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I was truly blessed this summer to have the opportunity to work as an intern for two months in the Maryland Office of the Public Defender in Baltimore, Maryland. As an official state organization, the Public Defender's Office is a key component—and one that is often overlooked—of the United States judicial system. The office was set up to maintain a balance of fairness and equal opportunity in our country's courts by assisting those who cannot afford private legal counsel. Today, the Public Defender represents indigent clients, who by privilege of being an American citizen, are entitled to assistance of counsel as well as a presumption of innocence, until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. It is this concept—that those presumed innocent until proven guilty needed help—that motivated me throughout the internship.

For most of this eight-week internship I worked in the office's appellate division with Assistant Public Defender and Sewanee class of '71 alumni, Brad Peabody. Over the course of my time in Baltimore, I came to consider Brad not only my boss, but also my teacher, my mentor, and my friend.

However, for the first few weeks of my internship Brad sent me to work in the State's trial division. The trial division helped acclimate me with the Maryland state judicial system, and gave me the unique opportunity to witness the trial of officer Caesar Goodson. While not necessarily a household name, Officer Goodson is infamous as the Baltimore police officer that drove the van in which Freddie Gray sustained his fatal injuries. Charged with multiple counts of manslaughter and criminal negligence, and one count of depraved heart murder, Goodson was, in essence, the "big kahuna" of the officers charged in Gray's death. The failure of the Maryland State's Attorney's Office to secure a guilty conviction on *any* of the charges alleged against Officer Goodson, *or* his

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fellow officers, marks a significant moment in our country's battle against institutionalized racism, and the unjust violence stemming from it. As a result, the Department of Justice launched an in-depth investigation revealing that the Baltimore police department has intentionally profiled and targeted black men and women, regularly making warrantless arrests and conducting illegal searches. Therefore, it was a once in a lifetime experience for me to witness this historic trial, and to live in Baltimore during such an important and controversial time.

After this acclimating period, I returned to Brad's office in the appellate division. My first day was sink or swim. Brad gave me a sheet with exercises intended to help me familiarize myself with Thomson Reuter's West Law, sort of the Google for United States court cases and other scholarly legal materials. By the end of my internship, I looked at this exercise sheet as if it were written for preschoolers. Just one week after I completed the exercises, Brad handed me what would become my principal project for the remaining duration of the internship. He gave me a transcript of a trial in the lower court and said that I was going to read it, find the issues preserved for appeal, and write the brief to be published to the Court of Special Appeals. Initially this appeared to be a daunting task. I didn't even know that someone without a law degree—much less an undergraduate—could write a brief to be published to the court. On top of that, the brief would be read by the Court of Special Appeals, which was made up of three experienced judges. But over the course of a few weeks I became more confident as my work progressed. With Brad's help and willingness to answer and discuss my numerous questions, I learned how to write a legal brief, consisting of statement of the facts, arguments, and citations to the record and other pertinent cases.

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While my writing may not be on par with lawyers who have been to law school and practiced in the field, drafting and revising my own brief gave me two opportunities. First, I was able to further my legal writing skills. The skills I developed this summer will put me ahead of the vast majority of other students entering law school. But more importantly, writing a brief, and doing all the legal research required for it, gave me a significant glimpse into the life of a lawyer. This was an incredibly important opportunity because it allowed me to imagine myself as a lawyer one day. In other words, it helped me realize that this is not only something I *could* do, but something I *want* to do. And for a soon-to-be college graduate, who this May will be thrown out of the comforts of student life and into the bottom rung of the job market, it is infinitely advantageous to know the path I want to take.

The significance of the Office of the Public Defender cannot be understated. While I am undecided as to whether or not I will want to enter the field of public service or private practice after I attend law school, this summer internship showed me that the law is what I want to do with my life. It also taught me skills that will initially put me ahead of my fellow students in law school. Finally, through this summer internship, I was able to witness history being made first-hand, and what I saw and took away from this experience will stay with me forever.