

Judicial Externship Gives UNM Law Student Lessons in Law and Life

By Richard Azar

In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, Plato describes a group of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall from objects passing in front of a fire behind them, these shadows are the prisoners' reality. One day the prisoners manage to break out of their shackles and discover the true reality around them. Before my externship at the Second Judicial District Court (SJDC), my view of the law and the legal profession was like that of the prisoners, merely shadows of the true reality. Throughout my externship at the SJDC, I became "unshackled" and my understanding of what the law truly was began to take form.

Whether it was discussing the "political thicket" in *Baker v. Carr* with the Court Executive Officer, analyzing bills in the current legislative session for the Court's General Counsel, or witnessing closing arguments in high-profile cases, my experience at the SJDC was invaluable. Although in the classroom students are taught the law and provided examples on how it would apply, nothing compares to being fully immersed in one of the busiest district courts in the state. From employment law to the rules of evidence, I was able to see real world (insert cave pun here) application of previously bewildering legal concepts. Additionally, this judicial externship provided me with a complete rotation of the various divisions of the Court (Family, Civil, Criminal, and Children's Court), an experience I believe every law student should have. I was given an opportunity to expand my love for constitutional and employment law, while also discovering a new love for criminal and family law.

Although I gained a plethora of knowledge on the law in the various divisions, I believe the greatest gift this externship gave me was the knowledge of the legal profession and how to treat others in the legal community. The way the SJDC not only treats its staff, but the public at large, is nothing short of extraordinary. Everyone at the Court has the best interests of the community at heart, providing a perfect reminder of why I decided to pursue my dream of becoming an attorney in the first place, to help others. With this new outlook on life and the law, I am now prepared to explore this amazing new world!

Richard Azar served his judicial externship in the Second Judicial District Court during the Spring Semester of 2019. He will start his third year of UNM Law School in the fall.