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This past summer, I worked at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in New York City. In the most abstract sense, the office is responsible for enhancing public safety through the fair and just administration of the law. In more concrete terms, the office, affectionately referred to as DANY by those who work there, has a mandate to represent the people of the state of New York in bringing criminal charges against a suspect and the responsibility to investigate and prosecute crime in Manhattan. DANY is broadly divided into the "Trial" and "Investigation" divisions, and numerous smaller bureaus and units with focuses ranging from cybercrime to white-collar crime comprise these divisions. Elected District Attorney Vance runs the office, and hundreds of assistant district attorneys (ADAs), trial preparation assistants, analysts, and administrative staff help Mr. Vance achieve the goals of the office.

On the surface, DANY resembles many prosecutorial offices around the country, both in terms of mandate and structure. Because of these superficial similarities, one might be quick to assume that DANY also conforms to the negative stereotypes often associated with prosecutor's offices. In the classroom, I have heard individuals say that all prosecutor's offices are overly

punitive or discriminatory, and in more casual settings, I have received many raised eyebrows at my choice of internship or been more crudely told that all prosecutors are unthinking. As with many criminal justice-related issues, overgeneralizations fail to tell the whole story. At DANY, I worked for prosecutors who took the weight of their jobs seriously, understanding that any decision required a careful balancing between many interests, the interests of not only the victim, but of the defendant and broader community as well. To me, our ADAs worked for the public's interest, because they strove to make decisions that took into account all groups, including the most underrepresented. My summer at the Manhattan DA's Office showed me an office committed not only to its basic mandate of representing the interests of the community and improving public safety, but also to an expanded mandate focused on community outreach and crime prevention. DANY's progressive approach and innovative strategies make it an office worth looking towards and emulating.

Within the office, I was placed in the Crime Strategies Unit (CSU), an intelligence-driven unit that stands on the cutting edge of the expanded mandate I explained above. CSU tries to prevent crime before it happens by tracking crime, identifying hot spots, and learning about individuals suspected

of committing the most violent crimes. Senior prosecutors in the unit work closely with NYPD and community partners to become experts on different areas in Manhattan. With this knowledge, they assist other ADAs in the office by providing supplemental information on defendants and build long-term cases against Manhattan gangs and crews. During my time at CSU, I helped with my unit's current investigation by analyzing jail calls and social media activity. I worked closely with my supervisor, our analysts, other law enforcement agencies, and three other college interns to help identify priority targets and better understand the circumstances surrounding the violent crime in our community. I often thought of myself as a detective, gathering and making sense of clues and evidence to piece together a puzzle. Throughout the summer, I listened to jail calls and read conversations that detailed horrible shootings and slashings that some of the City's youth committed against other youth. I came across violent "missions" younger kids had to complete for older kids to gain membership into a gang. By consolidating information on these violent crimes and those behind them, I contributed to a project that strove to prevent the drivers of violence from committing or recruiting others to commit crimes. While I undoubtedly lamented the circumstances and systematic issues underlying these conversations, I

respected how CSU refused to ignore and fought for those affected and those who would be affected in the future.

In addition to my work for my unit, three particular moments stood out to me and captured the essence of DANY's basic and expanded mandates. The first underlines how our ADAs view the role of the prosecutor and the power of discretion, and it occurred while I shadowed an ADA in arraignments. In arraignments, defendants first hear the charges brought against them by the state, and from the audience, it looks like a well-oiled machine that churns through defendant after defendant. Even at the front, it was incredible to see the volume and the speed with which prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges moved through these cases, and the process is admittedly very depersonalized and meant to be as efficient as possible. While assisting an ADA in keeping this machine moving, a defense attorney representing a client arrested for marijuana possession walked over to us and asked if the People would recommend a regular ACD instead of the traditionally-given marijuana ACD. The defense attorney explained that his client could suffer immigration consequences if he pled to a marijuana ACD, and he certainly wanted to avoid a trial. After thinking it over, the ADA announced to the court that the People recommended a regular ACD. The judge, confused, asked the ADA why he sought such a

disposition. The ADA explained the situation, the judge confirmed the People's decision, and the defendant returned home without having to worry about his immigration status. This experience clearly illustrated to me the seriousness with which DANY ADAs utilize their prosecutorial discretion. The role of a prosecutor demands adherence to the law, but most of all, it demands justice. My ADA decided to do the fair thing and he was the only one in the courtroom who had the power to do that.

