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Spring Break Pro Bono Trips
Each year, teams of Harvard Law School students are given the opportunity to spend their Spring Break experiencing legal services work with clinics and legal organizations in the Boston area, or working on projects around the country and abroad. These trips and placements are part of an “alternative spring break” program developed and sponsored by the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono programs at Harvard Law School. This year, during the week of March 11-18, students worked locally at the Volunteer Lawyers Project of the Boston Bar Association; at Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS)/Legal Advocacy and Resource Center (LARC); and at the law school’s own Legal Services Center (LSC)/Veterans Legal Clinic.

Project teams traveled within the U.S. and abroad, working with Equal Justice Under Law in Murfressboro, TN, following up on the work of last year’s pro bono trip to Tennessee by contributing to a civil rights lawsuit, Rodriguez v. PCC, that resulted from that work; assisting with litigation to advance human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) Ugandans under the supervision of lawyers at the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF); at the newly established Crossroads Cultural Arts Center (CCAC) in Clarksdale, MS with the goal to promote local artists and to use art as a tool for community connection and reconciliation; and at ProBAR in Harlingen, TX, at the Adult Legal Orientation Program, engaging in direct client representation. This is the 12th year that the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs has funded the trips, which originated in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when students went to New Orleans to assist displaced families.

Here, a few students share their accounts, reflecting on the significance of their service.
Human rights litigation in Uganda

By Brian Klosterboer J.D. ’16

Five students traveled to Uganda over spring break to work on pending litigation that could advance human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) Ugandans. LGBTI rights have been a contentious issue in Uganda since 2007, when LGBTI Ugandans started advocating publicly for their rights. This sparked backlash from pastors and politicians with close ties to the United States, and in 2009 a Member of Parliament proposed the death penalty for “serial offenders” of homosexuality. The death penalty was later reduced to life imprisonment, and a number of court battles over LGBTI rights ensued.

The students from Harvard worked under the supervision of lawyers at the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), a nongovernmental organization in Kampala that provides direct services, conducts research and advocacy, and coordinates strategic litigation. During the week-long trip, the team conducted legal research, met with lawyers and activists, and wrote an internal memo. Organized by Lambda at Harvard Law and Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights, the trip included Andres Caicedo ’16, Brandon Storm ’18, Brian Klosterboer ’16, Charlie Fletcher ’18, and Mitha Nandagopalan ’18.

HRAPF and Harvard strengthened these connections as students spent five days working with HRAPF attorneys and paralegals. The students also met with LGBTI clients and visited journalists and activists from the Kuchu Times Media Group (KTMG).

KTMG is an LGBTI-led media group that provides a platform for LGBTI Africans to share their stories in their own voices. It was founded in December 2014 by Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, who had previously been a plaintiff in a lawsuit against a Ugandan tabloid. That tabloid published the names, pictures, and addresses of dozens of LGBTI Ugandans and called for them to be killed. HRAPF represented Nabagesera in the case and set an important precedent that LGBTI individuals have the same right to privacy as everyone else.

Despite this ruling, Nabagesera and others continued to be outed and attacked in Ugandan tabloids. They decided to create a magazine and news website to tell their own narratives. Last Wednesday, students met with the staff of KTMG and saw a sneak peek of the second issue of Bombastic magazine, which is set to be released next week.

While in Uganda, the team also saw a cultural dance show, went white water rafting on the Nile River, and took a boat cruise on Lake Victoria. The team was welcomed by three LL.Ms–Godiva Akullo ’15, Susan Mirembe ’15, and David Lewis ’15—who graduated from Harvard last year and are now lecturers of law at two leading universities in Kampala.

The memo that the team produced is confidential, but students hope that their research and analysis will contribute to HRAPF’s mission of advancing human rights for all Ugandans.

The trip was sponsored by the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs, and Anna Crowe, a fellow in the International Human Rights Clinic, joined students on the trip.
They say that the market is flooded with lawyers, but this does not really mean that the field of public interest is flooded. Public interest law is still in dire need of lawyers. Accordingly, my main driving force in taking part in the spring pro bono projects was because it presented an opportunity for me to give back to society with my already acquired legal skills, and equally to get more acquainted with the U.S. legal system.

