

When I left Alabama to begin my summer internship with FLS in June 2010, I did not know exactly what to expect. I was excited because I had found a job in public interest law that would allow me to use my Spanish, and I was especially energized about the unconventional opportunity to go on outreach trips to the homes of migrant farmworkers. Beyond this general understanding, however, I really did not know what the job would be like on a day-to-day basis.

In some respects, the job was probably similar to many 1L summer internships across the country. Much of our time in the office was spent on research and writing assignments, including memos, briefs, client affidavits and other less formal communications between the office and the clients. I had the opportunity to help clients directly with a wide array of problems, ranging from underpaid wages, substandard working conditions, domestic violence, and immigration issues. By the end of the summer, I felt like a pro at I-90 renewal applications, and I had gained a basic understanding of a variety of legal issues affecting migrant farmworkers.

More importantly than that, however, was that the legal concepts and projects that I was working on had a real, tangible impact on people with whom I could see or speak to on a weekly basis. Virtually all of the first year of law school is based in past cases and hypothetical problems. Very little that we work on in our first year of law school has any real effect on anyone other than ourselves. At FLS, I was able to see how the legal concepts and principles at the heart of my assignments affected real people, and how those concepts could be used to enhance their lives.

The most enjoyable and unique aspect of the internship for me was the outreach experience. Twice a week, the interns would pair up and try to visit as many migrant camps in a given county as we could. On some of these trips, we would find migrant workers who were facing blatant violations of their rights -- ranging from wage and housing violations to the illegal removal of entire families from their housing units. Often when we encountered workers and families in difficult situations, they had no idea who to turn to and unsure if they had any sort of remedy at law. It was especially gratifying to be able to provide these families and individuals with information about their rights, and to be able to direct them to free, competent representation

The most enduring memory that I now have from my experience at FLS was the incredibly dedicated group of people with whom I worked. Often the attorneys, staff and interns would stay well past five working on cases and projects, and on outreach days there were times when we were out until midnight. The level of dedication and persistence I saw at FLS was inspiring to me both personally and professionally, as it showed me that there truly are people who embody the characteristics of selflessness and persistence that should embody work in public interest law.