Summer International Fellows Share Their Experiences

Each year Loyola is proud to offer an International Fellowship Grant to students who decide to work in the field of international law during the summer semester. Each of the Summer International Fellows shares their experiences in this special Fall Issue of the International Newsletter. As you read about the exciting opportunities in which each of these students participated, keep in mind that any interested student can apply for financial assistance through the Fellowship program for next summer. If you would like to pursue work in the field of international law, please look to the application information provided at the end of this issue. Thanks for reading!

Photo by Brenda McKinney, who shares her experiences in Africa on page 3

Center for Constitutional Rights, New York City
Jessica Sanchez

With this summer’s international fellowship I was able to live in New York City and intern as an Ella Baker with the Center for Constitutional Rights. Known for its rich history in defense of constitutional and human rights issues, CCR is exemplary of social justice and movement lawyering at both national and international levels.

As a law student passionate about international human rights law, what first drew me to the organization was its work on a case that frequents any international human rights course, Filartija v Peña-Irala. The Filartija case made use of a law created by the U.S. legislature called the Alien Tort Statute, which gave U.S. courts jurisdiction to hear and issue judgments for petitions involving foreign nationals in the U.S. filing against officials of foreign countries (while present in the U.S.) for torts committed in other countries. CCR tried the case on behalf of Dr. Joel Filartija and his daughter Dolly against Peña-Irala, an Inspector General in Paraguay, responsible for the torture and death of their son and brother, Joel Filartija. CCR won the case and the court issued judgment against Peña-Irala, in a landmark case that made waves throughout the international community and showed the U.S. as a champion of human rights.

My summer at CCR was no less impressive. It was everything I hoped it would be and more. Though I am not able to discuss the cases I worked on, I can say that I worked primarily on CCR’s international human rights docket with two international human rights attorneys. With one attorney I got to analyze and flesh out human rights issues occurring in Honduras with procedural processes taking place in domestic courts. With another attorney I got to draft a petition to an international commission relating to human rights issues in the U.S. and abroad. In addition, I received bi-
weekly trainings on topics ranging from education and outreach to interviewing a witness, sat in on client meetings for major impact cases CCR is currently working on, heard from social justice leaders and advocates from across the U.S. and abroad. I was able to attend an intimate meeting with State Department Officials in Washington D.C. regarding an international case, got to meet attorneys and advocates from Mexico working on human rights issues, and the list goes on and on. This summer was hands down one of the best summer’s of my life and career.

Working with incredible attorneys and dealing with fascinating human rights issues truly inspired me to pursue the career I came to law school to prepare for, international human rights. So much so, that I am seeking a fellowship abroad to continue contributing to human rights work once I graduate from Loyola. Without the fellowship I could not have pursued this invaluable opportunity. This summer’s international fellowship was vital to my work and my future and brought me one step closer to a career in human rights law.

Sudan’s Constitution and Public Order Laws, Washington D.C.
Suzanne Hilal

This summer I spent eight weeks interning with the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Based in Washington D.C., USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF’s main responsibilities are to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion abroad and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.

My position with USCIRF’s Policy Department entailed conducting research on a variety of international human rights and comparative law topics. However, my main focus was on monitoring the new Sudanese Constitution that is currently being written as a result of the country’s reconfiguration into two separate states and evaluating the facts and circumstances of Sudan’s Public Order Laws. My findings of violations of religious freedom in Sudan were documented and will form the basis of USCIRF’s next Annual Report on Sudan. In addition, I spent a number of weeks at the library of Congress researching apostasy laws in the Middle East and North Africa.

My experience with USCIRF not only sharpened my analytical and research skills but also confirmed my interest in international human rights. Interning with USCIRF this summer not only allowed me to continue gaining experience in the field of international law, but it also allowed me to retain my focus on Sudanese legal policy. Once again I had an exceptional summer contributing by way of policy recommendations to my home country, Sudan. My sincerest thanks to Loyola’s International Summer Stipend fund – it would not have been possible without it!

The Treaty Effectiveness Initiative
Vakhtang Janezashvili

This summer, right after the completion of courses for Loyola’s new master’s program Rule of Law for Development, I was given an opportunity to work as a research assistant for Mr. Thomas McInerney, the founder of the newly initiated Treaty Effectiveness Initiative. Loyola’s Summer Fellowship allowed me to seize this opportunity and gain the experience that proved to be valuable for my future career.

The main goal of the Treaty Effectiveness Initiative is to analyze the issues that impede effectiveness of multilateral treaties. The ambition and promise of multilateral agreements to address the world’s critical problems require systematic studies to find ways for improving the practice of their implementation. During this summer, I was engaged in the research on some of the critical issues in this area.

In particular, I worked to analyze selected treaties to determine efficacy of their institutional set-up and whether they apply all necessary mechanisms for successful outcomes in practice. This is important so that future policy recommendations can be made to improve certain areas for better results. In addition, I have undertaken a research project to examine the effectiveness of capacity development programs that aim at improving states’ capacities to implement treaty obligations. The results of the research will be published in a form of a white paper in the near future.