I worked with Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) and the Legal Advocacy & Resource Center (LARC). I worked with LARC screening clients for intake in a number of areas, including bankruptcy law. I also worked on a lawyer for the day project by conducting online research and telephone inquiries on the lawyer for the day programs and other pro se resources in probate and family courts in Massachusetts. I assisted the GBLS Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Sealing Unit in its legal representation of clients at the Roxbury Trial Court, and visited the Massachusetts State House to help create awareness on a Senate Bill, SB 2176, passed by the Massachusetts Senate on March 10, 2016 to increase the felony larceny threshold from the current $250 to $1500. My presence at GBLS also presented an opportunity to attend the Boston City Housing public hearing on the proposed Just Cause Eviction (JCE) ordinance. JCE seeks to incorporate safeguards for renters facing eviction and small home owners facing foreclosure of their homes in the Boston housing economy.

I was hesitant at first because of my foreign legal education but I am glad that I was able to fit in nicely so fast through the guidance of my supervisors. What surprised me most was the diverse pool of people seeking legal aid in order to access justice, and the fact that the limitations on the legal services field meant that most of them had to be turned away even though the organization tried its best to make external referrals. The spring break pro bono project exposed me to the intricacies of the legal services sector in the U.S., and the diverse nature of the U.S. populace. All in all it gives me great pleasure to know that my pro bono legal service made justice accessible to someone in need of legal aid.
Navigating the border: A dispatch from ProBAR in Texas

By Edith Sangueza J.D. ’18

Seen from the outside, the Port Isabel Detention Center (PIDC) is a cheerful coral color, with an asymmetrical glass front. Palm trees and bougainvillea flowers line the well-kept grounds. A short distance away, spring breakers enjoy the beaches and beer on South Padre Island.

On the inside, though, the detention center is chilly, sterile, and unmistakably prison-like. To the more than one thousand people detained inside, it might as well be prison. Detainees, often fleeing extreme violence in their home countries in Central America, eastern Africa, and South Asia, have no right to counsel in navigating the U.S.’s byzantine immigration laws. ProBAR, a legal aid organization based in nearby Harlingen, steps in to fill the gaps, helping detainees prepare for their cases. Because of strictures from its funding model, ProBAR chiefly provides legal education and helps people so they are better prepared to represent themselves pro se.

We arrived at ProBAR on Monday and received a brief orientation from Edgar Gaucín, the office manager, whose own life has spanned the border from Matamoros, Mexico, to Brownsville, TX. Once oriented, we headed out to PIDC where we split up and were able to interview several people seeking asylum. We helped them prepare English-language versions of their I-589 forms, the form potential asylees must prepare in order to apply for either asylum or for withholding of removal. We talked to people with a wide range of ages, experiences, and motivations for leaving their home countries, including some whose past criminal records could be serious obstacles to their asylum applications.

The experience was incredibly valuable as a way to see what the asylum process is like in practice, especially within the expedited removal context. It was also re-centering and motivating as a way to put my legal education into practice.

A memorable experience with Volunteer Lawyers Project

Lan Jiangzhou LL.M. ’16

I am very grateful to have spent my spring break at Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP). I never imagined how this pro bono experience could help me in a way that is so tangible and memorable. I crafted my skills by attending the Boston Housing Court, the Boston Municipal Court, the Quincy Small Claims Court and the Suffolk Family Court; by participating in the trainings and luncheons organized by the VLP; and by interacting directly with the clients at different clinics on bankruptcy law, consumer law, guardianship law, family law and housing law. Moreover, as someone with a legal background from China, this five-day experience gave me the precious opportunity to see how the pro bono system in the U.S. is funded and operated, and the breadth and impact of the system in the communities.

My eyes were opened to substantive law areas that I have not encountered—and would not encounter—in the big law firms. During my spring break, I was introduced to a unique group of people who were energetic and incentivized, cautiously balancing the two requirements of their job: keeping a sympathetic and empathetic eye on the clients and avoiding a quick emotional burn-out. I was able to glance at a previously neglected world, which is out there, vibrant and real. I would not be exaggerating when saying that pro bono work can nourish one’s soul. By handling every individual case, we drag one person or a household out of desperation. We redefine ourselves in paving the way to justice, and in aggregation naturally assume the role of fixing the systematic problems inherent in our society that I have eye-witnessed for the past five days and could not, from then on, just stand by.

