



May 2020

Congratulations IIP Graduates - Class of 2020!

Our seven seniors will always remember their college graduation during the COVID-19 pandemic. And we will always remember their incredible energy, commitment and dedication to bringing home the innocent. Though coronavirus has made the future uncertain, we know you will find your way. We cannot wait to see all you accomplish in your lives.

Meet our 2020 graduates, all of whom will continue working with IIP this summer: Rosie Dawoud, Cressa Wagner, Tyler Brown, Kasey Thelen, Diamond Price, Ashley Atherton and Sophia Ortega

(L to R, top to bottom)

Rosie, a legal studies graduate with a political science/philosophy minor, from Bowling Brook, will attend law school in the fall. Working hands on with cases has "taught me a lot more than a classroom ever could. It's opened up a whole new world of knowledge for me."

Cressa, a kinesiology/pre-med graduate (University of Illinois) from Springfield, is studying for the LSAT and plans to go to law school in 2021. "I realized going into the medical field wasn't the next step for me when I instantly became so passionate about the judicial system and law. I see now how deeply rooted corruption is in the system and I love IIP's mission. This is all new to me and I can't wait to keep going."

Tyler, a legal studies graduate with a political science minor, from Quincy, plans to start law school in fall 2021. "The Project has given me the first type of hands-on experience that I can truly appreciate. I plan to further develop my hands-on knowledge and skills by looking for full-time paralegal work this year and pursuing a paralegal certificate through an online program."

Kasey, a criminal justice graduate (Illinois State University), from Springfield, knew she wanted to help people but also knew that she did not want to use her degree to become a police officer. She was unsure of her options until she took a victimology course at ISU and then began work at IIP, which "opened my eyes to the fact that innocent people who are wrongfully convicted are also victims ... of the criminal justice system."

Diamond, a social work graduate, from North Chicago, will be looking for a full-time job in the social services field before pursuing a graduate degree in social work in spring 2021. "Working with IIP has opened me to some new ideas and shifted what I want to do in the future. Now I know want to work in the prison system."

Ashley, a political science master's graduate, from Kent, Ohio, will be applying for full-time research or advocacy work in criminal justice reform at universities and think tanks. "The Project gave me something to

be passionate about and knowing how important the work is has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It's helped me find my career path and I'm really happy I was given this opportunity."

Sophia, a legal studies graduate with a minor in criminology/criminal justice, from Waukegan, will be studying for the LSAT this summer, with the plan to begin applying to law schools in the fall. She will also be looking for full-time work when jobs start opening back up. "I've been able to grow with the Project but there's still so much to learn. I'm so grateful for the work we do to help people."

We know this is a challenging time. If you are one of the lucky ones still in a position to financially help, we ask you to consider making a donation to IIP. Our work to free the innocent is urgent as the rate of COVID-19 in Illinois prisons steadily increases.