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Katie Mulvaney

Roger Williams University School of Law

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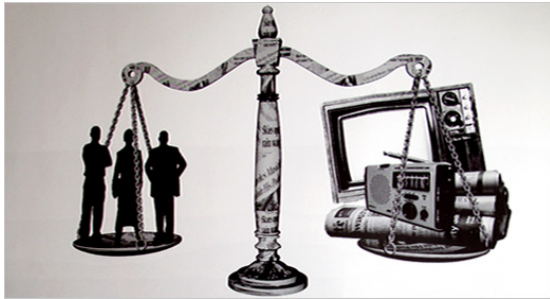
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February 16, 2017

Katie Mulvaney's Post

A Reporter Learns the Law -- Alongside Law Students

Posted by Katie Mulvaney on 02/16/2017 at 04:33 PM



I have had the good fortune of covering the courts in Rhode Island for [The Providence Journal](#) since 2009. I relish the beat for both its emotional and legal elements. It keeps me engaged and learning every day, and it allows me to explore what makes people tick, for good and for bad.

However, it did not take me long to realize, after enrolling in the [Master of Studies in Law program](#) at Roger Williams University School of Law last term, that, up to that point, I did not know how much I did not know about the law, though I had written about it for years.

Suddenly, when embattled [Rhode Island District Court Judge Rafael Ovalles sued](#) a Channel 10 reporter for defamation, [New York Times v. Sullivan](#) came to mind. I also learned the elements of conspiracy and accomplice liability. And I finally understood what common law really was.

As the jury deliberated in [Dan Doyle's trial for embezzling](#) from his non-profit, the Institute for International Sport, I found myself contemplating the *mens rea* of the offenses with which he was charged. I even tried to explain *actus reus* and *mens rea* to a fellow reporter. He did not bite.

The MSL program is adding depth to my reporting and my understanding of the law. The courses are a challenge, but MSL students get to suffer through with law school students working side by side. We work hard. Very hard.

One of the things that struck me most about the program, and something that seems to set the law school apart, took place during orientation in August. The professors and administration placed a particular

emphasis on diversity of thought, mind, race, religion, and sexual orientation. I found that sense of inclusion permeated discussion in class and the culture of the law school. It has impressed me.

I am only one semester in, but onward, and I am thankful for this opportunity.