HLS students volunteering with Volunteer Lawyers Project at the Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education center after lunch with retired Judge Raymond G. Dougan
Steven Salcedo ‘16 honored with ethics award

Via HLS News

Harvard Law School 3L Steven Salcedo is among 12 law students recognized by the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC)-Northeast for “exemplary commitment to ethics in the course of their clinical studies.”

Salcedo was nominated for the award by Harvard Law School Lecturer on Law Amanda Kool, who supervised Salcedo during his more than three semesters of clinical work with the Transactional Law Clinic’s Community Enterprise Project. In her nomination letter, Kool praised Salcedo for his work drafting a guide for immigrant entrepreneurs and helping immigrant clients on issues related to their business ownership, tasks which raised complex ethical issues.

“Put simply, I’ve never met a student more committed to the ethical rules than Steven Salcedo,” wrote Kool in her nomination. “He is far from reckless, but neither is he afraid of blazing (calculated, well-researched) trails to the effective delivery of legal services to the most vulnerable of clients, using the ethical rules as his roadmap each step of the way.”

Salcedo jumped into clinical work through his participation in the Community Enterprise Project of the Transactional Law Clinics (CEP), which allows HLS students to help small business owners, entrepreneurs, and community groups create businesses, obtain permits and licenses, and negotiate contracts and other transactional (non-litigation) services. During his first semester with CEP, he and a fellow student proposed creating a legal resource for immigrant entrepreneurs and those who work with immigrant entrepreneurs. The project was accepted and Salcedo continued with the clinic for an additional semester to see the project to fruition as the project team leader. The first-of-its-kind guide, A Legal Overview of Business Ownership for Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Massachusetts, was published last fall.

As a result of his work on the publication, Salcedo built a reputation for expertise and decided to stay on for a third semester of clinical work with CEP to continue representing immigrant entrepreneur clients.

In a recent Harvard Gazette article on the CEP, Salcedo said, “Lawyers can’t make economic development happen by themselves, but we can contribute to help solve poverty by enabling people to do what they want to do. We’re like a bridge; we take them from where they are to where they want to be.”

Salcedo is also a recipient of a 2016 Skadden Fellowship. After graduation, he will work at Western New York Law Center in Buffalo, New York, providing transactional legal services to low-income entrepreneurs with the goal of generating jobs, goods and services in under-resourced neighborhoods. Salcedo will receive the award at a gala reception for the honorees on Monday, April 25, at the Institute of Contemporary Art, in Boston. Each recipient of a Law Students Ethics Award will also receive a $1,000 check from the ACC-Northeast Chapter.

The Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) is a global bar association that promotes the common professional and business interests of in-house counsel who work for corporations, associations and other private-sector organizations through information, education, networking opportunities and advocacy initiatives. ACC-Northeast, sponsor of the annual Law Student Ethics Awards, serves the states of Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

“Put simply, I’ve never met a student more committed to the ethical rules than Steven Salcedo. He is far from reckless, but neither is he afraid of blazing (calculated, well-researched) trails to the effective delivery of legal services to the most vulnerable of clients, using the ethical rules as his roadmap each step of the way.”

- Amanda Kool, Clinical Instructor and Lecturer on Law
Three students receive Weiler Awards

Three Harvard Law School students – Brandon Bailey J.D. ’16, Loren Shokes J.D. ’17, and Nicolas Hidalgo J.D. ’16 – have been awarded Weiler Prizes, presented annually to eligible students who have participated in the HLS Sports and Entertainment Law Courses, the Journal on Sports and Entertainment Law (JSEL) activities, and in clinical placements through the Sport Law Clinic.

Bailey and Hidalgo won a Weiler Scholarship, established in honor of Emeritus Professor Paul C. Weiler, who retired in 2008 after 26 years of teaching at HLS. Shokes won the Weiler Writing prize, awarded to students whose writing project is accepted for publication in JSEL. Lecturer on Law and Sports Law Clinic Director Peter Carfagna ’79, presented the awards. Over 20 alums of the clinic and students in his class were in attendance.

The Weiler Award Winners

Brandon Bailey is a 3L from Northern Ontario, Canada. He graduated from the University of Toronto with a concentration in Canadian international relations and Canada-US affairs before coming to Harvard Law School. While at Harvard, he discovered an interest in sports and entertainment law, and has undertaken clinical placements in entertainment law through the Transactional Law Clinics, as well as at the National Hockey League Players’ Association in Toronto and the Tampa Bay Lightning in Tampa through the Sports Law Clinic. He has also participated in the Journal of Sports and Entertainment Law as an Article Editor and has volunteered for the Committee on Sports and Entertainment Law. After graduation, Brandon will begin working in the New York office of the law firm Skadden, Arps.

