

## Lawyers Receive Training on Indigent Defense: Free Program Supports Court-Appointed Cases

Nationally recognized practitioners of criminal defense gathered in Richmond May 4, 2007, to present the third annual seminar “Indigent Criminal Defense: Advanced Skills for the Experienced Practitioner.”

The daylong seminar drew 480 attorneys to the live presentation in Richmond and 100 to a simulcast in Abingdon. The seminar was sponsored by the justices of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Chief Justice’s Indigent Defense Training Initiative and the Virginia State Bar.

Among the eight speakers was Lisa M. Wayne of Denver, Colorado, who addressed the question of how to handle voir dire when a judge allows only 30 minutes for jury selection. She advised the audience to file motions for more time, “get right to the heart of your case,” and note for the record physical reactions by potential jurors to questions.

“Don’t apologize about who you are, because you are defending someone who deserves to be defended,” she said. “You are a modern-day saint.”

Luncheon speaker Joshua I. Dratel of New York City described the challenges he faced defending a detainee at Guantanamo Bay, outside the jurisdiction of U.S. courts. He lamented disinterest from the news media, an uninformed public and bizarre occurrences that probably would not have occurred on American soil—for example, judges who had not yet been sworn in ruling on motions.

Dratel saluted the Virginia lawyers before him who represent indigent persons. “I got these accolades from representing just one person in this system,” he said. In the audience were people “who do it every day, anonymously, tirelessly, passionately, effectively.” He thanked them “for your righteous commitment to justice for those who cannot afford to purchase it.”

Colette Tvedt of Seattle, Washington described strategies for defending some of the most detested defendants in the criminal justice system: accused child molesters.

“When your client is charged with raping his daughter, you are starting with a deficit,” she said. But “we’re starting to win these cases more and more.” Successful strategies include getting to know the child and how evidence was collected, gathering impressions from friends and neighbors acquainted with the family, and bringing in experts who can opine on how children can receive certain injuries or be manipulated to lie.

The seminar was offered free of charge to public defenders and court-appointed counsel in criminal cases.



Shown clockwise from top left: Lisa M. Wayne of Denver, Colorado; Joshua I. Dratel of New York City; Colette Tvedt of Seattle, Washington, with Virginia Court of Appeals Judge Walter S. Felton Jr. (left) and Richmond attorney Steven D. Benjamin