

DePaul University
Asylum & Immigration Clinic

Melissa Untereker

*Solo Practitioner ,
Frontera Immigration Law*

Prior to starting her solo immigration practice (Frontera Immigration Law) in El Paso, Texas, in 2016, Ms. Untereker worked as an Associate Attorney at another high-volume immigration law practice in El Paso and as a Supervising Attorney at the National Immigrant Justice Center in Chicago.

Ms. Untereker is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild, the Federal Bar Association, and the El Paso Bar Association. She is currently serving as vice president of the board of directors of the El Paso Immigrant Defense Bar and is a past president of the board of directors of the Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center. Ms. Untereker received her bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Anthropology and Spanish, with a Certificate in Global Cultures, in 2001. She subsequently received her Juris Doctor from DePaul University College of Law in Chicago, Illinois, in 2006.

Before attending law school, Ms. Untereker worked as a labor organizer who fought for the fair wages and employment rights of undocumented immigrant workers in Chicago and Northwestern Illinois. When she is not working, Ms. Untereker, her husband, Jed, and their two children aged 12 and 10, enjoy hiking and camping in the surrounding desert mountains of West Texas and Southern New Mexico.



*Clinic Participation:
2005
Graduated:
2006*

What do you remember most about your time in the Clinic?

That it was my only "class" in law school that provided me with actual lawyering skills and practical experience. It solidified my desire to become an immigration attorney after law school graduation.

What lessons from the clinic do you still use today or have used in your professional career?

As a practicing immigration attorney, I use the lessons that I learned in the clinic every single day. From file organization and legal research, to interviewing skills and dealing with clients who aren't 100% truthful, I would not have the successful career I have today if it weren't for the comprehensive and practical experience I received at the clinic.

How did your involvement with the clinic help you connect with other professionals in the field?

The clinic was an incredible career steppingstone for me as it allowed me to connect with legal non-profits in the area such as the National Immigrant Justice Center (where I later worked for 6 years) and provided the credentials that enabled me to obtain an externship at the Executive Office for Immigration Review while still in law school. I am also still in contact with a few of my fellow students from the clinic with whom I trade referrals and legal advice.

What would you tell current or future DePaul law students about the clinic?

If you are interested in learning about asylum and immigration law and experiencing what it is like to be a "real" lawyer, you have to do the clinic.

Is there a message you would like to share with your fellow Clinic alums, faculty, or staff?

I have nothing but fond memories of everyone involved with the clinic and hope everyone is healthy and doing well. I also want to thank Sioban Albiol – I am profoundly grateful for her mentorship throughout the years.