

**US District Court in Charleston, SC**

It's nearly impossible to describe the summer I had working for the Honorable David C. Norton at the US District Court in Charleston, SC. Knowing that I was going to be working for a federal court judge, my expectations were high, but looking back over my summer, I realize that they were far exceeded. I knew, with the District Court's jurisdiction including civil actions arising under the constitution, laws, and treaties of the United States; certain civil actions between citizens and different states; civil actions within the admiralty or maritime jurisdiction of the United States; criminal prosecutions brought by the United States; civil actions in which the United States is a party; and many other types of cases and controversies, that I would witness a wide array of legal proceedings. But who could foresee the Emanuel AME church shooting three blocks from my house or my presence at Dylann Roof's arraignment? I obtained a long list of practical legal skills and knowledge but an even longer list of memorable and powerful moments like this. I thought I wanted to go to law school before this summer. Now I know.

The first day I walked into Judge Norton's chambers I met his two powerful and intelligent law clerks, both women. One of them showed me to my office, gave me a brief introduction to Westlaw (legal website for case references), handed me a giant case file, and told me to write my first Social Security court order. Writing the court order and familiarizing myself with Social Security regulations and previous case law were practical legal skills I gained. However, the most memorable part of this task and those to follow was when I realized that I was not only reading through documents and typing up an insignificant order, I was deciding whether or not to grant someone disability benefits. That was someone's life. I more deeply

realized this was a role that law clerks, judges, and lawyers play everyday—using the law to determine and influence outcomes in individuals' lives.

This previously known fact but more deeply felt realization—the important role lawyers and the legal system play in the everyday life of people—revealed itself in many different ways throughout the summer. By the end, I knew about Social Security court orders, the process of appeal, and motions for attorney's fees. I also learned the basics, like how to use Westlaw to look up previous cases in support of my orders and how to read through docket reports on the US District Court website. I learned about vehicle suits, murder-for-hire cases, drug conspiracies, wire and tax fraud, plea changes, fairness hearings, discovery, sentencing guidelines, jury selection proceedings, and much more.

During a break from my first trial, the defendant approached me to ask if I was with the newspaper. I explained that I was an intern for Judge Norton. Then, awkwardly, I asked how he was doing. How good can a person feel when on criminal trial? He answered saying that he was good and that, being from China, he greatly appreciated his three years of legal proceedings. Innocent until proven guilty, he said, is not a thing in China. If the government there says you did it, you did it. "Guilty or not," he said, "even criminals deserve representation."

Everyone deserves representation. This was a point that was reinforced during a young lawyers luncheon that the courthouse holds once a month. Judge Duffy told us that everyone should do pro bono (for the public good) work in addition to his or her normal workload. Lack of money should not be a reason for bad representation. In the middle of one of these trials, he said that the mother of the young man he was representing tapped him on his shoulder and said that she needed to go. When asked why, she said that she had many kids at home that needed to be

taken care of and that there was only one bus going her direction that night. She asked if she could borrow a dollar for bus fare. He gave her a dollar. A few weeks later, he received a thank you note in the mail with a dollar bill attached. *That* he said was the most valuable dollar he ever earned.

Everyone deserves to be represented. My first trial and my second trial both drove this fact home. Judge Duffy's story strengthened it. And then there is Dylan Roof, alleged killer of nine African Americans in the Charleston church shooting. All summer I had been realizing more and more how everyone deserves representation—from prisoners' suing medical facilities to high-end doctors. Everyone. I had told myself this. Then, the Boston bomber's defense attorney was appointed to represent Dylann Roof. "Even criminals deserve representation" echoed in my mind. It was hard to think that someone like Dylan Roof deserved anything.

On the second-to-last week of my internship, I sat in the front row of the jury box for Roof's arraignment. The courtroom was packed with family members of the victims. As he walked in, his face was expressionless and remained so for the entirety of his arraignment. After the judge read the charges against Roof, family members of the victims were given an opportunity to speak. The ones who spoke talked of mercy, justice, trusting the legal process. A legal process worth trusting requires that everyone have representation. Roof possibly faces the death penalty and his attorneys are appointed to ensure to the best of their ability that if it comes to that, at the end of the day, he was adequately represented and heard.

When previously asked what type of law I wanted to practice, I would say malpractice defense or corporate law. That is still a possibility, but after this summer, I have thought more and more about criminal defense. I have watched guilty people be represented and the one thing

that is clear to me now is that everyone deserves that process. I have watched criminals with troubled backgrounds be treated with the utmost respect by their attorneys and be assured that guilty or not, they are worth something. I have watched people with drug offenses work alongside their attorneys in remedial programs like BRIDGE to lessen their sentence. While it is hard to think of someone like Dylann Roof deserving anything, one thing that makes this system one of the best is that he has that right. No matter the outcome, everyone will have been heard and, hopefully, justice will be served. That process and that standard is one that after this summer I feel drawn and inclined to pursue.