The second moment emphasizes DANY's commitment to community outreach. CSU shared a floor with the Community Partnerships Unit (CPU), a unit that does not prosecute any crimes, but instead, reaches out to communities to build strong relationships and create programs to help them. One Saturday afternoon, I decided to volunteer as a scorekeeper at CPU's *Saturday Night Lights* basketball tournament. *Saturday Night Lights* hopes to keep youth away from crime by creating sports leagues to provide them with an alternative. DANY and the Police Athletic League team up to bring professional trainers and community advocates to work every week with kids in high-crime neighborhoods. I saw the culmination of these efforts the afternoon that I volunteered. Kids from all over Manhattan came together to compete in a one-day basketball tournament. While the talent and level of play was certainly impressive, I was

most touched by the unspoken characteristics of the tournament. Kids from neighborhoods with competing gangs not only played against each other but also might have been playing on the same team with each other. Despite this, they cheered each other on, a beautiful contrast to the calls I often listened to. More than that, the audience cheered along with them, and it was refreshing to see parents, advocates, and law enforcement all rooting for the same team. While these kinds of programs are certainly not required of a DA's office, DANY believes that they are.

The last moment highlights DANY's belief in transparency and improvement. One morning, the college interns had a chance to meet with DA Vance and ask him questions. The Vera Institute report discussing racial disparities in prosecution had just been released, and questions surrounding the report surfaced quickly during our discussions. Mr. Vance told us that his next meeting was actually on that very topic, and the office was searching for ways to address the problem. At this point, DANY was still working on crafting specific responses, but what struck me was how Mr. Vance himself had asked Vera to conduct this study. While a risky move for someone coming in as a new DA, it only further increased my respect for him and the office. Most offices would be content sticking with the status quo, but

once again, the Manhattan DA's Office was different, always trying to improve and reach a new standard.

Going forward, I know I want to be a practicing attorney, so I hope to attend law school. Beyond this, my goals may still change, but I am currently most interested in focusing on criminal law. In criminal law, instead of determining something such as the appropriate monetary restitution required, we argue in the abstract moralistic world where an individual has allegedly done something so criminal that it warrants stripping him or her of certain fundamental rights. To me, dealing in this world is infinitely more interesting and impactful. After my experience at DANY, I would also like to become a prosecutor one day and return to the Manhattan DA's Office. I want to become a prosecutor, because prosecutors are the players who must balance between all interests involved, not just those of an individual client, and they are in the best position, in the courtroom at least, to effect systemic changes. I want to return to DANY, in particular, because as I described above, it is a special office with goals that I believe in. As a suburban Texan through and through, I cannot see myself staying in New York forever, but I would like to work at the Manhattan office, immerse myself in that culture of innovative prosecution, and potentially bring

that back home or to other offices in different parts of the country.



Figure 1: Saturday Night Lights Tournament - Meeting Before the Games Begin



**Figure 2: Saturday Night Lights Tournament - DANY Staff Volunteers
Liman/Summer Fellows/Summer 2014 Reports/11 4 14**

Since my suggestions for Liman do not really flow well with the report, I have attached those as a separate addendum below.

Overall, I really enjoyed being part of the Liman Fellowship program, and I particularly enjoyed the chance to go to Yale, take part in the colloquium, and meet other fellows. In the future, it might be nice if these relationships that began at Yale can continue developing throughout the summer. Although not all of the summer fellows work in the same place, I feel like a lot of us worked in the same general locations, and it would be valuable to talk with other Liman fellows during and after our internships, not just before them. For instance, I met up with a summer fellow from Yale, over the summer in New York City. Since she worked for the Bronx Defenders and I worked for the Manhattan DA's Office, we had some very interesting conversations, but I felt like we both came to better understand each other's views and obtained more perspective on important issues. It might be too difficult for Liman to formally create any summer events, but perhaps the program could see which fellows are working near each other, send out an email letting us know that other fellows are in the area, and just encourage us to meet up and discuss our experiences. A lot of us are interested in a variety of public interest law issues, and talking with each other after the colloquium would be very valuable.