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## **MLLS Essay Contest**

**Introductions by**

**Heather Weigler and Jill Tanner**

*This summer, Mary Leonard Law Society held its first annual essay contest for incoming Willamette University College of Law students. Inspired by the presidential campaign of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, MLLS asked the students to address whether it is important for women to continue to amass power now that half of all law school graduates are women and women have been viable candidates for national elective office. Although many excellent essays were received, the committee selected **Nicole Schaefer's** essay and awarded Nicole a \$500 gift certificate to The Willamette Store. Nicole discussed one of the more insidious barriers to gender equality that continues to plague society: how the different social expectations of men and women limit women's educational opportunities from grade school through law school. Nicole argues that women must continue to resist those subtle forms of oppression in their own lives in order to accomplish broader social change, and that continuing to amass power is necessary to creating more role models for women and shape new social expectations.*

*Nicole, a native Portlander, graduated from the all-women's Scripps College with a degree in Psychology and Art History before returning to Oregon to work at ChristieCare, a non-profit organization that provides school and counseling for children with mental disabilities. She hopes to work in the field of animal law once she graduates from law school.*

### **Nicole Schaefer's essay**

*Thomas (Tom) Martin received an honorable mention in the essay contest. Tom's essay, reprinted below, focuses on the "firsts" of Oregon women, taking from the list of Firsts Among Women Lawyers in/from Oregon prepared by Oregon Women Lawyers' Historian Trudy Allen. After reviewing some of the Oregon firsts and how those achievements fit with national legislation and judicial decisions, Tom concludes that the ultimate goal is "a society where women no longer need to be praised for achieving the status that men achieve, but \* \* \* a society where equal opportunity is the norm." Tom was raised in Nevada and earned an undergraduate degree from Humboldt State University (California) in International Studies. He is married to Ava, who he met during a study abroad in Costa Rica, and together they share a common interest of travel, having lived and studied in Costa Rica and visited Europe and Alaska. Tom has little free time but what free time he does have he enjoys spending outdoors and exploring his new home after having moved to Oregon in July.*

### **Tom Martin's Essay**