

## **Hilda Tizeba\***

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The first time I attempted to participate in a moot competition, I never really understood what it was all about, to be honest. I was in a haze of confusion about where to start and what exactly I was supposed to do. One feeling was abundantly clear; I was overwhelmingly excited. Later on I came to find out; I had absolutely every right to be!

The first moot competition I participated in was the East and Central African Human Rights Moot on the Rights of the Child and Persons with Disabilities held in Nairobi, Kenya in the year 2012. There were more than 20 teams participating. Our university had received a late invite to participate in the competition and my team mate and I only had two weeks to practice.

Those two weeks were filled with relentless rehearsals in front of our moot coordinator, lots of research, ridiculously funny public speaking rehearsals in front of my bedroom mirror and a lot of late nights. The day of the competition finally arrived, we mooted in the course of two days. Not only did our team emerge as the first runner up, I was also awarded the best overall orator of the entire competition! I was nothing short of amazed and had never felt more proud of myself.

The experience I got from Nairobi lingered within me, and I was thirsty for more competition. Therefore, the following year I enrolled for the All Africa Human Rights Moot held in Cape Town, South Africa. This time more than 40 countries from Africa were participating. The competition was huge and the struggle to uphold one's university reputation was extreme.

Upon reaching South Africa, I soon realized the competition was greater than I expected. The teams present were extremely good, the competition was fierce. I was determined to give it my best shot. This included instant grasp of cases and authorities argued by the opposing team and lots of quick wit to counter any argument where my knowledge of the law didn't seem to suffice.

Finally, the results were out. Our team did not perform as per my expectations. But at the

end of the day, the organizers cheered us all up with a marvelous dinner and dance celebration to close the ceremony; my spirits were lifted once again. Lol!

Despite it all, I gained a lot of cherished memories and experience. I made a lot of new friends, some of whom I still maintain contact with till today and they constantly inform me about various opportunities. My research skills are over the top these days, and there is no task that am not ready for regardless of the subject matter. The ability to think quickly and discern the immediate consequences of my responses is immense.

But apart from this, mooting doesn't mean all work and no play. I got the chance to enjoy wonderful excursions and meet many interesting people, and got the opportunity to enjoy South Africa's deep cultural heritage at the Roben Islands. There are also an opportunities to attend very informative conferences that upgrade your legal knowledge as well as provide you with great ideas for academic writing.

Once a mooter always a mooter.,The following year I also participated in the Jessup White and Phillip Case Moot Competition on International Law held in Washington D.C. There were teams from all around the world and actual judges form the International Court of Justice present! I felt noting short of honored and deeply humbled to actually get the opportunity to moot in their presence.

This competition was the most hectic and memorable moot experience of my life! The memorial for each side was fifty pages long, the amount of research required was enormous not forgetting the catching up with school work that had to be done once I got back! However, I wouldn't trade the experience for anything.

The experience at the Jessup made me more confident of oratory skills and equipped me with the most necessary elements required by every lawyer; discipline, love for research and the art of conveying passion and utmost professionalism in one's arguments. It also exposed me to the harsh reality that without proper exposure, you will always be a small fish in a very big pond , never truly knowing your full potential. The external competition made me aspire for greater.

In a nutshell, the mooting experience has definitely shaped my career choices. Mooting has opened my eyes to the vast career opportunities in law and not necessarily the court room alone. It has honed my lecturing skills as I speak with ease and finesse, not because I cram everything, but because my mind has already trained itself to think quickly and make a persuasive argument in a matter of seconds! Mooting is definitely an adventure that I would urge any aspiring lawyer not to miss!



## The mooting experience