

| Jamie Fukofuka || JFA Assignment Oct '09
| Focus Leadership Institute

JFA '09 is an experience I will value for life. The facts, the people, the conversations, the campus, the Exhibit itself and even my host family are people, places and moments I never want to forget.

Admittedly, training was emotionally sobering. I had never been faced with real abortion images. 'Hollywood' graphic is one thing, aborted babies - REAL abortion - is very much another.

Talking about abortion was sobering but also empowering. I found each section of training to be valuable and relevant; especially the introductory presentation. Using scripted and impromptu role playing was a new technique for me that I found very effective in building confidence and familiarity with each pro-life/pro-choice argument.

The training team created an environment of an open confidence - we could ask any question in the knowledge that we wouldn't be judged, regardless of the question, and someone, even if it wasn't the person we asked, would give us an honest answer. Each team member was very personable, respectful, open and honest.

The on-campus briefing (reflection, prayer, role play and general information) was great; especially the word of encouragement addressing feelings of being unprepared as I'm sure I wasn't the only one in that boat.

Once 'out of the boat', one piece of advice that stuck with me was how often people who had deliberately shied away from conversations regretted their decision. So, although it was a little bit awkward to get used to, approaching people or 'ever-so-discretely' coming alongside them was something I really wanted

to do. As the day went on it became easier. By day two, it was something I looked forward to.

The most memorable conversation I had was with a guy named Evan. Thankfully, it was a conversation I got to share with my room-mate Emily. For the both of us it was the most extensive conversation we'd ever had with an agnostic, bordering atheist, (so he claims), gay, young-adult.

We spoke about so much - when life begins, scientifically proving God's existence, how the bible has "screwed up society", how the



church hates gay people and even how if I believe life begins at conception I should also then be aware of exactly what I'm doing when I eat eggs because chickens are of equal value to humans because we are both as animal as each-other... interesting logic I know?! (What's more is that when I asked him if he was a vegetarian he said no.) Still, at the end of it all, I told him that "whether you believe it or not, you are here for a purpose and you're an awesome person."

One person I wish I could've really talked to was this one guy who said he had a few minutes for the survey, but then as soon as I asked him the first question referring to the exhibit he coldly said "I don't wana talk about it" and walked off. He was obviously deeply hurt. I wish I knew why.

I talked to many people who were pro-life (which was encouraging), including Candice. She was obviously not a Christian but she was definitely pro-life. When I asked her how she arrived at that conclusion she said "it's common sense?! You see a baby, you wana hold it; protect it." She 'gets it' and I think that's such a beautiful thing.

I am *extremely* grateful for this experience. I can't wait to take what I have learnt back with me to New Zealand!