys with the University of Houston Law Center's Immigration Clinic helped a young girl remain in the U.S. in a dispute involving the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in the Southern District of Texas. The ruling by U.S. District Judge David Hittner was made after hearings in December 2017 and January 2018. The work on the case was a collaboration between the Civil Practice and Immigration clinics.

The decision is reported on Westlaw here: *Peralta v. Garay*, 2018 WL 396329 (S.D. Tex. 2018)



# TRAVEL BAN AMICUS BRIEF FILED

Students: Anthony Foster, Sasha Missick, Kristen Koch worked on the brief to the Supreme Court

The Immigration Clinic has partnered with national organizations on at least 5 amicus briefs during 2016-2017.

In a collaboration with the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program, Texas A&M's Immigration Clinic, and also several nationally recognized immigration law professors, the UHLC Immigration Clinic researched and worked on drafting an *Amicus Curiae* Brief to the United States Supreme Court in the Travel Ban case, filed in 2017. A link to the entire Amicus Brief is [here](#). Below are quotes from the students who worked on this case discussing their experience.

Nos. 16-1436, 16-1540

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**In the Supreme Court of the United States**

DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, *et al.*,  
*Petitioners*,  
v.  
INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT, *et al.*,  
*Respondents*.  
DONALD J. TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, *et al.*,  
*Petitioners*,  
v.  
HAWAII, *et al.*,  
*Respondents*.

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*On Writs of Certiorari to the United States Courts of Appeals  
for the Fourth and Ninth Circuits*

**BRIEF OF IMMIGRATION LAW SCHOLARS  
AS AMICI CURIAE SUPPORTING RESPONDENTS**

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University affiliation is for identification only.

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"This semester, I think I met my goals in that I learned plenty about immigration law, learned a lot about being a lawyer, and learned a lot about interacting with clients. I learned about things I didn't even know I was going to learn. I think my experiences this semester will greatly benefit me in my career as a lawyer, and I'm sure I'll learn even more next semester in Clinic II."

—Anthony Foster, 2L



"It was a great privilege getting to play a part in an amicus brief for the Supreme Court. The travel ban speaks to the heart of the US immigration policy and how we, as a nation, will move forward in an area of law affecting the lives of millions of people. Through this experience, I learned about the President's authority on this political issue, and how the constitution has been interpreted to apply here. Overall, the UHLC Immigration Clinic has equipped me with legal skills to more confidently advocate for clients when I become an attorney."

-Kristen Koch, 3L



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

Clinic students share their student perspectives about their experiences



“Being a student in the immigration clinic allowed me to continue to learn how to represent immigrant survivors of gender-based violence, asylum seekers in court, and so many other members of the immigrant community who are forced to navigate our complex immigration system. I feel more than ready to take on my post-graduate fellowship with the Tahirih Justice Center thanks to my experience in the clinic.”

Karla Perez  
3L



“Before the hearing, I was very nervous and imagined my voice shaking as I addressed the Judge. However, when I actually began to speak my nerves went away, and I felt calm. That day, I learned that your oral advocacy all depends on your preparation. Since I was so prepared, I know exactly what I needed to say and what needed to be done. Knowing that preparation is imperative to oral advocacy, helps me understand that oral advocacy is not all as daunting as it seems....I am honored to have learned from the best mentors, and I know the experiences and skills I have learned are immeasurable.”

Rebecca Chavez  
3L



“A lot of what I learned this semester was never a goal I had at the beginning of the semester. Practicing law requires so many other skills that I could not have foreseen. I wanted to be a better writer. I also wanted to be a better advocate ... Well, I can say now, being a good advocate, at least the way I see it, requires patience, compassion, endurance, perseverance and down-time.... I learned that I need to and will be making steps to be cognizant of those things next semester.”

