

Dear Members of the Jessica Jennifer Cohen Foundation,

Hello! My name is Alexandra Johnson, and I am working at the Legal Aid Society in New York City as an Intern Investigator this summer thanks to the generosity of the JJCF. This is my second interim report about my experience so far.

My work has generally been the same since my last interim report, but is yet consistently full of new experiences. I have been able to observe multiple instances of the trial process, for example, such as arraignments, direct and cross examination of a witness, the sentencing process, and the handing down of a verdict. These experiences were particularly salient in light of my previous perceptions of criminal law as practiced in the courtroom, insofar as what is fictionalized on TV or sensationalized in the media in terms of criminal trials does little to reflect what I have seen firsthand in the Queens courtroom. It is not that these experiences have not been extremely dramatic – for instance, one case I observed included the introduction of the recording of a heartbreaking 911 call – but rather that they feel so much more personal and impactful than they do when one is removed from the trial behind a screen or a newspaper.

Additionally, I have continued going out on investigations of misdemeanors of all kinds, doing similar kinds of work to what I described in my last interim report: canvassing for video and witnesses, photographing locations, internet and social media searches, etc. Most recently, we had our first opportunity to interview two complaining witnesses (the party bringing the charges against the defendant, our client), who normally refuse to talk to us once they find out that we work for the defendant's lawyer. These experiences were especially exciting given how greatly they impact the attorney's theory of defense, and it was particularly gratifying to be able to put to work so much of what we went over in our initial week of training.

I have just under two weeks left at the Legal Aid Society, but I already know it has been an utterly transformative summer that has definitely broken me out of the bubble of my college campus. As a result of this internship, I am more confident than ever in my desire to attend law school, and I could not be more thankful to the JJCF for allowing me to take advantage of this opportunity.

Best,

Alexandra Johnson