

## MA STUDENT DEDICATES COUNTLESS HOURS TO IMMIGRATION LAW

Pittsburgh Seminary M.A. student Erica McIlroy has dedicated countless hours to pro bono immigration law. In 1993, during her spring break from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Erica visited the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, Fla. Having a heart for social justice mission, her experience there fostered a desire to help refugees come to America.

While in Miami, Erica worked with an attorney on a political asylum case. Communicating through a translator, Erica met with the asylee to record his narrative. “I could not believe the desperate situation of this man, and the fear of persecution he faced should he have been forcibly removed from the U.S.,” says Erica.



“Our asylum laws were formed so that America could be a refuge for people who were persecuted in other lands. Yet, the laws and the system often work to keep people out,” she says.

Erica has worked on asylum cases in Las Vegas and Pittsburgh, most recently with the Jewish Family and Children Services. Through that organization, she helped asylees to stay in the U.S. where they have sought refuge because of fear of persecution in their home lands.

The most rewarding aspect of Erica’s career has certainly been working with people—free and full of hope—who were able to stay in America. However, she names the government system and peoples’ misperceptions about immigration issues, as the most difficult piece.

While at Seminary, Erica has been involved in the PTS Peace and Justice Fellowship group. “We have done a lot of good both at the Seminary and in the community,” she says. Through the Peace and Justice soup group, students have served in the near-by East End Cooperative Ministries soup kitchen, brought in guest speakers regarding social justice issues, and participated in social justice action items.

Following graduation Erica plans to continue bridging the Word and the World through immigration law. “I look at my job as a ministry because I help to better peoples’ lives,” she says.

Written May 2012

Pittsburgh Seminary M.A. student Erica McIlroy has dedicated countless hours to pro bono immigration law. In 1993, during her spring break from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, Erica visited the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, Fla. Having a heart for social justice mission, her experience there fostered a desire to help refugees come to America.



While in Miami, Erica worked with an attorney on a political asylum case. Communicating through a translator, Erica met with the asylee to record his narrative. “I could not believe the desperate situation of this man, and the fear of persecution he faced should he have been forcibly removed from the U.S.,” says Erica.

“Our asylum laws were formed so that America could be a refuge for people who were persecuted in other lands. Yet, the laws and the system often work to keep people out,” she says.

Erica has worked on asylum cases in Las Vegas and Pittsburgh, most recently with the Jewish Family and Children Services. Through that organization, she helped asylees to stay in the U.S. where they have sought refuge because of fear of persecution in their home lands.

The most rewarding aspect of Erica’s career has certainly been working with people—free and full of hope—who were able to stay in America. However, she names the government system and peoples’ misperceptions about immigration issues, as the most difficult piece.

While at Seminary, Erica has been involved in the PTS Peace and Justice Fellowship group. “We have done a lot of good both at the Seminary and in the community,” she says. Through the Peace and Justice soup group, students have served in the near-by East End Cooperative Ministries soup kitchen, brought in guest speakers regarding social justice issues, and participated in social justice action items.

Following graduation Erica plans to continue bridging the Word and the World through immigration law. “I look at my job as a ministry because I help to better peoples’ lives,” she says.

Written May 2012

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
616 North Highland Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206  
Phone: 412-362-5610



[FIND YOUR PROGRAM](#)

[REQUEST INFO](#)

[APPLY ONLINE](#)

[VISIT THE CAMPUS](#)

[News & Events](#)[Contact](#)[Directions](#)[Employment](#) [Save Page As PDF](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Anti-Discrimination](#)

[Title IX And Anti-Harassment](#)