

My final days as an Intern at The Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Bureau

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After months in the courtroom, and not as a Defendant, I can proudly announce this: my experience as an Intern in the Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Bureau of The New York District Attorney's Office is over!

I find it strange that a simple internship has changed my perspectives over the past few months. Early this May it seemed unimaginable what I would witness in the upcoming summer as an Intern. Now, writing after leaving the courtroom doors for the last time, I can say with confidence that, as a result of my internship, my character will be forever changed.

Previous to working in the Child Abuse and Domestic Violence Bureau, I had a preconceived notion that law was a male-dominated and female disclosive industry. But rather, over the past months working with both female judges and lawyers, I have come to understand that a positive relationship between gender and social justice is essential to the legal workplace. In fact, most of the attorneys in my bureau were female and were just as passionate as their male counterparts about serving justice to those affected by domestic violence. But, despite the overwhelming amount of female attorneys I spoke to throughout my internship, there still exists a gap in the industry that much of the private law sector is dominated by males.

If I were to give a piece of advice to female-identified individuals who wish to find leadership in the legal workplace, I would say this: do not let the numbers scare you. Women are an essential component of the judicial process and you should not let your gender limit you from achieving what you wish to achieve. And this applies to any women who wish to work towards any profession: everyone has their own inner potential. If we capitalize on our diversity, we can create a workforce not only inclusive but also emboldened by new and different ideas.

In addition, over my time as an Intern, I have learned by studying the techniques of many lawyers in the courtroom the methods to becoming an effective problem solver, change agent and citizen. By observing their behaviors and interactions both on and off trial, I can give the following steps to effect change.

Step One: Identify the problem you wish to change and understand its systemic roots.

Oftentimes, when we go to address a problem which we think needs fixing, we will go about creating solutions which fail to incorporate what our problem is actually about. To understand the roots of the issue you are trying to influence, conduct your own private research and ask those affected by the issue many questions.

Step Two: Create a strategy.

Without a plan of action, it is impossible to implement your goal into action. You should create a hierarchy of your goals and determine realistic objectives you wish to achieve throughout your advocacy. Most importantly, you should create your strategy while being conscious of the effect your plan will have on others. For instance, In Domestic Violence Court, attorneys must structure arguments which both prove the defendant is guilty of a crime and ensure that the victim is not traumatized once again.

Step Three: Take action.

Although this step seems simple in theory, taking action involves not only passion on behalf of you and your team, but faith in the mission of your cause. What distinguishes a mediocre change agent from a great change agent is how much work the change agent is willing to input to utilize their strategy to change reality.

This summer, I set out a list of objectives I wished to achieve by the end of my internship. By the end of my internship, I wished to gain experience in legal research and writing, trial preparation, courtroom processes and women's advocacy work. By assisting the Assistant District Attorneys to compile cases, examining evidence and sitting in on Domestic Violence Court, Integrated Domestic Violence Court, Arraignment Court, Youth Court, and Family Court, I believe I have accomplished these objectives. But, there is still much I wish to learn.

Within the criminal justice system, there are so many different components which contribute to victim's experiences and affect the methods by which crime is controlled as a whole. During my upperclassmen years at Tulane, I wish to get more involved in the New Orleans Parish prison system to understand the relationship between incarceration and crime in both New Orleans and the United States.

If there is one thing I have learned from my internship, it is that you can never stop learning. I plan to continue to advocate for female leadership throughout my time at Tulane and beyond and advocate for Newcomb's mission to educate others towards female leadership and create the change I wish to see in the world.