



**PRESIDENT'S PAGE**  
**NIKKI PRESLEY MILIBAND**

# Civility Across Cultures

Quick, what do these have in common—a man riding a water buffalo playing the flute, washing elephants in a mountain river, and eight hours of MCLE? All were activities from the OCBA Travel Seminar to Thailand organized by OCBA Past President Joseph Chairez this past January 26-February 4! I am writing this article while having breakfast in Chiangmai, Thailand, together with fifty-five OCBA members, judges, and their significant others who similarly made the trek. What a beautiful country and people. At times it seems almost surreal. The water buffalo, you ask? Just a few minutes ago, while having a wonderful *al fresco* breakfast with my hubby and OCBA Past President, Joel Miliband, we heard the soft, melodic sound of a flute. I looked around to see if the music was being piped in from somewhere, but it didn't appear to be. I stood up and looked over the balcony to see a man playing his flute and riding a water buffalo (pictured). You don't get to see that every day in Orange County!

But, I digress. The camaraderie of these individuals, the support from the group to the speakers giving the one-hour end-of-the-day CLE seminars, and the acts of kindness I have witnessed by our group to not just one another, but to the people in Thailand, is truly commendable. I am proud to be a member of the legal profession and am growing somewhat weary of the denigration of this noble vocation.

We have all heard bad lawyer jokes during the course of our careers. Jokes like: *What do you call a smiling, courteous person at a bar association convention? The caterer.* Or: *How many lawyer jokes are there? Only three. The rest are true stories.* Or: *What do you call 1000 lawyers at the bottom of the Pacific? A good start.* And the list goes on. It is also disheartening when I hear members of our own profession state that they would actively discourage their own children from pursuing a career in the law. We actively encouraged my husband's son, Wesley Miliband, who expressed interest in pursuing a legal education and career (it was way more fun watching him go through law school from this side of the equation than it was going through it myself). He is now happily engaged in a thriving practice as a water lawyer in Sacramento. Simi-

larly, people sometimes misuse Shakespeare's statement, "the first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" to impugn lawyers. However, this quote from Shakespeare's *Henry VI* is uttered by a member of the mob plotting anarchy; it is not an indictment of lawyers, but a tribute to the fact that lawyers are the glue that holds society together that must be done away with in order to achieve a state of anarchy.

The nobility of our profession is evidenced by our members. Come by any day of the week to the OCBA headquarters and you will see a multitude of lawyers taking time out of their schedules to participate in and volunteer on the OCBA's various committees and meetings that benefit our community at large, including working with homeless people, visiting Orangewood, helping with pet adoptions, restoring the Newport Back Bay, cleaning up beaches, packaging food for OC Food Bank, teaming up for Race for the Cure, and preparing backpacks for victims of human trafficking. Many lawyers also volunteer to be coaches or judges at Orange County high schools for the mock trial program put on by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Orange County, as well as many other worthwhile causes that benefit our community at large. This doesn't even take into consideration the countless number of hours members of our profession dedicate to providing much-needed pro bono legal services. We are often the first to volunteer time, skill, and efforts to provide pro bono emergency legal services in response to a natural disaster. Again, I'm proud to be associated with individuals who possess this type of strong moral character.

While I believe that most of our profession is honorable and upstanding, I am not blind to the fact that there have been those in the legal profession who have tainted it for us all. I am hopeful that the new attorneys coming up the ranks choose to embrace the nobility of this profession and treat one another, their clients, opposing counsel, and our judiciary with the respect and civility that has truly been the historical hallmark.

To that end, the OCBA Civility Task Force, chaired by Scott Garner and Justice Richard Fybel, and consisting of Ebrahim Baytieh, Mark Brown, Carole Buckner, Kate Corrigan, Andra Greene, Hon. Linda Marks, Dan Robinson, Hon. Nathan Scott, Suzanne Burke Spencer, Hon. Josephine Staton, Jordon Steinberg, and Cherrie Tsai, has prepared civility guidelines for Orange County attorneys. We will be rolling out these guidelines this year to the courts, affiliate bars, and beyond.

You can review these OCBA Civility Guidelines on page 28. I would encourage everyone to circulate them to members of your firm or legal organization. While they may not change some individuals' affinity for lawyer jokes, they will remind all of us of the important etiquette that should be part of lawyering.



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