Loren Shokes is a 2L from Orange County, California. Before coming to HLS, Loren attended UCLA and majored in psychology and minored in political science. During her undergraduate studies, Loren was published in the UCSB Law and Society Journal as well as the UCLA Undergraduate Law Journal. At Harvard, she is the Events and Speakers Chair of the Recording Artists Project, the Interviewer and Highlight Contributor for the Journal of Sports and Entertainment Law, and an active member of the Committee on Sports and Entertainment Law. She also received the Dean’s Scholar Prize in Carfagna’s Advanced Contract Drafting: Sports Law course during the Fall 2015 semester and will serve as a co-Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant for the course in fall 2016. During her 1L summer, Loren interned at Sony Music Entertainment in New York, which inspired her to write the paper, for which she won the Weiler prize.

“I have a keen interest in music, fashion, and film law and I greatly enjoyed researching and learning about the intersection between the entertainment industry and new forms of technology,” she said. This summer Loren will be working at the law firm Simpson Thacher in their Manhattan and Beverly Hills offices.

3L Nicolas Hidalgo grew up just outside of Detroit, but moved to Indianapolis for high school and attended college at Indiana University. There he studied chemistry and history, attended every home basketball game he could, and wrote a thesis on the Cold War. He applied to law school during his senior year of college and started at Harvard after his graduation. At Harvard he has worked on the Journal of Law and Technology and the Harvard Law and Policy Review and served as vice president of La Alianza.

“I enjoyed Professor Carfagna’s Representing the Professional Athlete course during the winter of 2015 and his Sports and the Law: Examining the Legal History and Evolution of America’s Three “Major Leagues” during the fall of the same year,” he said. “Professor Carfagna helped me obtain a placement with Chris Deubert at the National Football Player’s Health Study, where I drafted research papers comparing the NFL, NBA, and MLB’s health policies.”

During the 2016 winter term Nicolas worked as a Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant for Carfagna’s Representing the Professional Athlete course and worked with a co-Research Assistant to update some of the class study guides. Next year, he will be working in Washington D.C.
CRIMMIGRATION CLINIC

“A unique and fascinating capstone to my law school career”  By Hanne Sandison, J.D. ’16

I knew I wanted to be involved in the clinical programs before I came to Harvard my 1L year. One of the main things that drew me to the school was its plethora of clinical programs, allowing me to gain real world experience and figure out who I wanted to be as lawyer. Participating in various clinics – the International Human Rights Clinic, the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic, the Crimmigration Clinic, and two independent clinicals during J-Term – have helped me find my strengths and passion while surrounding me with mentors and colleagues I respect, admire, and enjoy.

Working in the Crimmigration Clinic this semester has been a unique and fascinating capstone to my law school career. Crimmigration (the intersection of criminal law and immigration law) is a relatively new and constantly evolving legal discipline. The law is always changing, and advocates are constantly trying to find creative solutions to new problems. In the Crimmigration Clinic we have the unique opportunity to interact with both criminal defense and immigration legal spheres, as criminal laws affect clients in immigration proceedings, and a client’s immigration status affects their priorities in criminal court.

This semester, I was fortunate to work with Philip Torrey and Sabrina Lee, J.D. ’17 on three distinct projects. We worked with the Orleans Public Defenders (OPD) on a toolkit to help their defense attorneys avoid criminal convictions that would carry additional immigration consequences (such as deportation). Drastic budget cuts in criminal representation have left OPD underfunded and without immigration specialists, putting their immigrant clients in a precarious legal position. To help fill this gap, OPD sent us a list of commonly-charged misdemeanors in New Orleans, and we put together a manual to help their defense attorneys understand the immigration consequences of certain convictions – specifically whether such a conviction would lead to deportation.

My colleagues and I also worked on a project to map out the Massachusetts drug schedules – a tool that will help immigration advocates know how best to advocate for clients with drug convictions on their records.

Finally, I was able to partner with the Criminal Justice Institute and work with one student attorney on a case involving a non-citizen client. Here I was able to see where the rubber hits the road, and how criminal convictions can impact the ability of non-citizens to stay in this country. Working with CJI put a face and a story to the many statutes and cases we had read and digested throughout the semester.

