

NJLLA Grant Winner 2009

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It's hard to imagine a more appropriate setting for a law librarian conference than Washington, DC; our nation's capital, home of the US Supreme Court, the US Congress, and the world's largest library. In fact, the Library of Congress was where the conference had its official kick-off. The Great Hall where the reception was held was breath-taking, with a beautiful marble staircase and elaborate decorations. There was a wonderful exhibition on the creation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and Thomas Jefferson's library was on view, accompanied by a computer program which allowed one to browse the books and even read them page by page. There was an abundance of food and drink to top it off. And that was just the opening reception!

The conference itself was equally impressive. I went with the expectation that I would get an update on the latest innovations in legal support services from vendors in the exhibit hall, as well as classes which would help me to better perform my job as a research librarian. Additionally, I wanted to get ideas for teaching the associates in my firm as well as students in our Bridge the Gap program and public librarians in our Basic Legal Reference classes. I also hoped to meet up with other law librarians on a personal level, to create and cement social and professional ties. The conference more than met my expectations.

My favorite program, "So You Think You can Teach," was given by four law school legal research professors. They each gave presentations on a different area of law, using a variety of technologies, including playing a portion of a movie ("Fractured") in which the interaction between primary and secondary sources was illustrated and a television excerpt about the Michael Vick case. Another read a portion of the Wilderness Act and showed how a regulation intended to prevent motorized vehicles in National Parks ended up discriminating against people in wheelchairs. All used compelling real-life examples to make legal research interesting and relevant to their students. Their message was to find things that are exciting to you, and use them to create excitement in your audience.

What I was not prepared for when I went to the conference was the experience of being brought to tears by a courageous and inspirational speaker, Somaly Mam. This was at a Lexis function entitled "Human Trafficking and The Rule of Law." There were three speakers in all. The first speaker was Guy Jacobson, who had been moved to get involved in this effort when he was solicited for sex by a group of small children in Cambodia. His outrage led him to get involved with Somaly Mam and he eventually directed the film "Holly," which depicts the story of a 12 year old girl sold into sexual slavery in Cambodia and the efforts of an American to save her. The American character eventually brings the child to one of Somaly Mam's shelters. The film has helped to publicize the issue of human trafficking and Jacobson has been honored as a "Hero

Acting to End Modern-Day Slavery” by the U.S. State Department. The next speaker was Martina Vanderberg, a partner at a law firm in New York and a leading advocate for victims of human trafficking in the United States. She spoke of cases of human trafficking which have been prosecuted here, and the problems that continue to exist. The last, and most remarkable speaker (and they were all remarkable) was Somaly Mam, who told her story of being sold to a brothel as a young teen and only finding the strength to escape horrific exploitation and abuse after witnessing another girl being murdered in front of her. Somaly Mam has devoted her life to helping the young victims of human trafficking and has three shelters in Cambodia where she has helped thousands of young women. This is a story of remarkable courage and is an example of the difference that one person can make in the world. Her website is www.somaly.org . I have been personally inspired to help, and it is my hope that NJLLA can contribute to this effort . (It is interesting to note that the two Korean-American journalists recently freed from North Korea were researching the issue of human trafficking when they were arrested.)

Thanks again to NJLLA for sponsoring my trip. It was a wonderful experience and I am grateful to NJLLA for giving me this opportunity!