

## Message from the President, September 2017: The Eyes Have It



*Kathy Simons (WTSLA Chapter President), Photos © John Livzey, 2017*

An Argentinian poet, Antonio Porchia, wrote, "I am chained to the earth to pay for the freedom of my eyes." Wow. That's just beautiful. Let the image sink in for a second. Boy, only a poet can do that. But aside from the beauty of the image itself, think about exactly what the poet is saying. That one sentence, that one concept, is probably the best piece of practical advice I have heard in a very, very long time for dealing with many of the challenges we face today. Not coincidentally, the poet wrote that in 1943, obviously, another time of considerable upheaval. Don't see it? Let me explain.



Challenges are like air. We all face them. We need them. It's how we live. It's how we grow. Whether it's your personal life or your professional career, challenges are ever present. So, the idea isn't to rid yourself of trials or difficulties. The task at hand is to learn to deal with them in the most constructive, positive, and productive ways. In fact, how you deal with challenges defines the difference between them being a true learning and growth experience or a critical, depressing disappointment. So, let's talk about process.

Whether you lead a department, a company, or an organization, whether you just started your first job out of college, or whether you have years of experience managing and being managed, you will face challenges. Some challenges will present a very serious personal dilemma, where for political, private, or moral reasons you feel overwhelmed, angered, confused, or insulted. This is normal. It happens every



day. So, the important thing is to use these challenges as a means for reflection, and make important decisions from a place of wisdom and context.

Clarity cannot be overrated. Gaining perspective on your situation and the dilemma before you can only help you gain clear understanding of what is being asked of you and what your actions will mean in the grander scheme of things. So, when faced with a monumental conundrum, step back, literally. Take a moment and step out of your office. If you can go outside and get some fresh air, even better. Take a walk. Physically remove

yourself from your situation, so that you can gain the mental space to put your options in a greater context. Simply breaking down a problem into its smaller salient parts gives you a better perspective. Then you can develop strategies to deal with those parts or the issue as a whole. But the vital element is gaining clear sight of what is being asked of you, your responsibilities in the situation, and the ramifications of your actions or non-actions. And that's where WTS-LA comes in.

WTS must count on its core values and principles to carry us through difficult times. What we believe in—the philosophy we espouse—is a lighthouse. So, when seas become rough and waves are breaking over the bow, fall back on WTS-LA, its beliefs, and the support the chapter provides through those principles to help you weather the storm and gain the perspective you need to meet even the toughest challenges.

We are all chained to the earth to pay for the freedom of our eyes. And thank you to Mr. Porchia for administering that lesson in such beautiful language. I believe it helped him and many others get through some truly difficult times. And it can help us, too. Together, with the collective, supportive freedom of our eyes, we can help each other overcome the chains that must fetter us to the challenges of this earth.