While I find the most joy in working directly with and advocating for clients, my experience in the Crimmigration Clinic showed me how imperative it is to have capable and passionate people working at all levels and doing all types of legal work. Policy work, impact litigation, advising, and direct client services all work in harmony to create a more just and equitable system for those most vulnerable to abuse and neglect. I am excited to continue to be a part of this talented and inspiring community of lawyers, and I feel honored to have learned from and with them.

EMMETT ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY CLINIC

Expanding my Horizons through the Environmental Law Clinic  By Cade Carmichael, J.D. ’17

I must admit that during the 1L clinical registration period, I was a bit worried about transitioning into the “life” of a clinical student. Sure, I had put many hours into my Student Practice Organization work as a 1L, but being a clinical student seemed a bit daunting. That said, I knew that I wanted to register for a clinic, specifically the Emmett Environmental Law and Policy Clinic (ELPC). Of course, it wasn’t until I got started with ELPC that my 1L fears were put to rest.

For starters, despite wanting to be involved with the clinic, I had no background in environmental law – at least not in comparison to many of my peers. Turns out, this wasn’t a problem in the least, and my guess is that “lacking a background” isn’t a barrier to many of HLS’ clinics, precisely because they are here to give us substantive experience and to improve as lawyers. In the case of ELPC, there was a conscious effort on the part of the clinic to get me involved even before the semester had started! Through early discussions with clinic supervisors, I found a real opportunity to craft the kind of clinical experience I had hoped to have.

Since I started, I have dealt with wonderful projects that I never would have expected, including everything from a petition to the Office of Management and Budget at the White House designed to reduce CO2 emissions from university research laboratories, to researching questions of whether synthetic rhinoceros horn is “derived” from a real animal product, to analyzing applications of the “Rights of Nature” section of the Ecuadorian constitution, to revising decades old noise ordinances in order to bring them into the 21st century. These and other projects have entailed duties ranging from direct client interaction, to more high-level regulatory research, which is precisely what has made my time with the clinic so enjoyable: every project is a unique experience. In turn, I’ve not only improved my skills in areas that might be expected, such as writing memos, but I’ve also had a chance to explore completely new areas such as writing portions of a suggested regulatory amendment and digesting a flurry of ideas coming from a room full of motivated clients.

When looking back at these past two semesters with ELPC, I realize that they have been the most interesting and engaging portion of my law school experience thus far. So if I had one piece of advice for anyone considering a clinic, it would be to go for it, as your horizons will certainly expand as a result!
My clinical experiences at Harvard Law School have deeply enriched and shaped my legal education. During my time at HLS, I have had the privilege of engaging with many different clinics. I participated in the International Human Rights Clinic for two semesters, as well as the Immigration and Refugee Clinic, the Child Advocacy Clinic, and an independent clinical in Tanzania. These experiences helped pave my career path and contributed to my personal and professional growth. These clinics have given me the opportunity to collaborate with clinicians and classmates on pressing issues, travel to countries across the world, and see the positive impact of our legal work on individuals’ lives.

By gaining practical experience in these clinics, I learned many lessons that I hope to carry with me throughout my legal career. In the International Human Rights Clinic, I worked on two projects: one, advocating for the prosecution of senior U.S. officials for authorizing and implementing the use of torture and another, proposing stricter regulations on the use of incendiary weapons. This international advocacy taught me to stand up for what I believe in, even if it is an unpopular or controversial position. It also taught me the importance of negotiation, compromise, and teamwork when advocating for new international laws and norms. In the Immigration and Refugee Clinic, my teammate and I helped our clients through various stages of the asylum application process. This experience not only helped me improve my interviewing and writing skills, but also taught me how to be a compassionate and effective advocate when working directly with clients. Finally, through the Child Advocacy Clinic I am currently representing children with mental disabilities in their interactions with their school system. I am learning how the support of a lawyer can have such a profound impact on the realization of the rights of these children – a vulnerable population who might otherwise be voiceless.

A common value that was instilled in me from all of these experiences is the importance of public service work. These clinics strengthened my commitment and ability to dedicate my career to fighting for the human rights of others. After graduation, I will be providing representation and community outreach to child refugees in New York City. My passion and preparation for this position are directly attributable to the experiences I had in the clinical programs here at HLS.

