

## By Anne Sedlack '20

Goal:

### Juvenile Justice Reform

When I moved to Maine six years ago, I would have chuckled if someone told me that I was going to be attending law school in the near future – let alone loving the experience. I moved here for a job with AmeriCorps at an alternative high school in the area because I wanted to work with at-risk young people. (By the way, “at risk” really does not do justice to the young peoples’ incredible strength, humor, and sassiness.) At the alternative high school, I worked with some incredible social workers, and I decided to follow in their footsteps and get my master’s degree in social work at the University of Southern Maine. During my graduate program, I interned with Maine Inside Out. This program uses theater as a tool for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youth to advocate for real change in the juvenile justice system. At that internship, I realized that I needed to do more to directly impact Maine’s juvenile justice system. I ended up in a conversation with Caroline Wilshusen '07, Maine Law’s Associate Dean for Admissions. We talked about her juvenile justice background, and I somehow left that meeting with a plan to take the LSATs.

I joke with Carrie about this meeting, but deciding to attend law school was really life changing for me. I have been involved in so many remarkable projects at the Law School because the faculty and staff are genuinely excited to collaborate with students. For example, I recently had the opportunity to do an independent study with a fellow student, Emily Arvizu '20. She and I were invited to sit at a table with incredible juvenile justice and immigration advocates to get a law passed to make the path to getting a green card easier for certain young people – and this law was eventually passed after a lot of hard work! And now, as a student attorney at the Cumberland Legal Aid Clinic, I am looking forward to working on cases affected by this new law.

The experiences that I have been a part of are amazing, but I think ultimately the thing that has surprised me the most about this school is the incredibly supportive community. I’m a fellow for the Admissions Department, and people always ask about the dynamic at the school and if people hide books here, which they have heard about at other schools. I like to respond that we are “collaboratively competitive,” which definitely seems like two words that shouldn’t be stuck together, but it’s true. All of the students here are driven to be the best lawyers they can become, but they are also genuinely great human beings that want to cheer others on towards success.



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## By **Nina Ciffolillo '21**

Goal:

### **Seeking Social & Environmental Justice**

Until the month before I began my application to Maine Law, I was sure I would not go to law school. Through college and after graduation, I worked as a tutor, an energy-efficiency coordinator, a fermenter, and a bicycle courier, among other things. I had long known that I wanted a career in which I could bend oppressive systems to create justice where it was not, but I could not decide how to optimize my opportunity and skillset, nor imagine how creativity could fit in.

I knew no lawyers and no judges. I had always considered the legal system self-defeatingly academic and argumentative. A year out of college, I felt especially unnerved. I was most infuriated by human degradation of the environment and the evident disregard for the people living in areas being polluted and destroyed. I was awaiting the start of my employment on a Maine vegetable farm, traveling in the Cordillera Blanca in Peru, when I decided how I could be most useful. I applied to Maine Law as soon as I returned to the states.

My love of farming and dread of spending life indoors deferred my enrollment for a year. During this time, I was able to work with Fairwinds Farm and the Locker Project to reroute imperfect vegetables from the waste stream to hungry children in Maine. Now, though I admit that law school is more challenging than I expected, I am grateful and proud to be starting my second year at the Law School.

This summer, supported by the generosity and vision of Maine Law Professor Peter Pitegoff, I worked in Portland as one of Maine Law's inaugural Economic Justice Fellows. Supervised by Greg Payne, a development officer at Avesta Housing and the director of the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, I explored the world of affordable housing, through policy-oriented work and transactions in the development process. I researched how to effectively implement a blood lead-testing mandate for all 1- and 2-year-old Mainers, sought legal arguments to prevent lenders from circumventing Maine's Foreclosure Diversion Program, and reviewed documents necessary for Avesta's affordable housing developments.

I am excited by the passion for justice at Maine Law, especially visible in the various opportunities for students and in faculty research, which often punctures the academic bubble and centers on populations whose access to justice is obstructed. I trust that our community will continue to bring justice into arm's reach for more Mainers, and I am thankful to be able to involve myself in that effort.

“I am excited by the passion for justice at Maine Law, especially visible in the various opportunities for students and in faculty research.” – Nina Ciffolillo '21