



Aaron Tapia (third from left), Kaleah Sykes (fourth from right), and their team get ready to leave campus for their final group activity: working together to make it through an escape group.

Law, Civics, and Leadership for LA Youth

by Marie Kulbeth

In August 2017, BYU Law School and the Federal Bar Association launched an innovative Civics, Law, and Leadership Youth Camp. When asked why a law school would focus its resources on high school students, D. Gordon Smith, dean of the Law School, explained that “this pilot program nicely aligns with BYU Law’s goals and objectives to increase knowledge of civics, law, and leadership among young people. Today’s youth are tomorrow’s attorneys, judges, jurists, and elected officials. We hope the camp inspires and facilitates informed and civil

discourse among young people from all backgrounds and circumstances.”

The Los Angeles Chapter of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society caught and acted on that vision of bringing together young people from all backgrounds and circumstances. BYU Law professor Jack Welch, who was in LA as the Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the University of Southern California, told the current and past presidents of the chapter about the Law School’s new camp and its call to members of the Alumni Association and the Law Society to refer and, in situations of need, sponsor

young people from around the country to attend.

The LA Chapter took up the challenge and started raising money and spreading the word. Embracing the vision of encouraging discourse among young people from all backgrounds, the chapter turned to Larry Eastland, who works with many faith groups throughout LA. Eastland connected the Law Society with the Pilgrim Baptist Church, and its pastor helped chapter members identify three young people from his congregation to attend the camp.

In addition to raising \$3,000 to cover transportation and

camp fees (which included room and board for a week), the chapter committed to mentor the students when they returned, having the students report on their experiences to the chapter and then spend a day shadowing volunteer attorneys. According to Steven Adams, the pro bono committee chair who led the fundraising effort, continuing these mentoring relationships is key to the chapter’s vision of supporting these young people as they become tomorrow’s leaders.

According to these future leaders, the camp met its goal of teaching young people how

Kaleah Sykes, Utah Supreme Court justice Tom Lee, and Kayla Davenport meet after Justice Lee's presentation on the legislative and judicial branches.



Kayla Davenport takes notes while Rob Clark, former president of the Utah Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and one of the BYU Law camp founders, discusses civility.



Civics camp students also met with Robert Clark, a partner at Parr Brown. Clark was instrumental in the Federal Bar Association's participation in the camp.

to have meaningful discussions. Aaron Tapia, one of the campers from Pilgrim Baptist, discussed how his new friendships impacted him. "Meeting people from different cultures showed me how to see another way of life and how other people experience the same things as you but interpret them differently," he said.

Kayla Davenport, also from Pilgrim Baptist, added, "The debates were my favorite things. I did my best debate on the use of force [in an excessive force case]. . . . Hearing some of the other people explain why they supported [the police] helped

me understand their viewpoint, even though I disagreed. It's when you can't talk to each other that you can't have a good discussion."

Stephen Bradford, an LA Chapter member and local LDS bishop, not only contributed financially but also sought out a first-generation American member of his congregation and enabled him to attend the camp. Speaking of this young man, Bradford stated, "It was important to me that he have the opportunity to learn more about U.S. history and constitutional democracy. I also wanted him and the others to gain a

greater appreciation for the rule of law at the same time that we promoted their ability to have discussions across the aisles that divide us, be they political, religious, or cultural."

According to Adams, local Law Society members are looking forward to the next BYU Law camp. "Now that we are seeing the outcomes and know what is involved, we are committed to the program," he said. "Hopefully we will be able to sponsor six kids next year."

Until then, the chapter is busy mentoring and planning a religious freedom conference that the Law Society will host

at the Jonathan Club in LA on November 3. As with the BYU Law camp, they are looking for sponsorships to enable law students and those with limited means to attend.

In Los Angeles, the Law Society continues to fulfill its mission to strive "through public service and professional excellence to promote fairness and virtue founded upon the rule of law."

For more information about the Civics, Law, and Leadership Youth Camp, contact BYU Law dean of admissions Gayla Sorenson at sorensong@law.byu.edu.



A Hearty Hallelujah! Words from Ruth Lybbert Renlund

The J. Reuben Clark Law Society's annual fireside, held in Salt Lake City on January 20, 2017, featured Ruth Lybbert Renlund as the speaker. The Law Society's Distinguished Public Service Award was presented to former Nevada senator Harry M. Reid by Elder Lance Wickman, general counsel for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an emeritus General Authority Seventy. Elder Wickman described Reid as "one of the most influential people in the nation, a force to be reckoned with." Reid served five terms in the U.S. Senate, including eight years as majority leader, before retiring in 2016. Elder Wickman went on to say that throughout Reid's "years

at the pinnacle of government, he has been a loyal, constant source of wisdom and timely assistance on many matters of vital interest to the Church."

