

Plattner Verderame, P.C.'s Civil Justice Scholarship

When I first considered a career in law I was attracted to criminal law. After all, television shows are riddled with dramas concerning murders, theft, and suspenseful court cases in which last minute key evidence always saves the day. Civil litigation seemed to only involve the abstract idea of large companies and contracts with no real sense of advocacy or harm to the common man. Ultimately, my goal is to advocate for the most disenfranchised sectors of our society. I assumed I would be able to effectuate long lasting positive change by working as a criminal prosecutor. Nevertheless, this all changed after I started working in an employment law firm doing plaintiff's work.

My impression of the civil justice system changed drastically, teaching me how important it is to our democracy. It is here, that I realized that the civil justice system is in place to protect all of us from the most simple to egregious wrongdoings. I have been able to witness first hand how common people are injured and harmed by the negligence or recklessness of others and are often left to fend for themselves. Individuals deserve to be protected from negligent companies who produce unsafe products or create unsafe working conditions. My work during the past year has taught me that the civil justice system does not only involve breach of contracts or disputes amongst large corporations, it is in place to protect all groups of people. The civil justice system in its most simple of functions can protect individuals who have been discriminated at work but also protect consumers who trust that the vehicles they are driving are safe. I recognize the need for strong advocates who are willing to represent people against the wrongdoings and negligence of others.

The civil justice system represents a fair opportunity to right wrongs just as important as those in the criminal justice system. It offers protection from large corporations who would

otherwise get away with acting irresponsibly against their employees, producing unsafe products, engaging in illegal pollution practices and much more. Our political process may not hold them accountable but the American people can in court, serving as a vigilante force stronger than the government itself at times. It is a check on the free enterprise system.

The civil justice system gives everyone a fair chance for justice for both businesses and corporations but also individuals who may feel disenfranchised by our current justice system. As a woman of color who grew up in poverty I relate to many of the clients the firm I am employed by sees. Many workers devote themselves to their employment and put their bodies on the line and the moment they are injured companies terminate them, leaving people injured and unable to work. Many of the clients I work with are Spanish speaking; being bilingual I have realized how important it is to communicate with ones clients. Not only am I able to communicate and relate to my clients but also, I earn their trust. There is a general distrust of the American legal system among the Hispanic community which makes having future attorneys such as myself that much more important. A diverse society like ours needs a diverse set of attorneys ready to advocate for those who have been wronged. The civil justice system represents an opportunity for me to represent others and do life-changing work.