

BOOK REVIEW

Dree K Collopy, *AILA's Asylum Primer: A Practical Guide to U.S. Asylum Law and Procedure* (9th edn, American Immigration Lawyers Association, Washington DC, USA 2023) xxviii + 1845 pp, ISBN 978-1-57370-511-0 (pbk), ISBN13 978-1-57370-512-8 (ebk)

Capturing the complex nature of asylum law, regulation, and procedure in the USA amid the rapid pace of change over the past decade is a formidable challenge in its own right. But to take it all and provide a detailed, practice-ready collection of the legal turbulence and present it in a way that is user- and research-friendly is a monumental feat, and one that Dree Collopy and the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) have decidedly accomplished. *AILA's Asylum Primer: A Practical Guide to U.S. Asylum Law and Procedure* (9th Ed.) is an overwhelmingly comprehensive project that lives up to its name, despite the fact that the march of time and routine changes in asylum law, procedure, and practice will supersede some of the *Primer's* finer points.

This may seem an obvious point, but it is particularly salient in regards to US asylum law and practice since—with frequency—executive orders are issued, regulations promulgated, procedures implemented, and judicial decisions handed down that can and do fundamentally alter an asylum-seeker's case at any point. Since the time of its publication in 2023, and now having moved on to a new presidential administration, such changes are to be expected. *AILA's Asylum Primer*, however, remains a valuable tool for practitioners well past its publication date not only as a massive compilation of the recent state of US immigration and asylum law, but also in the valuable guidance it provides within its practice pointers. These not only inform the reader of contentious areas in the law, developing alternative arguments, and strategic approaches to novel legal situations, but also give tips and guidance on procedural aspects of the practice such as with court procedures, filing, and evidence.

Thus, the value in this primer largely rests in its tremendous practicality and ease of use for referencing even some of the most nuanced aspects of asylum law and litigation for application in practice. One immediate way to illustrate this usefulness is the map on the inside of the front cover showing the 11 federal circuit court jurisdictions, thoughtfully and knowingly placed there for attorneys who have performed that exact internet search countless times (myself included). Another is the appendices, which span to more than 200 pages of flowcharts, sample documents, graphs, and guided steps to different aspects of representing asylum seekers in or out of court. The inclusion of this vast number of resources showcases that this is not only a book for practitioners by practitioners, but also that the information on offer here will genuinely *inform* the reader on virtually every aspect of the practice of asylum law.

At more than 1,500 pages not including the appendices, *AILA's Primer* is as exhaustive as it is comprehensive, covering more than just the law but also any relevant history and phenomena that have led to the law's implementation and the resulting framework of executive, legislative, and judicial approaches to the same. One particularly strong example of this is the subchapter on asylum claims based on gang violence, which remains a contentious area of jurisprudence in US immigration courts. Collopy here explores the phenomenon of transnational criminal organizations ('TCOs') in the Americas with thoroughly well-cited eye to their geographic development, influence, mentality, and effect on the state. For a US practitioner representing a newly arrived victim of gang violence, part of making their case will certainly include the presentation of such background material and history before an immigration judge, and the *Primer* presents an easy starting point for this important work.

Comparing the unique facts of one's own case to the case law both as it has been and has progressed in recent years is also made intuitive here. The *Primer* sets about both what makes and is unlikely to make—based on controlling precedent—a 'particular social group' based on gang violence, and is always done here with a clear eye to accompanying persuasive precedent and potential arguments for relief. This is the case for any combination of issues that might arise for any claimant and for any aspect of their claim even well beyond case law: Country of origin considerations, claims based on gender, one's credibility in court, the availability of alternate relief, detention issues, and highly granular issues—down to the presence of tattoos on a claimant or their persecutor—that many practitioners and claimants may never need to know about until it becomes a controlling issue.

For academic research, Collopy's *Primer* also proves highly useful in its references to the internationally derived sources of US asylum law and the US's handling of key provisions from the Refugee Convention and Convention Against Torture, particularly in relation to *non-refoulement*. Domestic legal practice in the area of US asylum law does not always immediately appear to draw from these greater legal contexts, but the *Primer* takes care to illuminate the international treaty-based origins of the laws and regulations at play—most prominently in its 'Sources of Law' chapter, but also in other areas throughout, such as its 'Expedited Removal' chapter covering the controversial removal procedure at the US southern border.

In all, it is not surprising that the premier group of immigration lawyers in the USA, the American Immigration Lawyers Association, is behind the publication of this important work. The decades of collective experience and expertise is here on full display and, though daunting in its size, is accessible to the new and the seasoned practitioner alike as well as to any researcher seeking to gain a stronger grasp of the juggernaut that is US asylum law. It is not difficult to acknowledge that it would be hard to imagine a better, more handy, more comprehensive version of this resource—at least not until its next edition.

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