

Immigration Law \cong Foodservice

'An Alien of Extraordinary Ability' ... Fiona Cameron-Williams

by Becki Young



Fiona Cameron

recent successes was on behalf of Fiona Cameron-Williams, a butler "of extraordinary ability."

When Fiona came to us she held H-1B (professional worker) status, and was in the process of applying for a green card through labor certification (PERM). Unfortunately her PERM application had become mired in technical issues, and it was uncertain what would become of it.

Upon speaking with Fiona and

We have all seen butlers in films and on TV, but how many of us have encountered one in real life?

One of our law firm's most notable and intriguing

learning about her impressive professional background, we concluded that she would qualify for immigration status as an "alien of extraordinary ability."

Our firm has worked with "aliens of extraordinary ability" across a variety of occupations. In addition to many chefs, sommeliers, restaurant and hotel managers, we have secured "extraordinary ability" status for clients in hospitality related occupations such as winemaker, kosher catering consultant, and culinary media specialist. But before meeting Fiona, we had never filed a case for a butler.

We first succeeded in securing approval of an O1 nonimmigrant visa petition for Fiona.

Our next task was to obtain permanent resident status (a green card). In order for her to qualify for immigrant status as an "alien of extraordinary ability" we had to show that she was "one of the handful of professionals at the top of her field worldwide." Although I had no doubt that Fiona met this standard it

was a real task to educate the Immigration Service on what makes someone an extraordinary butler, and we were thrilled to receive approval of Fiona's immigrant visa petition at the end of last year.

Although you might not think of butlers (or household managers, a more modern iteration of the job) as a foodservice occupation, in fact a large part of the butler's job may involve food service related duties, such as:

- Caring for silver and other valuables (crystal, antiques, etc.)
- Understanding table service and setting tables (formal and informal)
- Orchestrating service at the table (formal and informal)
- Tea /beverage service
- Serving everything from coffee to canapés
- Wine cellar management, wine pairing
- Running a bar and 'mixology'
- Creating and managing events from concept to thank-you letters
- Cigars - service and storage
- Catering on private yachts and planes (logistics and service)
- Meal preparation in the absence of a private chef
- Protocol - working in various environments with religious/cultural needs/security needs

In this regard, Fiona's education in food preparation and service has served her well in her career.

Fiona completed high school in Zimbabwe before attending the Hotel Career Center in Bournemouth, UK where she obtained a diploma in Hotel and Catering Management (which focused on hotel operations, including food preparation and service). She also received City and Guilds certifications in Food Service for the Service Industry and Food Preparation for the Service Industry.

Her next step was a three-year diploma at the Ecole Les Roches in Switzerland. The three years were broken down into service, kitchen, and management. Each year focused on specific areas of food service and food preparation and included six months of internship training.

Fiona also holds a Master of

Business

Administration

Degree from Revans University in the UK, and is certified as a Corporate Etiquette and International Protocol Consultant by the Protocol School of Washington.

According to Fiona, her food and beverage experience has paved the way to her transition into private service. Her very first position as a Les Roches graduate was as a Banquet Coordinator for a luxury hotel in the Kingdom of Bahrain. After two years she was promoted to Assistant Food and Beverage Manager and was able to transfer to another part of the world (Africa). The transition into private service was a seamless one due to her hospitality and food and beverage background. She then served as an Event Planner/Palace Manager for the Royal Family in the Kingdom of Bahrain where she orchestrated events of up to 3000 VIP guests several times a year.

In the US, she has been employed by a number of private families (most recently in the Washington DC area), and was responsible for setting up the world's largest hotel butler department at a US luxury hotel.

For those interested in pursuing a career as a butler, Fiona recommends one of the numerous butler schools in Europe and in the USA that train individuals on/off site on traditional butler skills required in the servicing of fine estates and the fine people living in or visiting them. Alternatively, anyone interested in a career in private service could feel free to contact Fiona personally (fiona.cameronwilliams@yahoo.com) and she will be happy to assist with pointing them in the right direction based on their previous experience/ background in the service industry.



Becki L. Young has been working in the field of immigration law since 1995. Ms. Young's practice focuses on employment-based immigration law. She has represented employers in a variety of industries, including investment banking and securities, information technology, health care, and hospitality, providing advice on work permits and related immigration issues, and is the co-editor of Immigration Options for Essential Workers published by the American Immigration Lawyers Association. To learn more or to schedule a personal consultation, call 202-232-0983 or e-mail becki.young@blylaw.com.



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