



# IMMIGRATION LAW

Jeremy Bloor '09 (right) worked with Immigration Law Clinic Director Doug Ford (left) and several other students to help a victim of domestic violence receive permanent U.S. legal status after years of struggle.

“One of the things I learned from it was how much it takes to be a lawyer, because when you’re actually advocating for someone instead of studying for a test, it really takes everything you’ve got,” Bloor said.

He praised the clinic for allowing him to get hands-on experience. “It’s the kind of stuff you hear about in classrooms and you think ‘one day I’ll do that after I pass the bar.’ But the answer is no, you can do that right now in law school.”

## COURSES AND SEMINARS

### CORE COURSES

Citizenship and Membership  
Immigration Law  
Immigration Law Clinic  
Refugee Law and Policy

### RELATED COURSES

Administrative Law  
Antiterrorism, Law and the Role of Intelligence  
Foreign Relations Law  
Governance and Control of the Multinational Business Enterprise  
Human Rights Advocacy  
International Human Rights Law  
International Human Rights Law Clinic  
International Law  
Legislation  
Nationalism and Cultural Identity  
Presidential Powers  
Transitional Justice as a Security Strategy

**FROM THE MEXICAN BORDER** to the halls of Congress, the controversy over immigration law has only intensified and become more critical to U.S. policymakers. Virginia’s Immigration Law Program allows students to explore the key legal and public policy issues affecting this debate, including who should qualify for political asylum, the relationship between immigration and national security, and how globalization affects migration patterns.

Virginia’s program benefits students preparing for careers in the immigration field, as well as those pursuing careers in criminal law, business law, family law, administrative law or public policy, or who simply have an interest in immigration issues. Both in and outside the classroom, the Law School provides an ideal forum for considering philosophical and theoretical issues, including national and cultural identity, moral philosophy and the ethics of international relations, and the links between U.S. law and policy and international human rights. Students build practical skills through an Immigration Clinic and several pro bono programs offering aid to clients. The program frequently brings experts in immigration law — including leading attorneys and policy advocates, current and former government officials, immigration judges and others — to campus for talks, panel lectures and symposia.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE AND PRO BONO PROJECTS

Outside of the classroom, the Immigration Law Program provides students with numerous hands-on learning experiences.



**TIM FREILICH '99** won the inaugural David Carliner Public Interest Award for his work on behalf of immigrants at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville.

Freilich, legal director of the Immigrant Advocacy Program, has helped immigrants across the state receive more than \$3 million in unpaid wages, promoted policies that recognize the positive impact of immigrants and helped defeat anti-immigration bills in the state legislature.



**MARY BAUER '90**  
directed the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) Immigrant Justice Project from 2004-09, where she fought on behalf of immigrants in nine states in the deep South.

"When one group of people may be abused and exploited with impunity, that obviously degrades the working conditions, wages and civil rights of everyone here in our society," said Bauer, who is now the legal director for the SPLC. "There's a moral dimension to our work as well. We simply believe it is the right thing to do."

### Hunton & Williams Pro Bono Partnership

In 2004, the Law School developed a pro bono partnership with the Richmond-based law firm Hunton & Williams. The firm's attorneys work pro bono with the assistance of student volunteers to represent indigent clients in the areas of immigration, asylum and family law. The Pro Bono Partnership reflects the Law School's and the firm's commitment to the ideal of access to justice.

### Migrant Farmworkers Project

Run by the student organization the Legal Assistance Society, the Migrant Farmworkers Project works with the Legal Aid Justice Center's Immigrant Advocacy Program to assist an isolated population often in need of legal counsel. The program represents immigrant workers and farmworkers throughout the state. Although the center handles mostly employment law cases, it also takes housing and discrimination cases. Student members of the Migrant Farmworkers Project visit migrant farm labor camps and inform workers about their rights. The project also seeks to increase awareness about the substandard treatment of immigrant workers and conditions in which they live and work in Virginia. Students do not need to speak Spanish to participate.

### International Rescue Committee Refugee Assistance Opportunities

The regional office of the IRC in Charlottesville each year helps approximately 150 refugees, selected overseas as part of the U.S. refugee admissions program, to resettle in Central Virginia. Refugees have come from Burma, Colombia, Somalia, Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, Iran, Iraq and many other countries. After one year in the United States, they are eligible for full permanent resident (green card) status, but must complete a potentially daunting set of forms and records. For nearly a decade, Virginia Law students have partnered with the IRC to assist with this process and have also assumed other volunteer roles with the organization.

### Immigrant Jail Outreach Project

In conjunction with the Capital Area Immigrants' Rights (CAIR) Coalition, law student volunteers are trained and then accompany CAIR Coalition attorneys to several local jails around Virginia housing hundreds of immigrant detainees. Following know-your-rights presentations, volunteers interview the immigrants to identify key issues that can reveal if they have any legal basis to fight deportation. CAIR follows up and tries to find pro bono counsel for those with legitimate claims to status who lack the resources to fund their own defense.



**NEARLY FOUR YEARS AFTER A FAMILY** from El Salvador came to the University of Virginia Law School's Immigration Law Clinic for help, the eldest son has rejoined his family legally in the United States.

Students in the clinic spent hundreds of hours researching ways to bring Ernesto Rivas home to his father. Gabriel Rivas, Ernesto's father, said he came to America in 1990 to escape a war in his home country with the help of a green card. The family, which includes his wife and two American-born sons, has lived in Charlottesville for 15 years. Ernesto Rivas was raised by his grandparents in El Salvador, but fled to the United States after facing gang threats.

In December 2004, Gabriel Rivas got a call about his son. The U.S. Border Patrol had picked him up along the Mexico-Texas border on his way to Charlottesville. The Rivas family contacted the clinic for help in 2005.

Phil Storey, a law student who graduated in 2009, was able to see much of the case unfold.

"My friendship with the Rivas family and seeing the work the clinic did to help them was a big part of why I decided to go back to school," said Storey.

Once Gabriel Rivas became naturalized with the clinic's help, Ernesto could take a one-year voluntary departure from the country and reapply for an immigrant visa.

Ernesto, now 21, returned to live with his family in April 2009 as a lawful permanent resident.

"I'm very happy," Gabriel Rivas said. "My son is very happy."

The clinic has about 40 cases at any one time, many of which are waiting on court decisions.

— Adapted from *The Daily Progress*



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[www.law.virginia.edu/immigration](http://www.law.virginia.edu/immigration)

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