

LawWithoutWalls – A Chance to Be Different and to Make a Difference

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 Lana Kharlip

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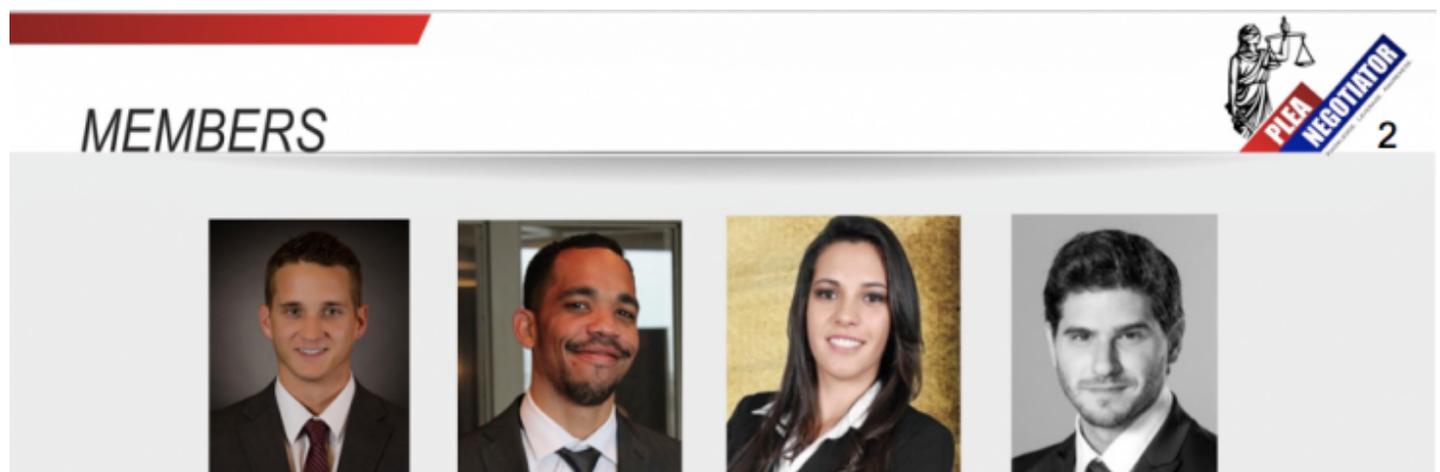
May 8, 2017

By: Brandon Burke (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/brandon-burke-8382oba6/>)

JD'2018 and 2017 Osgoode Hall Law School participant in LawWithoutWalls (<https://hennickcentre.ca/fellowships/law-without-walls-program/>) (LWOW) X program with the University of Miami School of Law.

LawWithoutWalls (LWOW) X describes itself as a “global, all-virtual multidisciplinary collaboratory.” It seeks to solve tomorrow’s social justice problems in legal education and practice related to issues around youth advocacy, juvenile justice, human rights, and/or access to education and justice for vulnerable client populations. **The course was one of the most interesting, thought-provoking, memorable, and important experiences that I have had thus far at Osgoode.**

“Teamwork” is a popular word at law school, especially during OCI season. I remember how important I was told that it was to ensure that prospective employers knew how well I worked both independently and on a team. But the truth was/is that law school can often be a very competitive and isolating place. The constant worry about “the curve,” and the relatively low probability of getting a Bay Street Job, combine to make for a stressful and often adversarial atmosphere among students. **The collegiality I felt as part of the LWOW family reminded me what it feels like to be on a team, work with a team, and thrive as a team.**





LWOW 2017 teamed 95 students from 30 law and business schools around the world with mentors. My team was made up of a business student studying in Bucerius, Germany; a law student studying in Miami, Florida; a law student from Brazil at the time studying in Leipzig, Germany; and myself. Over a four-month period, we worked with our mentors to identify a problem in legal practice and create a “Project of Worth” – a prototype and business plan for a legal start-up that we thought would help to alleviate the identified problem. The different time zones that we lived in often forced some of our team members to wake up for our meetings at 3 and 4 am in the morning, but ultimately this became satisfactory given how passionate and invested we all were in our project.

The problem that my team aimed to tackle involved an assessment of the structure and ethics of the plea bargaining process in North America, and specifically whether it produces equitable results—ultimately finding that plea bargaining reduces sentencing equity for minority groups, my team developed “Plea Negotiator,” a web platform utilizing Amazon machine learning to holistically evaluate plea bargains. The platform empowers defense attorneys with the data of what plea deals similarly situated defendants have accepted, creating leverage for defense attorneys that could be used during plea bargaining, and creating awareness of inequitable plea resolutions.

LWOW was a unique and amazing experience that I would highly recommend. I

collaborated with a team of students and mentors who became my family, and together we developed a product that if used could make a real difference in the world.

JAY AND BARBARA HENNICK
CENTRE FOR BUSINESS AND LAW
Osgoode Hall Law School
York University
4700 Keele Street
Toronto ON M3J 1P3

hennickcentre@osgoode.yorku.ca (mailto:hennickcentre@osgoode.yorku.ca)

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