Public lecture: How Lawyers Can Use their Legal Training to Improve their Society

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What do you think of lawyers? What are their differences from others? How can they work for the good of society? These questions of great concern to the law students were provoked by Mr. Edwin Rekosh on the public lecture “How Lawyers Can Use their Legal Training to Improve their Society” at the School of Law, City University of Hong Kong on 25 February 2016.

Mr. Rekosh teaches human rights, law and development at Columbia Law School. He is also the founder of PILnet: The Global Network for Public Interest Law.

Mr. Rekosh summarized four important characteristics making a lawyer unique: legal knowledge; skills; understanding about the law, the legal system and how it interacts with the society; as well as values. He highlighted that for a lawyer, the problem-solving skills, reasoning skills, communication skills, and presentation skills are essential.

Sketching normal paths for lawyers to contribute to the society, such as solving legal problems and reducing disputes, Mr. Rekosh stressed the less conventional ways, especially the legal aids on a voluntary, pro bono basis. “Lawyers have special roles in the legal system in society and should volunteer based on their specialized knowledge and legal skills,” he said.
Lawyers could also contribute their knowledge and legal skills to change the way that laws and policies were designed and implemented, Mr. Rekosh explained that lawyers could correct or change the laws or policies by bringing litigation.

“Lawyers could also work for the good of society through NGOs by providing legal information for citizens since they have the ability to translate complex information into simple and practical information, which was not only good for citizens, but also for the efficiency of legal systems,” Mr. Rekosh said.

Finally, Mr. Rekosh shared his personal story of founding PILnet. The attendants actively exchanged their opinions with Mr. Rekosh during Q & A section and still lingered around longing to talk with him after the lecture.