Pauline Rivera  
2L

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT AND PARTY 2017

Clinic students share their student perspectives about their experiences



“The immigration clinic has absolutely been an invaluable experience for me. The opportunities that have come my way because of being in the Immigration Clinic can’t be overstated. Since the Fall of 2017, I have learned fundamentals and basics of immigration law, how to analyze difficult and complex immigration issues and procedures for the immigration court that are and will be crucial in every aspect of my future in immigration law/legal career. I am thankful to the Clinical Supervising Attorneys for providing me with incredible and invaluable mentoring, coaching, and reinforcing my commitment in immigration law. Being provided with the opportunity to work directly with indigent immigrants, has revived and reminded me why I decided to go to law school...”

Aisha Karim, 2L  
2L



## Clinic Party Fall 2017





## 2017 Arrival Award Honorees



**Roberto Contreras**, President and CEO of St. Christopher Holdings, Ltd.

A businessman with strong ties in the United States, Mexico and Europe, Mr. Contreras has made a name for himself as a respected entrepreneur. Mr. Contreras has started and owned several highly successful companies, including a surfacing company that is renowned worldwide, Cosentino North America. Currently, Mr. Contreras serves as Chief Executive Officer and Founder of St. Christopher Holdings, Ltd. (SCH), a boutique private equity and real estate investment firm with interests in various industries, including DC Partners, LLC. Mr. Contreras is also active in the local community, serving on the Boards of the Houston Zoo, the Board of Trustees for the KIPP Academy and Genesys Works Houston and is a member of the Harris County Sheriff's Office Foundation, the Young Presidents' Organization and the World Presidents' Organization.



**Pershant Mehta**, President and CEO of Je Matadi Inc.

Mr. Mehta is president and CEO of Je Matadi Inc. and founder of Sean Collection Inc., Genesis Brands Inc and Luminess Direct LLC., the fastest growing direct cosmetics & skincare beauty company in North America. Luminess is a direct to consumer business operating multiple platforms. Located in Stafford, Texas, Luminess is positioned to become an annual billion dollar sales company by 2020 as it expands its footprint into retail. Mr. Mehta, along with his wife for nearly 20 years, Nidhika Mehta, are active philanthropists. Houston Chronicle listed the Mehtas in the top 5 most generous young philanthropists in the Houston Area in the year 2010. The Mehtas are active with UNICEF, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, University of Houston and approximately 30 domestic and international charities focusing on women and children's causes through their Stream of Change

Foundation.



**Manolo Sánchez**, Chairman and CEO of BBVA Compass

Manolo Sánchez is chairman and CEO of BBVA Compass and was named U.S. country manager for BBVA Group in 2010. Under his leadership, BBVA Compass has established itself as a bank driven by people, principles and innovation and a model of community involvement from Florida to California. Mr. Sánchez, whose responsibilities include BBVA operations in New York as well as Bancomer Financial Holdings, has worked for BBVA for nearly 25 years. Mr. Sánchez is a governing director of the Houston Symphony and a board member of the Institute of International Bankers, the American Bankers Association, KIPP Houston charter schools and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. He is a member of the Greater Houston Partnership and the Houston chapter of the Young Presidents' Organization and is a trustee at the Post Oak Montessori School.

Organization and is a trustee at the Post Oak Montessori School.

Under the leadership of co-chairs CHARLES FOSTER and GORDON QUAN, as well as other members of the Advisory Board, the Immigration Clinic had another successful Arrival Awards which was held this past January 2017.

The event raised funds for the clinic and ensures that we can continue the representation of indigent members of the immigrant community and keep educating future leaders in the field.

Members of the Arrival Awards committee in addition to Messrs. FOSTER and QUAN include, SOFIA ADROGUÉ, MAGALI SUÁREZ CANDLER, ROBERT ETNYRE, NATHANIEL MARTINEZ, MICHAEL OLIVAS, and PETER WILLIAMSON.

In the fall 2017, SOFIA ADROGUÉ arranged for the preeminent Opera Star Ana María Martínez to appear at the home of past honoree Taseer Badar as a fundraiser for the clinic.

Thanks to all for the great support during this past year and continuing into the future.

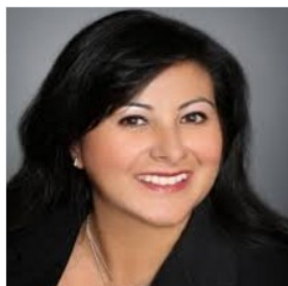
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