



## An Exciting Trip to the Pro Bono Institute Conference in Washington, D.C.

By Director Bruce A. Lasky

As I took the train into Washington from Baltimore, Maryland, I was filled with excitement. I had spent the previous day with Prof. Doug Colbert from the University of Maryland Law School, where I had attended a seminar session on racial issues and the law in the USA. In the evening, we'd gone to a reading at the downtown courthouse by an author whose subject was the lynchings of African Americans in Maryland in the 1930s. Late into that evening, Prof. Colbert and I discussed his upcoming work with us as a volunteer from June-August, when we will strategize about ways to develop and implement CLE programs with a pre-trial detention theme. So my head was literally filled with these thoughts as I came into the nation's capital and went directly to the Pro Bono Institute's annual conference.

This year, BABSEA CLE was invited to host a luncheon table at the event, illustrating the connection between pro bono and clinical legal education. It was my, and our organization's, first time to attend, and we were grateful for the invitation. The three-day event (March 28-30) was attended by some of the largest law firms in the USA, in addition to representatives from law firms and corporations from around the world, including the United Kingdom, Australia and the Asia Pacific region. It was a particular delight to see two of BABSEA CLE's main supporting



**With Annette Bain, Director of the Freehills Foundation**

law firms, Freehills and Blake Dawson, there. It also was a privilege to meet PBI's President, Esther Lardent: I'd heard so much about the amazing ways she has connected law firms and lawyers into the pro bono initiative.

A significant theme of the conference was the global expansion of pro bono and how to effectively utilize human and other resources to assist in this development. I attended a panel discussion entitled Global Pro Bono: Best Practices, facilitated by the Freehills Foundation, the Public Interest Law Network (Pilnet) and Advocates for International Development (A4ID). Many firms with branch offices in Southeast Asia, as well as corporations with in-house counsel, were keenly interested to explore collaborative partnerships with us and our CLE partners. Building on the momentum of this interest, BABSEA CLE's directors made an official decision to assist in organizing the First Southeast

Asia Pro Bono Conference later this year.

While the entire conference was overwhelming in a positive way, two events will likely forever stick in my mind. One was the final morning session, a three-hour workshop on how to inspire lawyers to do pro bono work. As a trainer myself, I was impressed with what I saw. The message was that it was a bad idea to use extrinsic motivation to get lawyers to do pro bono – because you run the risk that, once the external rewards are no longer given, the pro bono actions will stop. It is better to “tap into” the intrinsic values that lawyers themselves hold dear. This way, lawyers begin to feel good about themselves and the “flow” of the legal assistance they are providing. You take small steps and build up, and eventually pro bono work is not considered separate, but a core part of what they want to do.

The second event was the speech of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the U.S Supreme Court, addressing the conference dinner. Tiny in physical form, Justice Bader Ginsburg is a giant in all other ways. Dedicating most of her life to the advancement of access to justice and fairness in the law, she was a real inspiration to all.

*I am deeply grateful personally, and BABSEA CLE is professionally, to the Freehills Foundation for making our attendance at this event possible.*