

Karinne Marcolini

Summer Story

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Soft sand, glistening water, and listing palm trees are all features of a perfect vacation and the backdrop for my summer internship in Nassau, New Providence. On my morning jitney (bus) ride to work, I sat next to sun-screened tourists on their way to find hand-made treasures in the Straw Market downtown or to take the ferry to Paradise Island.

Though tourism abounds in the Bahamas, my experience working with the Crisis Centre introduced me to the other side of the island, the local Nassau. The Crisis Centre, located in the Princess Margaret Public Hospital, is a non-profit that serves to prevent and treat domestic abuse and provides legal aid to clients. The Crisis Centre works directly with families and individuals and also advocates for social change by influencing the Parliament. My role as legal intern reflected the Crisis Centre's versatility. I began my internship by performing intake of new clients in addition to researching and juxtaposing local sexual violence legislation with international legislation. Additionally, I spent time at the Eugene Dupuch Law School Legal Aid Clinic handling matters for Crisis Centre clients. My work included writing petitions for divorce and protection orders. A few weeks into the internship I spent a week shadowing a Magistrate Judge as she oversaw several dockets, gaining exposure to the unique Bahamian judicial atmosphere. The legal system in the Bahamas reflects its roots in the English Commonwealth. Until recently attorneys wore traditional attire, including wigs, when appearing in court. Given the rich colonial influence and the nation's relative youth, the legal system demonstrates the capacity for much legislative pioneering. The Crisis Centre proactively works to develop this system as it relates to Family Law and Sexual Offenses. It is my hope that the research I did will serve as the foundation for their future propositions.

My final project at the Crisis Centre involved research regarding youth law. I designed and administered a survey to the children in the Boys' and Girls' Rehabilitation Centres. I collected data on factors indicative of the nexus between domestic abuse and the likelihood of juvenile offence. Almost immediately I observed that a high percentage of the youth had either witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. The data I gathered can be compared to control groups in order

to inform programs aimed at preventing youth incarceration. It was a remarkable experience to witness the children's vivacity and openness, reflecting Bahamian culture even in a challenging setting. Living and working in the Bahamas impacted me personally and professionally, and I have never felt so at-home abroad. I look forward to the day I will be able to hear "welcome to the islands" once again.