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## Original Submission

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Please certify that you meet the eligibility criteria by checking the boxes

I am a woman journalist  
 Journalism is my full-time profession  
 I have 3+ years of professional reporting experience

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I am a (select at least one)

Print journalist

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Name

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Date of Birth (Optional)

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Self-Identification (Optional)

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Nationality

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Please list all countries for which you are a current passport holder

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Please select country where you are currently based.

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Email Address

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Phone Number

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Secondary Phone Number

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Biography

Laura Morel covers courts for the Tampa Bay Times in St. Petersburg, Fla. A graduate of Miami Dade College and Emerson College, she's worked at the Times for six years. Laura was among a team of reporters who worked on a yearlong investigation that exposed Walmart's excessive use of police resources. The project was named a 2017 Livingston Awards finalist. Last year, she participated in the Reveal Investigative Fellowship for journalists of color and published the "Unlocked and Loaded" series, which chronicled Florida's growing stolen gun problem. Born and raised in Miami, Laura is the daughter of Cuban and Honduran parents.

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Please upload your CV [Laura\\_C.\\_Morel\\_Adelante\\_resume.doc](#)

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Website N/A

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Twitter Handle @lauracmorel

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Instagram N/A

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Number of years of professional reporting experience 5 to 7

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Are you a freelance journalist? No

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Please list the media outlets where your work most frequently appears. N/A

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If staff, provide name of media outlet. Tampa Bay Times

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Do you have experience reporting as part of a team? Describe how you will balance getting your story while working collaboratively within a group.

At the Tampa Bay Times, it's very common for breaking news or investigative stories to include more than one byline. I've been among reporting teams who've covered a deadly sinkhole that swallowed an entire home, as well as the murder of a Florida police officer. From an investigative standpoint, I was among three reporters who looked into Walmart's excessive use of police resources. During my time as a Reveal Investigative Fellow, five journalists from across the United States were participating in the program. We all had our own projects, but during video conferences every week, we gave advice and feedback on each other's stories. Whenever I work in a team setting, I believe it's important to divide work based on the strength of each member. While I reported on Walmart, one of my colleagues focused on data analysis, while me and another coworker called dozens of sources and sifted through hundreds of records together.

I'm also a strong believer in communication and organization. When I was a Reveal fellow, I wrote a weekly memo detailing the work I had accomplished in the last few days to keep my fellowship editor, who was based in California, up to date on my progress. At a time when the newspaper business is grappling with the reality of smaller staffs, it's necessary for journalists to work together if we want to continue to inform the public despite our industry's challenges.

Have you ever reported from Latin America?

No

Please list countries and dates visited.

N/A

Have you previously received international grants or fellowships?

No

Please list international grants or fellowships you have received in the last two years.

N/A

Have you previously completed hostile environments and/or emergency first aid training?

No

Please list dates and summarize training

N/A

Please indicate the level of your competency in Spanish

Native and Bilingual Competency

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Statement of Interest

Growing up in Miami, my Cuban and Honduran parents spoke Spanish at home. We watched Mexican telenovelas and listened to Selena in the car.

It wasn't until I left for college in Boston that I realized my upbringing was different from most of my peers. I was often the only minority in class. At a Tea Party rally I was assigned to cover, a man asked if I was "illegal." Being the daughter of immigrants means maintaining a delicate balance between fitting in as an American, but also never forgetting where you come from. These experiences have given me a deep insight into the challenges this country faces with its immigration policies. If I want to further understand this system, I need to challenge myself.

This is why I want to expand my reporting to the U.S.-Mexico border. I've written about a boy whose parents were deported, police resources for Hispanics, and immigrants skipping court because they fear being detained by ICE. It's important that the public learns about the lives of immigrants and their impact in this country. If I am chosen for the Adelante fellowship, it will give me a platform in my community to give a voice to people who are often stripped of their humanity. I can bring back my experiences to our readers who will learn about a part of the world that's often just defined by politics.

The border is much more than just a wall. It's the beginning of this country's immigration story.

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## Story Pitch #1

Since President Donald Trump took office, more immigrants have been arrested and held at detention centers. This trend has attracted the attention of immigration lawyers throughout the country, who have traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border to represent immigrants on a pro bono basis. Many lawyers from Tampa Bay, my newspaper's coverage area in Florida, have also traveled here for this kind of work.

I have heard from one source that the town of Dilley, about an hour north of Laredo, has flourished ever since the South Texas Family Residential Center was opened in 2014. The detention center is now the epicenter of the town, which is bustling with hotels and restaurants that become home for lawyers who are here to help immigrant families.

This story would be about how the immigration lawyer community in the U.S. has banded together to provide representation for the wave of immigrants being detained for long periods of time at the border. It would also chronicle how a small Texas town is now benefiting economically from the private detention facility built within its city limits.

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One line description of Story Pitch #1      How a small border town became a haven for lawyers helping families at a detention center

## Story Pitch #2

On Jan. 12, 2017, just days before leaving office, President Barack Obama ended the decades-old "wet foot, dry foot" policy that allowed Cuban refugees crossing the border or traveling from the island to South Florida in rafts to stay here legally and apply for permanent legal status.

As soon as the change went into effect, Cubans who made the roughly 3,000-mile trek from South America to the U.S.-Mexico border were denied entry into the United States. Hundreds languished at border towns like Nuevo Laredo for months.

Since then, most have settled in other parts of Mexico or found another way to enter the U.S. legally. But many are still living in Nuevo Laredo or being held in nearby detention centers. We visit Nuevo Laredo and tell the stories of the Cubans whose journeys to the American dream ended abruptly more than a year ago. We also report on what impact, if any, the influx of Cubans had on Nuevo Laredo.

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One line description of Story Pitch #2      They walked thousands of miles to reach America. Now, many Cubans are calling the border home.

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Would you like to include a third story pitch?      No

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Story Pitch #3      N/A

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One line description of Story Pitch #3      N/A

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Plans for publication The stories I report on during my trip will be published in the Tampa Bay Times and appear on our website, tampabay.com.

Work Sample 1 (links preferred) <http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2017/special-report/unlocked-loaded/stolen-guns/>

Work Sample 2 (links preferred) <http://www.tampabay.com/projects/2016/public-safety/walmart-police/>

Photography work samples N/A

Letter of support from your editor (strongly preferred) [Laura\\_Morel\\_letter\\_of\\_support.pdf](#)

If you included a letter of support from your editor, please include their contact information below:  
NAME  
ORGANIZATION  
EMAIL  
PHONE NUMBER

Additional references (optional) N/A

How did you hear about this fellowship? Former IWMF Fellow

Name(s) of IWMF fellow(s) Amaris Castillo

Have you previously applied for any IWMF opportunities? No

Please list which opportunities. N/A

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person. true