In brief, the Fellowship helped me, as a recent graduate, to take first steps towards my career. I am grateful to the Loyola University Chicago community for the endowment and those who support the Summer Fellowship Program.
From May to August, I interned as the United National Children's Fund (UNICEF) regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa, which oversees and supports twenty-one country-level offices in Africa. As a ChildLaw Fellow and former teacher, I was very interested in gaining experience in international Childlaw. I especially wanted to learn more about how rule of law initiatives affect children in areas where informal law may be more prevalent than it is in the United States. Many countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, for example, have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and witnessed considerable progress in the area of justice for children. What I wanted to learn more about was what is being done to address situations where national-level laws (even more comprehensive children’s Acts) do not fully domesticate the CRC and other global and pan-African treaties that address children’s rights. In line with this, the main projects that I had the opportunity to work on this summer included: 1) creating and updating mapping tables and tools on child legal reform, 2) conducting a review of Justice for Children programs in Eastern and Southern African countries, 3) conducting research and writing a comparative case study on informal law in three different Eastern African countries, 4) visiting UNICEF partner organizations in Nairobi, and finally, 5) participating in a UN mission to visit a child protection center on the coast.

I really enjoyed this work and my time in Nairobi in general. In addition, my UN experience has already proven to be very valuable. For example, even with my previous international experience in over fifty countries and teaching abroad, I can say that gaining legal experience and a better understanding of child-friendly legal aid in Africa has given me an edge in job applications. It has also expanded my worldview. Many issues facing children in Mombasa, such as sexual exploitation, for example, differ from those I have encountered with my clients at the ChildLaw clinic and internships in Chicago. This socialization process has been educational and enriching.

In addition, my summer at UNICEF in Kenya allowed me to form friendships, forge networks with Childlaw practitioners, and connect with mentors in my field that I would not have met without this opportunity. Understanding the UN system, including how organizational goals are set and achieved, and understanding practical application of international instruments and standards related to children in various countries have also proven important to my job search. I found that the process of working independently and gaining the opportunity to sharpen my writing and analytical skills were directly applicable to the fellowship application process this fall, for example.

Further, my UN experience gave me perspective on what law-related opportunities exist outside of the US. I’ve identified a number of employers in the international law field since coming back that I would not have realized existed, and those employers have in turn been more enthusiastic to speak with me knowing I have the UN experience.

Loyola has supported UNICEF internships for several years now and this is an opportunity that I would highly recommend to anyone, especially those interested in ChildLaw. I could not have pursued this experience without the help and support of mentors and fellows students, and I am always available to answer questions or help other law students with similar UN interests and experiences.

At the end of the day, though, none of these experiences could have been possible without Loyola’s support. I would like to thank the International Law Fellowship Committee for their time, consideration and contribution towards these connections and developments. I will be forever grateful for the opportunities and memories you made possible and am excited about the professional journey that these opportunities are leading me down - whether it leads me to ChildLaw work in Kenya, Australia or even the U.S.
During the summer of 2012, I worked as a legal intern for the National Immigrant Justice Center ("NIJC"). My experience there was gratifying both personally and professionally.

Personally, being able to interact so often with clients kept the job interesting. Three to four times per month, I would conduct client intake. This means that I would meet with four to six potential clients during the day, interview them on their background and experiences in the U.S., and then tell them what their legal options were. There were several difficult times during which I had to tell people that they did not qualify for legal relief, but they were often grateful that the NIJC was honest with them, because there are many people that prey on immigrants, offering them false legal hope for a fee.

I also enjoyed working with clients from a variety of backgrounds and being able to interact with my clients in Spanish. This both helped me sharpen my Spanish skills and helped me to connect with my clients. The stories that people would come in to tell me were always unique and interesting. One time, I had a client who had fled from Syria and was seeking asylum. That same day, I met with a Mexican family that wanted to see if the father had any relief from deportation.

Being able to use the law in direct legal aid helped me personally and professionally. Coming from an international human rights law background, I decided to attend law school because I grew tired of the often ambiguous efforts of humanitarian organizations, the constant fundraisers and projects. At the NIJC, I was able to strategize and use the law in direct application to my clients’ needs; I was able to see how my legal education was helping my clients.

Professionally, the NIJC let me be more hands on than I think a lot of organizations or firms let their interns be. Once we decided as a team that we would accept a client, I was able to volunteer to take them as my client, and guide them through the entire immigration process. This included client meetings, affidavit drafting, argument and brief drafting, and submitting petitions to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services on behalf of my clients.

My favorite experience at the NIJC was acting as student lead counsel on a cancellation of removal case. I spent all summer meeting with my client, developing a relationship with her, drafting her brief, and finally representing her in immigration court. She was a Mexican national who had spent ten years fighting to stay in the U.S. with her U.S. citizen husband and children and trying to gain her permanent residency. On the day of her cancellation of removal hearing, the judge ruled in her favor, welcomed her to the United States of America, and she cried on the stand.

Legal work is often dry and exhausting. Being able to interact with people from all over the world, and more importantly, being able to use the law to directly improve their lives, made my hard work worth it. I truly appreciate the training, leadership, and knowledge that I gained at the NIJC this past summer.

Become a 2013 Summer International Fellow

The Law School’s International Programs Committee expects again to offer a limited number of stipends to students who work in non-paying or low-paying jobs related to international law over the coming summer. Approximately five stipends, in amounts of up to $3000, will be available. Students must find their own jobs. Preference will be given to students who work abroad over those who work in the U.S. There will also be a strong preference for those who find international jobs working for not-for-profit or governmental organizations, but other forms of employment providing international experience will also be considered. Awards will be made only to students who have confirmed job offers. Official announcement of this summer stipend program will be made during the spring semester, but students who might be interested in this program should immediately begin to explore possible job opportunities since many positions have an early application date.

Greg Veza of the law school’s Career Services office can help students in their search. You may get in touch with him at gveza@luc.edu. If you have any questions about the program, please see Professor Thomas Haney. He may be reached at thaney@luc.edu.