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Trending @ RWULaw: Deborah Gonzalez's Post: Reaching the American Dream -- With An RWU Law Team!

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Deborah Gonzalez's Post

Reaching the American Dream -- with an RWU Law Team!

Posted by Deborah Gonzalez on 09/23/2015 at 09:06 AM



In the fall of 2009, Roger Williams University School of Law inaugurated its Immigration Clinic -- and there can be no doubt that the work done there has helped many immigrant families from all over the world, changing their lives for the better.

A recent example: On August 3, 2015, one of the Immigration Clinic's first clients, Guinea native **Amie Toure**, finally reached her American Dream and was sworn in as a United States Citizen.

This outcome would not have been possible without the help and hard work of the various student attorneys who worked on her case, as well as that of the previous directors, **Professor Mary Holper** and **Professor Peter Margulies**.

Immigration cases take years to resolve. It is a long, drawn-out process of obtaining records, filing petitions and motions, responding to government requests for documents, and attending interviews and court hearings. An immigration case can take, on average, two years or more to complete, depending on procedural posture of the case.

By the time Amie arrived at our clinic, she had been through two different attorneys in the hopes of obtaining her lawful permanent residence based on her marriage to her United States Citizen (USC) husband, who was also born in Guinea.

Unfortunately for Amie, the man she married had turned out to be a monster. He raped her repeatedly and beat her almost daily. Amie lived through nine years of torture and domestic abuse at the hands of her husband. She has three USC sons with her now ex-husband.

In Fall 2009, Amie came to the Immigration Clinic during its inaugural semester. At the time, she was seeking help with responding to a request, made by the United States Citizenship & Immigration Service (USCIS), for further evidence for her Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) application. A VAWA application is one wherein the applicant is seeking to be classified as a self-petitioning spouse of a United States Citizen who is a victim of domestic violence under the terms of VAWA. At the time, Amie was also defending against deportation.

With the help of the then-Director of the Immigration Clinic, Professor Mary Holper, and her then-student attorneys, **Rishmil Patel '10** (who worked on the case in the Fall 2009) and **Lauren Parrella '10** (Spring 2010), in February 2010 Amie was able to obtain classification as a self-petitioning spouse, which in turn, allowed her to defend against removal proceedings by applying for lawful permanent residence before the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR).

In August 2011, with the help of then-student attorney **Melanie Shapiro '12** (who was volunteering at the clinic for the summer), and the summer coverage attorney, **Elizabeth Badger**, Amie won her deportation case and was granted lawful permanent residence. Special thanks go out to **Nicholas Perreira '11**, who also worked on the file.

Since receiving the approval of her VAWA application and lawful permanent residence, Amie has completed a certified nursing assistant (CNA) course and has received various certificates of accomplishment, including one from former **Mayor David Cicilline**.

In the fall of 2014, Amie reached out to the clinic again in an effort to get assistance with her naturalization application. Student attorneys **Alice Cunningham '15** and **Mailise Marks '15**, under the supervision of then-Director Peter Margulies, helped Amie by filing her naturalization application with the USCIS. On May 11, 2015, student attorney Mailise Marks and Peter Margulies attended the interview wherein Amie's application was placed under review.

On July 6, 2015, Amie received the excellent news that she was granted naturalization to that of a United States Citizen -- and she was sworn in on August 3, 2015.

Amie recently expressed to me how grateful she was of all the hard work and dedication that the students and the clinic put into helping her reach her American Dream. As she put it, "God bless all of the students and the clinic."

Amie's case is just one of the many cases being handled at the RWU Law Immigration Clinic. Since 2009, the Immigration Clinic has handled hundreds of cases and has changed many lives. And though there are several non-profit organizations in the State of Rhode Island that also provide *low-bono* immigration services, RWU Law's Immigration Clinic is the only non-profit organization that provides full representation of immigration cases for indigent clients, completely *pro bono*!