

**2020 Live Transcript**  
**Experience, Insights and Tips by the Winning Team of the 2019 Nelson Mandela World**  
**Human Rights Moot Court Competition**

*\*This is a non-literal transcript written by the organisers of the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition*

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**Gayathree:** Hi Everyone! My name is Gayathree and this is my friend Ayushi Agarwal! The two of us are from India.

**Ayushi:** Together, we participated in the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition ("World Moot"/"Competition") last year, representing the University of Oxford.

**Gayathree:** We just wanted to share our experience participating in this competition with all of you and encourage you to participate as well.

**Ayushi:** We will share some of the tips that helped us.

**Gayathree:** I think our journey began when we first got the Moot problems. Both of us are very passionate about human rights and we were studying human rights at Oxford at that point, so we were really excited when we realized that all the topics issues in human rights were being addressed in a Moot Court problem. I think that is what really got us excited about this Moot in the first place. We started off participating in an internal selection round at the University of Oxford, which was extremely competitive. We saw some really good quality argumentation and good quality judging, which was the foundation for a participation in this competition and also the foundation for how well we did at the competition itself, because it gave us a lot of practice and experience tackling judges' questions.

After the internal selection, we were chosen to represent our University and we began working on the memorials. We had already submitted preliminary draft of the memorials for the internal selection rounds, and that was the basis for the memorial that was admitted for the Nelson Mandela World Moot.

Sources-wise, what really helped us, apart from the treaties themselves, were the general comments produced by treaty bodies about these treaties, such as the Human Rights Committee's General Comments, which were extremely helpful to us to understand the exact contours of these rights. Apart from the UNHRC cases and decisions, we also used case law from the regional courts, such as a European Court of Human Rights as well as the Inter-american Court of Human Rights. The World Moot really values diversity and therefore, your memorial should reflect varied sources and varied perspectives on the law.

**Ayushi:** After the preliminary memorials, as well as the selection rounds at the University of Oxford, we realised that we had already done 60% of the work, which held us in good stand. When we finally received the email from the organizers that we had been selected for the international rounds, we were very excited because it is such a big deal to be able to argue at the United Nations. Unfortunately, we had exams just a week before the international rounds began so we were quite stressed.

Considering this timeline, the fact that we had already done a significant amount of preparation for the internal rounds [at Oxford] really helped us, so that is something that we would advise you to do as well. Be careful about deadlines that may come up close to the international rounds, and try to finish your preparation in advance instead of leaving it for the last moment. In terms of the other preparation for international rounds, we tried to reach out to people who had done this Moot Court before, or other human rights moot courts, because we thought that they would be able to offer us more streamlined advice and guidance. We tried to schedule two to three rounds everyday for the week that we had in between the end of final exams and the World Moot. On the flight to Geneva, we were still questioning each other and laughing, we were excited to be going to Geneva.

I think the most important thing, of course, is that both Gayathree and I along with our coach, who has a great sense of humor, had a lot of fun and enjoyed the problem so much, that we saw it was not just as a challenge but also as a really fun opportunity.

**Gayathree:** Then we landed in Geneva, which was a completely different ball game all together. It was very exciting to be at the United Nations itself, because we were just feet away from the Human Rights Council, from the International Law Commission and they were all in session when we were in Geneva. These were bodies that actually laid the foundation of International Human Rights Law and just to be at that institution, it felt very nice!

The World Moot values diversity and so we also had the opportunity to interact with participants from across the world, participants from every single continent, and that allowed us to understand how diverse the understanding of law is, in the way each team presented their arguments. We realised the differences between a Western perspective on Human Rights Law and Global South perspective on Human Rights Law, which resulted in an

incredible learning experience. Other than that, just to be able to speak to people from different countries was very exciting and we had a lot of fun.

**Ayushi:** I remember the quarterfinals and the semifinals very distinctly. In the quarterfinals we ended up against a Francophone team, and we had to use live translation, with one of those really cool headpieces that all of us were using for the first time. It was quite challenging and we were quite intimidated, of course, but then we saw that everything was unfolding quite smoothly, we were able to experience a United Nations setting for the first time, that was absolutely wonderful.

At the semifinals, we were up before 11 judges, which is the largest bench we have ever faced and again it was quite a ride, because the round was a close one. When we found out that we had made it to the finals our team was so excited and it was very hard to prepare that night because we wanted to eat really good food. Then, when we discovered that we would be judged by judges who have been in the European Court of Human Rights, International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and members of International Law Commission we were absolutely astounded, and we were just so grateful for the opportunity.

The finals were quite nail-biting. Just sitting in the United Nations General Assembly Hall, knowing all of the things that has gone on in that all previously, it was such an overwhelming feeling and I think we were perhaps already occupied with that feeling of how lucky we were. When it was revealed that we had won, I think it took a minute for the news to sink in. All of the people who we had been going up against were so encouraging and kind. They came up to us -we had become friends by then- so it was a really loving and warm feeling.

**Gayathree:** We will now jump into the question of whether we have any tips for you. I'm going to start with a really boring and obvious one, which is that you should practice as much as you can before going to the Competition. It's really good to get a sense of the kind of questions that people might ask you. I think it is important not to practice with the same person again and again, but to do rounds with different people because they will offer you different perspectives on what the law should be, and on whether your argument works for them or not. See the practicing rounds as a learning experience. You need to walk out of the practice rounds knowing how to change your argumentation to convince each person, because mooting is about the skill of being persuasive. So take your practicing rounds seriously.

**Ayushi:** In fact one tip to make the most out of the practice rounds: ask your teammates to record the questions that were asked and then after the round is done, try to actually write down the answers to those questions. The answers don't have to be the ones that you stated during the round. You will see that by the end you will have a question bank, and in most

cases it will cover 80% of the questions that will actually be posed to you during the rounds. So it could be a really helpful resource.

Having a good relationship with your teammate can also be very helpful not only because you will enjoy the process. Gayathree and I helped each other by offering suggestions on respective parts of the memorials and our speeches. Knowing that your teammate has seen all of your rounds and the ways you have argued can be very encouraging throughout the process.

**Gayathree:** There might be inconsistencies in what you are saying and in what your teammate is saying so doing these rounds together in advance is really important to identify those inconsistencies and remove them, before you go to a judge, because judges are bound to spot inconsistencies.

**Ayushi:** The final piece of advice we would like to offer, I hope that it doesn't sound cliché, is that don't forget to have fun! This is definitely the most fun Moot Court that we have been to, because of how warm it is. The moot problems for this year it's absolutely incredible and it offers so much opportunity for exploration of the different issues within human rights law, especially if you are enthusiastic about building a career in human rights. This is a perfect place for you to show your interest and learn.

**Gayathree:** All the best for the Moot Court Competition! Do the competition without fears and just enjoy and have a nice experience! Bye!

**Ayushi:** All the Best! and Bye!