

Courtroom paper

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



Courtroom Paper People always wonder, what makes this country so great? More than often people disagree with the answer given to that question. Some say it's the freedom of speech that we have. Others will say that it's our ability to vote and elect who we want to lead us. This is all well and good, but what really sets our country apart from many others is our right to a speedy and public trial of our peers. Some governments in other parts of the world reserve the right to take any citizen right off of the street and place him or her in jail with no other reason than a faulty witness who, more often times than not, is being pressured to bear false judgment against them. In our court system, there are many components that are in place to insure our citizens have a fair trial. I think the purpose of our country's cornerstone of the American criminal justice system. Definitely being the most common punishment for serious criminal offenses. In ancient times, trials were held in massive courts and there was usually a fair length of time that separated each one. In today's time, though, we have the means to hold several trials a day in any courtroom and the trials can cover a multitude of crimes at any given time. The other day, I had the privilege of watching our fair judicial system at work. I came to find out about the trial through my friend Polly Kohler. Polly, a bankruptcy lawyer, is normally very up to date and aware of the criminal trials each day. In the court case that I attended, the defendant Rafael Rocado was passed his preliminary hearing. Rafael Rocado was charged with the possession of heroin as a juvenile. When I attended Rafael Rocado's trial, Rafael and his attorney Mr. Trumbakas were looking for extended time the time of the trial due to there not being enough evidence to keep Rafael in juvenile prison. They were looking for extended time for

further evaluation of Rafael's possession case. The trial started in the afternoon around 1: 30. Since he was unable to afford an attorney, the judge provided her with a public defender. I found this to be a very interesting case for many reasons. One reason that I was incredibly amazed at is that it was a case involving a juvenile being arrested for the possession of heroin. Now I'm aware that this isn't exactly that uncommon around the United States, but I must mention that Rafael was only seventeen years old at the time of the trial. I couldn't help but feel that this was wrong. It's understandable to see adults in these types of cases but I always feel sorry to hear that a young juvenile would put himself in such a horrible situation. After hearing the background information on the situation, though, I began to take notice that this teen got himself in this situation. Although there wasn't enough evidence, which prolonged the case, I had the privilege to talk to one of Rafael's family members after the hearing. According to his mother, Mary Rocado, Rafael put himself in this situation after time and time again being involved with gang members. This type of situation seems to occur often when there is a family currently having financial issues. Most of the time when a child is growing up in a home, living in poverty level, the child starts to affiliate with people who wish to have more respect, money, and power. This is where they start to reside to gangs. The option of becoming a gang member brings you all of these so called attributes. But the downfall of it all is that it's strictly illegal. After going to this hearing I did myself some research on addiction and the outcome of an addiction to heroin. Addiction is a physical, psychological and physiological state that is as a result of dependence on substances that are psychoactive. These substances are

known to cross the barrier between blood and brain when they are taken into the body either through smoking, drinking, injection or any other means that may cause their entry into the body. These substances work by altering the normal functioning of the brain and results in what is often called 'getting high'. The addiction develops when an individual cannot stay for prolonged periods of time without relying on the psychoactive substance that they are addicted to. An addiction may also include habits or behavior patterns that with time become ingrained in our day to day lives and which an individual eventually finds out that they cannot live without indulging in their particular habit or behavior. Though the involvement in the activity or substance is initially a means to seek bliss and enjoyment, after a while, the individual will need to engage in the substance or activity to feel that he or she is normal. Correctional facilities today lack the ability and programs to rehab the criminals that are held in prison for a long period of time, this seems to be a reoccurring issue. Any person can predict that a prisoner that is held in prison for two, four, ten or fifteen years, then released, will back out into our society with no education or working skills. Giving that ex-con every reason to go back out and commit more crimes. Another reason is that most inmates have had little discipline. They happen to be very insecure and at war with themselves as well as with society. The fact is that a moral value isn't learned nor do they learn to follow everyday norms. People believe that if we want to rehab criminals we must do more than just send them to prison for many years, expecting them to learn their lesson with time behind bars. But we must take action in helping them acquire job skills while in prison; which will highly improve their chances of being a productive citizen of their

community upon their release. This kind of program would provide skills and habits replacing the sense of hopelessness that many inmates have. The hopelessness comes from the time spent in jail. The level of the criminal court was the Court of Common Pleas in the Central Court of Reading, PA. When I attended this court case there were multiple players present in the court room including the judge, three sheriffs (John Vroman, Heather Kasperzewski, and Dustin Thorton), the defendant (Rafael Rocado), the defense attorney (Mr. Trumbakas), and the court staff. No one testified in this case though because they weren't at the level of the case yet which will resume in the early weeks of May. In regards to the hearing some of my concerns were the possibilities of this young man still being able to be innocent. Rafael is an young individual who I believe needs to attend juvenile prison for a period of time in order to understand the wrongdoings that he committed. In most cases, young adults who are let go will often times just go back and commit the same crime, over and over again. The crime Rafael Rocado committed isn't a simple offense. This offense of possession of heroin and intent to sell is bad wrongdoing and can easily be distributed to the wrong individuals throughout out city.