D. Gordon Smith, dean of the BYU Law School, presented the Exemplary Leadership Award to Ruth Lybbert Renlund. Renlund has held several leadership positions, ranging from president of Dewsnup, King & Olsen to president of the Utah Trial Lawyers Association and to chair of the Utah Judicial Conduct Commission. She has served on the board of directors for Deseret Book, Murdock Travel, and the Workers Compensation Fund for Utah. Ralph Dewsnup, who practiced law with Renlund for 20 years, said of her: "Ruth is civil,

cultured, classy, smart, organized, loyal, creative, and fun. People wanted her to lead because she led. In a crisp, compassionate, thoughtful way she waded into problems to solve them."

Renlund's address focused on life lessons, drawing connections between the law, her father, and the gospel. She began by explaining how she left her law practice to serve with her husband, Elder Dale G. Renlund, in Africa.

"In 2009 my husband was called to be a General Authority and was assigned to serve in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency," she said. "Many of my non-LDS colleagues told me that they considered it noble that I would take time away

from my profession to help the poor in Africa. LDS lawyers, having a better idea of what I was doing, just wished me luck. . . . Many people I met in Africa could not understand why I had given up a well-paying job to come serve with my church."

One of those people was a journalist who interviewed her on national television in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He said, "You are a lawyer. Why would you leave your profession to come with your husband to the Democratic Republic of the Congo?"

Renlund responded that although her work as a lawyer was important, "there is nothing more important than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ."

U.S. Senator Harry Reid receives the Law Society's Distinguished Service Award.



JRCLS chair Ginny Isaacson (right) recognizes Mary Hoagland (left), retiring assistant dean of the BYU Law School and past executive director of the JRCLS, for her extraordinary 15 years of service in the society.



Her answer was met with “a hearty ‘hallelujah!’” from the journalist.

“Our five years in Africa were full of adventures and daily appreciation for the luxuries we all take for granted: water, electricity, good roads, plenty of food, Internet connection, and the rule of law,” she said. “I have discovered that no education or experience is wasted. The Lord uses all we have learned and experienced to further His work.”

Renlund then told of how she had become interested in the law when she was younger by watching her father. When she

was about nine years old, she and her father “drove together to Vernal, Utah, where he took a deposition at the front of an old courtroom while [she] sat in the back and soaked it all in.” Noting that her father “was a practical man with common sense that served him well in law and life,” Renlund shared three law and life lessons that he both taught and practiced.

LIFE LESSON 1: Learn to Disagree Without Being Disagreeable

Renlund’s initial impression of lawyers right out of law school was that they argued and that arguments, by definition, are disagreeable. “Then I remembered watching my father in action, walking down the street, in the courtroom, in the neighborhood. He greeted with warmth attorneys who were routinely on the other side of the bar. He told me who they were and how he knew them.

‘They are my friends—friends with different opinions,’ he said. He told me, ‘If you want to enjoy the practice of law, you have to learn to disagree without being disagreeable.’”

Renlund acknowledged, “This has been a great life lesson as well. Often we interact with people who disagree with us. Some may live in the same house. . . . The ability to have a conversation—a real discussion—with someone who disagrees with you is becoming rare.” She then invited listeners to remember the golden rule: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

LIFE LESSON 2: When You’re in a Hole, Stop Digging

“My father famously and repeatedly said, ‘Remember the first rule of holes!’ As a kid, growing

up on a farm, Dad realized early on that you cannot get out of a hole by continuing to dig. This law of nature is also a law for life. It may be hard to confess a mistake to a client, a misrepresentation to a judge, or a mistaken legal position to an opposing attorney, but the alternative is worse. Our integrity depends on our ability to say, ‘I am wrong. I made a mistake. I am sorry.’”

LIFE LESSON 3: You Have Only One Reputation

“When I got my first job as a lawyer, my dad said to me, ‘Ruth, you have a chance now that you will never have again: to create a reputation as a lawyer. Work hard, always be prepared, and follow the rules.’ That was it—the fundamentals of a reputation. . . . I can hear Jesus’s voice in those few words as well: ‘Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you’ (JST Luke 14:28). When we settle our minds on becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, we will naturally build good character and the reputation that follows.”

Renlund concluded with gratitude to her father for teaching her these principles that have guided her not only in the law but in life. She said, “As I told the Congolese journalist, although my work as a lawyer was important, there is nothing more important than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!”