**Three clinics, one common value**  
*By Lauren Blodgett, J.D. ’16*

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By Stephanie Jimenez, J.D. ’17

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**Empowering clients through the Estate Planning Project**

One of my most valuable experiences at Harvard Law School has been working with the Estate Planning Project in the Veterans Legal Clinic. As a student attorney, my responsibilities included preparing for client meetings, interviewing clients, drafting documents, and preparing documents for execution. Along with all this, I constantly worked with the supervising attorney, Tamara Kolz-Griffin, to spot any potential issues and brainstorm solutions for the clients.

There are several reasons why I enjoyed this clinic. First, it was a great way to gain experience in building relationships with clients. Because I worked with such personal information, I got to know my clients really well. Secondly, much of my work required discussions about death and incapacity and this helped me learn how to hold difficult conversations. Also, I was assigned cases that were in varied stages: some were at the beginning stages so I had to conduct intake interviews with the veterans, while some were already at the drafting documents stage. I liked this because in one semester I saw how the process works from beginning to end and I gained new skills in managing and prioritizing my cases.

Finally, I learned so much about estate planning even though I had very little previous experience. The documents we drafted included wills, trusts, durable powers of attorney, healthcare proxies, living wills, and declarations as to remains. One of the most interesting documents I drafted is the Supplemental Needs Trust. This is a trust that clients can put in place to protect their loved ones who receive government benefits. If they want to leave assets to that loved one, they can put the assets into the trust instead of giving them directly to the individual, ensuring that their loved ones receive the much-needed government benefits.

Estate planning requires a lot of thinking about what could happen with each possible decision that the client makes and thinking of ways to have the best possible outcome. For me, it is really great work to do because clients leave feeling empowered that they have control over their lives during difficult times.

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**ESTATE PLANNING PROJECT, VETERANS LEGAL CLINIC**
In my law school applications, I wrote that I wanted to be a lawyer to continue my grandfather’s legacy of healing. While he fought to heal the suffering in his colonized, impoverished country of Sierra Leone through public health and politics, I wanted to come to law school to heal this country’s racial wounds, and the rampant inequity those wounds cause, through the law. Though I did not know it then, I was writing in part about the Criminal Justice Institute (CJI).

Working as a student attorney and defending members of the larger Boston community in criminal cases has been my most educational, meaningful and all-around best academic experience in law school. As a law student, it’s easy to lose focus on the outward-facing reason why many of us came here: to help change the world for the better. As we focus our brainpower on trying to learn and digest the theory of law, we sometimes forget that the law ultimately is not in a textbook or exam answer but rather it is a real force in the real world with an enormous impact on real lives. And we can get so caught up in thinking about our own, admittedly busy, lives – our schedules, assignments, extracurriculars and job applications – that we inadvertently deprioritize thinking about others. But if those are some of the pitfalls of law school, then CJI is the ladder out.

There, I have used my classroom education to practice law rather than simply theorizing about it. This deepened my understanding of how the law actually interacts with communities, specifically low-income communities of color. Not only will I take these realizations with me into my career, I also share them with my classmates and draw on them to enrich other classroom discussions.

In CJI our clients, rather than ourselves, became the priority. CJI is tremendously worthwhile for the students both for the incredible legal experience and the personal fulfillment. But the challenge of CJI is ensuring that we deserve the honor of representing our clients; that we make the experience worthwhile for them, too. It is in trying to meet that high bar – through extremely hard work and dedication, and with the guidance of the most skilled, committed and wonderful clinical faculty and staff – that I got what I came to law school for: the tools to use the law to combat and heal, rather than reinforce, racial inequality.
I became involved with the Child Advocacy Clinic (CAP) through a less than traditional path. The clinic was something I had always wanted to enroll in, because I was interested in exploring juvenile justice work and the role that positive youth development could and should play in juvenile justice reform and intervention. This led me to be more interested in CAP rather than a criminal defense focused clinic. I wanted to explore the various alternatives to litigation as a form of “lawyering” for social justice and change.

Despite this interest in the clinic, I never seemed to have the time or room in my schedule. This semester was no different, except this time it wasn’t credit hours holding me back. I was fortunate enough to have received an offer from a start up, non-profit organization, InnerCity Weightlifting (ICW), to come in at “ground level” and help them continue to build this growing organization. IC-W’s mission is to help students in the Boston area succeed by providing a positive alternative to the streets. This was a non-profit that I had been volunteering for and hoping to join full time upon graduation. Although I was hired in a program development role, I also saw a great opportunity to help ICW grow by further utilizing my legal background.

