IMMIGRATION CLINIC PROVIDES SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE IN HIGH PROFILE CASE

On February 24, 2011 STU Law Student Brett Sager (3L) who is participating in the STU Law Immigration Clinic presented the asylum case of Kassim Ouma before the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Sager was assisted by STU-Law graduate Anthony Bugge (STU 2008) in preparation of the case. Usually the names of clients are kept confidential, but Mr. Ouma gave permission to make this disclosure. Mr. Ouma is perhaps the world's most famous former child soldier. Mr. Ouma had been kidnapped and forced to join the National Resistance Army in Ugandan at the age of six. He did not see his family for five years. He discovered the army’s boxing team and realized the sport was his ticket to freedom. After defecting from the Ugandan Army, Mr. Ouma ultimately became World Professional Middleweight boxing champion. Mr. Ouma's life story has become the subject of HBO specials an award-winning documentary.

Following his success in the boxing ring, Mr. Ouma became an activist speaking out against child soldiering. His mantra became “enough is enough.” The Ugandan government denies its role in this atrocity and expels or suppresses those who expose the problem. Mr. Ouma’s activism became an independent basis for his claim for asylum.

In representing Mr. Ouma, Mr. Sager engaged in sophisticated negotiations with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Mr. Sager helped present a significant amount of documentary evidence including affidavits secured from experts. Mr. Sager was ultimately able to craft a creative resolution of the matter with DHS. Mr. Ouma’s case will be brought before the court in one year. If Mr. Ouma has had no intervening criminal problems, DHS will stipulate to a grant of asylum. According to the Director of the STU Law Immigration Clinic, Professor Michael Vastine, this kind of negotiated plea deal is almost without precedent, the DHS almost never offers plea deals like this in this forum. Nonetheless, Mr. Sager was able to help Mr. Ouma. Professor Vastine is optimistic that the settlement will ultimately allow Mr. Ouma to achieve his dream of asylum in the United States. Professor Vastine said that the Ouma case was illustrative of the transformative impact law students can have on clients in dire need of legal assistance.

THE VIRTUAL YOU –
BE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT IMAGES YOU ARE PROJECTING

As many of you probably know Congressman Christopher Lee recently resigned due to a scandal that was brought about by him posting a shirtless photo on Craig’s List seeking to date a woman and misrepresenting his marital status (and job). Electronic social networking sites, email, tweeting, texting and other means of electronic communication are without question a powerful and useful means of communication. However, these kind of instantaneous, virtually permanent means of mass communication also create a “virtual” you. The real you needs to make sure and censor and monitor the statements, comments and postings of the virtual you. In some ways the ability to spread information (or other postings) quickly and to many people simultaneously has enabled the virtual you to have a greater impact on your reputation than the real you.
As lawyers and lawyers in training many of us develop a propensity to react in the heat of the moment. A perceived injustice or wrong may trigger a desire to provide a rapid response (many times in the form of an email or electronic network posting). Likewise, personal relationships that sour can lead to a perceived need to get “even” and respond in writing. Just because you can respond instantaneously does not mean that you should. Whenever you feel a compelling need to vent, you might want to adopt the 24 hour rule. Write your response, demand, etc. and then let it sit 24 hours before you send it. Reread it with new eyes before you send or post it. Do you really want that representation of you in the public domain? A reasoned and articulate request for more information or offer to provide more information will be better received than emotionally driven rants. Electronic “ranting” and threats have led some students in the past to be expelled.

Leanne Polk of our Admission’s Office presented at this year’s Orientation and addressed some of these concerns. More and more, potential employers are checking out job candidates through social networking sites. You are known by the company you keep – and things that you post on a website may reflect poorly on you … and may even be used against you. Presuming you wish to be licensed to practice law, you should be aware of the issue of Bar Licensing. It’s one thing to pass the test for the Bar; it’s another issue to pass the certification requirements. To be certified in any state, you must pass the background test in addition to passing the written test. The Bar will be looking at many things, including issues of character, ethics, financial responsibility, issues pertaining to trust, and the use of good judgment.

The Florida Board of Bar Examiners and other state bars have adopted a policy to investigate social networking sites for bar applicants. The Bar could be looking for postings about you “getting wasted” or pictures of you with alcohol or engaging in illegal or unethical behavior.

A law student from Mercer posted his status venting his frustration about the recent US News and World report on law school rankings. It blew up on Facebook and had professors and students participating in the post. Angry words were exchanged and it was an embarrassment not only to the profile holder and the people that posted in response, but also the students, faculty, and alumni. The school, overall, looked bad.

Never post that you are angry, frustrated, hate someone, revenge should be sought, etc.

Always think in terms of whether you would be ashamed to explain your actions to your….well, fill in the blank: it could be your parents, your family, a religious leader, any law enforcement officials or, in this instance, the state Bar. When in doubt hold back, reconsider, and exercise mature judgment.

---

**BARRISTER’S BALL TICKETS**

A few professors have been generous enough to donate some tickets to be made available to students who wish to attend the Barrister’s Ball but do not have the financial resources available to purchase tickets. One set of tickets is specifically designated for a married couple, particularly for a couple where one spouse is making a sacrifice to allow the other spouse to pursue a law school education. The law school will also have some tickets that can be made available to single persons as well. If you would like to be considered for the tickets, please send Assistant Dean John Hernandez a short email that explains your situation. In the email indicate the number of tickets you are requesting (1 or 2) and explain your financial circumstances. Dean Hernandez has not received the actually tickets yet, so he is not sure of the exact number of tickets that he will be able to provide. Please submit your requests no later than 5:00 pm next Monday, March 15, 2011. Recipients will be notified by Wednesday, March 16, 2011. All information submitted will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please speak with Dean Hernandez.