



## *Shiva Gill, JD 2007 Immigration Attorney*

Shiva Gill, a licensed architect from Texas, was living in Saudi Arabia with her husband who worked for an oil company when she discovered Concord. She had been looking around for something interesting with which to occupy her time after having depleted the supply of gourmet cooking classes offered locally. (Shiva even learned to make her own wine, a prohibited commodity – there being no liquor stores for purchasing it).

In her career as an architect, most of her work involved project management. As part of their duties, project managers must rely on attorneys for advice. Shiva's interest in the law was piqued starting at this point in her career. In the back of her mind, going to law school was something she fantasized about doing. However, marriage, family and the move overseas put all notions out of her mind. Until, years later, on a flight from the US to Saudi Arabia, a Concord Law School ad in the flight magazine caught her attention. Shortly, thereafter she saw a TV program promoting online learning and decided to enroll. "I wasn't prepared for how much I loved the study of law," she says. "It wasn't onerous for me at all."

Online learning requires tremendous discipline and motivation. "I reminded myself of the old adage: you can accomplish anything if you set your mind to it. Realizing that I could do it was the most valuable thing I gained from the Concord experience. It was a tremendous morale booster."

"I also found a huge commonality and generosity of spirit among my fellow students despite our diversity. We came back to the US for three

months every summer. I came to depend on the generosity of my fellow students to loan me books and notes as it was impossible (and very expensive) for me to ship my law books back and forth from Saudi Arabia. Generosity that was never lacking! I was in Florida, the summer Florida was decimated by multiple hurricanes. I received an overwhelming number of offers of help from fellow Concord students."

Shiva continues to keep in touch with a number of classmates, especially a group of Concord women. She finds it helpful to share emails about everything from how to get into law practice to vacation plans and recipes.

"What surprised me most about Concord was the quality of the education and the professors. Since I wasn't paying traditional law school prices I expected some cutting of corners or lowering of standards, but this simply wasn't the case. Everything was of a very high caliber."

Shiva returned to the States during her last semester of law school and in February 2009 passed the California Bar Exam. She began volunteering at a pro-bono center for immigrant legal assistance in Houston, TX that handled immigration issues and realized that she enjoyed helping others professionally. "The pro-bono work gives me an avenue to practice kindness to strangers," she explains. "It's better than giving to charity because it's so much more personal." In February, 2009, Shiva started her own immigration practice. She still does a lot of pro-bono cases for those clients who need immigration assistance but are unable to pay.

Recently Shiva participated as an immigration defense attorney in a mock trial on asylum issues at the University of Houston (UH). She so impressed the Director of the Law Clinic at UH, that she was asked to come back to speak about the personal benefits of volunteering and pro-bono work. When she isn't working or volunteering, she spends her time running half-marathons, enjoying rock and roll concerts, and cooking.