Every ICW student faces a variety of legal barriers to their success, whether it’s a pending case, probation/parole, family law issues; the list goes on. Therefore, in addition to helping further design and structure ICW’s model, and guiding the organization into a new period of growth and expansion, I will be taking the lead in researching and trying to implement structures within the organization to further support students in navigating the various legal barriers they face. However, there was one thing holding me back from being able to commit. The organization needed someone to start working in the winter and continue throughout the spring semester, at least on a part time basis. This is where my involvement with CAP began.

Cheryl Bratt, who teaches in the Child Advocacy Clinic, took the time to meet with me and gave me the opportunity to explain my goals about the project and the work I would be doing in the clinic. She helped me develop a concrete project, and has been a great partner in brainstorming and supporting my work with ICW more broadly as it relates to my future position with them. My project with the clinic is to: 1) Identify the most prevalent legal issues or barriers in our students lives; 2) Research and develop methods that ICW could incorporate into it’s structure to address these issues; 3) Develop a proposal for the executive team and board of directors, explaining what methods I think can and should be implemented.

The clinic has been one of the highlights of my law school experience. It’s one of the few times I’ve experienced a piece of the institution really going out of it’s way to support me in pursuing what I came to law school for: discovering my place in the movement for social change. I’ve not only found support through Cheryl as a supervisor, but my peers in the clinic have been incredible sources of information, brainstorming, resources, networking, and the list could go on. I came in thinking it was simply going to allow me to do the work I was hired to do, but what I got was so much more. The clinic has given me the opportunity to do work I’m passionate about, develop skills that will directly relate to the work I’ll be doing after graduating, and has been an incredible learning experience. The clinic literally changed my life in the law, and it’s something I’m always going to be grateful for.
I became interested in the Health Law and Policy Clinic after solidifying my summer employment working with the General Counsel of Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California (PPAC). Unlike the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), where I worked as the organization’s U.S. Policy and Advocacy Analyst last summer, PPAC focuses on the legal issues affecting their seven clinics in California in the moment and on the ground. Though I had a firm grasp on reproductive legal and policy strategies thanks to CRR, I was forewarned by PPAC that I would need to know more about barriers to healthcare access, public health concerns, and health disparities writ large. The clinic seemed like the perfect way to learn about these issues while cultivating a useful skillset for my summertime employment.

In the first couple of weeks, I immersed myself into the world of health policy reform by taking a few projects with a tight turnaround time. Along with Lauren Kuhlik (J.D., MPH ’17), I assisted in drafting a Supreme Court amicus brief re. Zubik v. Burwell, a follow-up to the Hobby Lobby decision. I also traveled to New York to visit a cancer center and assisted in launching their non-profit lung cancer screening initiative for upper Manhattan. The excitement of the first few weeks has set the pace for the weeks to follow.

I would venture to say that I learned more in the few weeks working in the clinic than I had learned in my entire law school career thus far. My supervisors have provided constructive and crucial guidance every step of the way, and have gone out of their way to show how much our work is appreciated. For example, when Professor Robert Greenwald and Clinical Instructor Carmel Shachar—learned that they couldn’t put our names on the Zubik amicus brief, they contacted Dean Martha Minow to acknowledge our hard work and praise us on a job well done.

While deeply invested in achieving impactful policy changes, the Health Law and Policy Clinic is equally invested in the cultivation of future policy advocates. Thanks to the clinic’s culture of mentorship, I feel competent and confident in my ability to produce meaningful work products this summer and for the years to come.

Working in the Health Law and Policy Clinic has given me exposure to a variety of public health topics, from HIV and hepatitis C, to specialty care access, to psychosocial determinants of health. The issues vary just as much as the policy tools used to address them. In one month’s time, I have drafted a policy roadmap for a community-based health organization, a preliminary injunction against a state Medicaid agency, a Supreme Court amicus brief, and an administrative complaint to the Office of Civil Rights. I have engaged in thorough legal analysis and research for all of my projects, using a wide swath of sources to evaluate case law, market statistics, and other indicators of health law and regulations as implemented in a post-Affordable Care Act landscape. I would highly recommend this clinic to any Harvard Law student interested in becoming well-versed in a variety of legal and policy strategies, whether or not they are considering a career in health law.