

A REFLECTION OF MY LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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I was overwhelmed with emotions when I started my first year at Touro Law School. I was scared, anxious, excited, happy, sad and angry all at the same time. I was scared because I was beginning a journey that was rumored to be one of the most exhausting and difficult experiences. I was extremely anxious upon receiving syllabi prior to the first day of school, with what I thought would be near-to-impossible to complete reading assignments, not to mention the cases.

I was excited and happy because my opportunity to become a lawyer had arrived. Ever since I was a little girl, all I wanted to do was become an attorney. I wanted to represent people who could not represent themselves. All of my pre-requisites in high school and college were designed to finally get me to this point. Adding to the joy of the experience, I was starting this journey with one of my best friends since elementary school, Jennifer Flores. At the same time, I was angry because my lovely social life, that I truly enjoyed, was clearly coming to an end. The only thing that you have time for as a first year law student is law school.

During orientation, I started to meet my classmates. Right away I noticed that people gravitated into groups and were making friends quickly. I had heard prior to law school that study groups were extremely helpful and therefore, I was on a hunt to find one. However, it did not really matter to me if I did not because I had Jennifer. Jennifer had done the Touro Legal Education Access Program (“LEAP”) prior to the start of law school and told me that she had met Jonathan Barreto, another student. She wanted us to become friends with him. After our first criminal law class, Jennifer introduced me to Jonathan and suggested we meet after class to review the topics we had learned that day. Additionally, Jennifer’s cousin’s girlfriend, Meaghan Fitzpatrick, was in our section too, and she invited her to our after-school study session. Shortly thereafter, Meaghan asked if she could bring Ryan Blitz, a fellow classmate that she met in her legal process class, to our study session. After a successful meeting that day we all became best friends and formed our study group.

The first couple of weeks of my first semester of law school didn’t seem so bad. I had my study group, which was extremely helpful and the professors seemed to understand that we were first year law students and so they were a little lenient with us. However, that cushion shortly ended and it was full force ahead. My contracts professor, Professor Graves, was not fazed by the fact that we had just began this journey as law students. Right from the first week of school, Professor Graves, threw assignment after assignment, and after two or three weeks, we had our first quiz. That was surely a wakeup call. This was not college anymore; cramming the night before an exam was not going to work.

Then, my first law school finals were approaching faster than I imagined. I was told by upper-level students that studying for finals had to begin a month prior to the final exam, so that is what we did. Once classes were over, we studied for 12-15 hours per day, every single day without breaks. Then panic attacks and five finals later, I had survived my first semester of my first year of law school.

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However, after final exams were over, I seemed to feel worse than prior to taking final exams. For seven straight days, I laid in my bed watching Netflix, with the blinds closed and did not move. I had to sit and wait for what seemed like ten weeks to see if I passed all my classes and where I ranked in the class. Prior to the first semester rankings coming out, no one knew where they stood or whether their method of studying was sufficient. Hundreds of “what if” thoughts consumed my head. What if I don’t make it? What if I am at the bottom of the class? What if my study group does better than me? Three weeks later, my grades came in, and I had done so much better than expected, I was beyond ecstatic. Furthermore, my study group had all done great as well, and I could not have been happier. The relief was brief.

Second semester of my first year was ten times more rigorous than the first semester. The professors treated us as if we were third year law students. The work had seemed like it doubled and the courses were more difficult. Additionally, I started a part-time job at a boutique matrimonial firm in Lake Success, N.Y. This would become one of the best and simultaneously worst decisions of my first year of law school. It was a fantastic decision because I learned more than I could have imagined. The partner and associate threw me right into the workload, inclusive of all the craziness a small law firm has to offer. I was forced to learn quickly. It was either sink or swim in that office. It was the worst decision because my grades decreased drastically. I was working twenty hours a week, which does not seem like a lot, but that is twenty hours a week that I could not use for studying.

Overall, working for the matrimonial firm was a great choice. It has helped me to become the President of the Family Law Society, and it has also helped me become one of the most proficient students in the Family Law Clinic. Last, but not least, I was able to secure a post-graduate job offer before graduation. Moreover, meeting my study group, most of whom I remain best friends to this day, has shaped my law school path for the better in more ways that I can describe. My learning of the law seemed clearer, my grades continued to rise, and my desire to succeed was continuously fueled by the passion of my study group. This is what helped me greatly throughout my second-semester of law school, and this is what led to my path of success.

Generally, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience as a first year law student. I learned more than anyone can imagine learning in an eight-month time span. I made friends that will last a lifetime and memories that will never be forgotten. My first year of law school changed me for the better in ways that I have never envisioned. I am very grateful for the experience I have had at Touro Law Center.