



The European Law Students' Association

HELSINKI

Institutional Study Visit

03.05.-13.05.2009

New York City NY, New Haven CT, Washington D.C.

Description of academic program

Monday 4.5.2009

On Monday May 4th we visited the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. Our host was the Community Affairs Unit, which serves as a link between the people of New York County and the District Attorney. The Community Affairs Unit educates the community on how to solve neighborhood crime problems. We learnt how the arrest-to-sentence process works in the state of New York. We also discussed with Assistant District Attorneys their role in the criminal justice system.

Tue 5.5.2009

On Tuesday May 5th the group visited Yale University in New Haven Connecticut. Unfortunately we were not able to get a guided tour because of exam season, so we got to know to the campus and city by ourselves. The idea was to get an idea about American university culture and see the world famous university and campus.

Wed 6.5.2009

On Wednesday May 6th our group visited the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, where we learnt about the role of Finland and European Union in the UN. We learned about resolution negotiations process in the UN and discussed current issues in the UN, including the question of reforming the make-up of the Security Council.

We toured the Columbia University campus area with three Columbia law students as our guides. We discussed the similarities and differences between studying law in Finland and in the US, and found out at least one major thing in common: being a law student means continuous reading and studying from the books, no matter where you are doing your degree.

Thu 7.5.2009

We visited the Center for Court Innovation Community Justice Center in Red Hook Brooklyn. The institution was built up to give justice among the society. The Center deals with minor offenders and houses a youth court and a high school for teenagers that have dropped out. The idea is to go to the reasons behind misbehavior and deal with the problems instead of simply sending the offenders to jail. Ten years ago the Red Hook area was one of the most infamous neighborhoods in the U.S. with its high crime rates and unsafe surroundings. The community justice center has brought genuine improvement in Red Hook, and it is now a safe and clean area with a relatively high employment rate. The punishments are designed to profit the



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community including removing graffiti, cleaning up the park etc. The center also offers a chance to recovery program for drug abusers and housing for those who need it. In general, the center tries its best to give another chance to those who need it. The option to the Community Court is to go to the State Court, where one does not have the same level of recognition of individual needs that the Justice Center offers.

Friday 8.5.

On Friday 8.5 our group spent most of the day in the United States Courthouse. During the morning we had the chance to visit the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. We also followed the Federal district court proceedings later in the afternoon. As the trials were very emotional, we listened teary-eyed as the counsel for the defense addressed the judge. Often the entire personal history of the accused was brought up with reference to anything from the crushed dreams of becoming a professional baseball player to their dating history and the medical conditions of their children. We were very lucky to have the opportunity to visit courtrooms and observe trials with our informative and hospitable guides, and even meet with a judge in her chambers. In addition, we discussed differences between the criminal procedures in our countries, and learned about American sentence guide lines and the work of prosecutors and judges.

Monday 10.5.

On Monday we visited the Supreme Court of the United States in Washington D.C. We were really looking forward to the visit, because all the lawyers we had met in New York City were impressed about our visit there. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a quite normal tourist tour across the building. However, we learnt a lot about the history of the Supreme Court which is the highest court level in the USA. The building and court room themselves was worth seeing.

Unfortunately our visit to the White House was cancelled just one week before the visit was scheduled.